daniel škobla
jan grill
jakob hurrle

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evaluation of the programme funded by the european social fund in 2007–2013

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Language proofreading: María L. Mikšík

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contents

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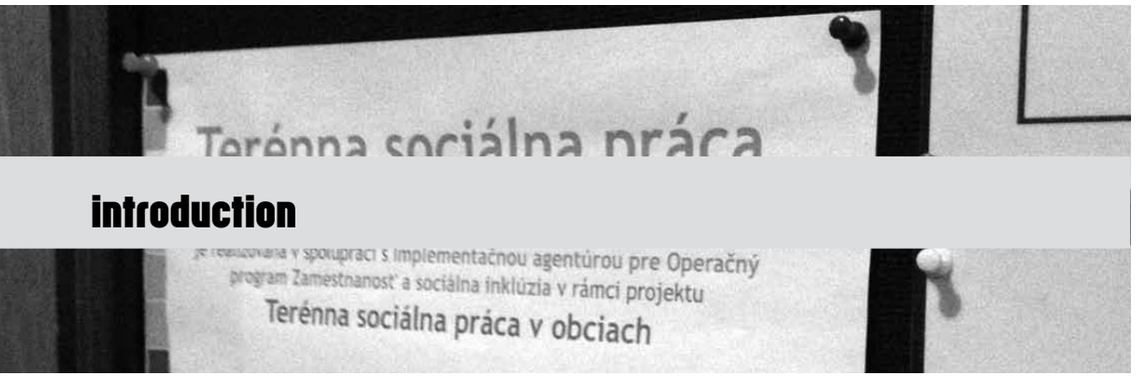


introduction

Slovakia is characterized by a number of deep and contrasting divides. One of the most visible divisions is articulated in the regional asymmetries – between the growing capital city and other cities in the western part on one side and the much poorer rural areas. These differences do not only reflect the urban – rural, or east-west asymmetries but, crucially, are differentiated alongside class and ethno-racial divisions. These divisions often intersect and are particularly visible when it comes to comparisons between the Slovak majority population and the Roma minority, who live mostly in rural municipalities of eastern and southern Slovakia. Thus, in addition to regional disparities in measures of poverty, unemployment, income, education and health status, discrepancies between the standing of the majority population and the Roma population are also manifested in Slovakia.

Characterized by high unemployment, insufficient infrastructures, poor housing and living conditions and a general lack of social integration, the situation of the Roma has for years been the subject of strong national and international concerns. In recent decades, the segment of Roma minority characterised by the somehow technocratic term as 'marginalised Roma communities' (MRK) became an object of political debates, policy-making initiatives and general modes of governing the poor and disadvantaged. Different initiatives have been launched on international, national or regional levels of governance. Although different governments and NGOs launched various projects and schemes aimed at fighting exclusion, improving livelihoods or assisting the growing number of poor and excluded segments of the population, the majority of these efforts were very short-term in their duration and limited in their systematic implementation on the nation-state level.

This text explores one of the most complex and systematic tools of social policy in the last two decades in Slovakia – Field Social Work (*terénna sociálna práca*). Having their origins in NGO's initiatives and a pilot project by the Slovak Governmental Plenipotentiary for Roma, Slovakia saw at the same time, the gradual emergence of an institutional framework to address these difficulties. The backbone of this system are the social field workers and social field assistants, who have been operating in recent years in about three hundred municipalities. Financed from resources from the EU structural funds, the social field work programme was implemented in recent years under the names of two programmes – open call for proposals projects (*dopytovo orientované*

projekty) and National project field social work (*Národný projekt terénna sociálna práca*), without changing its operational structures and still providing the same services with some adjustments and changes. While focusing mostly on municipalities with a significant presence of Roma, these field social workers (*terénni sociálni pracovníci)* are not supposed to solely target Roma but also any type of citizen that is in need of social assistance. However, in practice, the work of field social workers has been frequently seen as working predominantly with marginalised Roma groups.

In October 2014, the Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (IA) commissioned a team of researchers to carry out an evaluation of the field social work programme in the 2007–2013 programming period. The research was designed to evaluate field social work in relation to the target groups and the relevance of the programme in terms of its impacts at the local level and contribution to social inclusion. The research consisted of both statistical data analysis and qualitative field research in municipalities. It was aimed to critically examine and assess the workings of the field social work in practice. The results of the research and its key findings served not only as a feedback for the past programmes but also initiated a set of policy recommendations, which were used for designing the field social work programmes up to the year 2020.

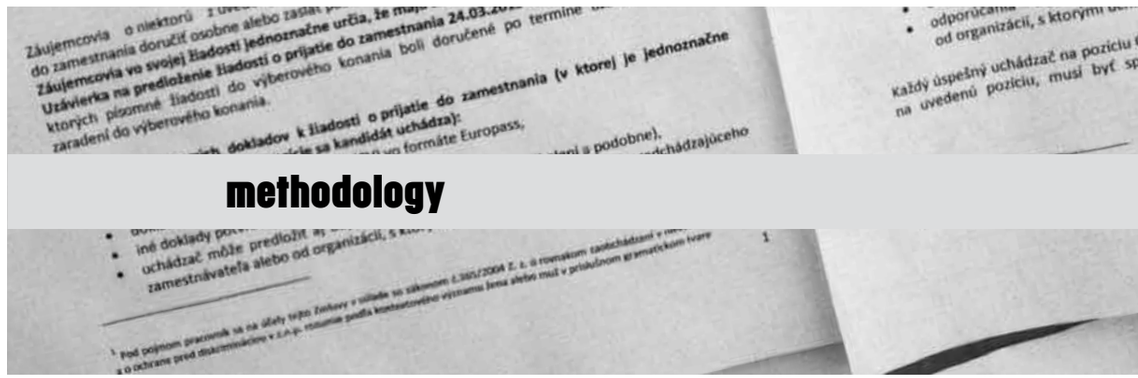
This research was not the first attempt to evaluate interventions targeted at the Roma which were funded by EU structural funds. A few years ago, The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) embarked on a similar initiative in order to assess the impact of the European Social Fund (ESF) projects (Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion) on Roma groups (Hurrle, J., et al., 2012). Moreover, at the beginning of the decade, the Ethnographic Institute of the Slovak Academy of Science carried out an independent evaluation of the field social work programmes (Hrustič, T., et al., 2010). One of the components of this undertaking was also a questionnaire-based survey among field social workers (TSP/ATSP) (Fedačko, R., et al., 2010). Internal evaluations related to the field social work were also carried out by the IA (IA, 2013). The survey among field social workers and other assisting professionals working with the marginalized Roma communities, was also recently carried out by the Institute for Research on Labour and Family (Bodnárová, B., 2014).

The present research builds on these previous efforts. The text explores the workings of the TSP programme and its transforming structures. It asks what changes in municipalities were brought about by field social work? Has the introduction of the National Project of Field Social Work influenced the quality of field social work and what were the key drivers of change? How does the quality and scope of supervision and methodological leadership provided by the IA influence the quality and impact of field social work? How do different social actors (clients, municipalities, field social workers, general public) perceive field social work? What systemic measures should the Slovak Republic take in order to implement the field social work more efficiently and at a higher quality level in the future?

To present the findings of this comprehensive research, the publication which follows, is structured in the following way. The first chapter outlines the methodology of the research and ethical issues in the field research. The second chapter is statistical analysis, that employs a method that correlated geographical coverage of field social work projects with the Atlas of Roma communities in Slovakia. The third chapter deals with typology and hierarchies within the field social work structures and provides an attempt at reconstruction, of different main and recurring trajectories of the TSP/ATSPs, in order for the reader to acquire a better understanding of the practices and performance of field social work. The fourth chapter is an attempt to explore a particular form of distinction within which TSP/ATSPs understood and categorised the clients, their behaviour, needs and possible reactions. The fifth chapter aims to describe the fundamental workload in the field of the field social work. The sixth chapter focuses on some of the critical issues related to the offices for TSP/ATSPs, facilities and material equipment of the offices. The seventh chapter describes administrative issues related to field social work and how the shift from open call for proposals projects to the National Project affected the functioning of field social work and its administrative practices. The eighth chapter describes one of recurrent issues recorded during the fieldwork, which concerns the issue of recognition of TSP/ATSP and their work. Finally, the authors formulate some policy recommendations resulting from the assessment of field social work.

The authors of this report intentionally did not choose to structure the text according to 'views and experiences' of particular 'groups of actors'. Rather than writing about the perspectives of TSPs or mayors, we have chosen to structure the text alongside (and to place more emphasis on) some of the key themes and issues that emerged during our research. This decision made by the authors, was also supported by the fact that many of the practices, experiences and views about the field social work were not unified within the group of actors, and differed in relation to individual position, professional trajectory, gender, class, and ethnicity.

1.



methodology

The research combined three types of methodology: desk research, statistical analysis and field research. The desk research provided useful background information on how the field social work was implemented. We were interested not only in official reporting about the work performance but also in *nested hierarchies*, which affected the work of various field social workers and their assistants (TSP/ATSP), regional coordinators (RKs) or project managers in Bratislava.

The available documents, reports and materials were an important source of information that contextualized our understanding of the situation in municipalities before we visited the sites. The materials that we studied included: documents related to individual projects including project documents with attachments; various assessments concerning the field social work; monthly performance reports submitted by TSPs and RKs to Bratislava; newspapers, media and internet information related to the field social work.

Statistical analysis of the available data on field social work projects primarily employed a method that correlated geographical coverage of these projects with the Atlas of Roma communities in Slovakia. The combination of these two types of databases allowed researchers to assess the focus of field social work projects in relation to levels of development/backwardness of municipalities, scale of the spatial segregation of the Roma population living in municipalities, educational profile of local Roma population, political participation of the Roma, and the like. This analysis enabled those regions and municipalities that have failed to be identified and reached by the field social work programme to be disclosed.

The research also included an analysis of two types of questionnaires: one for field social workers and their assistants and the second for regional coordinators. These questionnaires were distributed electronically (via an online Google application) in order to anonymously obtain additional information from a wider range of workers, not only from those we could directly encounter, due to the limited number of sites we visited. The questionnaires consisted of open questions, which created enough space for the unconstrained reflections of the respondents. The research also consisted of in-depth interviews with experts and project managers (from the IA, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the Office of Roma Governmental Plenipotentiary, etc.) and representatives of NGOs.

selection criteria for municipalities and types of respondents

Municipalities for the field research were selected in order to represent a mix of the following characteristics:

- Form of financing (both the open-call for proposals project "DOP" (*dopytovo-orientovaný projekt)* and the national project "NP TSP" (*Národný projekt*)
- Difficulty of the field social work performance (the extent of cumulated problems in communities, according to expert opinions)
- Type of municipality (whether it is a town or a village)
- Type and size of marginalized Roma communities

The municipalities which were visited were concentrated in three historic regions of Slovakia. This was in order to obtain a socio-economically, ethnically and culturally relatively homogeneous environment and thus eliminate the effect of exogenous factors (e.g. in economically peripheral regions versus economically core regions), which could affect performance of field social work. The second motivation for such a choice was logistical – researchers wanted these sites to be accessible from the district towns, where they were based during the three-week long fieldwork. The final number of villages and towns we visited was twenty-two.

The interviews were conducted with the following types of social actors:

- Representatives of the IA (current and former project managers, methodologists, senior managers)
- Representatives of the Labour Office (ÚPSVR) who had some relation to the field social work
- Regional coordinators of the field social work
- Field social workers (TSP/ATSPs)
- Clients (Roma and non-Roma) in municipalities where it was implemented,
- Representatives of towns and villages (including employees of social services departments in municipal offices)
- Representatives of other institutions and organizations related to field social work (e.g. community workers, police officers, school principals and teachers)
- Other professionals and experts from various think-tanks and NGOs.

strategy for interviews and our approach towards respondents

The fieldwork visit of localities usually started by talking with the TSPs and ATSPs. This was done both individually and in an informally formed focus group consisting of all the TPSs and ATSPs in the municipality. The research team combined both strategies. The advantage of individual interviews was the possibility of more focused discussion, which was not conditioned by the power relationship to the other interview participants. Thus, apart from the self-censorship and relationship to the research team there were no other additional factors influencing the respondents' perspectives (for instance, this enabled some TSPs to be more critical of the mayor, which would have been impossible in her presence, etc.). The individual interviews were combined with the focus groups as these brought some additional benefits in terms of how data were generated. The focus group and group discussions were conducive to particular information generated through the dialogical reactions, disagreements or complementary points stemming from the group dynamics (and not necessarily influenced by the monolinear research-respondent format of questioning).

In certain localities the researchers started with an interview with municipality representatives – the mayor or local authority workers. The first option, especially in the case of smaller municipalities, was always a mayor. In towns, it was usually a worker in the social services department at the city council. The interview was conducted in a semi-structured way so that the respondents had ample opportunity to state their own opinions, while at the same time a list of questions ensured that we discussed all important points. Interviews usually took one, to two and a half hours. In addition to interviews with representatives of municipalities, researchers held an interview with the TSP or ATSP (optimally separately, however, it was not always possible and sometimes the interview was done in the presence of the mayor or other municipality representatives). Information from community leaders and the TSPs were then compared with the perspective of clients from the Roma community. Whereas the perspective of the clients among communities could be crucial with respect to assessing the impact of field work, interviews within the Roma community were held in the form of impromptu focus groups and in the absence of municipality representatives and TSPs. Building trust among the Roma research team was facilitated by one of the researchers who is fluent in Romani, which enabled holding talks 'without supervision' by a municipality representative or a TSP. Such 'informal focus groups' were often made in the respondent's natural environment – e. g. outside their homes where they hung out with their neighbours and friends; or inside their homes, which were frequently visited by a number of neighbours and friends. These particular contexts generated discussion group dynamics which helped elicit the information in more natural settings, with less degree of self-censorship (as would be the case, for instance, if we were to ask clients in the presence of the TSP). These talks are likely to be less structured than in the case of interviews with municipality representatives and the choice of subjects will also be, to some extent, subject to information obtained earlier from the village and the TSP.

In the majority of cases, the interviews with the TSP/ATSPs were conducted within the premises of the field social work offices. In some cases, our respondents focused only on the interviews and during that time did not assist clients who came to the offices. Other times, they assisted their clients during our visit. This context helped us to observe (albeit in a very limited way) their interactions and ways of dealing with their clients, as well as indicating how frequented their office is by clients (in some offices we encountered a high demand, in others no client came to the office for the entire duration of our visit). At times, we asked the TSP/ATSPs to show us their 'work in the field' and accompanied them as they interacted with clients, showed us their daily routes and explained the social landscapes through their eyes (as they described to us the families/types of problems, what kinds of problems the households they were dealing with had, etc.). This proved to be a very fruitful strategy but was only used in several localities as in other localities we did not want to be seen by the clients as TSP 'colleagues' or collaborators, and instead opted for visits and discussions with clients without the presence of a TSP/ATSP.

All observations and data from the fieldwork were recorded in the form of written field notes by the researchers. De-briefing sessions at the end of every day served as a way of comparing observations and field notes from the workday. These discussions were crucial as it enabled the comparison of different perspectives and served as a springboard for greater reflexivity included in our analysis.

ethical issues in field research

The fieldwork was conducted in 22 localities. All the respondents were assured that all actual names of places and persons would be changed in order to protect their anonymity. Additionally, we have changed all the real names of localities in the report, in order to protect and respect the confidentiality with which respondents shared their perspectives with us. Thus, this research was by no means designed as a tool for monitoring the work of particular workers or how the field social work operates in particular localities.

Despite reassuring the respondents about the aims of the research, we encountered different reactions and expectations. For instance, some TSP/ATSPs and mayors interpreted our research visit as a form of checking or monitoring from the side of the IA. Others saw our assignment as a way of mapping municipalities where the field social work 'works well' and 'where it is needed' and understood our visit to be directly related to their possible future extensions. These, in turn, created certain reactions (i.e. preparing what to say, arranging things so they look 'rosier', etc.), and forms of initial mistrust and self-censorship on the side of the respondents. The reactions we encountered illustrate the surrounding insecurities and uncertainties that the field social work workers and municipalities feel towards the present and future of the field social work in Slovakia. We were often asked, simply because we were seen as being sent by the IA, if the field social work is going to continue and, if so, if it is going to be in the current format or if there will be any delay in the extension of the programme. These long-term insecurities influenced the collection of data in significant ways.

Additionally, we must acknowledge that in certain contexts we were unable to talk to people individually and the asymmetrical relations within the group discussions shaped the nature of the data collected. These forms of asymmetrical relations that shaped the interviews could be summarised as the following:

- Mayor – TSP/ATSP – this relationship and its power dynamic had a significant impact on our research. Some TSPs were clearly submissive and acted almost only with approval from the mayors
- TSP and ATSP – when interviewing the TSPs and ATSPs, we usually talked to all members of the team on site. In several localities, we also managed to talk individually with a TSP or ATSP outside of the context of the interview. This strategy has proven important as it revealed some possible tensions (or good working relationships) within the team, problems, etc., which could not be easily detected from the focus groups
- RK and TSP – some of the TSPs talked carefully about their RK for fears that the research team might pass the information on to him/her
- TSP/ATSP – Bratislava (The Implementation Agency) – when the TSP saw us as 'gentlemen from Bratislava' and feared that we might pass confidential or sensitive information on to the IA

The research team is aware of these ethical issues, which posed some inevitable limits on the data obtained in the research. Although we tried to mitigate these power factors by talking to different actors and across different contexts of their work, we are aware and reflect upon these inherent limiting factors surrounding this type of research (which could only be overcome in the case of a much longer research project).

2.

statistical analyses

This chapter explores some of the critical features of the field social work program in the period of 2007–2013, from the statistical perspective. Analysis of the available data on field social work projects primarily employed a method that correlated geographical coverage of these projects with the Atlas of Roma communities in Slovakia. The combination of these two types of databases allowed researchers to assess the focus of field social work projects in relation to levels of development/backwardness of municipalities, scale of the spatial segregation of the Roma population living in municipalities, educational profile of local Roma population, political participation of the Roma, and the like. This analysis also enabled those regions and municipalities that have failed to be identified and reached by the field social work programme to be disclosed.

short history of the field social work projects

In 2002 (Resolution no. 884 dated 21 August), the Slovak government approved funding for the Field Social Work pilot project, which was to be co-implemented by the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. In August 2002, 18 public works jobs were created (according to Act no. 91 on Employment) for TSPs (for the period August 2002 – July 2003), 40 places for ATSPs (for the period August 2002 – December 2002) and three working places for coordinators. In March 2003, there was also approved ATSP financing for the period up to March 2004. These initial pilot projects were implemented in 18 towns and villages in the Spišská Nová Ves (Letanovce, Markušovce, Rudňany, Spišská Nová Ves) district, Sabinov (Jarovnice, Krivany, Pečovská Nová Ves, Torysa) district, Prešov (Hermanovce, Svinia, Veľký Šariš) district, Vranov nad Topľou (Čičava, Hlinné, Jastrabie nad Topľou, Malá Domaša, Soľ, Žalobín) district and the Gelnica (Nálepkovo) district. These were municipalities and mayors who cooperated with the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities (ÚSVRK) and were included in the pilot Comprehensive Development Programme for Roma Settlements.

In March 2004, the time-synchronized funding for TSP and ATSP positions was secured from the budget of the Ministry of Labour (MPSVR). In 2004, 49 municipalities, 76 community social workers and five coordinators participated in the programme. An important step during this period was to promote

that social work be included in the so-called catalogue of operations (*katalóg činností*) at the Ministry of Interior. At the same time, the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities set up a working group, which, in collaboration with NGOs, drafted the *Introduction to Standards of the Field Social Work*. Since 2005, the implementers of the programme became a contributory organization of the Social Development Fund (*Fond Sociálneho Rozvoja*) established by the Ministry of Labour and financing was provided from grants by the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (ÚPSVR) for 200 TSPs, 400 ATSPs and 17 coordinators in 202 towns and villages. Since January 2006, these 202 villages continued under the new Programme of Support for Community Social Work in Municipalities (*Podpora rozvoja komunitnej sociálnej práce v obciach KSP*) with funds from the Ministry of Labour and administratively under the Social Development Fund (FSR). According with a broader consensus, policymakers wanted the field social work programme in the new EU funds programming period to switch to the European Social Fund (ESF) funding. Thus, since 2008, the field social work projects began to be implemented through a number of open calls with an allocation of almost 40 million € from ESF, specifically from the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion, Priority Axis. 2 Promoting social inclusion and Measure no. 2.1 named Promoting social inclusion of people at risk of social exclusion or socially excluded through the development of care services with special regard to marginalized Roma communities. However, the actual contracted amounts were lower. According to the table of projects that researchers received from the IA, the contracted total was (as of 23 January 2014) nearly 28 million €.

The National Project Field Social Work (NP TSP) in municipalities was launched in 2011 with an allocation of almost 30 million € which amounted to some important institutional, administrative and methodological changes in the field social work performance. The NP TSP aimed to relieve the municipality from the previous administration method and to stimulate further development and improvement of field social work. NP TSP was carried out (as of 2014) in 291 locations. The number of TSPs and ATSPs (as of 2014) was 895 people and the number of clients who received services from outreach social work reached (according to statistics kept by the IA) the number of 83,000. The total amount of contracted grants for DOP and NP TSP projects that were co-financed by the ESF in the 2007–2013 period was over 53 million €.

statistical analysis: continuity and discontinuity

Table 1: Towns and villages participating in the pilot projects (2002–2003) and their subsequent participation in the follow-up programmes of field social work (participation is indicated by gray shading)

	Region	Pilot project	KSP	DOP	NP TSP
Čičava	Prešov				
Hermanovce	Prešov				
Hlinné	Prešov				
Jarovnice	Prešov				
Jastrabie nad Topľou	Prešov				
Krivany	Prešov				
Letanovce	Košice				
Malá Domaša	Prešov				
Markušovce	Košice				
Nálepkovo	Košice				
Pečovská Nová Ves	Prešov				
Rudňany	Košice				
Soľ	Prešov				
Spišská Nová Ves	Košice				
Svinia	Prešov				
Torysa	Prešov				
Veľký Šariš	Prešov				
Žalobín	Prešov				

Table 2: Average number of field social work programmes implemented in municipalities, which implemented NP TSP (including NP TSP) by districts and regions.

	Number of municipalities (villages or towns) in NP TSP	Average number types of programmes
Banská Bystrica	**67**	**2.1**
Banská Štiavnica	1	1,0
Brezno	4	2.5
Detva	1	3.0
Krupina	3	1.3
Lučenec	14	2.1
Poltár	7	2.0
Revúca	7	1.9
Rimavská Sobota	20	2.4
Veľký Krtíš	5	1.8
Zvolen	2	3.0
Žarnovica	1	2.0
Žiar nad Hronom	2	2.5
Košice	**96**	**2.1**
Gelnica	6	2.0
Košice	2	1.5
Košice II	1	2.0
Košice mesto	1	3.0
Košice okolie	20	1.8
Michalovce	20	2.3
Rožňava	11	2.1
Sobrance	7	2.6
Spišská Nová Ves	10	3.1
Trebišov	18	1.7
Nitra	**34**	**1.9**
Komárno	9	1.7
Levice	11	1.9
Nitra	4	2.0
Nové Zámky	5	2.0
Šaľa	3	2.0
Veľký Krtíš	2	2.0
Prešov	**150**	**2.5**
Bardejov	19	2.7
Humenné	4	2.3
Kežmarok	18	2.3
Levoča	8	2.6
Medzilaborce	2	2.5
Poprad	7	2.0
Prešov	23	2.8
Sabinov	13	3.0
Snina	4	2.3
Stará Ľubovňa	12	2.4
Stropkov	12	1.9
Svidník	8	2.4
Vranov nad Topľou	20	2.8
Trenčín	**4**	**2.0**
Bánovce nad Bebravou	1	1.0
Partizánske	2	2.0
Prievidza	1	3.0
Trnava	**11**	**2.4**
Dunajská Streda	7	2.4
Galanta	3	2.0
Trnava	1	3.0
Žilina	**13**	**2.1**
Dolný Kubín	2	2.5
Liptovský Mikuláš	4	2.5
Martin	3	1.7
Námestovo	2	2.0
Ružomberok	1	2.0
Žilina	1	1.0
Total	375	2.3

In Table 1 we see the list of 18 towns and villages in which the field social work was implemented as a pilot project, in the years 2002–2003. The table clearly shows that in all these municipalities the field social work continued after the pilot project, making use of new possibilities that opened after the end of the pilot programme. This continuity, however, does not capture the fact that in individual municipalities there could be longer breaks between the end of one project and the beginning of another, nor that the projects could be terminated for various reasons (for example, due to external circumstances such as political decisions of the new local government after municipal elections). It should also be noted that the fact that a few villages from this group were not involved in NP TSP could not always automatically be considered to be a discontinuity because the NP TSP did not replace DOP everywhere – in fact, these two programmes were ongoing simultaneously.

