

Impediments to the public decision-making access of groups with protected characteristics



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The Equal Treatment Authority accomplishes its research project called „TAMOP 5.5.5/08/1 Combating Discrimination, Shaping Societal Attitude and Strengthening the Work of the Authority” by the assistance of the European Union and the co-financing of The European Social Fund between 2009 and 2013.

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Recent study has been prepared by Ipsos Inc., T-Tudok Centre for Knowledge Management and Educational Research Inc. and ColoRom Public Benefit Organisation entrusted by the Equal Treatment Authority in the scope of its project called „TAMOP 5.5.5/08/1 Combating Discrimination, Shaping Societal Attitude and Strengthening the Work of the Authority”.

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THE INVESTIGATION OF DISCRIMINATIVE MECHANISMS OF CIVIL SERVICE AND LEGISLATION ON THE LEVEL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS – RESIDENTIAL RESEARCH

Circumstances of the research

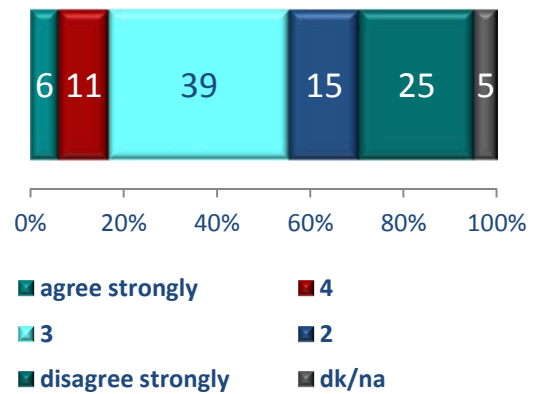
This report was made for The Equal Treatment Authority. This is a summary of a research sequence's residential module about the discriminative mechanisms of civil service and legislation. Three groups with protected characteristics stood in the focus of the research: elderly, Roma people, persons with disability (physical, sensory, intellectual). The data consist of the total population sample of omnibus research, a further omnibus block about elderly above the age of 65, a Roma survey sample with a size of 300, as well as structured interviews with elderly and people with disabilities.

The population's relation to groups with protected characteristics and equal treatment

The relation of the Hungarian society on the whole can't be regarded as satisfactory: positive discrimination that stands for the rights of those with protected characteristics is only poorly supported by society; on a scale of one to five 2,6 was the average level of agreement with the statement, that people being underprivileged due to different reasons should be treated favorably by employment; a smaller part of the society supports integrated education system, which serves to improve the chances of underprivileged people.

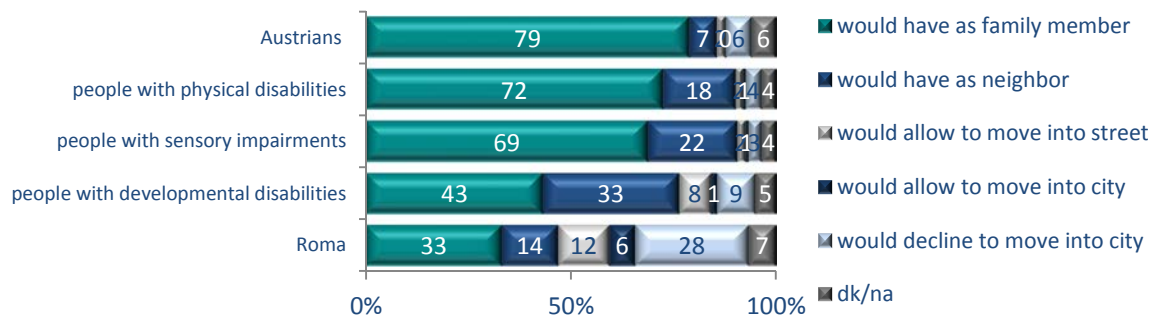
To what extent you agree or disagree with the statement, that underprivileged persons (for

example disabled or Roma people) should be favored by employment? (total population, %)



As expected among all the analyzed groups the Roma are the most rejected ones in the society (measured with Bogardus scale). They are followed by the people with intellectual disabilities, and with a much lower social rejection the sensory and physical disabled. Rejections of certain groups are correlating with each other. Those who have a strong disapproval towards Roma, also reject people with disabilities with greater probability than the average.

Bogardus scale of social distance (total population, %)

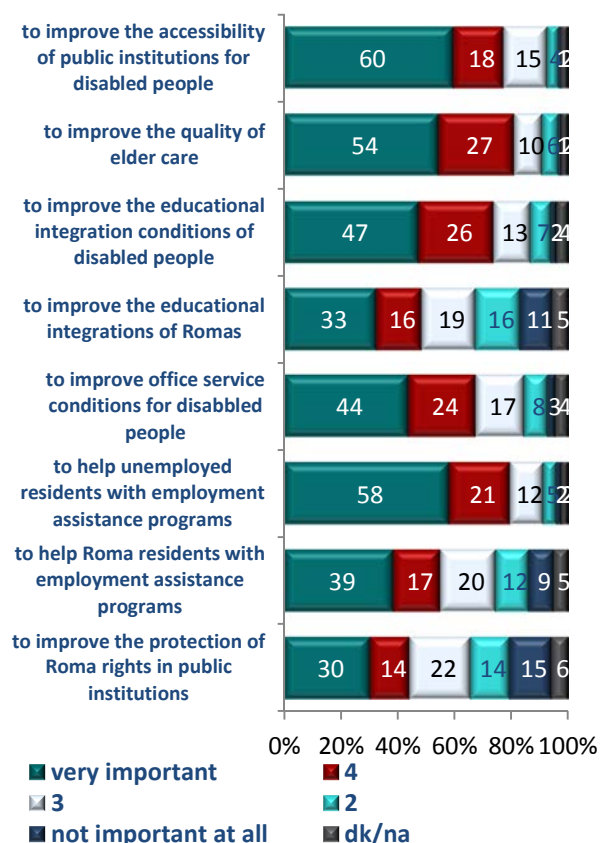


The majority consider the support of people with disability important; the importance of local governmental decisions made in favor of groups with protected characteristics is questioned notably only in the case of decisions regarding Roma.

People agree with the support of disabled persons on the average, however averseness towards this group can be demonstrable: according to the results of Bogardus scale and the interviews it clears up that this group doesn't live in a fully supportive environment.

Similarly to the people with disabilities, the acceptance of the elderly's support is very high. Generational conflicts appear only in that sense in the research, that the positive discrimination of elderly is somewhat less supported by the respondents than the positive discrimination of persons with disabilities (80 percentage against 93 percentage among those, who think, that these groups are treated more favorably than the others).

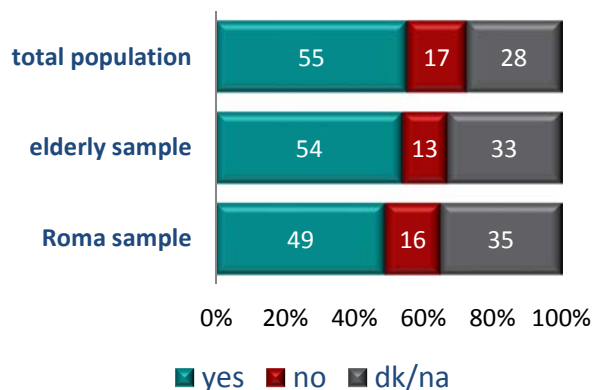
Assuming that the local government has restricted financial possibilities, how important do you regard the followings: (total population, %)



Awareness in the question of equal treatment

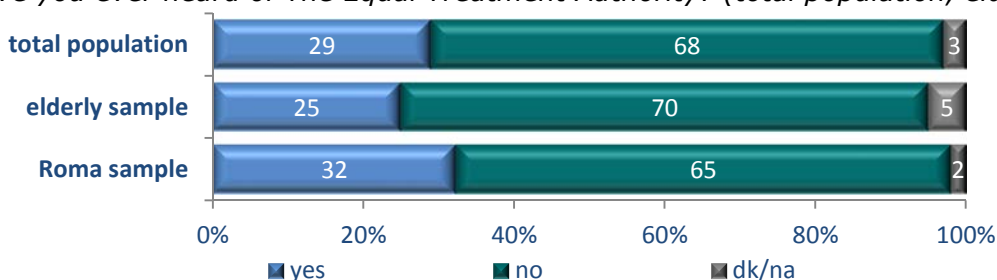
There is a low awareness in population regarding the question of equal treatment, the institutions dealing with it and legal redress possibilities: 28 percentage of the total population sample, 33 of elderly and 35 percentage of the Roma can't answer the question whether there is any law that prohibits discrimination. About half of the respondents are aware of its existence. The awareness of Roma population slightly lags behind the average.