In the following, we will analyse at the regional level the extent to which municipalities involved in NP TSP were previously involved in other programmes. To this end, we have Table 2 in which we counted all four types of programmes (2002–2006 pilots, KSP, DOP and NP TSP) and assign them to the list of municipalities that are in NP TSP. Using this method, municipalities, e. g. Jarovnice (the Prešov region), which belong to the first group of pilot sites and have participated in all three of the following types of programmes were assigned a value of 4. Whereas, for example, the Chrámec community (the Košice region), where the data indicate that NP TSP was the only type of field social work project there, reached a value of 1. A comparison of these values by regions and districts provides valuable information as to what extent the NP TSP was a new experience or rather a continuation of earlier efforts.

comparing data about the field social work with the atlas of roma communities

In the previous chapter, we described how the field social work programme gradually evolved. In the very beginning, the field social work was carried out only in a small group of villages in eastern Slovakia in the Prešov region, and to a lesser extent, in the Košice region. While a gradual increase in the volume of funds was conducive to the involvement of municipalities from other regions (except the Bratislava region) the tendency to path-dependency could contribute to the Prešov region remaining on top in terms of number of municipalities with the field social work.

In the following, we compare the data on the field social work projects with data on marginalized Roma communities that are in the Atlas of Roma Communities. This allows us to cluster the villages on the basis of certain characteristics, and compare the group, which conducted projects with groups in which the field social work projects were not implemented. This may identify any structural constraints in the programme settings, which may cause the field social work to be less available or less attractive for certain types of municipalities.

One methodological limitation (and also interesting to note) is that there are a number of municipalities in which the field social work was implemented, but which are not included in the Atlas of Roma Communities (Table 3).

Table 3: Villages and towns with field social work, which were not included in the Atlas of Roma Communities

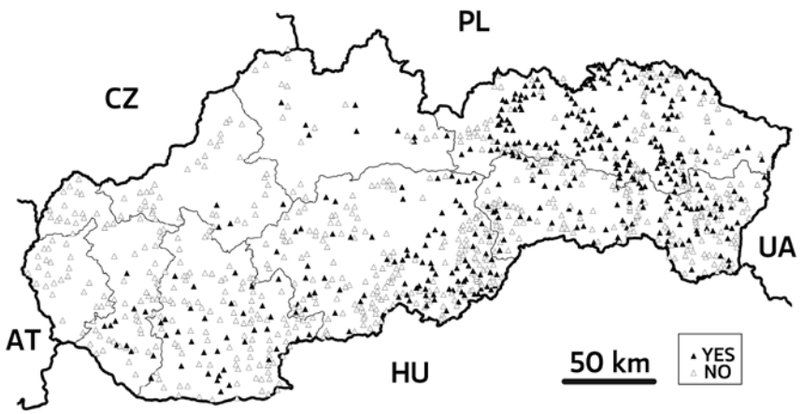
Region	Number villages /towns with field social work	Number, share and names villages/towns where field social work was implemented and which are not included in the Atlas
Banská Bystrica	98	2 (2%) Hradište, Poltár district; Utekáč, Poltár district
Košice	98	1 (1%) Ostrov, Sobrance district
Nitra	38	4 (10%) Dlhá nad Váhom, Šaľa district; Mudroňovo, Komárno district; Príbelce, Veľký Krtíš district; Vinica, Veľký Krtíš
Prešov	166	6 (4%) Kvakovce, Vranov nad Topľou district; Makovce, Stropkov district; Šandal, Stropkov district; Tisinec, Stropkov district; Vyškovce, Stropkov district; Zlaté, Bardejov district;
Trenčín	4	0 (0%)
Trnava	12	0 (0%)
Žilina	13	3 (23%) Bziny, Dolný Kubín district; Rabča, Námestovo district; Zákamenné; Námestovo district
Total	429	16 (3.7%)

Remark: Projects that were carried out in Košice's urban areas are summarized under Košice.

Whereas researchers did not collect socio-economic information about 16 villages, which are not included in the Atlas, we excluded them entirely from the following analysis. We have identified large differences in terms of the field social work performance among individual regions. It seems that there are two different types of regions in relation to how they try to solve the problems of marginalized Roma communities: While for a long time the Prešov region was at the centre of research and political interests, the issue of Roma inclusion in other regions was much less the focus of attention, for this reason, there may be less awareness of the field social work programme between municipalities, which could translate into a lower number of projects.

Marking all municipalities included in the Atlas in either grey (no field social work projects realized) or black (municipalities where the field social work was implemented), Map 1 allows us to gain a visual impression of the spatial distribution of Roma communities in general, and the communities targeted by the field social work. While the Roma-related issue tends to be perceived as an issue in eastern Slovakia, this map demonstrates that Roma are present in most regions of Slovakia. There are, however, clearly differences in regard to the reach of the field social work programmes, with a number of black and grey clusters. Yet this map includes all municipalities included in the Atlas, independent of the actual size or living conditions of the Roma community.

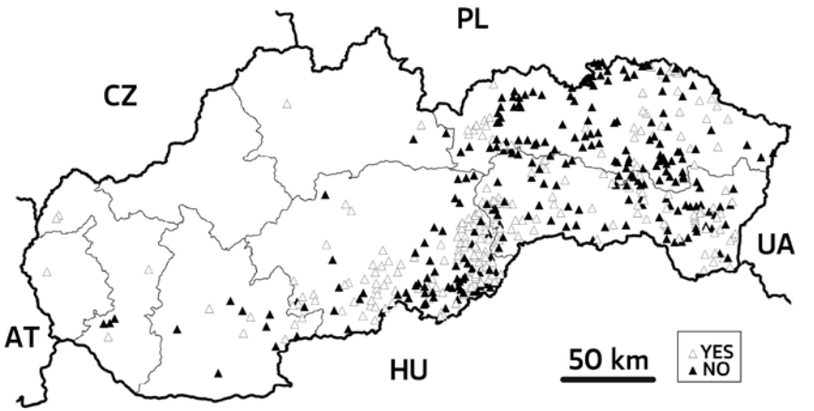
Map 1: Municipalities included in the Atlas (those with the field social work in black)



Map was prepared by Petr Kučera

In order to focus more on municipalities with significant needs, we created Map 2 where only municipalities were included, in which the share of Roma in the total population is estimated to be at least 20%.

Map 2: Municipalities included in the Atlas with Roma share to be estimated to be 20% or higher (those with field social work in black)



Map was prepared by Petr Kučera

Map 2 quite clearly shows both the general concentration of Roma in eastern and southern Slovakia and the higher reach in the northern part of these areas (the Prešov region). It can also be seen that there are also areas with a high share of 'grey' municipalities within the Prešov region (mainly in the most eastern regions and also in Poprad's surroundings).

However, looking solely at the number of municipalities included in the Atlas, it says little about the needs that are found in these localities, as there are great differences in regard to the size of the Roma communities and their socio-economic conditions. In order to learn more about this, it is highly instructive to analyse other data included in the Atlas. Comparing municipalities that were targeted by the field social work measures, with those that were not, enables us to assess to what extent the field social work was realized in places with particular needs.

which municipalities were reached? size of targeted municipalities

When analysing any numbers from either the Atlas or municipalities involved in the field social work, it is necessary to bear in mind that averages can be strongly influenced by the impact of large cities with larger total populations and relatively small Roma communities. As demonstrated in Table 4, the Atlas distinguishes between three principle types of municipalities – district towns (*okresné mestá*), towns (*mestá*) and villages (*obce*). While the average size of the local Roma populations is largest in the case of the district towns (1,635), the estimated share of the Roma is by 6% lower than in other towns (11%) and villages (24%) included in the Atlas. However, a look at the total number of Roma living in the three types of municipalities demonstrates that the question of Roma integration in Slovakia is overwhelmingly a question of rural municipalities, which are home to 63% of the Roma included in the Atlas database.

Table 5 allows us to have a look at the distribution of these types of municipalities listed in the Atlas. Here, we see that 88% of the municipalities included in the Atlas are villages. Corresponding to this, there is also a very strong focus on villages in the case of the 403 municipalities included in the Atlas, which were reached by at least one of the afore described field social work programmes. However, percent wise, the prevalence of villages is somewhat less dominant (81.8%). The reason for this difference is the stronger presence of the field social work in larger municipalities. The share of municipalities reached was more than twice as high in the case of district towns (69.7%) than in villages (34.7%). There are a number of likely explanations for this: First, the numbers show that the Roma communities in cities tend to be larger than in villages. While it might be difficult to justify the existence of a special programme, especially in the case of smaller municipalities with a relatively low number of potential clients, this is much less the case in larger municipalities. In addition to this, the research findings from some places indicated that in cities, the field social workers could also focus on other clientele than Roma, such as homeless people, who are a less common phenomena in the countryside. The third explanation to be offered are the capacities of larger municipalities, which in many cases have their own social services departments that are likely to be better informed about funding possibilities than the mayors of smaller municipalities without specialized staff.

Table 4: Types of municipalities included in the Atlas of Roma communities

	Number of inhabitants according to 2011 Census	Average from total number of inhabitants according to 2011 Census	Average from total number of Roma in municipalities	Number of Roma in municipalities total	Average from percentages share of Roma in municipality
District town	2,419,392	36,657	1,635	38,842	6
Town	405,483	7,509	719	107,929	11
Village	1141,631	1,202	270	256,039	26
Total	3,966,506*	3,707	376	402,810	24

Note*: This number represents number of inhabitants in municipalities included in the Atlas according to the 2011 Census (SODB).

Table 5: District towns, towns and villages included in the Atlas of Roma communities with field social work projects

	Number in the Atlas	Number in the Atlas with field social work projects	Share of those with field social work projects on those in the Atlas
District town	66	46	69.7%
Town	54	27	50.0%
Village	950	330	34.7%
Total	1,070	403	37.7%

When looking more in detail at Table 6, at the village type of municipalities included in the Atlas and (always in the right hand columns) involved in the field social work activities, we can also see that in this group the size of the municipality matters. Targeted municipalities have on average 244 more inhabitants than non-targeted municipalities. Interestingly, the significance of this trend differs considerably by regions. While being almost negligible in the case of the Prešov region (a difference of 174 people), the region with the smallest average size of municipalities, it is however, very important in the neighbouring Košice region (a difference of 645 people). While the average size of municipalities from this region, that are included in the Atlas is actually slightly smaller than in the case of the Prešov region, the average size of those participating in the field social work programmes is 34% larger in the Košice Region. With the exception of the Žilina region where the field social work municipalities included in the Atlas are smaller than average, similar observations can also be made in a number of other regions. However, as the total number of municipalities that are included in the Atlas and reached by the field social work is much lower than in the eastern part of Slovakia, the averages describe the situation in a much smaller number of places. One last observation to be made concerns the Banská Bystrica region, as the region with the smallest average sizes of municipalities included in the Atlas. Even though the targeted municipalities are on average also larger in this region than the average of municipalities included in the Atlas, the difference is relatively small (257 persons). This region is therefore the region with the smallest average size of municipalities with field social work.

It seems likely that the under representation of small municipalities in most regions has to do with lack of administrative capacities or insufficient access to information. However, taking a look at the last column on the right, which deals with the average share of Roma on the level of municipalities, we might pose the question if there may not also be a connection between the larger average municipality size and the higher share of Roma in the total population. Interestingly, the data does not support the posed hypothesis at all. Even though there are regional differences, the general trend is that population sizes are larger than average in municipalities with a small share of Roma and smaller in places with a larger share of Roma. One partial exception to this is the small group of municipalities where the share of Roma is higher than 80% (18 municipalities in all of Slovakia). Here, the average population sizes are higher than in the total of municipalities, yet still smaller than in the case of the municipalities with less than 10% of Roma.

Table 6: Villages and villages with field social work included in the Atlas of Roma communities: average numbers and shares of general and Roma populations.

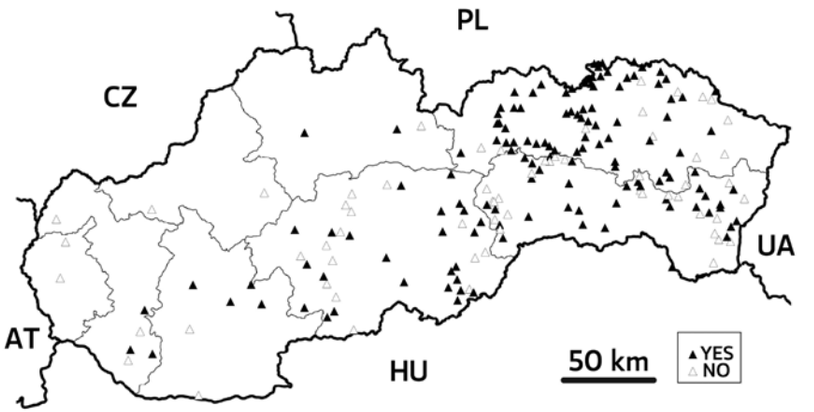
	Average number of inhabitants (only villages)		Total number of Roma in villages (according to Atlas)		Average number of Roma in villages (according to Atlas estimates)		Average share of Roma in villages (%)	
	Total villages in the Atlas	Villages with the field social work included in the Atlas	Total villages in the Atlas	Villages with the field social work included in the Atlas	Total villages in the Atlas	Villages with the field social work included in the Atlas	Total villages in the Atlas	Villages with the field social work included in the Atlas
Banská Bystrica	804	1,061	47,679	25,535	195	336	32	40
Bratislava	2,193	N/A	4,656	N/A	222	N/A	10	N/A
Košice	1,087	1,732	82,369	58,356	345	739	29	42
Nitra	1,639	2,207	20,429	8,919	172	343	12	18
Prešov	1,118	1,292	84,106	71,677	381	516	33	38
Trenčín	1,852	2,754	2,361	200	87	200	7	7
Trnava	1,875	2,516	11,806	4,100	190	683	10	22
Žilina	1,879	1,635	2,633	1,060	165	353	10	21
Total	1,202	1,446	256,039	169,847	270	515	26	37

segregation and underdevelopment of communities with the field social work

The Atlas distinguishes between various types of Roma settlements according to the degree of physical integration or segregation. As there are many municipalities where part of the Roma live among the majority population and other parts in settlements with varying degrees of physical separation, it is possible to estimate the number of Roma living in different types of locations reached by the field social work on the basis of percentages of people living in the four different types of locations provided in the Atlas in combination with data on targeted municipalities. As in the case of the earlier calculations, in the following, we will only focus on rural municipalities (*obce*), which constitute the overwhelming majority of targeted municipalities. The provided estimates of 'people reached' has the character of a mathematical indicator for the presence of the field social work in various parts of Slovakia. In this case, being reached is not defined as having entered a formal proceeding with the field social workers, which would lead to the creation of a 'case', but simply as Roma living in a municipality where the field social work has been realized within at least one of the four previously introduced programmes. We might therefore talk of potential beneficiaries or members of targeted communities.

Segregation is also the leitmotif in Map 3, which depicts municipalities that are included in the Atlas and where at least 20% of the local Roma population are living in segregated settlements. As in the maps shown earlier, municipalities reached by the field social work programmes are marked in black whereas the other municipalities are marked in grey. The map shows one well-known fact: The concentration of these settlements is largest in the case of eastern Slovakia (Spiš and Šariš regions and the surroundings of Košice). However, there are also important clusters outside of this area, for example in Gemer and in the surroundings of Zvolen and Banská Bystrica. While the situation differs from region to region, in most of these less-known and less-studied areas the share of municipalities with the field social work programmes is lower than in Šariš or Spiš.

Map 3: Municipalities included in the Atlas of Roma communities, where at least 20% of population live in segregated settlements, with and without field social work



Map was prepared by Petr Kučera

differences in technical infrastructure and access to basic services

Differences of the technical infrastructure and access to basic services, such as clean water, are another important indicator for the living conditions in a given municipality. In the following, we will compare targeted and non-targeted rural municipalities in regard to a number of technical indicators included in the Atlas. Please note that average values were calculated as averages of values of municipalities and not weighted by population sizes. Therefore, the total averages do not describe the total Slovak Roma population (or the total population of municipalities reached by field social work), but the 'average situation' in the targeted municipalities. While it would require analysing this data on the regional level in order to interpret the findings properly, the comparison of municipalities with and without field social work clearly indicate that field social work is targeting communities where infrastructure is less developed and needs are therefore likely to be greater than in the average municipalities included in the Atlas.

Table 7: Infrastructure provision in municipalities included in the Atlas of Roma communities with and without field social work

	Average from % share of dwellings in municipality without access to running water?	Average from % share of dwellings in municipality can be connected to electricity?	Average from % share of dwellings in municipality actually connected to electricity?	Average from % Proportion of municipality covered by public lighting?	Average from % share of dwellings in municipality that use "kuka" or "bobor" containers for garbage collection?
Municipalities with FSW	1.6	99.5	97.5	98.2	87.1
Municipalities without FSW	0.6	99.9	98.9	98.7	94.1
Total	0.9	99.7	98.4	98.5	91.6

Table 8: Educational profile of Roma population – municipalities included in the Atlas of Roma communities with and without field social work

	Sum from number of Roma in municipality total	Sum (and % from Roma total) from how many Roma in municipality did not finish elementary school		Number (and % from Roma total) from how many Roma in municipality attended special school		Sum (and %) from how many Roma in municipality finished University		Sum (and %) from how many Roma in municipality attend University		Sum (and %) from how many Roma in municipality finished secondary school	
With FSW	286,610	50,554	17.6%	386	0.1%	504	0.2%	332	0.1%	15,894	5.6%
Without FSW	116,200	17,764	15.3%	650	0.6%	222	0.2%	154	0.1%	7,340	6.3%
Total	402,810	68,318	17.0 %	1,036	0.3%	726	0.2%	486	0.1%	23,234	5.8%
Only rural municipalities (villages):											
With FSW	169,847	35,836	21.1%	328	0.2%	212	0.1%	135	0.1%	7,735	4.6%
Without FSW	86,192	14,970	17.4%	613	0.7%	149	0.2%	113	0.1%	5,602	6.5%
Total	256,039	50,806	19.8%	941	0.4%	361	0.1%	248	0.1%	13,337	5.2%

educational profile of targeted roma population

The above-formulated hypothesis, according to which the field social work projects tend to target localities with greater-than-average needs, is also supported by a comparison of the educational profiles of the Roma population in targeted and non-targeted municipalities, which is summarized for all municipalities (including towns and district towns). In Table 8 there was, for example, a slightly higher share of Roma without any educational degree in municipalities with the field social work whereas the share of Roma with a secondary education, was slightly lower. However, these differences are not very significant. The proper targeting is more evident when focusing only on the rural municipalities (in the lower part of the table). Not surprisingly, in view of the results in regard to segregation and access to technical infrastructure presented above, which indicated that targeted rural municipalities are on average less developed than non-targeted ones, we see that these differences are also mirrored in the educational profile of the targeted population. As the programme's reach is higher in the case of urban municipalities, where Roma on average tend to be more educated than in rural municipalities, this effect gets somewhat lost when focusing on urban and rural municipalities alike. However, we need to keep in mind that in many cases the field social work in urban communities will not focus on the entire Roma population, but often on inhabitants of segregated urban localities (such as Luník IX in Košice) or even focus on other types of vulnerable populations (e.g. homeless people).

municipalities which were omitted

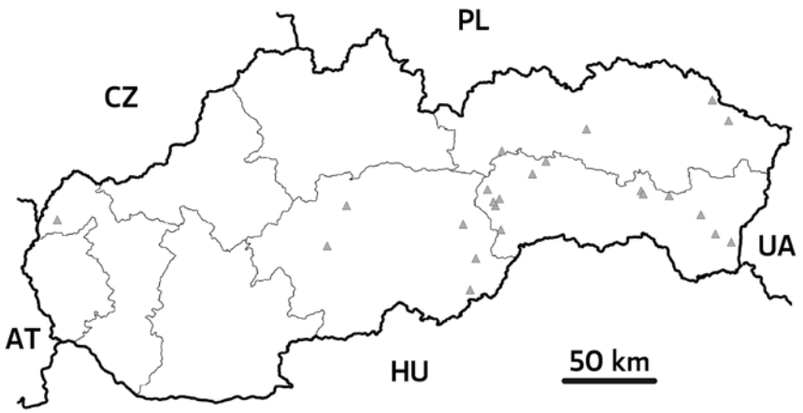
We have in our analysis hitherto identified two important facts: Firstly, the programme does focus on communities where Roma tend to be more vulnerable than on the average of municipalities where Roma live. Secondly, there are significant regional differences concerning the accessibility of the field social work. While a very high share of municipalities were reached in the Prešov region, the outreach was much less complete in the Košice and the Banská Bystrica regions, which are also regions with a high number of Roma living in segregated settlements. While the combination of information provided above allowed an idea to be reached about the location of places with needs that

have failed to be identified and reached by the field social work programme, in the following we will deal with this question more explicitly. We selected municipalities without field social work programmes with the following features: Estimated share of Roma higher than 30%; More than 50 Roma living in segregated settlements.

Using these indicators as filters in our combined table with data on projects and municipalities, we can produce a map of localities that were not reached by the field social work, even though the data implies that it is likely that there will be issues that could be addressed by social work. It needs to be stressed that the resulting list and its visualization in the form of a map should under no circumstances be interpreted as a definitive list, but should be understood as a guideline in which directions research and outreach (e.g. information seminars, inviting mayors to visit municipalities using the field social work) could be realized.

The visualization of these results in the form of Map 4 allows us to identify a number of areas that might be perceived as being particularly prone to be overlooked. While we might recognize some concentrations (e.g. east of Košice, south of Dobšiná, around Banská Bystrica and Zvolen) it is also clear that the issue of unreached communities is not limited to one particular region.

Map 4: Municipalities with segregated communities without field social work



Map was prepared by Petr Kučera

political participation of roma and presence of other roma-targeted interventions in municipalities with field social work

While our analysis in this chapter focused mostly around the question of appropriate targeting, in the last part of this chapter we will deal with two characteristics of the places that were actually targeted. First, we are interested in the participation of Roma in local politics. Table 9 allows us to compare the field social work municipalities with other municipalities in the Atlas, in relation to indicators related to political participation. In general, it is possible to say that in the municipalities participating in the field social work programmes, Roma tend to have a more active role in local politics than is the case in municipalities without such programmes. However, it seems likely that this result is influenced by the size of local Roma populations, which tend to be larger than in municipalities without the field social work programmes.[1]

The second issue is the co-existence of the field social work with other Roma-targeting initiatives, such as community centres. As has been outlined in other sections of this text, the embeddedness of the field social work in larger and long-lasting development schemes can be crucial if the work of the social workers should bring lasting results. At the same time, however, parallel efforts can also lead to disruptions, such as competition for staff or clients. Table 10 offers an overview about which community institutions and activities were identified in various municipalities with and without field social work.

1 We realize that this analysis is somewhat schematic and has several weaknesses. For example, it ignores the specific election periods when the political situation in the villages could vary significantly. The table does not reflect real patterns of political power in the villages, instead it simply compares numbers. This issue deserves more qualitative research.

Table 9: Political activities in municipalities included in the Atlas of Roma communities with and without field social work

	Total Number of municipalities	With Roma deputies	With Roma mayors	In the past (since 1990) with Roma deputies	In the past (since 1990) with Roma mayors	With commissions for Roma issues	Where Roma participate in these commissions	With Roma self-government
Municipalities with field social work	403	116	20	175	18	134	134	65
Municipalities without field social work	667	83	8	164	9	111	111	38
Total	1,070	199	28	339	27	245	245	103

Table 10: Community activities in municipalities included in the Atlas of Roma communities with and without field social work

	Number of municipalities	Presence of community centre	Presence of launderette/ hygienic centre	Working launderette/ hygienic centre	Presence of parish community centre	Working parish community centre	Presence of NGOs	Presence of NGOs working with Roma
Banská Bytrica	**266**	**31**	**20**	**20**	**17**	**16**	**215**	**47**
With FSW	92	24	17	17	12	12	85	30
Without FSW	174	7	3	3	5	4	130	17
Bratislava	**27**		**1**	**1**	**3**	**3**	**20**	**5**
Without FSW	27		1	1	3	3	20	5
Košice	**256**	**29**	**13**	**13**	**16**	**16**	**165**	**84**
With FSW	94	21	11	11	12	12	74	54
Without FSW	162	8	2	2	4	4	91	30
Nitra	**134**	**12**	**5**	**5**	**6**	**6**	**74**	**38**
With FSW	34	7	2	2	3	3	19	13
Without FSW	100	5	3	3	3	3	55	25
Prešov	**243**	**37**	**16**	**16**	**18**	**19**	**115**	**67**
With FSW	159	35	13	13	15	16	92	57
Without FSW	84	2	3	3	3	3	23	10
Trenčín	**41**	**7**	**1**	**1**	**9**	**8**	**22**	**5**
With FSW	4	2	1	1	2	2	4	1
Without FSW	37	5			7	6	18	4
Trnava	**76**	**5**	**5**	**5**	**7**	**7**	**65**	**31**
With FSW	11	3	1	1	4	4	11	9
Without FSW	65	2	4	4	3	3	54	22
Žilina	**27**	**6**	**5**	**5**	**7**	**7**	**25**	**7**
With FSW	9	5	4	4	5	5	9	4
Without FSW	18	1	1	1	2	2	16	3
Total	1,070	127	66	66	83	82	701	284

conclusion

The analysis of the territorial distribution of the field social work throughout the territory of Slovakia revealed a number of important facts. While the projects were relatively successful in targeting municipalities with the most vulnerable communities, there were significant differences between regions. The strong focus on the Prešov Region (overproportional concentration of projects) seems to be partly caused by the programme's history, which gradually emerged out of a pilot project implemented in eastern Slovakia. As some later calls for proposals (in 2008–2010) were open only to municipalities that had already benefited from the field social work at an earlier point, this *path dependency* seems to have resulted in a concentration of projects in the Prešov region. It seems likely that the factors influencing the selection were also soft factors, such as an awareness about availability of grants for field social work among mayors or a deeper knowledge of certain regions from the prism of Bratislava-based administrators. While on the one hand, unequal distribution of projects throughout the territory of Slovakia may be considered problematic, on the other hand it may be considered good for the sustainability of projects and field social work as such. The identification of regions that were not sufficiently covered in previous years should hence be considered a signal for which regions to direct new projects.

3.

typology and hierarchies within the field social work structures

One of the key characteristics of the field social work is that its operating structures were created and institutionalised since early in the year 2000. Although there have been great fluctuations of employees at all levels of its structure, ranging from the top positions in Bratislava to the ATSP positions, one can observe certain typical trajectories accompanying the institutionalisation of this particular field. This went hand in hand with a transforming vision of what social work consists of. This was also related to the efforts of creating a better level of more 'professional' services. These career trajectories were developed and underwent particular transformations in relation to how the whole social work field developed and became institutionalised. These institutional changes within the given social field entailed changing criteria and regulations, changing project structures, interruptions in projects over a period of time and uncertainties caused by new programming periods, as well as redefined qualification criteria over the scope of the last decade. Additionally, the trajectories and profiles of the TSPs and ATSPs have also changed in relation to the development of various educational programmes educating new generations of social workers, some of who found employment within the field social work structures. We believe that by reconstructing different main and recurring trajectories of the TSP/ATSPs, the reader will be able to acquire a better understanding of the practices and performance of the TSP/ATSP's work, of the shifts occurring over the period of their work, and crucially also of the dispositions that TSP/ATSPs acquired in their previous jobs and are a result of their social standing, which then in turn, incline them to see and act in particular ways in their work (Bourdieu, P., 1993).

At the beginning, we shall also clarify that we are more interested in presenting 'typical' trajectories consisting of some recurrently observed features but which are not exact copies of very specific, individual trajectories. Here we are more interested in outlining some typical trajectories based on a sum of convergent factors and features (often derived from different individuals). As such, this model focuses more on the similarities and shared traits than on differences and divergent trends. For practical reasons we will take each central category within the field social work structures and discuss different trajectories of becoming and being a RK, TSP and ATSP.

field social workers (tsps)

There is a wide range of Field Social Workers (TSP) who differ significantly in terms of their social trajectories, professional experience, age, ethnicity or class. At the moment, due to the official minimal educational requirements, all TSPs should have a University degree. However, not all of them have obtained this degree through specialised Social Work studies. Many others have obtained a specialised degree in Social Work or closely related disciplines at one of the booming University programmes in Slovakia. Many TSPs worked in different fields prior to getting the TSP jobs and only then switched their specialisation, and possibly obtained further education in the field of social work. It has been one of the challenges for the leadership and management of the field social work programme in Bratislava to create sets of standards through which they try to more closely define what is and what is not field social work and how the work should be delivered to clients. We have observed a significant development among the TSPs towards the standardisation of their work, with many of them being keen to learn more about field social work in order to help them to enhance and professionalise their work practices. At the same time, we have also observed some important differences in terms of the attitudes and dispositions towards their work and clients derived from their previous social trajectories, intellectual-cum-educational formation and other factors.

In general, we have divided TSPs into two categories:

- Good Slovak mothers with job insecurity (frequently combining the following mixture of characteristics: good Christian women, socially conscious and compassionate, unemployed or with difficulties in finding a job in their previous careers and educational paths, middle-aged mothers with grown-up children, willing to commit themselves to start studying social/community work)
- Young professionals (mostly [but not exclusively] originating from the locality or its surrounding; with university degrees; predominantly non-Roma).

'good slovak mothers' (tsps)

The title reflects particular characteristics and traits accompanying the trajectory and dispositions of the TSPs under this term. We have intentionally chosen the title to simultaneously express that most of these TSPs are predominantly middle-aged women (from mid-30 s to 50 s). Their ways of becoming TSP workers were marked by a previously interrupted social trajectory. In most cases, these women worked for many years in stable jobs until these disappeared and/or they were made redundant. Many of these women found themselves in rather an unusually precarious situation of unemployment, or temporary positions and in general struggled to get a job locally or at least close to their homes. Most of these women are either from the locality where they work (as a TSP) or live in the surrounding localities. While some of them could be described as finding their new vocation in the TSP job, others have (at least initially) perceived it as a good opportunity for local work. This has especially been the case in smaller towns and villages that are in regions with a high level of unemployment.

Most of these workers did not have direct experience with working in the area of social work prior to their TSP jobs, though many would be often described by others as having 'social feelings' ('*sociálne cítenie*'). There were several TSPs who have degrees from non-related subjects but have been involved in various charity activities in the past (often organised by various churches) or even active members of churches. As such, they themselves see their TSP jobs only as a formal expression of what they have always possessed and were seen as always having 'social feelings'. This was also evidenced by remarking that without this disposition, "I would not be able to do this [heavy/demanding] job." The difficulties of the job was often presented as and contrasted with, the dominant society's contempt for working with Roma groups, in what was perceived as a problematic group and risky and dangerous conditions. The working conditions were often seen as challenging in regard to their dealing 'with Gypsies' – who in Slovakia still continue to be perceived as 'troublemaking' and 'unruly'. It was also related to the perception of working in the field, which is frequently stereotypically imagined as 'dirty'. This could be illustrated in the frequently heard remark among the dominant non-Roma populations: "Be careful not to catch something over there" (i.e. among the Roma). Therefore, to some extent, their dedication to work was presented as hard work, full of hardship and difficulties but still worth making the personal sacrifice. Some of these virtues were influenced by the ethical values shaped by their upbringing, previous social trajectories and church membership.

Many of these TSPs lost the jobs they previously held and struggled to find new opportunities in their fields. Thus, in the search for work in localities where job opportunities have become scarce, they often applied for and started to be interested in working as a TSP. Their previously obtained University degree, albeit often from completely different subjects, helped them in their TSP job applications. An alternative trajectory to the TSP work was that of having a previous history of working for a local municipality or similar bureaucratic institution. Based on their experience, defined differently and ranging from 'working with people' to 'working here at the municipality for many years', these TSPs were often selected. None of these experiences necessarily implied any work with the TSP target groups. These TSPs were often selected in the earlier periods of TSP since the competition for TSP positions has changed in recent years with the arrival of new generations of graduates from the University programmes in Social Work. Additionally, some of the earlier generation of TSPs were helped in getting their job positions by particular forms of social connection or support from local political elites (for example, mayors).

The selection process does not necessarily have a direct correlation to the actual performance of work. In fact, many of these TSPs often embarked on creating TSP in localities with enthusiastic drive despite their own initial lack of training and limited resources and support. Many of them started to work as a TSP and within a few years also applied and started to study social work or a closely related field of study at universities. Their motivations for studying were driven either by their own interests or by their worry that increasing qualification requirements might lead to them losing their jobs, or a mixture of these two reasons. Regardless of the motivations, the decision and perseverance to study meant some personal sacrifices in terms of balancing the family and work, financial costs and emotional investment in the study. Additionally, for many of these TSPs, returning to study a completely different field of specialisation after long periods of only working, proved to be particularly challenging. Their efforts to obtain a University degree further reinforced their perception of sacrificing and investing a lot in a job, which often did not give them long-term security and for which they were not gaining much public

recognition (for example, from the general public or the mayor and municipality employees). Uncertainty about their future at work in relation to TSP programmes continuing, further accentuated feelings that they have invested so much professionally and personally – created a web of relations with clients, studied at the expense of their own family relationships, and tried to do their work in the most professional manner but to no avail and with no recognition.

Their initial lack of training and experience in the field of social work often translated into practices led by their 'intuition' and/or self-educated understanding of social work and clients. Some of them 'started from scratch' and through various trainings (often held in previous periods of field social work) and RK supervision, developed their practice and obtained experience over the years. In their practice, some of them would be propelled to act through their unique personalities combining a mixture of sympathy and empathy with their clients and yet frequently, also patronizing tones in their everyday work. This is also why we have chosen to use the figure of 'good Slovak mothers' since their attitudes could be often compared to the motherly figures who are trying to raise their problematic children with a mixture of discipline and devoted caring. Their attitudes were also influenced by what some of them often perceived as minimal positive change. Also, the lack of gratitude among their clients, or their frequent breach of mutual agreement (for instance, assisting the clients with sorting out paperwork with institutions – clients not showing up to the agreed meetings and later on providing an excuse deemed a 'lame excuse' in the eyes of the TSP) led some of the TSPs to develop certain opinions about clients, which in turn reflected in their attitudes. Some of them saw their work as continuously helping the clients, but the perceived demands and requests for help from the clients' side, also brought some of them to suggest that, "They [the clients] are too spoiled now. They are too used to us 'helping them' or 'they expect us to help with everything.'" For some, this perception underlined the type of attitude and characteristic 'way of thinking' of their clients who were seen as dependent, ungrateful, and using the services without putting in enough effort themselves. Another specific expression encapsulating these feelings was that, "Waiting for a thank you would be a waste of time… well, some do thank you but most of them don't." For other TSPs, these perceptions of 'being spoiled' or the 'dependency' of clients on their services further accentuated their worry about the insecure future of this form of assistance and, "Where will these people go when we won't be here?" The latter perspective was also indicative of the larger attitude of 'helping' and seeing this as a devoted, if thankless, mission (not doing it for the sake of gratitude from the clients but deeply believing that their commitment to 'doing good' is helpful in a more general sense) despite the perceived lack of responses and acknowledgement from the side of clients and institutions (thus feeding into the narrative of sacrificing as described above).

young professionals (tsps)

This category of young professionals consisted mostly of a young generation whose educational formation and previous (rather short) working experience comes from the field of Social and Community work and ones that are closely related to it. The age of 'young professionals' TSPs would range from their mid-twenties up to mid-thirties. They frequently come from the locality where the TSP work takes place. Some of them came straight to the TSP job from their University education and others with some previous experience of working in the social services field or pastoral care. However, in contrast to the 'Good Slovak Mothers' category, more of the young professionals commute to work from nearby localities. This category also includes a greater amount of young Roma who are completing their studies or who have previously worked as an ATSP or in different social and community projects.

Unlike the 'Good Slovak Mothers' their skills and personalities tended to be more influenced by the educational formation they obtained through their professional and study careers. They would certainly see this as a positive feature and themselves as more professionally trained than other TSPs without such education. Although, as pointed out by many TSPs, ATSPs or RKs, 'theory is one thing and practice another'. Many of these young professionals acknowledged that their formal university degree did not prepare them for the everyday practice of working with the TSP clients. As one TSP with previous work experience with seniors remarked, the change and challenges of the TSP were rather radical since the clients and problems 'they dealt with were completely different' (e.g. from their previous experience and theoretical knowledge).

Although the young professional figure displayed greater theoretical knowledge in the field of social work, they were not resistant to some prejudices

or patronizing ways of treating clients (not unlike the 'good Slovak mothers'). Some long-serving TSPs from the 'good Slovak mothers' category often pointed out a fear that increasingly selective criteria (i.e. such as a possibility of the only criteria being a degree in specialised social work to be eligible for the TSP work) might disqualify them vis-a-vis the increasing competition from newly graduating Social Workers. At the same time, the older TSPs saw these as lacking the most important and crucial thing, which is the 'practical knowledge' obtained in their work.

assistant field social workers (atsps)

In contrast to the TSPs, most ATSPs do not have to comply with the same requirements regarding the level of education achieved and have a lower salary. These factors also influence the possible candidates and the current ATSPs and their role. However, these factors do not have any direct correlation with the level of professionalism and work performance. In some concrete cases, it was the ATSP whose work would display a greater level of trust when working with clients, or had even greater practical skills than the TSP. Thus, the relationship between the ATSP and the TSP was not always defined by greater experience but primarily by the educational level they had achieved.

We choose to broadly identify two categories of ATSP:

- Young Roma on the 'social move' (aspiring and desiring upward social mobility)
- Local non-Roma (with particular trajectories and connections to the local municipalities)

We will now turn to each of these categories one by one.

young roma on the social rise/move (atsps)

This subcategory has been largely formed by a number of young Roma who we describe as being 'on the move' or 'on the social rise'. Often, these are young Roma who have finished high school and frequently continue with University degrees or start working in order to save some money or decide about their futures. As such, they are in the process of transition and on the move. This category of people often come from more established members of Roma groups and are seen as on the rise.

They are frequently among the first Roma who finish high school and aspire to continue their education with University studies. One of their life projects is to find a secure and well-paid job, which would allow them to support themselves and/or their families. This category of ATSP can also be in relation to broader changes in Slovak society where we can witness a relatively small but still increasing number of young Roma completing high school and entering higher education institutions, despite their disadvantaged position in society and pervasive stigmatisation. This young generation of Roma emerged on the labour market in the last decade or so. Many of them study at Universities (most of them in the field of Social and Community Work). We can observe that there are potentially more and more qualified Roma who have applied for the jobs of ATSP/TSP (of course, there is still a structural asymmetry in relation to the number of dominant non-Roma Slovaks).

Considering some gender roles, many young Roma men end up leaving these jobs as they are usually not well-paid and cannot adequately support young families. Some try to get TSP positions but others search for other opportunities. In many cases, being an ATSP works only as a 'steppingstone' or 'transitory' position through which they achieve specific experience but do not appear to be attractive enough to keep them in the long-term. They often complain that these are not well-paid jobs. For most of them the most significant factor for leaving their jobs is finding better opportunities elsewhere. These new job prospects might be either in the field of social and community work or in non-related career opportunities with better incomes, allowing them to economically support their families and gain more recognition from their Roma and non-Roma relatives. From their perspectives, ATSP jobs are good but ultimately (mainly financially) not 'good enough' and in practice end up being more like 'transitory steps' (especially in the context of young individuals with hopes of having children, building a house/buying a flat, buying a car, etc.). The job can provide a symbolic recognition in the sense that they can be seen as having a 'good job', which they gained due to his/her 'intelligence' or 'study achievements'. The jobs are also seen as having practical advantages. One is

usually 'working at home' (or close to home) – in the same locality they reside in. The ATSP jobs are also seen as 'a not too difficult job' in contrast to other exploited and physically demanding jobs they can compare with to their peers. These views refer exclusively to the physical and practical aspects of work since many ATSPs and TSPs often noted how difficult (psychologically) their work is.

Thus, for many of them, an ATSP represents a rather short-term job commitment in their own life transitionary period and they do not necessarily associate their long-term future with being an ATSP. At the same time, some of the young ATSPs are highly dedicated and continue with their studies in the area of social work in order to continue with their work, increasing their qualifications and possibly hoping that in the long-term they can become a TSP or see an increase in their salaries.

An important aspect of their position as a Roma ATSP is their ethnicity in relation to the performance of work. This can be seen simultaneously as positive or negative (by themselves and by others). On one hand, some of them see it as an important aspect in gaining the trust of clients, as well as enhancing their practical understanding of the clients' situation. Some ATSPs expressed a view that ethnicity can play an important role in eliciting a specific type of more trusting relationship. While this has been a common perception, the researchers cannot empirically verify the extent of this claim through the data collected during the field research. It seems that while in many cases this can facilitate access and trust from the side of clients, there can be also other negative aspects stemming from the clients' perception of mistrust about Roma ATSPs and preferring non-Roma TSPs/ATSPs (for various reasons ranging from accusations of 'being big-headed' to 'thinking too much'. Sometimes the young Roma ATSPs feel that they are doing more practical work in the field than the TSP who assigns them the tasks. In other words, they felt that they were asked to go to the field (*do terénu*) more than some of their direct TSP superiors. At times, these feelings could also resonate with, and reinforce, ethnicized perceptions that unlike the non-Roma or non-local TSP they know the clients and local 'terrain' of social relations much better than the TSP. For some, this can lead to feelings that they are working harder, or that – despite their knowledge, which is crucial for the successful work performance of the whole team – they are paid less. A good example of this can be the remarks of one Roma ATSP: "We know all the people and where they live. You know how they often have different nicknames rather than their official names. Without us, they [the non-Roma TSP] would be helpless (*"odstavený"*), but still it's them who get more money than us."

On the other hand, their ethnicity does not necessarily help their work in a practical way. Some of the ATSPs do not have any contacts to the community of clients. Also, some of them do not speak the first language of clients despite sharing the same ethnicity. This can relate to the fact that they are from different localities or relate to the class positionality in which they see themselves. The absence of spoken Romani and their lack of local contacts (if they do not come from the same locality) in some instances lead to criticism from the side of the clients. At times, these ATSPs were accused of being arrogant or that they were alienated from the lives of the poor (and/or) Roma. Some clients would perceive them as conceited and think 'too highly of themselves'. These critical comments were often articulated when the Roma ATSP refused to speak Romani with the clients (despite their knowledge) and instead insisted on speaking Slovak. Alternatively, some clients perceived some of the Roma ATSPs as informing on them to the non-Roma authorities and this act of betrayal was seen as more significant, precisely because of the assumed shared moral economy/solidarity stemming from their shared Roma ethnicity.

local non-roma (atsps)

This category included non-Roma women and men who were either young or middle-aged without required specialised qualifications (but with high-school completed and/or studying/thinking about studying for University degrees). They entered these jobs after a period of unemployment when they lost their previous jobs (in the case of the middle-aged women) or after finishing high school. Some women leave the ATSP position for better paid jobs or for personal reasons, leading them to search for other job opportunities or follow their partners to different locations.

Men in this category are middle-aged or older and generally have a technical education – under the previous regime they completed secondary education (for instance, in the field of agriculture), began working in a local industry (for example, in the wood processing industry) or in a related production of

an agricultural cooperative (*pridružená výroba JRD*) and could be in a middle management position. They obtained the ATSP position after a shorter or longer period of unemployment that followed when the local factory or cooperative, in which they worked went bankrupt in the 1990 s. These men may slightly damage the stereotypical image of 'manly' ways of working and being in rural areas, by having intellectual interests. Although as technical staff they had no direct work experience with social work, in their previous job positions they directly interacted with people in different ways. As one respondent said: "I always helped people in my surroundings with various documents, or in handling administrative matters or otherwise." This category of men initially perceived an ATSP post as temporary and transient and not necessarily associated with his future. Some might expect that they will be offered a better opportunity in their original profession, or expect that the local economy will revitalize, that some foreign investor, who will restore the agricultural cooperative is coming and the like. But it turned out that such hopes were rather illusions in the context of the continuous lack of job opportunities in the location they lived in. What originally started as temporary work, became a longer-term commitment to them.

The older ATSPs do not have the same aspirations as the young ATSPs both in terms of moving elsewhere/on with their lives. They are placed at concrete points in their lives. Often, they already have families who reside locally or for whom they need to help and care about. The ATSP represents a very good opportunity to work locally. For many of them, especially in the more marginalised regions of Slovakia, the ATSP position appeared as a great opportunity considering the difficulties in finding other jobs on a labour market in crisis, where they have the additional disadvantage of their age. The older ATSPs also tend to stay in the position longer and would like to continue with their work.

Many of them do not have any previous educational or work experience working with the clients or in the field of social and community work. They are in need of work and are willing to work and to learn more. Although many of them become skilled or dedicated to their work after starting the job, many of them do not enter these jobs due to their professional merits. One of the key characteristics of this group was that they are from the region or the same locality, and they often have some connections to the mayor, some other members of the municipality or powerful local residents.

This category of ATSP seemed to be the least prepared for working with the usual TSP clients. Many of them did not have any previous experience or training, which would challenge their perceptions of the clients as particularly problematic. However, their understanding of the specifications of their job tasks and interactions with clients were often filtered from their previous understanding of Roma and/or socially marginalised clients, which often reflected widespread prejudices and forms of negative essentialism dominating Slovak public discourses.

regional coordinators (rks): 'catalysts of change'

The category of RK represents a very different group from the TSP/ATSP in terms of their previous professional trajectories. They are also rather diverse in terms of their backgrounds (including Roma/non-Roma, men and women, urban/rural residents). Despite this diversity, what seems to be the unifying thread cutting across this difference is their previous engagement with Roma and human rights' issues and consequently, their profile of people who were among the first to work within the emerging institutional structures that worked with Roma (be these non-Roma or Roma). Prior to entering the TSP networks, most of the present RK already had diverse experience from working in the fields of 'Roma', development, social and community work with marginalised communities, or human rights' activism. There are currently several RK who have worked (though at times with some interruptions) in the field social work projects since its beginnings, in early 2000. Some of the RK had previous experience working as a TSP. These forms of involvement were carried out either in state or non-governmental sectors. Some of them first began working in various projects in relation to the Czech and Slovak NGOs. There were various projects, which started to enter the central and eastern Slovak regions throughout the late 1990 s and the first decade of 2000.

Thus, their experiences were first shaped by these encounters and learning within this 'culture'. For instance, some used to work with the former Plenipotentiary or some of the NGOs which established the first projects with Roma. Some of the RKs participated in various trainings organised by NGOs and state institutions from Bratislava and/or regional city centres. Along with their

practical work with social and community work related issues, their encounters with this particular NGO and human/Roma rights' organisational culture shaped their perceptions and understanding of field social work. Additionally, many of the RK started and finished their education in the field, which theoretically contributed to additional forms of understanding derived from their studies. One element of the NGO culture would be characterised by fairly familiar relationships with the Bratislava-based coordinators and with the TSP/ATSP. Many RK forged and envisioned their relationship as somehow more 'egalitarian' (in contrast to other workplaces) than in the traditional hierarchical job settings. Despite the shared tendencies, even within this category of RKs, there existed some significant differences and internal hierarchisation reflecting their individual trajectories and other important factors (such as their education, age, gender, ethnicity, rural/urban background and others).

Another important feature of the RK category is that their selection was based on their previous experiences and also on their assumed knowledge of 'knowing the problematic well' in a particular region. However, knowledge of the problematic did not necessary mean expertise in social and community work and some of the current RKs were only learning social and community work principles during their work as RK. The RK operates as a kind of bridge and extended hand of Bratislava coordinators and the TSP/ATSPs. One can see their location as being in-between the centre in Bratislava and the local TSPs in their region. This often puts them in an ambiguous position in which they were expected to know a lot about the decisions and proceedings in Bratislava centre from the side of the TSP/ATSP (but which was not always the case). It also seemed that not all RKs were equally connected to the Bratislava centres. It appeared that some had better relationships than others, as well as some having more formal and informal information than others.