Is there any law in Hungary which prohibits discrimination and protects one's right to equal treatment? (total population, elderly and Roma sample, %)



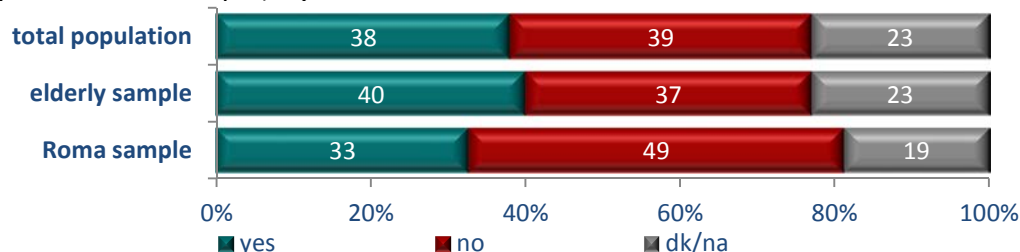
Accordingly to the low awareness only the minority of the population (29 percentage of the total sample) has heard about The Equal Treatment Authority. Elderly are the least informed in this question as well, however neither the Roma's level of awareness exceeds significantly the average.

Have you ever heard of The Equal Treatment Authority? (total population, elderly and Roma sample, %)



The minority of respondents think that the question of equal treatment in Hungary gets enough attention, however about the same number of people considers that it isn't handled sufficiently; besides the ratio of don't know answers is high, which is again in accordance with the low level of awareness. Roma respondents have a more definite opinion about the question, only one third of them think that the topic is treated properly enough and half of the group consider that the issue should get more emphasis in public life.

Is equal treatment and discrimination a question important enough in Hungary? (total population, elderly and Roma sample, %)



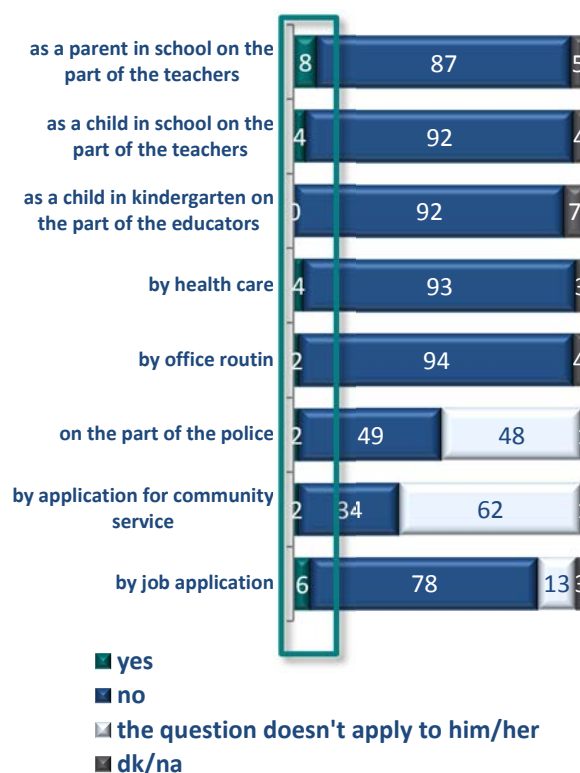
The Roma respondents mentioned primarily the Roma minority self-governments as institutions they can apply to for legal redress; The Equal Treatment Authority is not in the public awareness, only three respondents have mentioned it.

Experiences of discrimination

One seventh of the population has already felt during their lifetime that they were treated adversely due a certain protected characteristic of theirs. Most frequently it happened in school or by job application. According to the answers given for the open questions about detailed discrimination experiences most of the cases were related to disadvantages on labor market due to old age and to discrimination in many fields due to Roma ethnicity. Besides the inconveniences experienced during using public services (for example the long waiting time at local governmental offices or health care) were usually considered as discrimination by the respondents.

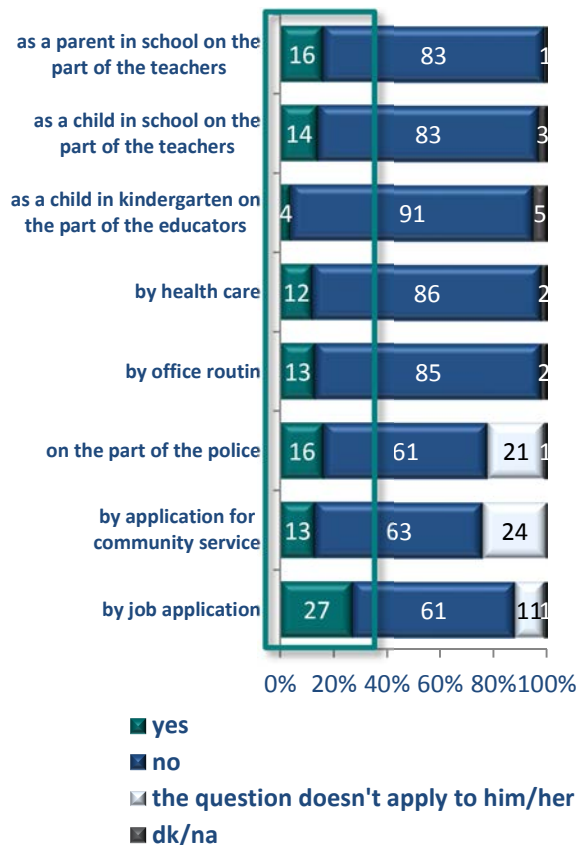
Have you ever been treated adversely due to a certain characteristic of yours, as gender, age, religion, ethnicity, skin color? (total population, %)