One of the underlining features of their work is the perception of working as some kind of 'pioneers' in the process of professionalising and institutionalising the TSP/ATSPs, while also manoeuvring within the changing and project-based/limited terrains of the still forming field of social and community work in Slovakia, with regard to the Roma. Being among the first pioneers and having often had to change various jobs in relation to different projects, the RKs not only have certain long-term perspectives but also can be characterised as 'catalysts of change' in which they persevere in the field. Similar to TSP/ATSP jobs, however, their recent job trajectories are marked by interruptions. For instance, some of the RKs were originally RKs around 2006–07, lost their jobs after the RK positions were cancelled in the following period, and again re-applied and continued to work as RKs in the most recent programming period.

The RK positions differ greatly from the ones of the TSP and ATSP. Their previous experience and relative autonomy from the local municipalities' power structures, tend to predispose them to more critical views about local politics regarding Roma and socially marginalised groups in general. For instance, they often challenge the mayors or the local TSP/ATSP practices if they feel that there are some problems. Interestingly, the RK position, views and trajectory often contrast with some of the local mayors' perceptions. This can be illustrated with one mayor's remark. When asked his opinion about the RK's work and his interactions with him, he noted: "He is a nice guy. We don't have any problems. He is very 'diligent' ("*usilovný*")… [ironically] perhaps too diligent for my taste." This position illustrates a potential clash of different perspectives but also ways of communication and interfering. This relates to the perception of some mayors seeing the RK as not having practical knowledge or familiarity with everyday problems in localities or as being too idealistic or 'unrealistic' in their demands. At times, the relationship between mayors and RKs was also related to gender, ethnicity, age and urban/rural categorisations.

Over time, the RKs developed a different relationship with the Bratislava based project managers and leadership of the IA. Interestingly, some of the RKs have a very good relationship with the Bratislava staff due to their shared complicity and the similarity of their dispositions, acquired within a particular field of the organisations and institutions which work on similar issues. In fact, one could argue that they are the products of a similar activists' culture and frequently have a certain similarity in what they are trying to achieve or how they diagnose problems (a shared illusion which is not always the case in practice). Then, these RKs often take a more active role and can be even asked to lead some training sessions at the RK meetings.

conclusion

The typology we suggested presents some ideal types and recurrent trends in the structures and positions of the field social work. The reasons for outlining some of these general characteristics and social trajectories was not to try to define some definitive and fixed traits but rather to help the reader get a context from which one can further analyse some of the processes and workings of the field social work. Its aim was to situate particular positionalities and hierarchies within the structures of the field social work. Firstly, it can provide an understanding of relationships within the institutional and other structures composing the field social work. Secondly, by looking at trajectories and certain characteristic features of the TSP/ATSP and RK one can also understand particular dispositions and modes of relating and acting vis-a-vis the clients. As such, we believe that it is important to give a bit of contextual background before proceeding to the analysis of the workings and key issues characterising the field social work.

4.

situating relations and perspectives of tsp/atsps about clients, their own everyday work, and possibilities of change

During the fieldwork, we encountered different ways through which some TSP/ATSPs developed a particular form of distinction within which they understood and categorised the clients, their behaviour, needs and possible reactions. Some of these differentiations reflected their previous long-term attitudes and understanding, while others were developed and changed in light of their work as TSP. Their diverse perceptions and different ways in which they categorised clients reflected the wide range of entrenched attitudes and positions they held in society, and also the relative lack of a unified mechanism through which the IA managing and training structures, synchronises ways in which a TSP would approach their clients without the baggage of a particular moralising position and assumptions. Although mostly not in an overt way, the research revealed that a certain segment of TSP/ATSPs would implicitly share widely popular stereotypes about the 'specificity' of their clients. These assumptions and categorisations were reflected not only in their attitudes toward their work, but also in their understanding of their work and perspectives on possible changes and effects of their daily work. The categorisation of clients and the assumed effects of work, however, was also important in considering the hopes, despair, joys and frustrations accumulated over the years of working as a TSP/ATSP/RK (both *vis-à-vis* their working interactions with clients, and also within the organisational structures of TSP).

two general categories of clients

On a general level, the TSP/ATSPs tended to divide clients into two broad categories:

- those who were seen as 'skilful' and generally 'non-problematic' (from the perspective of the dominant norms of white middle-class Slovaks) but who found themselves in difficulties due to various external factors and inequalities (i.e. these subjects were seen as relatively integrated, independent, with a previous history of long-term employment, with skills, desires and readiness to take up opportunities and capable of enduring difficulties in their constant striving to get out of the economic hardships in which they found themselves)
- those whom the TSP/ATSP characterised as 'chronic' or 'hopeless cases'. This category was often seen as impossible to help or change. One TSP referred to these clients, in a somehow reversed ironic remark, as the 'healthy core' who persist in being poor and needy – despite continuous TSP assistance.

These distinctions tended to appear in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the field social work. The first category of clients were seen as those who were significantly helped by the TSP/ATSPs. The TSP/ATSP noted that there has been an increase in these clients due to the worsening socio-economic situation, unemployment and various 'traps' their clients fell into without even knowing their consequences (i.e. ending up in debt collector's hands). Some TSP/ATSPs also criticised the current socio-economic conditions and political decisions to keep more and more people suffering, without opportunities to change their circumstances, and caught up in various forms of indebtedness and social problems, despite the effort and willingness to change their situation.

On the other hand, the latter category tended to be seen as 'hopeless cases' either because of them being critically damaged by their circumstances, or possessing particularly fixed characteristics and qualities. Sometimes these were explained with reference to the socio-economic conditions and the TSP/ATSPs could put their clients' strategies within wider contexts. However, sometimes they described these in essentialist terms – as a result of the inherent cultural, social or psychological qualities of the clients.

While some of the TSP/ATSPs tended to reproduce some of the stereotypical and fixed ideas about clients, many others developed more understanding and empathetic perspectives. Many TSP/ATSPs have acquired knowledge in which they have pointed out the oppressiveness of various structures and unequal treatment of their clients. In other words, their experience of working with the clients and their long-term immersion in the lives of some of the most oppressed and marginalised people in Slovakia, cultivated in them a special understanding and critical semi-activist stands towards the oppressive structures and pervasive effects of institutional and structural racism. These TSP/ATSPs were able to work closely with the clients and develop a relationship of trust and respect. They were also able to approach their clients in non-judgemental ways and their work often led not only to assistance with 'filling in forms' but also to greater empowerment of clients who were able to act more independently and confidently in their encounters with institutions. These TSP/ATSPs usually tended to be among those who tried to develop

more activities aimed at prevention and ways in which they could help clients learn how to develop skills for dealing with their problems in more independent ways. However, due to structural conditions such as the high amount of clients and few TSP/ATSPs available, many slid down to what was frequently evoked more as 'extinguishing a fire' (*hasíme požiar*) rather than addressing the issues in more systematic ways. The 'extinguishing a fire' expression was also frequently associated with the 'chronic' cases and contrasted to the relatively small amount of pro-actively skilful (*"šikovných"*) clients who were seen as more likely to change.

TSP/ATSPs would sometimes shift from one position to another, and discuss their clients with a mixture of somewhat contradictory terms. They would differentiate between individual clients and their particular cases explained within wider contexts, but at times they would also slip to generalising statements, some of which resonated with widespread folk stereotypic representations of poor and/or Roma in Slovakia. One of the key issues was the perceived lack of responsibility or effort. One female TSP suggested, for instance, that among the clients: "You can't find a kind of responsibility… a sense of responsibility for the future is not there." In addition to the perceived irresponsibility, this statement also reflects the common assumption about different temporal orientations and frameworks in which some of their clients 'live for the moment'. As many TSPs suggested, many of their clients live "from one day to the next… They don't think what will be in a month's time or next year." This perception resonated with the perceived lack of, or inability to, 'plan'.

Another useful example illustrating these two ways of explaining and perceiving the clients by TSP could be found in their difficulties in dealing with the bureaucratic workers and formal administrative tasks. Sometimes, these two ways co-existed at the same time in the viewpoints of the TSP workers. Some saw the problems as resulting from the discrimination against the clients (because of their ascribed stigma of 'Gypsyness', 'social case'[2] or poverty).

2 The expression '*sociálny prípad*' [social case] is an idiomatic term referring to cases of families or individuals who are seen as problematic, 'asocial' and often find themselves in the constant position of marginality and under close governance by state institutions.

The multiple discriminatory practices observed by the TSP at the Slovak offices ranged from: an unwillingness to assist clients in interpersonal encounters, communication using difficult language expressions that prevented clients from understanding or complicated written language used in various official letters sent to clients. The problems with understanding was also seen as a reflection of the increasingly more difficult and complicated language of various official documents, through which state and non-state institutions communicate with citizens. Consequently, several TSP/ATSP noted that "some of these things are so complex that sometimes even we have problems with understanding them." Additionally, some of the loan companies were accused of things such as: "They try to trick[3] them about things that a normal person can't even understand." However, as much as some TSP recognised all the above listed factors and characteristics, some have also expressed concerns and doubts regarding the intellectual capacities of their clients. As one put it, "You must talk [to them] very simply because they really don't understand [a more 'complex' way of talking]." They, in this context used indiscriminately for all clients, were seen as less capable of understanding and as less 'developed'. At times, some used explanations such as "This is their mentality… you can't change that" as the catch-all encompassing term.

These ideas, in some cases, led to more paternalistic and patronising patterns of attitudes and relationships with clients. For instance, some TSP/ATSPs talk informally (*tykali*)[4] to their clients without any established relationship of closeness or offer from the client's side. This asymmetrical relationship and treatment can be illustrated with the words of several TSP/ATSPs when discussing

3 This refers to the practices and strategies of various loan-agents to deceive or get their potential clients' signature because of their ignorance or confusion about the terms and conditions of the loans, credits, or mobile phone deals.

4 In Slovak, there are two forms of addressing each other using 'you' – one is formal Vy and is used in most encounters between the state and its clients; the second one is informal, Ty and it is used informally among friends, family, peers or when older people speak to younger ones. The latter expression thus reflects a certain power asymmetry between the speakers in which the more powerful person uses Ty while the less powerful is expected to reply with Vy. In contrast to majority, Roma clients still experience the patronizing form of being addressed as ty much more frequently. While the Roma clients are seen as rude, uncultured, primitive, uneducated or uncivilized when using the Ty form to address institutional workers, the institutional workers' use of Ty is frequently seen as more normalized and not problematic (for the non-Roma majority who represent the majority of officers).

one of the most frequent issues in the field – help in dealing with debt collectors (*exekútori*). One suggested: "We are helping them [with all kinds of issues], for instance with how to pay the debt collectors… and also protecting them so they don't take these [loans]." Alternatively, "We have to protect them… but also protect them from themselves [their own selves]." This statement is telling, because it highlights that the TSP see their role as protecting their clients from external agents and forces that prey on their client's vulnerability (i.e. protection from aggressive and predatory loans) and also from their own decisions, that are seen as unwise or less rational and which lead to decisions harming their own situation. This idea of protecting them from their own decisions also simultaneously reveals the asymmetrical relationship in which the TSP assume that they know better what is right for their clients and also implies that it is often the clients themselves who are to blame for their precarious situation as a 'self-harming' individual (be this consciously or unconsciously; out of perceived ignorance or for other reasons). This point can be further illustrated by another TSP's suggestion: "They pay back a loan with another loan." In all these statements the clients are seen as acting less rationally, or not knowing enough and acting against their interests, well-being and effectively harming themselves due to their perceived ignorance. In this vision, the TSP acts not only as a help to the clients in solving their problems in a collaborative and dialogical way, but also as 'protecting' the clients 'from themselves'.

from classification of beneficiaries to assessment of the field social work's effects

The classification of the clients by the TSP had some important effects on the perception of their work and its effects. The first category of 'diligent' (*"snaživý"*), keen or proactive (in trouble despite their efforts) were often the ones who were seen as examples of achievements and changes that the TSP had made in their work. When reflecting upon their work achievements, this category largely overlapped with the ones who were seen as being helped '*postaviť sa na (vlastné) nohy*'. This expression can be literally translated as helping them to 'stand on their own legs (two feet)' and refers to being able to function without any support from others. In this context, it would mean that the TSP would help these clients to return to what was perceived as 'normal' lives with formal employment, without debts (or at least with debts they would be able to pay back) and more generally be able to manage their livelihoods on their own terms and secure it through their own efforts and income without the need for external agents or institutions (such as a TSP). The underlying assumption is that these clients were capable of re-establishing some kind of stability and control over their livelihoods, which were previously shaken by some 'critical events'. The TSP/ATSP often saw working with these clients as rewarding and positive examples of change amidst the pervasive majority of cases in which they described their work rather as only 'extinguishing a fire', which would be seen as not being able to solve their problems and stabilise their otherwise erratic livelihoods.

The minority of 'diligent' clients were seen as those with whom one could work more in the area of 'prevention' and enhance their independence. In some localities, we have encountered views of TSP/ATSPs in which they described their work and clients as: "Here we do not have that kind [of people], well, the backward ones like they have elsewhere [in other localities]… [in our locality] we don't deal with such cases and problems that we hear about from some of our [TSP] colleagues' stories." In most cases, they had no direct experience with the other clients but they ascribed the rather generalising perception of 'difficult clients' as located elsewhere and contrasted with their own clients. This evolutionary mode of classifying clients into more 'backward' ones and more 'advanced', dates back to historical development and modernist (and) socialist modes of governing the poor (and) Roma (Grill, 2015)

The classifications held by TSPs about different clients also related to the ways in which they reflected upon perceived clients' attitudes towards TSPs. When discussing these issues with several TSP/ATSPs at one informal focus group/discussion, we recorded some of the following viewpoints of the TSPs[5]:

5 The structure resulted from the informal group discussion and different opinions arising in this context. However, the divisions and structure were extracted by the researcher team for the purposes of this analysis.

- 'Fill in' (*vypíš mi*) approach, which was perceived negatively by the TSP. The clients were seen as impolite and demanded help rather than politely asking. They also did not show much respect or willingness to learn themselves. The demanding requests without adequate form and lack of greetings was seen as negative and rude. Some of the TSPs responded to this view by approving, such as nodding, and also suggested that in these cases they often try to reply in a polite way and try to educate (implicitly or explicitly) the clients about forms of greeting and polite interactions prior to dealing with the clients. These perceptions of attitudes also reflected certain discomfort and insecurities, which some TSP/ATSP experienced while working in the field (*v teréne*).
- 'Call them because I didn't make the payment' (*"zavolaj tam, že som zabudol zaplatiť"*) – although this attitude is still considered inappropriate, according to some TSP/ATSPs, it already shows a positive shift because they 'at least have some kind of awareness (*povedomie*)' that they should care about something or that there is something they need to address or respond to. This contrasts with the perception that previously the clients did not care about dealing with things. Although seen as a shift, it still shows that the clients demand help and it signals dependency on the TSP/ATSP's knowledge and expertise, as well as lack of self-autonomous behaviour.
- 'they know how to fill in (the forms) but they come to us anyway' (*"vedia si vypísať sami, ale aj tak prídu"*) – some of the clients are seen as having knowledge and skills to deal with institutions but they still come to the TSP/ATSPs in the belief that they (the TSPs) will deal with these things more effectively, that they are less likely to make mistakes or that the TSP/ATSPs will not encounter the possible (and expected) poor treatment from the institutions. In other words, these clients were seen as coming to the TSPs with a hope that the TSP's work will bring results with a higher degree of positive resolution (than if they would do it themselves). With these clients, the TSPs would often try to encourage them to do it themselves. But this suggestion could also turn into a contentious issue as some clients perceived it as being rejected by the TSPs. One TSP characterised this rather aptly: "They would get offended if I tell them 'fill in the form yourself.'" "You know how to do it [by yourself]." Another TSP described it as: "Then they come to us and ask us, why did you help others fill in the forms, and didn't do it for us?"

- The last category is made up of those who have learned how to deal with various things themselves and who only come in the case that they are presented with something that they themselves cannot resolve. Though being a minority, the TSPs highlighted these clients as examples of their successful work.

This understanding of different attitudes observed by the TSPs were also related to the assumed perception of their work in the location. Most of them see this positively, as creating a functioning structure that helps the clients if they need something, a first contact point, and knowing where to turn to.

This positive development and establishment of relationships was also characterised by a somewhat more ambiguous view that: "They got used to us too much" and now "They already learned [and took for granted] that we fix and deal with all kinds of things for them." This statement captures rather well the dual nature of TSP perceptions, who saw this as positive in so far as it provided ways of mediating and helping their clients with their problems, but also highlighted its limits as it could contribute to reproducing what some TSPs perceived as passivity, dependency and demanding-help-without-own-effort. Some TSPs also implicitly and explicitly referred to their clients as being too spoiled by their assistance and help.

"we are an extended hand for them!"

The TSPs were often seen by others, as well as seeing themselves as 'an extended hand'. The metaphor of 'hand' seems to be an accurate concept expressing the position but also the directionality of the TSP's activities. While some TSPs used it to describe themselves as a hand of institutions, others used it to refer to their position of helping and assisting the clients vis-à-vis the institutions. The 'extended hand' expression also refers to the mediating aspect and to a certain 'in-betweenness' of the TSP position.

For some, they were the extended hand of the state and other institutions. For others, they were the mediating hand, which represented the interests of their clients, which at times also meant skilfully negotiating with the oppressive

'hands' or 'tentacles' of state laws. Thus, the 'extended hand', was often a concept which did not possess the same meaning and frequently differed. This also shows the rather arbitrary and unclear definitions of what constitutes clients' 'interests' and what are, in practice, the ways in which TSP/ATSPs come to interact, assist and collaborate with clients in addressing various issues.

differences in action

The researchers were surprised about what significant differences existed among the TSP/ATSPs in terms of their perceptions of clients and their actions. One unique opportunity to observe differences between TSP/ATSPs is during the collective meetings. It is here when one notices how differently some see their work and their clients. For instance, these meetings revealed that while some TSP/ATSPs would more engage in 'extinguishing a fire' and filling in forms for the clients, others took a more proactive approach and developed a range of activities for developing prevention, self-empowerment and independence of clients. While these differences frequently related to structural conditions such as type of localities and amount of clients, there were also some significant differences between TSPs working in similar conditions but embracing different strategies and efforts when working with their clients. Though there is a certain perception of common issues and phenomena they dealt with in their work, their understanding of clients and the causes of their situations and the context that shapes the lives of their clients differed greatly. It was also these differences, which highlighted the lack of a more systematic elementary training from the side of the IA in general.

It seems symptomatic that there were very different understandings of what the TSP is all about, of the clients and the different extensions of the imaginary acting like a 'hand'. Although there would certainly be persisting differences between TSP/ATSPs in relation to their position and social trajectory, the lack of provided trainings also seem to contribute to this. The individual interventions and supervision provided by the RKs were seen as not sufficient considering the amount of other work expected from the RKs. Most of the responsibility and work lay on the RK and the more senior TSP/ATSP colleagues who would share their experiences with the less experienced colleagues through formal and informal information channels. But in some cases one could detect how differently some TSP/ATSPs interacted with their RK, who would not be able to interact or monitor the TSP/ATSP's work in more qualitative ways due to the amount of other responsibilities.

conclusion

While the TSP/ATSPs were provided with some trainings, and most of them requested, for example, opportunities to be trained in relation to 'human trafficking', they were not offered the more elementary but perhaps much more relevant trainings necessary for acquiring synchronised optics for understanding clients in less morally-loaded ways.

As one of the long-serving TSPs noted with a concerned voice in one of our discussions: "As for me, I am fine because I had all the trainings when I was starting my [TSP] job back in 2006 [i.e. in the previous programming period]. Back then, the trainings we had were very useful and I can't imagine how I would do my job as well [i.e. with high-quality standards and professionalism] as I'm doing it now without these trainings… I really benefited from these a lot. But my colleagues who only joined the TSPs in this last [programming] period, they did not have any trainings and one can see how much they are missing this [education]."

Researcher: 'and in this period you have not had any trainings'?
TSP: "Well, there were some offers… but we've already had so many offers for training for 'human trafficking' that I could almost lecture about this myself [ironically]. But the elementary principles, which are needed now for everyday [TSP] practice and work, are sorely missing [i.e. in the last period]."

The concerns of this TSP worker also highlights a particular shift in the forms of governing, educating and managing TSPs by the central managers in Bratislava. Some TSPs who have worked in the scheme since its beginnings, often remembered how useful the grounding trainings were for equipping them with basic skills for assisting clients with their needs and requests, as well as managing relationships with the clients. These trainings were largely missing

in the last programming period and mostly depended on personal supervision of the RKs or contact between Bratislava based project managers and the individual TSP/ATSP. This change in emphasis also points out a shift in emphasis in the state modes of governance. The proliferation of trainings on 'human trafficking' and its prevention is quite symptomatic. Various organisations received generous financial support for running 'human trafficking trainings' and the TSPs were encouraged to participate despite the relatively 'low' number of individual cases suffering from these phenomena in their localities. In contrast, trainings that focus on practical skills and knowledge necessary for their daily interventions, issues and the suffering resulting from structural oppression and neo-liberal state reforms were not provided. These elementary trainings which could enhance basic TSP skills were mentioned to be missing by all TSP/ATSPs from different regions.

5.

fundamental workload in the field social work

This chapter aims to describe the main workload in the field of the field social work. It also discusses differences between the theoretical definitions of TSP/ATSPs outlined in the *Introduction to Standards of the Field Social Work (Úvod do štandardov terénnej sociálnej práce)* with the practices at work. The latter emerge out of the needs and issues rising from their initial and continuous monitoring of the field, from interactions with and needs identified by their clients and other institutions' demands (The Labour Office, police, etc.). Additionally, some TSP/ATSPs occasionally engage in activities, which do not fall in their job description (either from their own initiative or at the request of a mayor or other local representative).

division of work between the tsp and atsp

The teams that perform social work consist of two types of job functions – the TSP and the ATSP. The *Introduction to Standards of the Field Social Work* describes the workload specifically for TSP and specifically for ATSP. According to the Standards, TSPs are independent workers that diagnose and identify solutions for clients, propose forms of social intervention, provide consulting, analyse sites and set targets for fieldwork in the long term. On the other hand, ATSPs are expected to perform professionally undemanding tasks, assist clients with filling-out forms, accompany clients, organize meetings with the client's family and assist with interpreting and mediating cultural context in communication between the client and the TSP or other institutions.

In practice, however, the division of the workload between the two work functions is ambiguous. It can be said that it is difficult to summarize the things that 'typically' are done by TSPs and by ATSPs. Division of work in teams certainly exists, but it does not take place along the TSP versus ATSP line. Normally, TSPs have greater experience with social work than ATSPs. However, how work is divided in practice is more subject to the specific situation, personal qualities, experience and professional capacity of individual employees. On the other hand, it can be concluded that TSPs are often decision makers and in certain locations divide workload and supervise the work of ATSPs. Regarding specific tasks, the difference in the types of performances between these two work functions cannot be too generalized. Other factors play an important role in the redistribution of tasks: for example, the issue of ethnicity (non-Roma vs Roma), experience (e.g., the difference between a new and established TSP), better knowledge of specific clients and thus, expected better bonds of trust, a certain personality and social communication skills, knowledge about the legal system, specific local knowledge, specific knowledge about particular social issues (e.g. social protection system or various legal matters), length of service and experience in dealing with clients. Apart from administrative duties, the only particular division of labour between the TSP and ATSP that can be generalized is that the TSPs have more decision-making power and also greater responsibility towards the community and other agencies, as well as in relation to ATSPs.