at least one of these: 14%



Have you ever been treated adversely due to a certain characteristic of yours, as gender, age, religion, ethnicity, skin color? (Roma sample, %)

at least one of these: 56%



Contrarily the majority (56 percentage) of the Roma respondents have already experienced discrimination during their lifetime and according to the interviews sometimes these could be very serious cases. However it can be possible again, that these experiences of discrimination are rather their own perception of the faced inconveniences understood as adverse treatment. However the respondents reported some very serious cases of discriminative treatment relating to school, health care, local government and police.

The Roma are facing discrimination primarily by applying for employment. Almost the same answer appeared in all those cases where discrimination was experienced: as soon as it turned out that the applicant was Roma they were rejected immediately.

The elderly were rarely complaining about being disregarded or paid less attention during using public services in local government offices or health care institutions.

People with disabilities and their family members have experienced greater rejection from the population, however rather the lack of accessibility and the low standards of social benefits meant difficulties regarding the public services.

Discrimination in local government administration and health care

Among the analyzed groups with protected characteristics the Roma and people with disabilities were connected to local governments and Document Office the most as well as to social administration, public health care, social employment and community service due to their higher involvement. That's why it is crucial to investigate whether the people using local governmental administration face any discrimination. According to the total population sample only a few have experienced serious problems in local governmental service or health care apart from the long waiting time. By the latter the waiting lists and gratuities were also mentioned in the research. Roma respondents have more bad experiences compared to the total population: it happened with 10 percentage of them, that they were verbally insulted due their ethnicity during an administrative procedure in local government office. 12 percentage mentioned, that they were treated disadvantageously regarding the quality and promptness of the service. More Roma respondents (14 percentage) feel, that the employees of the local government treat them more negatively compared to other customers. In health care Roma people face not only the long waiting hours but also the impolite, discriminative behavior of clinic/hospital employees and the inadequate medical service, which can lead to serious health consequences.

| Have you ever experienced by administration in local government or Document Office, that...; Roma sample | |
|--|-----|
| the official in charge made insulting remarks due to your Roma ethnicity | 10% |
| your case was handled slower than the others' due to your Roma ethnicity | 12% |
| your case was paid less attention due to your Roma ethnicity | 12% |

Elderly usually face the problem of accessibility of buildings and the difficulties of orientation by arranging their official issues or having health care services. People moving with difficulties or being ill can have problems with the lack of accessibility, however it is more frequent, that they can't reach the buildings of local government and health care institutions due to the problematic traffic. For them even the electronic administration couldn't mean a solution, since only a few of them use internet and even in that case only some of the functions.

People with disabilities face the same problems as the elderly; according to the interviews made with them the lack of accessibility is quite an often phenomenon.

Experiences of discrimination in education

According to the population sample primarily the Roma and people with disabilities are concerned by discrimination in education. The results of Roma sample shows that the disadvantageous treatment of the group appears in segregation, the distinct valuation of school behavior and performance, as well as in exclusion from school activities. However humiliating comments including negative stereotypes of Roma people and sometimes even abuse occur.

A small minority of Roma already experienced obstacles in entering the compulsory education. Not admitting a Roma child to a certain school of the town is only one type of segregation; inside the school children face even greater exclusion. 10 percentage of the responding parents' children study in segregated Roma class. Similar is the ratio of those Roma children who are excluded from non educational school programs or suffer disadvantages during non study activities, like having meals at school.

Regarding your child's education have you ever experienced, that... (Roma sample, with children, %)



In accordance with the underprivileged position in educational system 42 percentage of the respondents from local governments find it typical, that there are more Roma children pronounced private students than non Roma children. According to fifth of the respondents there is a higher Roma ratio also among the SEN (Special Educational Needs) children.