To give some examples of this division of labour between the ATSP and TSP and factors involved in their divisions, we encountered a location in which an older TSP, a man with a University degree and a reputation for expertise in legal help, only rarely goes to the field. This was said to be due to his ongoing health issues but also his self-declared 'busyness' with the various paperwork and legal claims he was dealing with. At the same time, his unwillingness to write various reports and 'boring and unnecessary' paperwork leaves his younger, female, non-Roma colleague, also a TSP with a University degree, to deal with most of the official paperwork. This also limits her time for more intense fieldwork with clients. Additionally, it also means that most of the fieldwork and everyday interactions with clients is done by a Roma ATSP. Since the ATSP/TSP team has only one or two computers available in their office, it also means that the older TSP works on the computer most of the time. Another task, which is usually done by the Roma ATSP, is the photo-copying of various documents for the clients. This division of labour is not questioned or changed due to various factors: an established male TSP with higher authority (also reflected in his dominant position in the focus group's discussion), a younger ATSP who does not question this division and 'sacrifices' herself to take on more administrative work in order to make the team work well, a Roma ATSP who is seen as not so well qualified to deal with various legal cases (seen as too complicated).

These divisions of labour varied. In another case we observed in the field, there was a team of three (1 TSP, 2 ATSPs) in which they attempted to divide their work more equally in terms of time spent in the field and time spent on

various administrative and office work. However, the non-Roma TSP has more authority and responsibility when it comes to making decisions and more professional knowledge. This is derived from her TSP position but also more years of work experience in the field. They tend to go to clients in groups of two or three, though she generally prefers her non-Roma female ATSP to be accompanied by her or the male Roma ATSP, when they are go to the area seen as a 'settlement' (she considers that the non-Roma ATSP could be more easily intimidated by some clients given her relatively short experience). Therefore, she considers her ATSP's gender, ethnicity, age and experience in making these decisions. In contrast, she does not have the same degree of worry about sending her young male Roma ATSP colleague to deal with clients individually (even though she generally prefers two social workers for the work). At times, the TSP has more paperwork and administrative tasks and she stays in the office while the ATSP visits the clients. She does try to accompany them in the field in the most equal way possible. In both of these cases, we can see a number of factors and power relationships that shape the division of labour. Although these are generally possible to be detected from the paperwork and work reports submitted to the RK and the IA, there is also a large degree of relative autonomy for the TSP and ATSP, to form a more or less effective working team and partnerships in which they assist their clients and in which all team members feel equally recognised and appreciated.

In the following, we will attempt to describe typical actions in relation to clients that field social workers carried out. Firstly, this stems from interviews and ethnographic observations in the field. Secondly, from entries in the monthly monitoring reports by TSPs and ATSPs and regional coordinators, which are intended for the agency. The advantage of an ethnographic study was that we could observe certain tasks and work activities, which were not always stated in the monthly reports (either intentionally or unintentionally). We have structured the descriptions of the activities similarly to the monthly reports, by different areas of intervention: health, housing, employment, social security, education and cooperation with schools, finance. Finally, we tried to describe, what are, in our opinion, very unusual interventions.

different activities and areas of work

In the area of social assistance and social security, a very typical activity of field social workers was advising clients regarding social benefits and contributions (parental allowance, housing allowance, benefit in material need). In this range of activities may also fall the subsequent mediation of messages for clients from the Labour Office (ÚPSVR) and explaining contents of documents sent from this and other institutions, advising clients in the completion of various kinds of forms and applications in relation to the labour office (registration of jobseekers, registration for housing allowance, etc.). In relation to social and health insurance, TSP/ATSPs often assist clients in providing documents that prove they are eligible for general health insurance and help send the client to the relevant department of the Social Insurance (*Sociálna poisťovňa*) or General Health Insurance Company (*Všeobecná zdravotná poisťovňa*), assist clients in providing a birth certificate and help to call for more detailed information regarding various contributions. A common activity was also the interpretation of official announcements received from different institutions, since the clients might not understand the specific language of official correspondence. TSPs and ATSPs also helped in calculating the amount of social benefits requested when there are changes in the family situation, or informed clients about the possibility to receive a one off emergency social benefit payment and help write the application for it. Often the TSP/ATSP's help was particularly important in situations that were not routine for the client, for example, counselling and assistance in writing out the form for the initial application of jobseekers, solicitation of the first decision for awarding a pension and the pension amount. There were cases when it was necessary to assist clients in writing a request for invalidation of institutional care for a child placed in an orphanage (*detský domov*). In the group of activities of a more practical nature, TSP/ATSPs performed some preventive actions, such as advice on issues such as neglect of children's needs and child care. These groups of activities could also include negotiations within the family, conflict resolution, as well as defending the interests of children in families that neglect their needs. Another important activity was cooperation with the workers of social protection and guardianship. At the request of the Labour Office (ÚPSVR), TSP/ATSPs were able to write expert reports on the situation of the client and to describe the social profile of households.

In the financial area, a typical activity was basic advice on the management of finances, advice about rescheduling payments schedules (in written and oral form) and also help in dealing with debt collectors (*exekútori)*, which have been filed against clients based on debts to insurance companies, mobile operators or various non-banking institutions. These types of activities were indicated by many TSP/ATSPs as one of the most common and constantly growing in terms of number of cases of clients' indebtedness. The role of field social workers lay in communication with debt collection officials and concluding rescheduled payment schedules. The activities included basic aid to clients when writing money orders, explaining the content of documents from financial institutions, assistance with completing various forms and applications regarding financial matters. The less typical activities were assistance for households which were in an emergency situation (for example, when a fire broke out), and assistance in writing a request for financial assistance from various charitable foundations, or for one-time financial assistance from the municipality or humanitarian organisations. Quite often it has been counselling to increase financial literacy, reduction in household expenditure, and overseeing the observance of repayment schedules – it usually happens at the request of the clients themselves. We also recorded an activity, which consisted of monitoring electricity consumption in households and in the settlement.

Indebtedness also required a specific activity, which is assisting in communication with non-bank companies, and in assessing whether the client's debt exceeds the statute of limitations. Also important were preventive activities, e.g. problems regarding special recipients (IOP) in connection with neglecting children's needs, including assistance in a strengthened regime for the purchase of food and clothing. Some TSP/ATSPs often saw the former as a frustrating activity, because on the one hand, they saw the caginess of debt collection officials and on the other hand, they were aware of the client's constant inability to keep up with the payment schedules.

In the area of cooperation with schools, the typical activity was cooperation with the elementary school in the case of poor school attendance and truancy. Also, it often was checking that children took school buses in the morning, informing parents about children's regular school attendance and informing parents about the children's behaviour in school. It also happened that clients who were temporarily abroad, needed a TSP/ATSP to deliver a certificate of school attendance for their children who were also abroad. Some of the activities of the TSP/ATSP were about cooperation with the school, enrolling children in the zero-class or the first year class. Sometimes the TSP also gave advice on pre-school education, and helped mediate the availability of pre-school education. Some TSP/ATSPs organized different clubs and after-school activities for children.

Activities in the area of health include various forms of assistance to clients, such as sending clients to various medical examinations, request for a home visit of a doctor to a client, help in finding telephone contact to the gynaecological clinic, information about the pre-operative assessment for the client, and so on. Included were activities of a preventive nature, which were, e.g. a counselling interview with the client about health, alerting the client about the need to visit a children's paediatrician, a counselling interview with the client about lice, an interview regarding the issue of a healthy diet, prenatal and post-partum counselling, reminding clients to comply with the prescribed treatment, etc. It happened that the TSP and ATSP also carried out a very personal intervention: for example, at the request of the client they consulted a doctor about the client's health condition and later explained it in an 'understandable' way to the client. Also, the TSP/ATSPs provided advice on the use of contraceptive methods. They communicated with various institutions about the instance of communicable diseases or virulent infections.

The area of housing typically included assistance in collection of necessary documents for a housing allowance or in finding lodging for homeless clients. An important activity was consulting about waste management, and informing clients about various available forms of waste disposal in the municipality. To these group actions, we can also include checking cleanliness and hygiene in settlements.

In areas relating to employment and employability, a typical activity was a search for vacancies, assistance in writing a CV and assistance in writing applications for employment. This also included help with drafting applications for employment assistance, assistance with electronic transmission of documents to potential employers, scanning, searching and offering jobs to clients and helping

with resume writing. A typical activity was also the individualized preparation of a client for a job interview. It often happened that the TSP/ATSPs provided advice, or proposed to a municipality, whether or not to involve a particular client in activation work (work provided to the long term unemployed) or in volunteer activities.

activities outside of the tasks defined by the introduction to standards of the field social work

Despite the variety of tasks that the TSPs should do and are doing in their daily work, some were also involved in activities that bring them outside the tasks defined by the *Introduction to Standards of the Field Social Work*. In most cases, this was related to their position as employees of local mayors and, in some cases, to their own initiative and willingness to do more for clients (which they subjectively considered as appropriate).

In some municipalities, mayors considered the TSP as their direct employee. At times, they ordered them to do work because they did not consider them to have too much work. Other times, these orders stemmed from the confusion and unclear ideas that mayors have about what constitutes the content of work for field social workers. They would ask the TSP to do things which they considered to be part of their work. In certain localities, it was not only mayors but also other municipality employees who considered the TSP/ATSP to be working with everything 'Roma related'.

One of the most extreme (and rather singular) cases was an incident where the TSP/ATSPs were asked to help with planting flowers for the municipality. Elsewhere, we also encountered that TSP/ATSPs occupied offices with the municipality radio station and were at times asked to make public announcements to the local municipality. However, more common tasks were to act as delivery boys/girls with post and some official messages issued to Roma inhabitants. Some of the colleagues at the municipalities would ask the TSP/ATSP to 'bring it to XY resident' since 'you're going there anyway'. In some municipalities, administrative staff were directing Roma and socially marginalized clients directly to the TSP/ATSP workers who were expected to help them with filling in various forms (which in theory were the duty of other workers). In some localities this led to the TSP/ATSPs taking over a large amount of work and diverse responsibilities from other municipality workers, since they were known to be 'dealing with Gypsies'.

Despite some protests from the side of the TSPs, many have accepted taking on some of this work in order not to worsen working relations. However, the dilemma and problems arising from this work is that it could be positioned as an 'extended hand' of the municipality, and by the mere fact of delivering a simple letter, could be associated with those who are issuing it. This, in turn, can influence mistrust towards the TSPs (for example, if they bring a letter about financial arrears, or similar matters).

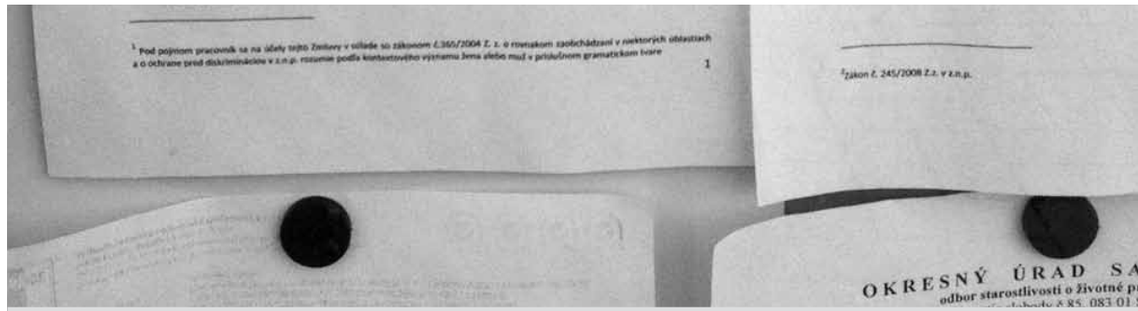
Additionally, it is interesting to map the different responses of the TSPs to these requests. While some of them confronted the mayors' requests, others complied with their orders and carried out the activities they were asked to do. It is interesting to reflect upon the factors influencing these different strategies and responses. One can argue that those who have a stronger and somehow more equal relationship with mayors challenged them in such a way that the mayor respected their refusal. This also helped to clarify what is and what is not the work content (*náplň práce*) of the TSP. In other instances, some TSPs informed their RK about the fact that they are asked to do things that are not part of their job description and the RK intervened and issued a warning to the mayor. In most cases, the mayors respected the RK's interventions, though in many cases, it made working conditions and relationships with the municipality workers and with the RK more complicated.

Some of the TSPs did not really want to involve the RK, as it might 'make things worse', they suspected that the mayors might seek revenge (*pomstiť sa*) if they reported it to the RK. Alternatively, in some cases, they did not believe that the RK would have a sufficiently strong enough personality to confront the authoritative mayor. But, perhaps more significantly and common, was the reaction that the TSPs saw this as a 'trade-off' deal with the mayor and other employees. They did not see it as too much work, and that they did it in order to get a more viable relationship with them in return. However, it is difficult to assess on a more general level the extent to which these extra-work-tasks influenced the performances of TSP/ATSPs and their relationship with clients.

conclusion

In relation to clients, TSP/ATSPs perform a wide range of activities. These covered areas such as social welfare, labour and employment, school and cooperation with schools, health and financial advice. The division of labour in teams, however, generally did not go along the lines of TSP/ATSP. Although the majority of TSPs had greater and broader experience as ATSPs, the division of workload was subject to the specific situation in the village, personalities, experience and the professional capacity of individual employees. During the fieldwork we also observed activities that could be considered as atypical for a TSP/ATSP. In some municipalities, mayors considered the TSP/ATSPs to be their regular municipal employees, and assigned them work according to their desires. Dilemmas arising from accepting work that is not in accordance with their job description consists in the fact that the implementation of such work, may make workers stand out as the 'extended hand' of the mayor and have a negative influence on the confidence of clients towards them. Despite some limitations, social workers have a relatively high degree of autonomy to develop an effective team and partnerships, in which all team members should feel recognized.

6.



offices, location of offices, facilities and equipment

This chapter focuses on some of the issues related to the offices for field social work and material equipment. An important role in the performance of the field social work is played on the one hand, by the location of offices and on the other hand, by the space and furniture in offices, computers and other office equipment. Office locations for the performance of the field social work are an important factor that can mediate smoothly delivering social assistance to clients, or vice versa, it can be a barrier in delivery of services.

accessibility (how clients can enter offices)

In the villages and towns we visited, we met with two variations of field social work offices location:

- In a municipal office building with the entrance from the main hall or with a separate entrance (in another wing of the building or in the basement, etc.).
- In another building near the municipal office (which may be in a school building, in a cultural centre, in the building of a community centre, parish, etc.)
- In the settlement or in the immediate vicinity of the locations where clients live, in areas that are multi-purpose (e.g. pastoral centre building, cultural centre or social housing units).
- In rare cases, there is a combination in the localization of field social workers. (For example, part of the field social workers sit in an office in a municipal office building and part are located in premises directly on the site).

Every method of location of offices has its advantages and disadvantages.

We have noticed a situation where one of the TSPs works in the municipal building and his colleagues sit in a building near Roma localities. According to the explanation we received, this is due to the fact that some clients need assistance in the town centre and do not want to go to an office far away on the outskirts of town. Although this reasoning sounds logical, as we discovered the access to TSPs in the municipal building was not free of obstacles. Firstly, staff at the reception desk referred us to the point of first contact, where they examined us with questions, "Where are you from?" Only then, did the TSP take us to his office on the 2nd floor and allow us to pay a visit. Such practices can discourage clients from socially disadvantaged environments (who are generally frightened by contact with authorities) and thus it can create a significant barrier for good performance of field social work.

In several cases we have seen that the field social work office was passing into another municipality's office. We also note the case when the field social work office was shared with other officers from the municipality. These situations are normally interpreted by the municipality as a 'temporary' solution, while pointing out the fact that field social workers will have new spaces prepared. In the field, we often see that the offices of field social workers (both within DOP and NP TSP) are adjacent to the office of 'activation work'(work provided to the long term unemployed). This fact, can be seen by some TSP respondents as positive: "Clients are coming to activation work and when they are here, they drop in to take care of things with us…" The field social work office located around the office of the activation work coordinator, however, was evaluated as negative: "There is terrible noise when they [clients] return from activation work, they walk through our office." In one case, we visited a DOP project and witnessed the fact that field social workers work with the activation work coordinator in one room, separated only by a portable screen. This can also lead to the problem of mixing the institutions in the eyes of the clients; or preventing the clients from developing closer and trusting relationships with the TPS workers due to their perceived lack of, a 'safe' or 'intimate' environment. For instance, they could fear that they will be seen by other municipality officers at the field social work office or the feeling that they cannot talk openly about their problems because of being possibly 'overheard' by other employees of the municipality.

Sometimes the barrier at work is the confined office space, which will not accommodate too many employees or clients at one time. According to some of our TSP respondents, there are groups of clients that 'only can be taken care of in their own homes'. Although this solution may have its benefits, it can also be risky for the credibility of the field social work. On the one hand, this step provides greater privacy in that the TSP moves along with clients from office to home. On the other hand, it can lead to problems in cases where the client or group of clients has some unequal power relationships within their families. In any event, the key for the TSP is to be able to evaluate the situation and if necessary, arrange an interview with a client in the confidential environment of the office.

We met with cases of positive innovations from the side of TSP/ATSPs, who redesigned their office so that they had a small play area for clients' children: "We made a children's play area where the children play while we deal with our client's agenda… we brought toys and board games from home." Such innovations have a positive effect on the building of mutual trust between the TSP/ATSPs and clients, as well as create a good atmosphere and feeling of security. An uninviting office appearance or low accessibility of the office reduce the possibility of establishing better and mutually trusting relationships with clients.

location of field social work offices directly in roma settlements

The *Introduction to the Field Social Work Standards* does not specify in what manner, the office should be located in relation to the domicile of the majority of clients. An office location directly in the Roma settlement is a controversial issue. Many TSP/ATSPs expressed opinions that such an arrangement is a good solution. From this perspective, it is better for mutual trust and contact with clients: "Before, we were in town and we would walk to the settlement… now it's better for us, because we are close to the settlement, it's also better for mutual trust and contact with clients." If the municipality or town has a segregated settlement at some distance and if it is not the only targeted locality, it can happen that the field social workers have a 'detached' workplace there – they visit it several times a week (for example, twice a week).

Relocation of offices from village/town directly into a Roma settlement may also be due to unusual circumstances we encountered, such as the demolition of a shanty location and relocation of the whole Roma community from this area to a greenfield site with new social housing: "Before, when there was the old settlement, the office was in the village, in the new location that we are in for a year and half, we now are directly in the settlement." Also according to client respondents, placement of the field social workers' offices directly in the settlement was a positive step. The question that arises in this context is to what extent such relocation 'to close proximity of clients' can deepen spatial and thus symbolic exclusion of marginalised Roma within the context of overall structural inequalities that are present at the local level.

facilities and office equipment

Neither the *Introduction to the Field Social Work Standards* nor the *Handbook for Municipalities* (*Príručka pre obce*) regulate in detail how many computers should be in a single office. In a direct question about the facilities, most respondents answered (especially in the early stages of the interview) that the technical equipment is fine. This does not, however, always correspond to what we saw with our own eyes in the offices – such as outdated PCs and monitors. In the instance of bigger municipalities, where there are a greater number of TSP/ATSPs, one or two computers were clearly not enough. In some villages we noticed that the equipment with which the TSPs worked was quite out of date (for example, it was easy to see old monitors). In the instance of one 'open-call' project we visited, we noticed that the office (located in the municipal cultural centre) was without a PC and without a fixed telephone line. On the other hand, another municipality with an 'open-call' project in another region, created very good conditions for their TSP/ATSPs – a modern office, equipped with new computers and a copier.

In the instance of one town we visited, we noticed that field workers have a long-term problem with internet connection. According to them, the office was disconnected from the internet network for several months. They addressed this situation by sending email messages in the evening from home. In another municipality, although the internet connection worked, it had a very low bit rate, which made it impossible to download the necessary volumes of data.

It turned out that access to photocopiers were bigger problems – in daily practice TSP/ATSPs need to copy a lot of documents for clients. Only in a few cases did we see an office equipped with a photocopier. Given the relatively high price of this device, it is common that there is only one copier for the entire municipal office, and that it is located in the mayor's office. The usual practice in such cases, is that clients visit the field social work office in the morning to leave their documents, during the day the TSP/ATSPs take the documents and copy them, and in the afternoon clients come to collect them. Copying documents outside the office is cumbersome for the TSP/ATSP. They can get into a position of 'beggar', who relies on good personal relationships with the secretariat of the mayor. It may be due to the relatively high cost of toners that copying is perceived as an extra financial burden by the staff of the mayor's office.

phones and utilities

Within DOP projects, telecommunications costs are considered direct costs and eligible expenditures. Within NP TSP phones are financed under the so-called 'unit costs'. These costs were obtained on the basis of the analysis of completed projects, and it was determined that a legitimate expenditure was set at € 10.00 per month for a single TSP, respectively an ATSP. Given the scope of the agenda, which is dealt with by telephone (almost daily telephone contact with debt collectors, calling the Labour Office, various institutions, etc.), this amount, according to general opinion, was too low and inadequate.
TSP work is demanding, also in terms of exposure to specific hazards when in contact with environments with poor sanitation conditions (Škobla, D. – Filčák, R., 2014). While visiting a settlement a TSP/ATSP may face poor sanitation (infections, and also lice). Although *Introduction to the Field Social Work Standards* state that 'the municipality or organization…provides a financial contribution for the purchase of protective equipment and sanitation utilities (cleaning agents, disinfectants, clothes and shoes for fieldwork)' in reality, we have not met with a case in which this was certain. On the contrary, in some cases, the TSP explicitly expressed that it would be good if the community provided such equipment. Such attitudes were particularly evident in locations where field social work involved working with clients with an occurrence of infectious diseases (e.g. jaundice, etc.). On the other hand, we met with a case where the town provided vaccinations against infectious diseases (hepatitis A, B, vaccination against the influenza virus).

conclusion

The location of offices, facilities and equipment is very diverse among the municipalities. The main factor that determines the location and facilities is the attitude of the municipality towards field social work. This question does not differentiate whether it is DOP or NP TSP, or whether it is a small village or a larger town. Within the projects visited, we observed poorly located offices with lack of office equipment (e.g. no internet connection for a few months) both within the NP (where there is direct supervision over the quality of work by the Regional Coordinators) and DOP. The same applies for the opposite situation: modern office with good equipment, new computers and monitors was also recorded in the case of NP TSP as well as DOP. Unit costs for phones are low and not adequate for the volume of the agenda, which must be done by phone. In not even one village that we visited, did we record that workers were provided special clothing for the performance of work – the need for which, some TSP/ATSPs pointed out. In the future, it will be necessary to improve enforcement of commitments and effectively penalize the village in the case that unsuitable premises or lack of facilities violate the provisions of the contract.

7.

administrative issues related to field social work performance (dop versus np tsp)

One of the key research questions, was how the shift from open call for proposals projects to National Project affected the functioning of field social work and its administrative practices. This chapter looks at the administrative requirements that different categories of actors are requested to do and carry out in practice. The chapter is based on the knowledge which was gained through interviews and ethnographic observation in municipalities.

administration that is carried out by a grant recipient (municipality)

Administration, which is carried out by a grant recipient (in the case of DOP it could be also an NGO) is primarily related to the reimbursement of costs. This aspect was previously very problematic not only for the field social work, but generally within ESF projects, given the often very long time period for checking the eligibility of expenditures, thus leaving the requests for payments pending and delaying transfer of money to the municipalities' account.[6]

The biggest change within the NP modality is that it significantly simplifies the administration and the municipality does not need to submit a request for payment. The IA in Bratislava provides municipalities with funding through monthly transfers. Administrative tasks associated with payment requests, monitoring of projects and other operations related to the ESF are also carried out by the IA and not the municipality. Thus, municipalities do not need to run the ITMS system.

The flow of money and reimbursements in the NP TSP, according to the testimony of our respondents, who were among representatives of municipalities, was smooth and problem free in this regard. In one singular case, the mayor indicated a minor problem in the continuity of transfers, however it was brought about by confusion after the municipal elections: "In a statement for reimbursement we indicated the name of a new mayor, which did not correspond

6 More about this aspect see Hurrle, J., et al., (2012)

to the name, which was recorded in ITMS, and therefore payment was delayed." All respondents among the representatives of municipalities considered the transition to the NP TSP to be a positive step.

administration that is carried out by tsp/atsp

Compulsory for the field social work performance are the *client's file* and the *fieldwork diary*. The *client's file* contains records of clients and description of problems, as well as a record of the methods or types of interventions provided. It should provide information that is sufficient to assess how the client handles long term problems. In the case of clients who formed a family or household, in contrast to open call projects, new instructions from national projects required transforming clients' files in such a way that it refers to individuals (so that the family cannot be registered as a case). Such adjustment of documents can be challenging and this was one of the acts that from the perspective of TSP/ATSP respondents cause excessive workload (often pointed out in an interview). A *client file* contains records of interventions with a description of the problem, facts, activities and date and signature of the worker. The file also includes a social history of the client and may include photocopies or originals of decisions from institutions, documents, checks, etc. In addition to a file on a TSP client, there is the ATSP's *fieldwork diary*, which is designed to capture certain quick knowledge when interacting with clients, on the basis of which, information is produced for the *client's file*. Some information from the log may or may not become part of the *client's file*.

administrative burden from the tsp/atsp perspective

Many TSP/ATSP respondents indicated that they do not have problems with the administrative aspects of their work. For example, one TSP said that: "Administrative work is cool, easily manageable, without problems." Even in the questionnaire survey (in the open questions) respondents in this regard wrote statements like: "It's fine… we can do it." Some respondents contrasted the administrative aspect of field social work with field work, and interactions with clients were considered more demanding than paperwork: "I think that administration is not so difficult. Our initial communication with clients is sometimes more difficult."