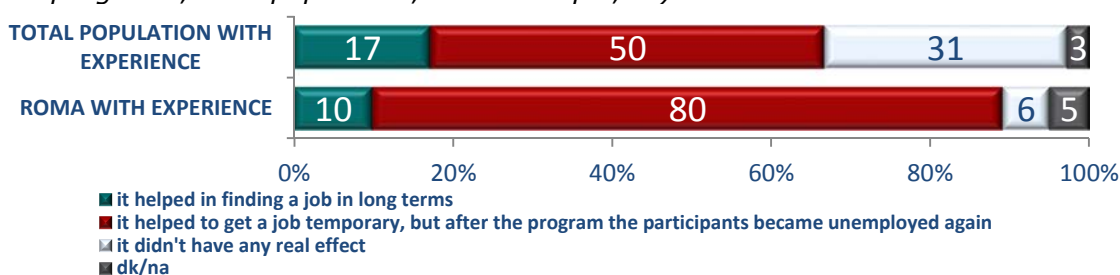
As for the interviews the integrated education of children with disabilities, or simply their involvement in kindergarten pedagogy or education is far from being fully solved. In smaller towns, where only a few children with disabilities take part in education, institutions usually aren't prepared for their teaching. According to the reports of respondents with physical disabilities most of the schools lack the accessibility options and are only partly prepared for sensory impairments. Children with intellectual disabilities and their families meet the lack of developmental education in many cases. The most frequent problem by every disability type is that the education of the child can't be arranged in place, therefore they have to be sent either to a boarding school or the family is encumbered to bring their child to the neighboring bigger town every day. Based on the experiences of the interviews the integrated education of children with disabilities is still in the egg, it is far more usual to use special developmental schools, or institutions specifically made for educate children with physical disabilities or sensory impairments.

The efficiency of social benefit system from the point of view of the groups with protected characteristics

It was a core question in the research, whether the concerned groups' access to social benefits and services reflects the claim of equal treatment. Regarding the social assistance and unemployment benefits it can be stated, that there are no significant obstacles in availability. The lack of awareness and trust keeps away some of the needy, but most of them are aware of their possibilities and can use them. The situation of the Roma is more difficult in the sense that there is inequality in who to employ for community service and often worse and harder works are given to Roma, than to non Roma workers during community service.

Roma population is more targeted by programs helping to find job (7 percentage of total population, 35 percentage of the Roma sample have participated in such programs). The majority of both the total population and the Roma sample consider that these programs are not efficient, don't mean a real, long term solution.

The efficiency of unemployment programs according to those involved (among those, who participated in these programs; total population, Roma sample, %)



Equal treatment and necessity don't really prevail in the case of obtaining maisonettes according to the experiences of Roma respondents; three quarter of them hold that not the necessity what really counts, but the good relations. There are also some negative experiences regarding generally the housing allowances, however the situation is better than in the case of social maisonettes; 32 percentage of Roma respondents think, that necessity doesn't matter neither by these allowances.

We analyzed the function of social benefits also from the point of view of elderly people struggling with financial difficulties. Based on the results the efficiency of elderly care was valued positively, the respondents above the age of 65 rated the efficiency of the institution 3,7 on the average on a scale of one to five. 18 percentage of them consider it very efficient, while not more than 6 percentage of the respondents gave worse evaluation than average. More problems were mentioned and more unequal situations were experienced regarding the residential elderly care system. According to 20 percentage of the elder respondents it has happened in the town or the city, that somebody couldn't get a place in the home for the elderly due to somebody, who was less needy but had better relations.

Financial problems make difficult also the life of people with disabilities therefore they are expecting further help from the local government beside the accessibility. First of all they need working possibilities, and for those who are unable to work, more assistance. Regarding the employment possibilities they emphasized the lack or the low number of social firms. On the other hand they feel that the list of working places able to employ disabled people is not well formed, and the employment of disabled is not supported efficiently. For people with physical disabilities telecommuting could be a solution, however, as for their experiences there are hardly any chances for this.

Obstacles and possibilities of information flow: online administration

Orientation difficulties or the information available of public services can play as an obstacle for access to public services. Developing the information channels can contribute to get over existing disadvantages.