More common, however, was the evaluation, which the administration generally considered (both within the NP and the DOP) as 'difficult'. Some respondents reported that they are somewhat frustrated regarding administrative matters and that the growing administrative burden actually means that much less time can be devoted to fieldwork. During the research we also visited villages in which the sheer number of clients and size of communities created tremendous pressure on the TSP/ATSPs to cover all the clients' requirements – this resulted in difficulties managing all required paperwork. Some TSP/ATSPs complained about excessive paperwork with the words: "We have to write everything out… lot of writing." Some felt it was a problem, that writing cannot capture everything that was actually carried out. As one of the TSPs in a big municipality with a large numbers of clients, said: "I cannot write all the things I do. Sometimes I don't establish a new individual file and when it's just a little thing, I do not even write it down."

On the other hand, most TSP/ATSPs were aware of the necessity for administrative records. Many respondents at the beginning of the interviews complained about the amount of paperwork but gradually, during the conversation, also began highlighting the positive elements of record keeping. Many TSP/ATSPs appreciated the importance of keeping files and expressed that their work helps them when they are working with clients: "In the *client's file*, everything is captured." Another respondent noted: "It is good that we have those things written down, when a client comes, what we dealt with before can be traced, even just a few years ago, but we are not able to remember." Accumulated knowledge about clients and records for longer periods may prove very useful when dealing with current problems in the best and most efficient way. Client records are particularly useful in communities with a large number of clients, where TSP/ATSPs cannot remember everyone. Writing things down is also useful in the case of personnel changes in the TSP/ATSP positions because information is preserved despite changes.

The process of collating the *client's file* brought about an interesting side effect in some locations. Some TSPs or even clients noted that the habit of Xeroxing

certain documents and attaching them to the *client's file* is very useful because clients might lose the originals of these documents. During the research we saw some workplaces where clients approached field social work workers and asked them for Xerox-copies of various papers. We also witnessed a situation where some original documents were kept in the *client's files*, at the clients' own request, since they considered the field social work office to be a much a 'safer' place, than their own homes (e.g. in the case of households with small children).

A bit of controversy and confusion in relation to the administrative duties of TSP/ATSPs within NP TSP caused management's instruction about the client's individual plan, which was to become part of the *client's file*. According to *The Manual for Municipalities*, this individual plan is requested (only) for long-term, complex problem solving in order to define the various steps to achieve the goal. While talking to various TSPs it seems to us that the agency (or Regional Coordinators), most likely, inconsistently instructed their TSPs about the individual plan, and some of them said, obligated them so that each client must have such a plan. In several cases, the TSP indicated that such plan preparation overburdened them, and they had ('retrospectively') prepared a draft of the document in their time off work, without seeing a clear benefit from it.

Some TSP/ATSPs considered the required documentation (such as the aforementioned client's individual plan or client's social history) as a kind of ideal case scenario. As one TSP said: "If only we had time to work with it." These types of remarks amounted to a kind of metaphor, which respondents repeatedly contrasted with everyday practices and conditions for the performance of TSP, and with the theoretical ideas about field social work which has its centre in Bratislava. In other words: "One thing is the theory and another thing is the practice." This aspect was emphasized in particular by workers who felt overwhelmed by the number of clients and amount of work, and who felt that they only 'extinguish a fire… and do not do something more conceptual'. Many TSP/ATSPs felt that they spent a lot of time making phone calls to various offices at the expense of more detailed work with clients. A TSP respondent working in a larger Roma community with lots of clients stated: "I wish I had only a few clients and could only work systematically with them… like it is in other locations [a reference to his colleagues with a smaller number of clients]." It seems to us that the ideal of field social work has clear contours, but in reality it is an unfulfilled ideal.

Some TSP/ATSPs critically perceive what they considered to be a shift towards 'individualisation' of documentation about the client (for example, the above mentioned individual plans) and interpreted it as a certain neglect (of dynamics) of social inclusion in relation to the environment in which the client lives – household or family. One respondent said: "You can make individual plans, but the client's problems are also his household's problems… and you have to assess it in the overall context, because those problems are not just the problems of the individual." Critical statements of this kind were not only aimed at the issue of individualization of records, but also tackled the alleged lack of effectiveness and possible field social work limitations if interventions only focus on the individual. The perception that the individualisation of client's files and an individual plan is the beginning of ignoring the family, may be a little misunderstanding. On the other hand, in a larger municipality with many clients, where the *client's file* focuses only on the individual (and not the household) for a TSP it may be difficult to keep track of which are collective factors and family conditions that have an impact on the client.In interviews, the question was often thematized about the duplication of some components in the clients' files. The TSP/ATSPs indicated that records that are requested often repeat content and just have a different format. One respondent said: "In my opinion it is unnecessary to rewrite what is already written…" On the issue of duplicate records, TSPs often mentioned that they are required to write a social history of clients: "In addition, we have to write down the client's social history, including details such as, how many children he has, and so on. You also need to update it regularly if there are some changes in the client's situation…" The development of the client's social history is quite a demanding and technically challenging operation. As stated by one TSP: "It took us a long time to prepare these clients' social histories. We had to visit clients individually, rewrite the file. When we did it, we had to do it after office hours, even at home."

administration carried out by regional coordinators

NP TSP introduced regional coordinators (RK) into the field social work. Each RK shall ensure coordination of field social work within the specified region and the number of RKs has been established with respect to the number of municipalities involved in the NP – each coordinator is in charge of about 15 villages. These municipalities do not have to belong to one single district but are also allocated with regard to logistical issues and physical access to municipalities (depending upon the place of RK's residence). RKs mainly provide methodological guidance, methodological and technical support for TSP/ATSPs, and support for TSP/ATSPs when communicating with municipalities and institutions. In a way, they also mediate communication between TSP/ATSPs and the IA in Bratislava. You could say that RKs are symbolically located somewhere between Bratislava and other regions. RKs also evaluate the quality of the TSP/ATSPs performance for the period in question, whether the work performance is in the required scope and quality and in accordance with the standards, guidelines, manuals for municipalities and contract. RKs also check compliance with the guidelines regarding the management of clients' files and record of activities in the field log.

RKs are responsible for regular reporting on the implementation of field social work in individual locations on a monthly basis. They prepare the following reports, which are submitted to managers in Bratislava: *The Report of RK regarding implementation of the field social work in the municipality, The Checklist to assess the quality of the field social work, The Monthly TSP and ATSP activity report* and *The record from the village meeting. The Monthly TSP's and ATSP's activity report* is based on the reports that TSP/ATSPs prepare themselves.

Regional coordinators act as intermediaries between individual municipalities and Bratislava. RKs played an important role in explaining and instructing TSP/ATSPs about administrative tasks. Most TSPs perceived the presence of RKs positively. They view them as someone with whom they can communicate and be in regular contact. On the other hand, TSP/ATSPs sometimes indicated that RKs demanded 'too many [unnecessary] things' from them. In our interviews, there sometimes appeared a theme that the TSP perceived instructions from RKs in relation to non-essential guidelines, as a kind of 'bullying': "We were told [by RK] that the client's history is too long and it should be shortened."

One important factor why, especially initially, report writing seemed so difficult was the fact that it was a skill in which most of them were not trained. Writing different administrative documents is time consuming, especially if we consider that most TSP/ATSPs had no previous experience with specific report writing skills. Some TSP/ATSPs had earlier theoretical knowledge gained in various educational programmes; others have more practical experience from social and community work. But most of them do not have practical experience of how to transform their work results to written form and according to specific formats (as required by administrative guidelines). For many, this proved difficult, time consuming and also exhausting. One RK said: "They [the TSP/ATSP] do so many important things, which they do not even know about… and they do not know how to write about it." That is the reason why at one meeting organized by RKs for TSP/ATSPs from several municipalities, there was a special time dedicated to discussing particularly challenging cases, and also examples of 'good practice'. Besides the exchange of experience, the purpose of the exercise was to teach the TSP/ATSP teams how to articulate what they do, and how to report on matters that they do when implementing the field social work. Such an exercise was also aimed at writing monthly reports, which went beyond repeating phrases and superficial descriptions of work activities. This exercise also served well for RKs because it has helped in evaluating and understanding the actual job performance of TSP/ATSPs.

The TSP/ATSP respondents generally praised cooperation with RKs in the context of administrative duties. One of the TSPs, said: "With a regional coordinator we cooperate in solving complicated cases, we communicate with each other, we try to look for better action in the work with clients, we exchange experiences." Another respondent assessed the relationship with RKs as follows: "Regional Coordinators direct us in terms both of administration and work with clients and complement our information in areas we do not have enough experience in, and in communication with other entities regarding clarification of responsibilities." However, it is not always a perfect relationship. Sometimes we met with an attitude from the TSP side that could be described as a perceived lack of communication: "The regional coordinator should communicate with us and mainly cooperate, and not check our administrative records." In more complicated cases, it happened that RKs and TSPs had some confrontations regarding administrative issues.

business trips and reimbursement of costs

Within DOP TSP/ATSP, travel expenses were considered as eligible, direct costs. These were reimbursed from the grant and were covered according to the Act on Travel Allowances. In the case of NP TSP travel expenses, they are handled through so-called standard reimbursement costs (*jednotkové výdavky*), which are paid without the obligation to submit travel documents. These standard reimbursement costs for travel are stated in the amount of € 3.6 per month per person. In both cases, the municipality can cover travel expenses in excess of this amount, according to actual needs in the performance of field social work.

The payment for the mission was mostly rated by TSP/ATSP respondents as unsatisfactory. During the research we did not meet a single TPS/ATSP that would consider the current system to be satisfactory or that it would contribute to better performance. On the contrary, the issue of travel payments was almost unanimously commented on as being low, and the current system as a bad solution. The issue of travel was perceived differently, depending on the municipality, status of field social work and depended on the most common types of problems in a given municipality or town. The question of transportation has been identified as very problematic in isolated locations with poor transportation connections with district towns.

During the fieldwork, we encountered three different (broadly defined) responses to this problem:

- TSP/ATSPs used standard reimbursement costs and after it was exhausted, mostly remain in the workplace – that is, they do not do work outside the village (even in cases where it is necessary)
- TSP/ATSPs paid for transportation from their own pockets (whether for bus tickets or use of their own cars).
- TSP/ATSPs have the support of mayors, which reimbursed them for additional travel costs or allow them to use a company car.

In municipalities where there was full support from the mayor, the effectiveness of the field social work was increased by the opportunities to use different means of transportation. These municipalities, or rather the mayors and their 'willingness' to allow for easier and more efficient work when the TSP needed to be mobile. Regarding the travel costs reimbursement, one mayor told us: "What they reimburse [the IA]… this system… it is about nothing." Instead, they only reimburse social workers for public transportation (bus, train) if there is a need to accompany clients to institutions in the neighbouring city, and in some instances, also lent them a car. More commonly, the TSP/ATSPs used their own cars in order to save time.

In one case, we met with a TSP/ATSP team, who were not accompanied by their clients to a nearby town to visit an institution. "We can explain to them [clients] what to do in town, but then they come back and say that they did not manage (*nevybavili*) things like they were supposed to. And then we do not know if it's because they did not know how to say it, or whether authorities refused to deal with them because they are Roma. And so we again call to the office and again have to deal with it…" This example well illustrates that the lack of funds, which does not allow the TSP/ATSPs to travel with clients, may cause additional work and further delays in addressing and resolving problems. It should be noted that this story was not isolated, but was one of many that we saw during the field research.

issues related to personal data in client's file

Following the instruction manuals for the process management of project documentation, which is part of the *Handbook for Municipalities* involved in NP TSP, it stipulates that the client's name must not be in the *client's file* and that it is necessary to obtain consent from the client for processing of personal data (the *Handbook for Municipalities* refers to the Act on the Protection of Personal Data). The field social work practice associated with inserting personal data, however, was perceived by many clients to be rather ambiguous. Due to the long history of marginalization, institutional racism, abuse of the poor and Roma stigmatization, many clients were concerned since it was not clear for them why they needed to sign these forms. Acts of obtaining signatures were thus met with some reluctance from the side of clients, despite the TSP/ATSP's effort to explain it in a transparent manner. And even though clients signed these statements, they continued to have concerns about what purpose it might be used for in the future.

For example, we encountered situations when clients who were fined or received a legal summons, blamed the TSP/ATSPs for abusing and sharing personal information about them with other institutions. Some accused the TSP/ATSPs of betraying them and providing information about them. Although many TSP/ATSPs managed to establish a trusting relationship with clients, this might prove to be extremely fragile when clients started suspecting the TSP/ATSPs of cooperating with various institutions in order to act against them (in this sense it is not at all important whether such information was confirmed or whether it was only based on gossip). On the other hand, if such a situation happens it does not necessarily mean the definitive end of a relationship between the TSP/ATSP and the client. The resulting lack of trust may not completely break social ties. It often happens that the relationship continues, even though it will take some time until it regains the previous trust – something in their relationship could improve and something worsen. For those TSP/ATSPs who managed to regain trust in such a situation, it is usually crucial to have tried to build up more egalitarian relationships. In addition to the efforts of the TSP/ATSPs to re-establish a trusting relationship, other factors can also play a role: e. g. objective need of a client to fix something and thus a need to turn to the TSP/ATSP.

The TSP/ATSP respondents reported that, despite some initial concern from clients to provide personal data, situations where the clients refused to provide personal data have not taken place. "There in the *client's file*, it is full of data about clients… first, the client fills out an agreement about the processing of personal data… initially they did not trust, but when it was explained to them that it will not be given out somewhere else, then they signed it." The TSP/ATSPs were also aware that, in accordance with the instructions in the *Handbook*, the correct procedure is to respect the client's potential refusal: "In that case, it would be written in the *client's file* that the client refused to provide personal information."

In practice, therefore, procedures to ensure data protection are respected and complied with; specific methodological guidelines (about this issue) by the Agency, however, were sometimes seen as too rigid and unnecessarily 'complicating life'. For example, the TSP/ATSPs have guidance that in the *fieldwork diary* there should not be the full names of clients. As one respondent reported: "I do not understand why I cannot write the name of the client? After all, is the name personal data?"

conclusion

One of the most important changes within the NP TSP is that it significantly simplifies the whole process of administration and reimbursements of costs for the municipality. Such a change has contributed to the fact that the flow of money has become, according to the testimony of respondents from among the representatives of municipalities, smooth and without problems. It should also be emphasized that no problems regarding the reimbursements were indicated in demand-oriented projects.

Some respondents among the TSP/ATSPs indicated they are somewhat frustrated in relation to administrative duties and felt that increasing the administrative burden actually means much less time they can spend with clients. Such testimony was especially recorded in municipalities with a greater number of clients and smaller field social work teams. On the other hand, many TSP/ATSPs appreciated that the necessary administration and paperwork help them in their work and in dealing with clients.

The field social work projects managed to collect some of the richest and most complex materials on various cases of social exclusion at the local level. This material can serve as an excellent basis for the further professionalization of field social work services. But it is also important to note that this information is very sensitive and can potentially be abused by entities or institutions, which do not act in the interests of the clients, but rather vice versa. Such potential possibility of abuse was reflected by some of the clients themselves. Given the history of marginalization, institutional racism, abuse of the poor and the Roma, acts of obtaining signatures for a declaration of consent for the processing of personal data, have met with some reluctance on the part of clients, despite the efforts of the TSP/ATSPs to explain it in a clear and transparent manner. Even though clients signed these statements, some are worried for what purpose they could be used for in the future.

8.

struggles for recognition: yearnings for, lack of, care and marginalisation in working spaces and infrastructures

One of the most recurrent issues recorded during the fieldwork concerned the issue of recognition. It emerged as one of the important themes during our encounters with the TSP/ATSPs and also with the RKs. To a lesser, but significant extent, it also appeared in our interviews and discussions with the clients. Although each of these mentioned the category of recognition in different contexts and with different meanings attached, it is a useful concept that will be described in this section in its multiplicity and relationships. We intentionally choose not to define it and use it to explain certain perceived qualities of relationships derived from the status, work and perception of field social work by themselves and others who come into contact with them. Therefore, this report focuses on the issue from several aspects and subsections. To start with a rather simplifying definition, by recognition we mean recognition of the TSP/ATSPs as equal workers and also recognition of their work, emerging through their relationships with clients and other institutional actors.

For the sake of structure, this chapter will be organised in several subsections in which we will try to address one aspect related to the issue of recognition in different relationships:

- between TSP/ATSP and dual employers' structure
- between TSP/ATSP and the municipality office (mayor, other employees/ colleagues)
- between TSP/ATSP and other institutions
- between TSP/ATSP and RK and the IA in Bratislava
- between TSP/ATSP and clients
- between TSP/ATSP at work and their families and friends

"two lords on one field"

One of the TSPs interviewed, characterised her working situation as being trapped in serving two bosses at the same time: 'two lords in one field' (*"dvaja páni na jednom poli"*). By this she referred to the fact that the TSP/ATSPs are simultaneously employed by the local municipality and the IA. This dual structure creates some ambiguities and potential tensions derived from different power structures and understandings of their work. Although this issue is discussed elsewhere in the report, here we want to highlight that this dual

structure often led to a certain disembedding in regard to where the TSP belongs. The fact that they were, and were 'not quite', part of local municipalities was reflected not only in the possible issues such as different tensions with mayors regarding their job description or office equipment, but also, on a more symbolic and intersubjective level, signalled a lack of clear belonging and recognition of one's status. At the same time, the TSP/ATSP frequently did not feel enough support from the IA administrative centres. For some TSPs, and in particular ATSPs, financial remuneration of their work appeared as 'not enough' or 'relatively low' (in terms of salary). For instance, they noted that this insufficient care can be seen in the relative lack of adequate trainings provided by the IA (which sometimes even prohibited them from going to trainings, which they found themselves in order to improve their qualifications). It was also seen in the insufficient communication regarding various issues, most recently the uncertainty surrounding their futures as TSPs. Additionally, several TSP/ATSPs working with clients in poor hygienic conditions and with a recurrent history of infectious epidemic diseases, suggested that the IA could provide vaccinations, hand cleaning gels and similar products, or overalls/uniforms for TSP/ATSPs. The fact that the field social work scheme did not have any of these was at times seen as 'those in Bratislava do not really have much idea, what conditions in the field are' and, on a more general level, as not really caring about these things (or failing to recognise them as important). Although they frequently acknowledge the work of RKs and characterised their role as sufficient and helpful, generally they often felt that the Agency should care more.

Also, several TSP/ATSPs expressed that the years of work and extra effort they put in, often seemed not to be valued. For instance, some suggested that 'one sacrifices so much' (for the TSP work and education) (*"človek sa toľko obetuje"*) or 'one invests so much into it' (*"toľko do toho investuje"*) and still doesn't know 'if they will extend us (i.e. their contracts) or not'. Most of the TSP/ATSPs felt that they invested a lot of themselves morally, their energy and emotionally and also financially. Many took additional courses or were studying in order to work in a more professional manner. Some TSP/ATSPs decided to start University degrees in order to enhance their qualifications and skills. This required not only physical, emotional and intellectual investments, but also family sacrifices. In many instances they also studied at private Universities and had to pay fees, transportation, study materials and books. However, many felt that

despite these investments they were not sufficiently valued and the possibility of uncertain futures further accentuated these feelings. These uncertainties can be also situated that in the context of some regions, losing their TSP/ATSP jobs would also pose difficulties in finding alternative and comparable jobs in the same field.

This was further reinforced by the fact that the TSP/ATSPs were funded from an external organ (IA) and always seen as operating on a time-limited project basis. For some, this particular transitory-cum-limited temporary, translated in some cases, as an obstacle for gaining better recognition and acknowledgement of their equal status. In several examples, this was raised by the TSP: "But if we are still [employed] 'through project' they look at us like that." Thus, the structurally ambiguous position with uncertain futures contributed to the TSP's perception about others: "They don't take us seriously (*"neberú nás vážne"*)."

However, the during research we also found several localities in which TSP/ATSPs received adequate recognition and respect from the mayors. The positive recognition of some TSP workers immensely improved the work and effectiveness of field social work in localities. For example, one mayor told us: "Without my ladies (*"bez mojich báb"*) I would not be able to do as many good things as I have done." But even that positive appraisal, which was also supported by generous treatment and full support in material equipment of their offices and social care for his employees, was not free of certain power asymmetries. In the above case, the very expression reflects a particularly gendered way of a male mayor working with his female employees in good working relationships, here familiarly calling them by the informal and affectionate '*báb*', but with clearly delineated power divisions, in which it is clear that there are some things that the mayor wants them to do and the TSPs have to do them, without any possibility of carving out more autonomous positions. So, while he allows them to do their work he also asks for certain information or occasionally asks them to do other things (for example, making announcements on the local radio). We will now turn to some of these asymmetries.

"over there you will be a lady, here you're just a stooge" (asymmetries of tsp/atsp relationships with mayors and other municipality workers)

Despite that most of the clients did not raise the issue of recognition in similar ways as the TSPs, some have become aware of the particular position of the TSP. To illustrate this point we will turn to an ethnographic observation from our fieldwork.

As we were sitting in a TSP office while talking to the TSP and ATSP, a male client in his early 50 s entered the office. He was attended to and assisted with his request. He suspected that the electricity company bill had overcharged him and he was seeking advice on how to challenge the company's notification. The TSP discussed his issue and promised to study the letters he received, in order to provide better-informed advice to his requests. They agreed that the client will come a bit later. As he was about to leave, the client asked about one of the field social work team members planned departure from the field social work project. She was about to start to work as a Community worker (in the sister National Project of Community Centres). Disappointed to hear the news, the client first lamented: "What are we going to do without you?" But he also immediately added, in a more approving manner: "It's good that you're leaving… over there you be a Lady [someone], here you're just a stooge." After he left the office, the TSP worker turned to me and commented: "So you can see for yourself how things are here… even our clients see how we're treated [by the mayors and other municipality officers]."

This short vignette highlights specific feelings of insufficient recognition from the mayors but also vis-à-vis the field social work structures. The client's comment unwittingly touched upon the very sensitive issue, which was raised by a number of TSP/ATSPs. In this case, the long-term TSP worker started to experience her third mayor. Although several months passed since he was elected, he has shown "very little, if any, interest in our work. I have invited him several times to come to see us so I could explain to him what are we doing and to talk about our work and future. But he still has not stopped by our office a single time… I know he is busy with many other things. He wants to apply for all the new projects that are out there but that [he hasn't come to see us] tells you something." Her words touched upon the issue of perceived lack of interest and also recognition, which many TSP/ATSP workers felt during their work.

In cases where there was an interest from the mayors regarding the field social work, its intensity and focus varied. In very few localities, seen here more as exceptions, mayors truly recognised and valued their field social work teams. One mayor even said that he would back up their TSPs and managed to pay them for a few months (from the municipality budget) in the case the extension of TSP incurred some delays. His commitments to and the significance he attached to the field social work was further reinforced by claiming that he would "try as much as possible to keep them here in some way, even if the TSP would have some significant [time] delay in continuing." As he pointed out, "I wouldn't want to lose them. They have been like my right hand." He saw the everyday work of the TSP positively: "If there is a small accident, they can deal with it and prevent it from becoming a big problem… If there would be no TSPs (*tereňáci*) half of the things would not be noticed and then they would only appear as big problems." He emphasised how the field social work often spotted possible issues at their early stages and their timely interventions then prevented these in becoming more significant. A good illustration would be to help clients with some unpaid bill or debt, which might lead to significantly multiplied indebtedness and threats from debt collectors.