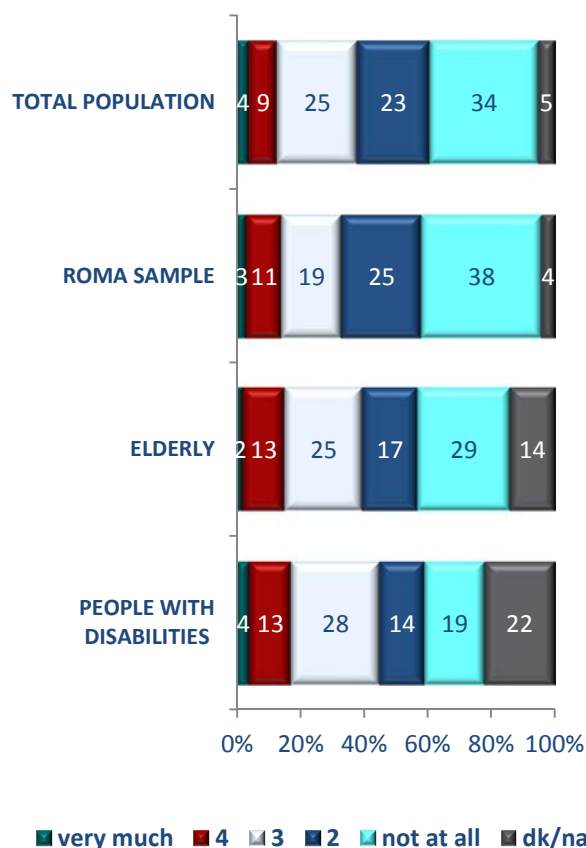
Online administration could serve primarily for ill people or persons with physical disabilities, but the application patterns show, that it can't fulfill its function yet: the ratio of electronic administration users is quite low and are mainly the higher educated members of the population. It is not typical of the elderly or the Roma among the groups with protected characteristics.

According to both the answers of most concerned disabled people and the local government sample only a few local governments offer online administration possibilities.

Interest representation of groups with protected characteristics

It is true for both the total population and the analyzed groups with protected characteristics that they don't feel much influence on the local governmental decisions affecting their life (the average is 2,1-2,3 on a scale of one to five). According to the opinion of population, people with disabilities and elderly are less able (than the population) to represent their interests on the average, while Roma people can represent their interests more efficiently.

An obstacle of interest representation is the lack of civic activity; 42 percentage of the elderly and 46 percentage of the Roma in our researches couldn't answer the question whether it had been any local governmental decision made in the past few years, which directly affected them as elderly or Roma. The participation ratio in public hearings is also low. *How much influence do the residents of the town/city have on the local governmental decisions affecting their life? (total population, elderly sample, Roma sample, people with disabilities, %)*



Based on the population's knowledge 13 percentage of the local government's employee of their town or city are elderly, 4 percentage people with disabilities and 15 percentage Roma.

General research goals by T-Tudok Centre for Knowledge Management and Educational Research Inc.

The main objective of the research was to examine the connections, service provision and operation mechanisms of municipalities in order to identify possible discriminatory mechanisms of functioning and operation; to map the practices of these mechanisms with special regard to decisions concerning groups of protected characteristics; and to cast light, through its findings, on the intersections of the local cooperation and decision-making system, as well as spontaneous and conscious processes in administration resulting in discrimination. This general objective was carried out in the context of two subprojects: access and participation of groups of population with so-called protected characteristics in public administration decision-making; and exclusion mechanisms in public administration and regulation. The contents of the two subprojects were complementary: while one set out to research the experience and attitudes of the user's side, and collect and analyse the effect of local action on the individual's life, the other explored operating and decision-making mechanisms of local governments and their social impact in both a local and a wider sense. The two subprojects were conducted side by side rather than consecutively. Integration of the research topic in a unified framework was indispensable for the detection and in-depth analysis of the maze of discriminatory mechanisms. We therefore designed a research project that relied on the concomitant use of quantitative and qualitative methods, and depicted the municipal landscape through the in-depth survey of six settlements selected on the basis of specifically determined criteria.

Research Subproject 5: Barriers of the participation of population groups with protected characteristics in public administration decision-making and of access to public and community services and developments

The specific objective of this research component was to collect the opinion and personal experiences of discrimination that members of adult groups with protected characteristics encountered in the course of their transactions at various levels of public administration – in other words, to plot the patterns and spread of mechanisms of exclusion from the users' side. The analysis specifically addressed access of groups with protected characteristics to administration services, the socialisation of local administration, the impact of administrative decisions, development and programs to the individual, attitudes regarding local health, social welfare and educational services, the usability of public spaces, involvement in local decision-making, sustainability of local remedial programs, as well as the status and conditions of social capital.

Main stages and methodology of the research project

The opinion and experiences of the groups in the focus of the research were mapped by means of qualitative methods, specifically in homogeneous focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Our data were supplemented by the analysis of cases of discrimination in administration that occurred over the past three years, where the case descriptions and case documents were analysed. (The analysis comprised public reports of the ombudsman, complaints submitted to the Equal Treatment Authority, and cases of discrimination collected by the Roma Press Centre and the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union.)

Among the groups with protected characteristics this research project focused on persons with disabilities. Twelve life story interviews were conducted and analysed quantitatively, and conclusions were drawn as to the barriers of these groups to access to public administration services.

The regional distribution of the respondents were as follows: four were selected from the Northern Hungary region, four from South Transdanubia, and four from West Transdanubia with the help of our local contacts. Six of the seven home towns or villages of the respondents are located in disadvantaged micro-regions. There were six male and seven female respondents, seven of them belong to minority groups. The parents of two-thirds of the respondents have a low socio-economic status, and the status of one-third is medium. The respondents fall into four groups by their educational attainment: two of

them did not complete primary school, four finished primary school, four graduated from secondary school, and two have degrees. All degree holders and half of the secondary school graduates were from the West Transdanubian region; those with the lowest educational attainment were from disadvantaged micro-regions in Northern Hungary and South Transdanubia. The average age was 47 years. The degree of disability was mild-to-medium in two-thirds of the respondents and severe in one-third of the respondents. Disability was acquired in the great majority of cases (10), and congenital in the case of two respondents. The research was anonymous, the interviews were conducted privately; we asked our respondents about their life story, their access or barriers to administrative services, training and labour market programs as well as their experiences discrimination, if any, in the context of semi-structured, open question interviews.

| Activity | Duration | Product |
|--|-----------------|---|
| Review of literature, collection of documents, development of criteria of analysis | Weeks 1-2 | Criteria of analysis |
| Document analysis | Weeks 2-4 | Sub-summary |
| Selection of research sites | Week 2 | |
| Development of research tools | Weeks 2-4 | Focus groups script, outlines of interviews |
| Organisation of six focus groups | Weeks 3-4 | |
| Six focus group discussions | Weeks 5-7 | Audio recording of focus group meetings |
| Selection of 12 interviewees (life story interviews) | Weeks 7-10 | Audio recording of interviews |
| Content analysis of instances of discrimination, legal analysis | Weeks 5-10 | Legal analysis, sub-study |
| Encoding and analysis of focus group discussions and interviews | Weeks 11-20 | Encoded body texts, summaries, sub-studies |
| Preparation of research report | Weeks 20-24 | Final research report |
| Preparation of policy recommendations | Weeks 25-26 | Policy recommendations |

1.1 Criteria of selection of research sites

The six localities serving as research sites were selected along the following criteria:

Step 1: From among the 33 most disadvantaged micro-regions of Hungary a Northern Hungary and a South Transdanubian micro-regions were randomly selected.

Step 2: Based on the nationwide indicators of unemployment, educational attainment and health (premature births and infant mortality) two localities were selected in each of the two micro-regions whose indicators were not only below the nationwide average but also below the micro-regional average, one with a population of over 10,000 and one with a population under 10,000. In this way it was possible to analyse two localities of different sizes in each micro-region,

Step 3: Based on previous research findings two more localities were selected from Western Hungary indicated as ethnically heterogeneous (one with a population of over 10,000 and the other under 10,000) that were around the nationwide average in terms of unemployment, educational attainment and health (premature births and infant mortality).

Selection of the sites for the qualitative research according to the above steps gave us an opportunity for a nationwide survey; in addition, the two localities in non-disadvantaged micro-regions and having average indicators also served as control.

The respondents were selected with the help of our local contacts.

1. Place and date of the life story interviews

| Locality | Date of interview |
|----------|---------------------------|
| RA | 22.03.2013 |
| ZR, GYK | 18.03.2013 and 21.03.2013 |
| SZR | 22.03.2013 |
| ZG | 20.03.2013 |
| ZaR | 20.03.2013 |

When analysing the legal cases the researchers presupposed a direct correlation between the number of complaints and the number of inhabitants. We expected that the largest number and proportion of complaints by far would appear in ZG, whose population is six times that of ENY and SZR. Contrary to our expectations, the numbers of discrimination complaints received in ZG and SZR were identical.

The research hypothesis in this respect proved unsubstantiated: there was no significant correlation between population size and number of discrimination complaints. This is particularly true in the light of the fact that settlements with a population less than one thousand registered one complaint each, the same number as ZR with 3000 inhabitants. This, however, is a worse rate of complaints per capita compared to ZG, where only four complaints were reported for a population of 60,000.

We analysed the cases submitted to the Equal Treatment Authority (ETA) and the ombudsmen. While the number of cases processed was rather low it is conspicuous that the former minority ombudsman (an office that no longer exists) and the current ombudsman's office received considerably more discrimination complaints from the localities selected for the research than the ETA despite the fact that the ETA has county officers who help to reach out to complainants.

A research hypothesis was that there is a relationship between the number and nature of discrimination, the equal opportunity situation of the local inhabitants and the local regulation of equal opportunities.