But even in cases where the mayors recognised their significance, the picture was not only positive but also entailed some possible limits and 'cracks'. In some cases, the mayors truly supported their TSP/ATSPs by all moral, material and social forms and means without interfering in their work. In other instances, we encountered that the mayor not only supported them but also assumed that the TSP/ATSP will share his/her vision of the clients and the ways that their 'problems' should be solved. In several localities, we have thus seen how the mayors' recognition *would only be possible* in so far as the TSP/ATSP would act rather submissively vis-à-vis the mayor and somehow fit in his/her ideas. This differentiated form of recognition was also influenced by, and hinged on, other factors and power differentials such as gender (i.e. in the case of older dominant male mayor vs. female TSP) or ethnicity (i.e. usually non-Roma mayor and young Roma TSP/ATSP worker). These factors influence

the mayors' position of authority and the very asymmetries crucial for making such 'recognition' viable only if the TSP/ATSP accepted and were willing to collaborate with mayors. However, in some instances this also meant some possible clash with the *Introduction to Standards of the Field Social Work* and passing on of sensitive information about the lives of the clients, which could be used for 'better' or for 'worse' by the mayors.[7]

One of the pervasive features that the TSP/ATSP often encountered was the lack of recognition of their work and of them as equal workers. The lack of recognition could be related to the mayors' indifference or attaching a low value to the field social work. At the same time, the negotiation of recognition was not only restricted to their relationship with mayors and their support of the TSP/ATSP workers. It was also a matter of collaborating with other municipality employees. One of the recurrent sentiments expressed by the TSP was that they felt overlooked by their co-workers at the municipalities. Some have ascribed this as 'envy' of their work. As one aptly put it: "We often encounter our colleagues telling us: 'Once again you're going for a stroll… I would also like this kind of job.'" Her comments relate to the common perception of their work as easy, as only going for a walk or having a chat but generally not having tough duties and tasks, located and restricted to the office spaces. Additionally, the lack of recognition was for some, derived from the stigma of working with a particular kind of the clients. They were seen as those who are 'working with Gypsies'. The clients' problematic reputation and stigma in the eyes of other employees of institutions contributed to the marginalisation and lack of adequate recognition of their work as 'proper work'. Another comment illustrates this rather well: "but what kind of job is it really… just to have a bit of chat with the Gypsies?"

7 This moralising assessment would depend on the position of the person. For example, what might appear as 'beneficial' for some mayors, can be, at the same time, seen as 'harmful' by the clients. It seems that passing sensitive information on to other figures and institutions is certainly not the role of the TSPs and it should be avoided.

positive recognition of work within structural constraints

At the same time, the work of the TSP/ATSP was often highly valued for different merits and using different criteria. Because in many localities the TSP/ATSPs came to deal with a wide range of issues and work that were defined less by their work nature and more by the problem and/or groups they dealt with (i.e. social problems often ascribed to socially marginal and stigmatised Roma). This also meant that with the TSP/ATSP working at the municipalities, a significant amount of workload from other offices was consulted, assisted with or even exclusively dealt with by them. In the structurally constrained municipalities with limited budgets, this help was particularly welcomed and valued. For some, it had also an added symbolic value reflecting the deeply entrenched structural and institutional fabrics of racism since they 'don't have to deal with these Gypsies'. These observations were confirmed by some TSPs in localities where, as they described it, "We have to deal with everything that relates to Roma… Some officials [and bureaucrats] refer them [to the entering Roma clients] automatically to us… we will deal with the things they need." These comments highlight how the presence of the TSP created a racist logic and division of labour in which the other state/municipality officers automatically referred the Roma/Gypsy citizens to the TSP. When I asked if these even include things that they would not necessarily associate with their official work tasks and 'duties', she answered: "What can we do… some of the forms that the officials should provide to them [the Roma clients], we have to download from the internet, print out and then fill them in for them." Although these comments reflect rather more extreme examples, many TSPs perceived that they shared a large portion of municipality work. Even if they did not think that they were asked to do things not necessarily related to field social work, they considered their work highly important and helpful for the municipality. "If we don't run the errands and don't arrange things for our clients, then many big problems come and then they [the clients] would come to the municipality office." This remark of another TSP illustrates that the TSPs often considered their ordinary work as acts of prevention and a pre-emptive solving of problems in their early phases. Their work was often helping the municipalities to avoid issues that would grow into bigger proportions and which would then have to be dealt with by the municipality officers. But it was precisely this invisibility of these 'ordinary' and everyday actions that also contributed to the perceived lack of recognition by others who did not see these in this context.

Although we outlined some limits and issues with recognition, we must note that many officers at local municipalities were aware of how helpful and useful the TSP/ATSP's work is for the functioning of municipality structures. They suggested that they 'help us greatly'. As some interviewed municipality workers said, "They are really great and help us a lot with what we need. But you know that we don't know whether they are going to stay or not… [therefore] it is difficult [for us] to rely on that. It would be good if they could stay because otherwise all the work will again return to us at the municipality." What is particularly striking in this quote is that the local municipality worker refers to the field social workers positively but yet, not quite equally, due to their time limited work. Her words also illustrates the worried awareness that, in the case the TSPs stop working, their workload would increase exponentially (especially with clients they generally try to avoid dealing with). She also made an implicit subtle distinction between TSPs and 'us' who are working at the 'municipality'. Despite being formally based, hosted and administered by the local municipalities, the field social workers are often continued to be seen ambiguously as temporary and not part of the 'municipality' structures.

In some instances, this perceived lack of recognition was further reinforced by the material equipment of the field social work offices or the very location of the offices. Thus, in some instances, the researchers encountered that the field social work office was located in inadequate and disconnected spaces. In one village, the TSP/ATSP office was a former 'club-room' (lounge), equipped only with old computers inherited from their municipality colleagues (after they had received new ones) with no internet connection. It was located at the back of the municipality building and one had to go around the building to find it. Elsewhere, they had to share an office with the coordinators of Activation Work (only divided by a provisional 'curtain', which creates a symbolic and optical division of space but does not allow the privacy necessary for dealing with clients). This lack of care was manifested both in material terms and also interpreted by the TSPs on a symbolic level of neglect and lack of recognition of their work. In several other localities, the field social work office was given marginal office spaces and equipped with old computers, again when the other municipality employees got new ones. We have also seen how in one field social work office, the mayor used it for other things as well (making public announcements on the local municipality radio) and this also sometimes included the TSP workers (who were asked to help making announcements).

"we are good for them if they need something, but if we need something from them, then [we hear that] 'they can't.'"

There are asymmetrical partnerships and collaboration between the TSPs and other institutions. The lack of equal recognition must also be related to other institutions working with the clients in other capacities and thus collaborating with the TSP/ATSP. These institutions can range from employees of the Labour Office (ÚPSVR) to police officers. Although these institutions often considered their collaboration with the TSP as 'useful' and working 'very well', the feelings of the TSPs were not always the same (though many of them characterised their relationships as good). The institutions often considered the knowledge of field social workers as helpful but in most cases there was also a sense that this relationship is clearly asymmetrical. At times, this was related to the assumption that 'we are all in the same (one) boat' without the institution's workers realising the specificity of the TSP position. Frequently, there was an underlying assumption about what constitutes 'good' or 'interest' from the point of view of these institutions. However, this illusion of shared agenda and moral grounds, were not always shared by the TSP, whose position and officially defined working duties might differ from other institutions precisely because they were situated in between the clients and other institutions (and thus, at least theoretically, not always serving the other institutions' agendas). According to the TSP, in the official definition of their duties and tasks (see the *Introduction to Standards of the Field Social Work*), there is a lot of information that should not be shared with the other institutions in order to protect the interests agreed to with the clients. However, many institutional workers do not understand this and assume that the TSP should give them the information they need. At the same time, we have also encountered some TSPs who suggested that the other institutions 'understand our role and don't ask for anything that serious'.

During our field research, for instance, we also talked to several police officers who characterised the TSP/ATSP work in localities and their collaboration with them very positively. As one of the police officers noted: "We are willing to help each other. The cooperation works very well. We would even want to work more with them because it is beneficial for everyone." When we interviewed the TSP from the same locality, she mentioned their good cooperation with institutions but also pointed out possible ambiguities, limits and dilemmas

stemming from their interactions. Specifically, when mentioning police officers she commented: "They would want to collaborate with us even more closely but we can't!" By drawing certain limits to this assumed closeness, she referred to the delicate and sensitive information that the TSPs feel they must protect from other state agents' that could potentially use it *against* the interests of the clients. She was well aware that they are dealing with 'a lot of issues among our clients that I simply can't share with the police officers [as they would like]'. But it was precisely these lines – drawn between what the TSP considered to be 'sensitive' or ' needs to be shared' with other authorities governing the poor (and Roma) – that became contested, blurred and ambiguous and their re-drawing greatly differed in the practices of individual TSP/ATSPs and their power position vis-à-vis the mayors, and other municipal and institutional agents.

Some TSP/ATSPs also commented that they are not treated as equal by other institutions. For instance, one noted: "When they need to find out something, to get some information, then we're good for them. But whenever we need something from them they [they say that they] can't [help]." Her remark illustrates how some of the institutions, such as employees of the Labour Office (ÚPSVR), social workers who were not employed via the field social work project, (or even debt collectors), did not recognise them as equal and did not reciprocate in the same ways.

At the same time, as most of the TSP/ATSPs interviewed acknowledged, the institutions and their employees should not be lumped together and one cannot generalise about all of them. "It is all about specific people…There are some employees who we know won't be helpful but others with whom we have developed excellent working relationships and are very helpful." At times, they also described how different forms of communication also helped in resolving their requests. One TSP noted: "When we call them, they barely talk. But when I later wrote an official email, I received a positive and fair answer." Another TSP gave another example of how she was once treated so badly when "accompanying one of our clients in person… I don't know if it was because of the [kind of] clients [and their stigma]. But when I phoned her a few days later, the officer was very nice to me again." The relationships between TSPs and other institutions were thus often dependent on a range of other factors (ranging from personal to structural, or contextually dependent ones). In general, however, it seems that the TSPs were seen as not equally recognised and tended to be treated more as service/information providers for the other institutions than equal partners in solving and addressing clients' issues.

"one brings many victims… and no thanks heard" (tsp/atsp vs. client's relations)

The issue of recognition played out in unexpected forms also in the relationships between TSP/ATSPs and clients. Some TSPs described their sentiments in a rather telling way. "It is thankless work." This is because of the hard and 'invisible' work and sacrifices. It is also because: 'like in any other job dealing with people, it is a difficult job'. But it is seen as 'thankless' precisely because of the problematic and stigmatised group of clients with whom one works. It is also seen as such, because one only rarely sees some big results. It is seen more as 'carthorse work' (*"mravčia práca"*).

In one of the replies reflecting upon the positive and negative aspects of their work, one TSP replied: "What can be demotivating is when a client doesn't know where the limits of decency are and considers the field social worker to be his servant." Or, other TSPs characterised the issue as: "During this [field social] work one needs a large portion of empathy, understanding and a willingness to help. I'm happy with the job. I'm particularly happy when I see that the client is also satisfied and thanks me for my help." And yet another suggested: "One sacrifices so much and still doesn't even get a 'thank you.'" This last sentence is telling. Despite some of the key principles of social work stating that the TSP/ATSPs should not emotionally wait for clients' gratitude, many of the field social workers would consider these acts of gratitude to be important. On one level, this would be encouraging, energising and rewarding for their efforts. These acts of gratefulness would be a welcomed recognition of the meaningfulness of their work, which they often felt went unnoticed and underestimated. In addition to the rewarding aspect, their positive responses to 'gratitude" and frustrated feelings of perceived 'ungratefulness' were also embedded within historically developed ideas about the deserving and undeserving poor, as well

as the Roma. For some TSP/ATSPs, the perceived lack of gratitude resonated with the dominant representations of Roma as 'ungrateful subjects' who are 'used to taking without giving back' (and thus seen as 'faulty' citizens breaking the idea of reciprocity between citizens and the state).

These particular comments reflecting the perceived lack of appreciation and gratefulness were, in particular, raised by the group we earlier described in this report as 'good Slovak mothers' and middle-aged non-Roma ATSP. But even the professionally educated TSPs who graduated with Social Work (and other related) degrees – and were taught that as social workers they should not really be expecting 'gratitude' as an indicator of their work performance – often found that the clients are not only ungrateful but they often argue with them or accuse them of helping those who are seen as oppressing them. It was not only the frequent lack of 'gratitude', which made the TSPs feel demotivated. It was also the very Sisyphean nature of their jobs, in which they felt like they are frequently addressing some unchangeable and unsolvable issue. This was explained with references to the imagined 'nature' of the clients and/or with the perceived worsening of socio-economic opportunities, structural oppression and other forces continuously trapping their clients into various difficulties and hardships. For example, one TSP said: "One sometimes asks herself 'why am I doing all of this' [with a sigh of hopelessness]… how many times does it happen that you arrange something for them, for example a 'repayment schedule', and then you come to see them again and they are again not paying [the instalments according to the agreed schedule]." Her point shows how their efforts and frequently many hours of work, appeared to be 'thrown away' by the perceived irresponsibility, unreliability or some other structural forces and inequalities.

The expected relationships with clients and the long-term struggles and 'thankless' nature of these jobs led some to what they described as a state of 'burnout' (syndrome) or ironic remarks, cynicism and sarcasm about their jobs. Such self-ironic comments were often articulated in reference to the seeming hopelessness and perceived impossibility to change the situations, conditions and predicaments they were dealing with.

At the same time, and in contrast to the tendencies described above, a good number of TSPs described that the most rewarding experience of their jobs come from particular relationships and cases in which they achieved some positive change (despite initial difficulties or perceived complexity and seeming impossibility to change anything). Some were proud and felt joy when they managed to solve certain situations. Others derived recognition from the feelings of 'a job well done' or from seeing receptive and conscientious clients who were willing to actively work with them (rather than those seen as 'passive' and 'demanding without making any effort'). Some TSP/ATSPs also developed good collegial, and even friendship-like relationships with other TSP/ATSPs from the same work teams and from different localities. These ties also forged particular forms of mutual recognition of their work and difficulties. These relationships were seen as greatly positive for their work.

striving for recognition from family and friends

The issue of recognition also emerged in discussions concerning relationships between TSPs and their family members and friends about their views about the field social work. During the fieldwork, three sets of reactions were recorded and observed. Firstly, it was seen to be a good job (especially for TSPs who were seen as relatively well paid – in contrast to ATSPs), which is based locally. This was particularly true in areas where it was practically impossible to find a job on the official labour market. Some also saw it as a good job because of its status of working at the municipality and/or sometimes accompanied with higher educational achievements (such as a University Degree). Some TSP/ATSPs also saw positive changes in their family members' attitudes towards their work, as well as towards the Roma groups in general, as a consequence of their work. Some of them were also seen by their friends and relatives as doing a positive job, in which they have to somehow sacrifice for the greater common good and honourable aims in striving for a better society (regardless of positive or negative views about the clients they worked with). The second reaction could be found among the TSP's family members who saw their job rather indifferently. These TSPs have maintained a clear division between work and home. As one mentioned: "I don't have any problems. I don't talk to my husband about my work at home and he is not really interested [in it] anyway." However, the third reaction was mostly negative and there were some TSP/ATSPs who did not feel supported by their families in

their jobs. Additionally, they often feel that their job position puts them into an ambiguous position vis-à-vis their immediate families, peers and friendship networks. Their work was often seen through the stigma expressed by the common perception: 'You're working with those Gypsies'. Thus, some TSP/ATSP found it difficult to justify and explain their work in the prevailing anti-Gypsy sentiments in Slovakia. This was not necessarily only a case of simple anti-Gypsyism, but was also reinforced by the perception of 'how difficult it is to change the Gypsies'. Or, 'you won't change them' types of comments, which were further undermining to the TSP work morale. Additionally, some family members remarked about the relatively low salary conditions (especially among the ATSPs) considering how demanding the work with groups considered to be problematic is. Some even suggested that this job is not 'worth the money' considering all the kinds of difficulties they perceived it consisted of.

Different sets of perceptions were associated to the RK position and the status associated with their work. Frequently, the RKs derived more recognition from their work position. This was not only because of the financial valuation but also the symbolic prestige surrounding the position. This recognition did not necessarily have anything to do with the actual knowledge of the job and concrete tasks and responsibilities of the RKs. Often, it was based on the ways in which it was imagined by friends and family members. For instance, in one locality with a Roma RK, we recorded words of praise, pride and respect: "He even goes to ministries in Bratislava regularly." Although the person's comments were based on a certain level of misrecognition, of seeing the RK as working at the 'ministries', it highlights the significance and symbolic status attached to the RK jobs as being a person with a great deal of responsibility and power that goes beyond the municipality's boundaries (in fact, as another respondent put it in reference to RK work, "He can even tell off the mayor if there is some problem.")

conclusion

In this chapter we addressed the issue of recognition of field social workers, which we operationalized as recognition of TSP/ATSPs on the part of municipalities, institutions and clients. The dual structure of employing TSP/ATSPs causes certain confusion and tension due to functioning of power structures in municipalities and stemming from this different understanding of field social work. The fact that the TSP/ATPs are 'not quite' village employees, may be reflected not only in the tension between the TSP/ATSPs and mayors regarding the content of work. In some cases, the lack of recognition underlined the lack of material equipment, inadequate facilities and location of the office. Perceptions of some TSP/ATSPs of not being recognised enough, were deepened by the fact that they were perceived as project workers who work on a time-limited project basis. The question of recognition has emerged in relations between the TSP/ATSP and clients. Some TSP/ATSPs perceive their job as 'thankless' because they seldom see significant results.

During our fieldwork we also found municipalities where TSP/ATSPs enjoyed appropriate recognition and respect, such recognition enormously improves field social work effectiveness and results. According to some TSP/ATSPs their most positive work experience came in instances where despite initial difficulties, they achieved some positive changes among clients. Some TSP/ATSPs also succeeded in establishing good collegial and friendly relations with other field social workers, either within their team or with those from other municipalities. These links helped to strengthen specific forms of mutual recognition among field social workers.

conclusion

what changes on a local level were brought about by the field social work

The field social work projects entailed a number of changes in municipalities, which have been discussed in different parts of this report. The forms and degrees of changes brought about by the field social work depended on a number of factors. There were some significant differences between larger towns or cities on the one hand and small towns and villages on the other hand. While the former group often recorded less visible changes (due to the vast size of territory and numerous population), the latter established field social work as an integral part of municipal policies and strategies for assisting the poor.

Despite the various limitations and shortcomings discussed elsewhere in the text, field social work established itself as a significant tool of an everyday form of social assistance. It proved helpful, and in many localities almost indispensable, for dealing in a continuous way and through a sustained everyday presence with the social issues experienced by the most marginalised groups in Slovakia. It has become beneficial for the local municipalities, in which the TSP/ATSPs established themselves as specialised experts on these issues, which were previously dealt with only by different bureaucrats with little/no training or possibly by NGOs who might have happened to work in the localities. In this sense, the field social work also became one of the first and most stable services operating locally, working with clients and frequently acting as mediators between clients (considering their perspectives and taking into consideration their complex family and social circumstances) and the state and other institutions. This positionality also entails a shift from traditionally more punitive and disciplinary approaches encountered by the poor at the hands of other state and non-state institutions in Slovakia in the last two decades.

In many localities, the TSP/ATSP also acted as a mediator and communicator between the municipality and the marginalised residents, as well as between the neighbourhood relations' issues. The research also recorded very positive effects that the field social workers had had in some localities, the dropping level of children's school absenteeism, for an example. The TSP/ATSPs often developed good working relationships with other institutions and these synergies often improved the cooperation between clients and the institutions, as well as mutual understanding.

For most of the mayors, the TSP/ATSPs worked well and they expressed the wish for the continuation of field social work in their village or town. At the same time, in some localities, the field social work practices and engagements did not work unequivocally in positive ways. Thus, it would not be accurate to generalise these observations about all localities where field social work operates. As discussed elsewhere in the text, in some localities the field social workers acted more as an 'extended hand of the mayor' who might have often acted in a patronising and disciplinary manner. In these localities, the field social workers frequently replicated the traditional more paternalistic ways of dealing with clients and failed to develop better social relationships with their clients. In some localities, the field social workers spent more time being closed in offices located far from clients, or offices that were not very accessible. Elsewhere, the field social workers became the 'extended hand of the state' and clients did not have any trust in the workers. Also, we have observed how in some localities the creation of a field social work office with its workers led to the shifting of responsibility (and to some extent a refusal of responsibility) on the side of mayor and other municipality employees to deal with 'the Gypsies'. This scenario did not have positive effects, as the Roma clients were automatically directed to the field social workers rather than dealt with in ways similar to other citizens.

From an analytical perspective, we can discern how the work of the field social workers positively contributed to prevent some forms of a continuing deepening of poverty and indebtedness. Considering the current aggressive forms of 'loans' or recent laws shifting towards greater 'punitiveness' targeting the poor, small forms of transgression can often generate some grave consequences that can be prevented or at least mitigated. What we mean by these forms of 'transgression' can range from delays in bill payments to state or non-state agencies, or not responding quickly to official documents issued by state institutions. These acts have led to some unnecessary forms of indebtedness and punishment, which contribute to a growing marginalisation and deepening of social problems among the poorest. For instance, the very fact that the TSPs frequently acted as mediators for negotiating a debt payment schedule (*splátkové kalendáre*) or communicated with various debt collection officials. In many localities, in which we can characterise the work of TSP/ATSP as professional, and willing to follow and enhance the *Introduction to Standards of the Field Social Work* regulations, their impact on the everyday lives of the poor was very important.

in what way has the national project (np tsp) changed the quality of field social work implementation

One of the most significant changes of the field social work programme recorded in the 2007–2013 programming period, has been the shift from open call for proposals projects (DOP) to the National Project (NP TSP). In terms of administrative design within the NP TSP, the IA acts as the beneficiary of financial assistance, while the actual performance of the field social work is provided by municipalities. The biggest change that significantly simplifies the whole process of project administration could thus be considered that the grant recipient does not need to submit an application for payment but only issues a simple invoice (*čestné vyhlásenie*). As a result, the flow of money became smooth, which was viewed unambiguously positively by municipalities.

TSP/ATSP respondents rated NP TSP (compared with the previous open call for proposals projects) largely positive. According to some respondents, the administration within the NP TSP diminished. However, other respondents indicated that there is still a substantial administrative burden, which means that much less time can be spent with clients in the field. Most respondents positively appreciated the fact that the administrative records about clients can help them in their work. These administrative records represent, systematized, rich and the most complex materials on social exclusion at the local level. These can serve as a basis for the further professionalization of field social work.

The National Project represents major progress toward the professionalization of performance with uniform methodology, which effectively allows coordination and monitoring of the situation of marginalised clients. In the next programming period, however, it is necessary to provide for a system of supervision and trainings for TSP/ATSP, which would further enhance the quality of work.

in what way has supervision and methodological guidance from the ia influenced implementation and impact of the field social work

An important step to methodological guidance and monitoring of working conditions was done in the framework of the National Project by the establishment of Regional Coordinators (RK) positions. However, as we in the field observed, municipalities sometimes did not comply with conditions regarding the field social work that they committed to by the signing of the contract (i.e. poorly located offices, inadequate facilities, lack of office equipment) also supervision and checks by the IA needs to be pursued consistently – to ensure compliance with the commitments that were officially stated in the contract.

The introduction of standard reimbursement costs (*jednotkové výdavky*) to finance certain types of activities (travel, telephone) was an innovation, which simplifies the administrative burden. In practice, however, it showed that the amount of these standard reimbursement costs was significantly undervalued and did not meet the necessary needs. If, standard reimbursement costs are further used, the IA must review the calculation methodology.

During the fieldwork we experienced the phenomenon that different informal and often controversial information about the future of the field social work project and its relation to other sister projects (e.g. National Project Community Centres, or 'take-away' TSP run by Office of the Governmental Roma Plenipotentiary) led to some confusion among workers. This caused unnecessary tension and adversely affected the quality of work performance. Therefore, it is necessary that the IA ensures a consistent and reliable flow of relevant information of this type from Bratislava to the field social work teams in regions.

The question of trainings and supervision proved to be one of the weakest elements of the field social work programmes throughout the programming period and an unfulfilled promise. Despite the explicit goal within the NP TSP, trainings and supervision necessary to further professionalize field social work, have not been provided, or were provided only at a very insufficient level.

It is necessary for the IA to pay special attention to forms of job performance evaluation, which must take into account not only formal administrative issues and record keeping. In addition to the RK's regular visits to municipalities and meetings with TSP/ATSPs, they should also visit clients. They should walk unaccompanied by the TSP/ATSPs, and should speak directly with clients and discuss their perception of field social work. This is key feedback that can help improve the quality of performance.

how have different actors (clients, municipalities, social field workers, and the public) perceived the field social work

The final report was deliberately structured in such a way that individual chapters deal with individual problem areas in the performance of field social work, that were identified during project preparation as well as during actual field research. Within each of the analysed problem areas we identified a great diversity of ideas and practices within the 'groups' of actors, which we tried to describe. This also means that a detailed answer to this research question can be found in various places in this report.

In general, it can be said that clients are well aware that in their municipality field social work is carried out, and perceive it positively (except for the larger towns where awareness of field social work depends on specific areas or specific population groups). In particular cases, field social work significantly helps to solve everyday problems, which marginalized individuals or households are facing due to various circumstances. The clients' perception of field social work is conditioned by the daily presence of, and physical proximity, to individual workers. In communities where field social work is performed at a very high professional level, most clients expressed very positive attitudes. In many villages, we recorded such and similar opinions: "We cannot say anything bad. Field workers always help us when needed." On the other hand, in certain areas, we also met with some criticism because of perceived paternalistic behaviour and alleged 'snitching' (*donášanie*) to other institutions or mayors, or ethnically perceived 'disinterest' on the part of non-Roma (*gadža*), who were employed as TSPs. For example, in one location several clients stated: "Two *gadžiky* [non-Roma women] got this work [TSP]. They do not know the community, but they

are on good terms with the mayor. Well, they do not even come to see Roma in the community." Some of these criticisms resonate with the perception that this work should be 'for the Roma – but Roma never get it'.[8]

In certain extreme cases, it became apparent that in some marginalized regions, respondents were unaware of the services provided by the field social work. In certain cases, the absence of information about field social work could be caused by difficult access (within the larger towns), but also by little effort from the TSP/ATSPs to perform everyday fieldwork and their preference to sit in the office. In general, despite some critical opinions that pointed out some shortcomings, the overwhelming majority of clients expressed positive opinions about the services and work that TSP/ATSPs carried out.[9]

In interviews, representatives of municipalities perceived field social work clearly positively and confirmed the interest of the municipality to continue with the project in the future. Often mentioned in particular, was that the issues and problems, now tackled by TSP/ATSPs, would, without the project, remain on their shoulders and the municipality would have to deal with it with its own resources. Therefore, for them the project represents significant help. However, in reality there are some nuances in terms of the extent to which representatives of municipalities considered field social work important or useful. The degree of importance attached by the municipality to field social work, in turn, translates into factors that affect job performance. This is the case e.g. office equipment, labour standards, compliance with the labour code, and overall recognition of field social workers by the municipality.

8 This criticism has been articulated in municipalities, in which either there were no Roma in teams or work as an ATSP. From a statistical point of view, it seems that this criticism is based on some degree of truthfulness, because it strikingly reflects the significantly higher number of non-Roma TSPs.

9 During the research we did not encounter instances of a preference for 'sitting in the office' and the absence of field work from the side of field social workers. Authors of such cases, however, observed this in their other long-term research in eastern Slovakia, especially in the initial period of the field social work programmes.

The perception of field social work by TSP/ATSPs and RKs are described by us in detail elsewhere in the report. Generally speaking, their perception is influenced by: structural conditions (size of the village, size of the Roma community, etc.), position of the municipality towards field social work (facilities and equipment provided, etc.), and social status and career trajectories of field social workers. The TSP/ATSPs are, to varying degrees, committed to their work and carry it out according to their skills and knowledge. On the other hand, field social workers, to various extents, may harbour feelings of dissatisfaction (for example with salary or an uncertain future regarding employment) and a lack of recognition resulting from the fact that they are employed temporarily on a project and that they work with highly stigmatized populations.

what systemic measures should the slovak republic accept in order to improve quality and efficiency of the performance of field social work

It have to be emphasized that as key, a systemic issue appears to be ensuring the continuity of the field social work programmes and projects. Otherwise there is a risk that the positive results that field social work achieved in municipalities will be lost. The question of discontinuing projects also involves the potential loss of highly skilled workers, and thus directly affects the quality of field social work.

A statistical analysis of the field social work projects and correlation with the Atlas of Roma Communities yielded two important findings: the field social work projects have actually been targeted to locations where Roma have worse living conditions than are considered average living conditions in the total of municipalities where Roma live. The analysis also showed that there are significant regional differences in relation to where field social work projects were implemented and that there are locations with a strong representation of marginalized Roma communities, where it is likely, that the accumulated problems could have been handled by the field social work. Therefore, in the next programming period it would be necessary to target field social work projects precisely to these localities.

It is inevitable and necessary to ensure not only the continuation of field social work but also to extend it. Not all sites, which such assistance for needs of the poor and socially marginalized were covered by field social work. It is necessary to ensure adequate availability of the programmes, in terms of informing municipalities about the possibilities for grants, as well as in terms of simple administration and low co-financing.

It is necessary to continue to professionalize the programmes and to adopt detailed and comprehensive standards of field social work to ensure decent working and social conditions for workers and to secure training and supervision for them. Due to the concurrence of several field social work programmes in the future (National Project of Community Centres, 'take-away' project of the Office of the Governmental Roma Plenipotentiary, National Project Healthy Communities) it will be necessary to coordinate these programmes on the local level.

recommendations

The recommendations resulting from the assessment of field social work are formulated at different levels: some are in the form of operational recommendations and others are of a strategic nature. We divided them into the following groups:

- Operational recommendations on issues of material character in the performance field social work,
- Recommendations in the area of the interactions and relationships between various social actors in carrying-out field social work,
- Strategic recommendations in programme design, institutional and administrative structures relating to the programme of field social work.

operational recommendations on issues of material character

securing adequate equipment and proper location of offices

It is of utmost importance that the field social workers are assigned autonomous, sufficient and well-equipped offices. It is important that there is no sharing with other officers. The office must be accessible and clearly designated. It must be a welcoming space for clients and accessible to them (i.e. not in the main municipality offices in bigger cities, where clients would have to ask the doorman to let them in and find it difficult to find the office, which can be also intimidating). It should be convenient to see clients (no limits on space, privacy, etc.).

There should be some unified regulations regarding the standards of technical equipment – enough access to Xerox-copiers (which so far, in practice, is often dependent on the local mayor's office desire to help and assist). Good innovation is also important, i.e. a nice board with information, children's corner.

We encountered greatly varying standards of office equipment and localities. While some TPSs were provided with excellent support from the side of the mayors, others were found in rather poor working conditions. We recommend that better monitoring of the technical equipment must be in place. Additionally, some TPS/ATPSs, in localities where mayors were not particularly supportive, found that they could not deliver sufficient services to the clients due to lack of material conditions.

It is often that inconvenient (or poorly located) offices for field social work are interpreted by the municipality as a temporary condition, despite the fact that this situation persists for months or throughout the whole duration of the project. Therefore, the IA should monitor the situation from the very beginning of the project cycle and take appropriate measures to secure conveniently located office space.

It would be appropriate to adopt more unified and detailed provisions concerning standards of technical equipment: to define what 'office supplies' are, explicitly require a photocopier (an absolutely essential and crucial tool for the job), define how it will provide 'sufficient' access for the TSP/ATSP to the copier (the photocopier is often placed at the mayor's secretariat and to access it, the TSP/ATSPs have to overcome some barriers), to define what 'computer systems' mean, and how many computers will be given to a field social work team, define the quality of internet connection, further define the parameters and modernity of PCs and monitors (we have seen in some instances that TSP/ATSPs use technically obsolete PCs and non-compliant monitors).

set more realistic level of resources for travel

The current system of reimbursements for travel is insufficient. The current amount allocated for the TSP/ATSP is neither sufficient nor flexible. The possibilities for TSP/ATSPs to travel to accompany their clients to institutions, must be better facilitated in the structures of TSP/ATSPs. In general, the issues with commuting to particular institutions seems to inhibit the effectiveness of field social work. For localities situated on the main roads to cities, this did not seem to be such a problem since there are frequent public transportation connections to the regional towns. However, for localities from far-away or marginalised spaces, this represents a major hurdle in enhancing their work and the possibility to assist their clients. If in the future, funding through the standard reimbursement costs (*jednotkové výdavky)* will be used, it is necessary to review the calculation methodology. Considering that in some areas workers do not need to travel intensively (in district towns) and in some quite the opposite, it would be appropriate to calculate norms for different groups of municipalities according to the types in relation to their geographical positions.

consider the possibility of taking clients from neighbouring communities

During the fieldwork we have encountered a number of localities where the marginalisation of Roma seems in great need for a TSP presence and work. Some TSP/ATSPs from localities, which border with these, say that some of their clients come to their offices in their home localities. They assist them at their offices but due to travel restrictions and the area of coverage, they do not go to their localities. In light of these findings, we suggest that there should be some additional reform in the ways TSP/ATSPs can travel to their clients (and support and enhance the system of claims for reimbursement for their travel). This does not necessarily mean that the TSP/ATSP has to cover 'more localities'. It would, however, give them possibilities to provide assistance to people from outside of the locality if they ask for it (i.e. by visiting their office) and/or go and travel to other localities in case there are some important issues requiring the solving of particular problems (i.e. related to clients' extended family located in a different locality). To improve the system in this aspect, would significantly improve services and more equal availability of the field social work services. It would also help clients who are officially registered in different localities to occasionally come for advice, etc.

ensure that the amount of the phone costs is in line with real needs

A large part of the TSP/ATSP's workload consists of calling various institutions in the interests of clients. The current amount for phone calls proved to be unrealistically low. If in the future the standard reimbursement costs (*jednotkové výdavky*) will be used, it is necessary to review the method of calculation. The possibility of reimbursing mobile flat rates or pre-paid credits should also be considered.

ensure safety at work and secure protective equipment

It should be ensured that work clothes (overalls) are available for TSP/ATSPs who request them. For example, in some localities with hygienic or medical problems (jaundice, infectious diseases) – these work overalls could consist of shoes, trousers, jacket, cap (could be with the IA MAPSVR SR logo). Its use can remain optional but some TSP/ATSPs might request it for greater work satisfaction and protection. This might also forge a greater sense of identity as a TSP/worker. This is also related to the fact that all TSP/ATSPs should be equipped with basics, such as soap, washing gel, towel – this could be done in collaboration with the mayors.

ensure that field social work performance is at all times in accordance with applicable law (e.g. labour code)

We witnessed the situation that in some municipalities, TSP/ATSP workers, despite current legislation, were not receiving food vouchers from the employer (municipalities), because they were (wrongly) not perceived as full-fledged municipality workers (but also as 'those who are doing the project'). The IA must ensure that all municipalities strictly adhere to the applicable laws (Labour Code) relating to labour and legal circumstances of the field social work performance.

recommendations in the area of mutual interactions and relations between various actors

ensure transparent relations in communication within the programme structure and between various field social work programmes

The relevant governing bodies (the IA, the Ministry) should ensure good and transparent relationships between different forms of assistance (financed from various sources or under different priorities within the Operational Programme such as e.g. National Project of Community Centres, 'take-away' project of the Office of the Governmental Roma Plenipotentiary, National Project Healthy Communities). In this respect, it would be reasonable to consider the possibilities for joint coordination, or the merger of two separate projects.

In the field we heard various rumours and informal information spread among TSP/ATSPs about the future of projects. Uncertainty for field social workers about the future of the projects was causing unnecessary tension. Many TSP/ATSPs were seeing the National Project Community Centres as potential competition and expected the 'fight for a client' within a municipality. Such confusion could be avoided by providing direct and unambiguous information that would be officially delivered to TSP/ATSPs in the localities.

The coexistence of individual projects, therefore, must in the future be coordinated and monitored in order to avoid negative consequences for the field social work. One of the issues that need to be addressed immediately is the question of whether the workers of NP TSP and the National Project Community Centres should be located in the same building – and if so, whether clients will differentiate between the projects or not, and what might the consequences be?

create conditions for a shift from 'extinguishing fires' to 'prevention'

Field social work practices in the field social work programmes, were largely shaped by either institutional requirements (administrative agenda, collecting documents and files of clients, etc.), as well as by the needs and requirements of clients. However, these needs have been largely generated by what we call 'fire extinguishing' – that is, by an approach, which is mostly 'problem-oriented' and not by an approach that also covers forms of prevention and strengthens the empowerment of clients. Qualitative changes can only be achieved if there is adequate structural support for TSP/ATSPs in the performance of their work, it also means enough good material equipment, appropriate facilities, etc.

It is necessary to extend the scope of field social workers in their skills and responsibilities to influence the clients' empowerment. This should not go beyond the TSP/ATSP's personal capacities, especially in terms of their job responsibilities – they are already too busy with many activities and requirements of clients and institutions. The forms of clients' empowerment should include, improving skills for dealing with institutions and clients' involvement in the process – rather than merely assisting clients and keeping them passive.

ensure education and supervision

The issue of trainings and supervision proved to be one of the weakest elements in the field social work programme throughout the programming period and was an unfulfilled promise. The idea of trainings and supervision, is an integral part of the very idea of field social work. NP TSP explicitly works with this idea as one component of its structure. The 2010 evaluation report stated: "Social workers perceive very sensitively the lack of trainings and other support mechanisms, such as supervision." (Hrustic, et al., 2010, p. 14). The request for trainings and supervision was almost unanimously emphasized by all respondents from the ranks of the TSP/ATSPs with whom we spoke.

provide personal trainings for tsp/atsps and possibly for mayors

It is important to provide the trainings that are urgently needed. Perhaps different types of trainings are needed for the TSP/ATSPs and also for mayors on the following topics:

- i.e. 'de-exoticising' the clients (poor, unemployed, often ethnicized stigma), prejudice-challenge training
- legal training
- managing interpersonal relationships – conflict management
- field social work is not about 'waiting for a thank you' (from clients or from institutions)
- Against paternalistic and patronising forms of help, hidden under the veil of 'helping'

There should also be more transparency and consistency about the kinds of trainings, which are useful for the TSP/ATSPs. There is no need for trainings that are nurtured by political demands (e.g. about 'human trafficking') rather than burning issues in the field, but there is a need for more trainings about how

to deal with everyday problems. Some of the old-school TSP mentioned that the initial trainings offered in the first period of field social work (2006–2007) were of huge benefit for them. Thus, the quality of the TSP/ATSP's work in the future may benefit immensely from further trainings and schooling.

schemes for further education

Considering the requirements and changes in the TSP/ATSP, many established TSP/ATSPs find themselves in the precarious position in which they would like to improve their qualifications, but due to their positions find it difficult to find enough time and money to start their university studies. There could be some kind of system of stipends (or special arrangements with the universities), which would support the TSP/ATSPs in their studies (or at least would help them by being helpful while both studying and working).

ensure the provision of psycho-social assistance and care for tsp/atsp

More psycho-social help and care provided for the TSP/ATSP – so that they would get more of a sense of recognition and feeling that their employer does care about them – psychological counselling, trainings/workshops where they would deal with their work with clients and also psychosocial hygiene (i.e. team-building type). The above point is related to the greater need for continuous 'supervision' of the TSP/ATSPs and of the RK.

ensure institutional and symbolic recognition of tsp/atsp

There must be greater institutional and symbolic recognition of the field social work. In other words, they must be taken seriously as institutions themselves, with their own competencies. This relates to their relationships with:

- mayors
- other employees of the municipalities who often see them as 'you are going for a walk again',
- other institutions,

It is important to invest in activities that would improve the self-esteem of field social workers and also the sense of belonging and pride derived from being a TSP/ATSP worker. This could be achieved by improving political lobbying and strengthening the positive image of field social work. For instance, there could be more media coverage of their work, which could highlight the daily work of the field social workers and their achievements and benefits. There should be more communication from Bratislava and RKs with the regional institutions who often see the local TSP/ATSPs. There should be more visibility of TSP/ATSPs via the IA in public sphere – i.e. could have previously contacted some of the official debt collectors. Ultimately, this could also be achieved by structurally changing field social work in the more long-term and permanent structures. This could mean a permanent position at the municipalities but with a certain level of semi-autonomy, which prevents them from being under the direct power relationship with mayors.

need for improving forms of performance monitoring

It is crucial that the RK pay special attention to the forms of assessing the work of the field social workers. They must not only consider the formal and administrative order and record keeping. In addition to talking to the TSP/ATSP, it would be good to visit the field more frequently both with, and crucially, also occasionally without, the company of the TSP/ATSP in order to talk to the clients and discuss their experiences with the work of the TSP/ATSP and their relationship and cooperation with the local municipality power structures. This is important as it might highlight some serious issues with imbalances of power and management of personal privacy regarding the clients' needs and issues.

collaborating but not informing!

The IA should ensure that TSP/ATSPs should by no means disclose any sensitive information (which might harm or endanger their clients) to the mayors or other institutions. There are several ways this could be achieved (i.e. juxtaposing and comparing clients' reactions with the accounts of the TSP, describing

ways in which TSPs assisted in difficult client's cases and providing good feedback on their conduct). There could be trainings or even some clear materials more closely delineating the ethical standards for the TSP/ATSPs.

job vacancies and selection procedure

Unfortunately, at present, there are some lobbyist pressures, in the process of selection for vacancies. Participants in commissions set up for job interviews are encountering a variety of dilemmas arising from conflicts of various interests. In this respect, a guarantee of greater transparency and more attention from the side of the Implementation Agencies is needed (such as to ensure participation of a project manager or methodologist from the IA at the job interviews, also in municipalities very far from Bratislava). A lot could be achieved by minor modifications of the rules, such as about the composition of the selection board members (e.g. an obligation of an odd number of members, or strengthening weights in voting for representatives of the IA, or cancellation of preferential votes for representatives of the municipality, etc.). The selection of a TSP/ATSP is a very important process that can affect years of quality, efficiency and results of the field social work and should not be underestimated.

strategical recommendations in the area of the programme's design and institutional structures

ensure continuity of programmes and projects

It is of utmost importance that there is a continuity of field social work – vis-à-vis the state, the municipality, the TSP/ATSP and also vis-a-vis the clients, otherwise there is a risk of losing all the relationships and trust that the field social work managed to build in the last period. Discontinuity of programmes would also risk losing the highly experienced TSP/ATSPs. Uncertainty about the continuation of projects in the future, also influences the work performances of TSP/ATSPs, who might start telling the clients about the uncertain future or might be searching for other jobs and investing less of themselves into their work. The IA should give a clear message that 'we're interested and we value your work' – so far, there has been a high degree of insecurity and uncertainty for TSP/ATSPs.

ensure targeting on regions and localities, where there is a need for field social work, but which were not covered by field social work before

Statistical analysis of the projects and correlation with the Atlas of Roma communities yielded two important findings: field social work projects have actually been targeted to locations where Roma have worse living conditions than the average conditions in municipalities where Roma live. At the same time, this analysis showed that there are significant regional differences in relation to where field social work projects were implemented.

The data show that there are some regions/territories with a strong presence of Roma communities, where it is likely that their residents accumulated certain problems and disadvantages that could be mitigated by field social work, but where field social work was not implemented. In the next programming period, it would be necessary to target projects precisely to these sites. The field social work programme could be directly promoted in these regions by invitations to mayors to come to information seminars, etc.

ensure follow-ups and enlargement of the field social work

Finally, it should be explicitly emphasized that despite some administrative and institutional shortcomings and the many problems in the actual performance of field social work, the field social work projects in the 2007–2013 programming period were among the most positive activities financed by EU funds (and by the ESF) which were aimed at socially excluded populations. The field social work projects had a direct impact on addressing many life situations and problems of people at the local level. In a way, the field social work projects were a bridge, which to a large extent, successfully spanned macro-level major

EU structural funding with local-level, through social services for the poorest and most vulnerable groups in Slovakia. It is inevitable and necessary to ensure not only the continuation of field social work, as well as its extension, as not all localities which needed such assistance were covered. When allocating funds for the next programming period, it is necessary to think of these gaps and needs in many villages and towns. It is also necessary to ensure adequate availability of the programme, in terms of informing municipalities and communities about the possibilities for grants, as well as in terms of affordable co-financing and administration for municipalities, since limited budgets of small rural communities (where due to persistent poverty there is a great necessity for social work) can be a barrier to the implementation of field social work. It is also necessary to continue to professionalize the programme in accordance with united and comprehensive standards of service and good working and social conditions for workers. In the next programming period it will be necessary to coordinate the field social work with similar programmes aimed at Roma and socially excluded populations at the local level.

list of abbreviations and names

ATSP – (asistent, asistentka terénneho sociálneho pracovníka) assistant to the field social worker

DOP – (Dopytovo orientované projekty) Open Call for Proposals projects

ESF – (Európsky sociálny fond) European Social Fund

FSR – (Fond sociálneho rozvoja) Social Development Fund

IA – (Implementačná agentúra Ministerstva práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny SR) Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic

KSP – (Podpora rozvoja komunitnej sociálnej práce v obciach) Support for Community Social Work in Municipalities

NP TSP – (Národný projekt terénna sociálna práca) National Project Field Social Work

RK – (regionálni koordinátor, koordinátorka terénnej sociálnej práce) regional coordinator, regional coordinator of field social work

TSP – (terénny sociálny pracovník, pracovníčka) field social worker

ÚPSVR – (Úrad práce, socialnych vecí a rodiny) Labour Office, Social Affairs and Family

ÚSVRK – (Úrad splnomocnenca vlády pre rómske komunity) Office of the Governmental Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities

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about the authors

DANIEL ŠKOBLA is a senior researcher at the Institute for Research on Labour and Family in Bratislava. He graduated in Sociology from the Central European University (CEU) and obtained a PhD from the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. For ten years he worked as a Poverty Reduction Officer with the United Nations Development Program and carried out research projects on the living conditions of the Roma population in Central Europe. He provided technical assistance for the Slovak government regarding the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 and the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies 2020. Škobla has also been involved in Roma advocacy on an international level, participating in numerous meetings throughout Europe and has cooperated with the European Roma Rights Centre, Amnesty International and the Open Society Institute. He has written academic articles in journals such as *Sociológia*, *Polish Sociological Review*, *Sisyphus Journal for Social Sciences*, as well as chapters in books on social inclusion and Roma integration. He participated in numerous conferences at Central European University, University College London, Aalborg University, University of California Berkeley, and others.

JAN GRILL is a Simon Research Fellow at the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester. He is also affiliated with the Department of Sociology, Universidad del Valle, Cali, Colombia. In 2012, after completing his PhD in Social Anthropology, at the University of St. Andrews, he worked as a temporary lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester, held Work Fellowship at IGK Work and Human Life Cycle in Global History at Humboldt University in Berlin and the ERSTE Foundation Fellowship for Social Research. He conducted extensive ethnographic research among Slovak, Czech and Hungarian Roma/Gypsy groups, exploring issues related to different forms of migration from Central Eastern Europe to Great Britain and Canada (and back). Grill has contributed to several edited volumes, as well as publishing in a number of journals such as *Focaal – Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* or the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, and co-edited a book on migration processes in central eastern Europe. He has participated in several evaluation research projects assessing different social policies and EU-funded projects ranging from issues of social inclusion, unemployment to labour activation schemes.

JAKOB HURRLE is affiliated with Charles University in Prague, at the Faculty of Sciences, Department of Social Geography and Regional Development. He studied Urban and Regional Planning and Eastern European Studies in Berlin, Warsaw and New York. In his thesis, he conducted a comparative evaluation of Roma-targeting community development projects, in rural municipalities of eastern Slovakia. After graduating, he began working for the Prague Multicultural Centre, a Czech NGO dealing with migration and integration issues. Hurrle also participated in a large number of evaluations and research assignments for a variety of institutions, such as: UNDP, the Norwegian government, the World Bank, and the Government Office of the Czech Republic (evaluations of Roma-targeting projects). At the Institute for Social Geography at Charles University in Prague, he participated in research on new socio-spatial formations financed by the Czech Grant Agency. His dissertation deals with the emergence of newly segregated localities in rural areas of the Czech Republic.