It was supposed that the equal opportunity situation depicted by the equal opportunities documents¹ would mark the discrimination "hot spots" – i.e. the fields where most of the discrimination complaints arose. It was expected that in the settlements where, for example, the situational analysis of equality in public education indicated segregation we would find complaints regarding educational discrimination. In the case of municipalities having spatial anti-segregation plans or residential equal opportunities programs we expected local people would complain of discrimination related to housing application, municipal tenements for social housing or eviction. Another hypothesis was that ethnic conflicts would arise in localities with a significant Roma population and this would be reflected in the complaints.

The findings partly supported these hypotheses. The equal opportunities documents indicated educational segregation in ENY and ZG. One of the discrimination complaints from ENY clearly indicated illegal segregation among the ENY schools – a fact also admitted in the mayor's reply to the minority ombudsman's letter. Residential segregation and segregated pockets were identified in the equal opportunities documents of ENY, ZG and SZR (typically in integrated urban development strategies and anti-segregation plans). The case of MF Housing Estate in SZR also highlights the situation apparent in the municipality's anti-segregation plan: MF Housing Estate in one of the SZR districts having the worst segregation indicators.

¹ For the purpose of our analysis micro-regional equal opportunities programs, institutional equal opportunities plans, as well as municipal integrated urban development strategies and related anti-segregation plans are regarded as equal opportunity documents.

Surprisingly, the other spatial segregation complaint involved the municipality of ZR. It is surprising because the ZR equal opportunities documents did not indicate that the Roma lived in segregated colonies. While neither the ETA nor the minority ombudsman considered the complaint substantiated regarding failure to apply for support for the dismantling of a segregated Roma colony, it draws attention to a housing problem that is not conspicuous in the equal opportunities program of ZR.

On the whole, it was found that the fields of discrimination identified in the municipal equal opportunities documents, including residential and educational segregation, are likely to be reflected in specific discrimination complaints as well. Consequently, the situation explored in these equal opportunities documents is useful for the enforcement agencies – particularly for the ETA and the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner of Fundamental Rights – when they determine the target areas for comprehensive *ex officio* investigations into discrimination. Review of the ETA's decisions passed over past three years relating to administration and public services pointed out that ETA does not make use of its power to initiate *ex officio* procedures, whereas public equal opportunities documents (particularly integrated urban development strategies and anti-segregation plans) provide accurate data about inequalities in housing and education in a given locality.

The practice of the ETA and the Supreme Court reveal that data on, for instance, the proportion of Roma students contained in equal opportunities documents may be evaluated as proof of probable discrimination, as the case may be.

Equal opportunities documents also provide data about equal access to public services in a particular locality, which can also serve as an input for comprehensive investigation of this area.

The next hypothesis suggested a correlation between the number of discrimination complaints and the local level of regulation of equal opportunities. The correlation can be bidirectional: on the one hand, in settlements that comply with the statutory obligations of equal opportunities planning the knowledge of local population about the prohibition of discrimination is expected to be broader; in other words, people's ability to enforce their rights is stronger, which should be conspicuous in the number of discrimination complaints. The other, essentially contradictory statement is that in settlements that put equal opportunities planning in the focus of attention local people is exposed to less discriminatory atrocities by practitioners of public authority. If this statement is true the number of discrimination complaints must be lower in these localities.

As expected, the localities that are pioneers in equal opportunities planning were ZG, SZR and ENY. SZR should be singled out in particular, where the municipality has drawn up all mandatory and optional anti-discrimination documents (including a micro-regional action plan to promote equal opportunities in public education). While most ideal from the standpoint of equal opportunities planning, SZR has the highest rate of discrimination complaints compared to the other two localities by population size. It is also true, however, that two of the four discrimination cases were explored by the minority ombudsman during his country tour, thus the complaints were "forestalled".

Considering the "quality" rather than the quantity of complaints registered at the three larger settlements, it is the ENY cases that can be seen as real discrimination complaints in the legal sense. ENY, too, has the mandatory equal opportunities documents (with the exception of an equal opportunities plan). At the same time the ENY municipality is less effective in tackling the problems identified in the equal opportunities documents, especially compared to SZR.

Only one discrimination case was found in each of the other three settlements examined. Based on the available data, KU and RA have no municipal level equal opportunities documents. While ZR approved an equal opportunities program but it is not suitable for handling local discriminations as the goals are formulated on a general level and lack specific local contents.

As indicated by the above findings, none of the hypotheses were justified: there seems to be no direct correlation between the number and quality of discrimination complaints and the number or quality of equal opportunities documents and measures adopted by municipalities.