

REPORT ON THE CONFERENCE

BUDAPEST, 9-11 MARCH 2020

JUSTICE FOR ROMA AND SINTI A CHALLENGE FOR CHURCHES



CO-ORGANISED BY



ccme

churches' commission for migrants in europe



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INTRODUCTION



Dr Torsten Moritz, General Secretary of CCME

Roma and Sinti people are a minority in almost every European country. They are among those groups most affected by racism, xenophobia, discrimination, and all forms of social and cultural exclusion – both throughout history and today. While the focus of this report is on Roma and to some degree Sinti, it is important to acknowledge that discrimination and antigypsyism also concern other groups like the Yenish and Travellers.

Over the years churches in Europe have become aware of widespread discrimination against Roma and Sinti people and acknowledged their responsibilities. CCME has been seeking to support and inspire this work: in 2001 CCME hosted an ecumenical conference in Bratislava and drew together recommendations to improve Roma inclusion in church life and wider society. The concluding document detailed a few areas in which churches should be actively involved in empowering Roma and building more inclusive communities.

At the CEC General Assembly in Trondheim in 2003, the Nordic Churches' work in recognising the ongoing task to work at 'healing of memories' was presented. A positive step in reconciliation were confessions of guilt and appeals for forgiveness in several countries. A decade later, in 2013, representatives of European member churches of the Lutheran World Federation and CCME came together in Frankfurt to review Roma inclusion. The participants emphasised the need for churches to create space for face-to-face interactions with Roma and sharing of life stories, culture, and worship. They also saw the ongoing need to speak out against hostility directed at Roma people. On an EU level, CCME has been engaged with partners in advocacy on Roma/Sinti inclusion.

Following CCME's involvement in ecumenical conferences in the past where commitments have been made to improve Roma inclusion, it was time in 2020 to review the current situation of Roma and Sinti people in Europe, specifically with regard to the role of churches. There was a need to evaluate the efforts of churches regarding Roma/Sinti inclusion and the ongoing challenges, particularly at a time when new populist movements in Europe are increasingly spreading antigypsyism narratives.

CCME was aware that there are several other organisations working on the social-diaconal and advocacy aspects of the issue. CCME believed its role should rather be to focus on the Justice and Unity aspect and examine the reality of churches' inclusion, reflecting whether the time has come for them to ask for forgiveness and reconciliation.

In mapping current activities, it became clear that the Roma mission of the Hungarian Reformed Church is one of the strongest examples of churches focusing on Justice issues and working at fellowship and reconciliation of Roma and non-Roma.

The conference was therefore held in cooperation with the Ecumenical Office and the National Roma Ministry of the Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH) at its Synod Office in Budapest.

The conference took place shortly before the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic forced most European countries into a lockdown and a closure of borders.

Due to increasing concern, there were some cancellations and early departures of a few participants.



Shari Brown, Executive Secretary of CCME

Nevertheless, the conference was evaluated a success by the participants and an important step in encouraging churches in Europe to hear the voices of Roma/Sinti, address churches' history in Roma/Sinti exclusion, and work towards greater Roma/Sinti inclusion and the challenging of antigypsyism narratives.

The contacts made will help CCME to facilitate links between the traditional audience of the ecumenical organisations in Europe and the existing newer networks of churches in Europe.

A particular thank you goes to the Reformed Church in Hungary for the fruitful cooperation and to the planning group of the conference who helped prepare and facilitate the meeting: my colleague Shari Brown and the colleagues at the Reformed Church in Hungary (in particular Eszter Dani, Balázs Ódor, Anita Tóth and Kriszta Naszadi), and Maria Atanasoaei, Petre Breazu, Burkhard Paetzold and Dotschy Reinhardt. I am also grateful for the support of Marta Sappé Griot who compiled this report.

The conference would not have been possible without the support of the Presbyterian Church USA and Otto per Mille of the Waldensian Church of Italy - our profound thanks go to them.

This report provides an overview of the proceedings of the conference. I hope you will find the input provided by the different speakers and participants informative and inspiring.

Dr Torsten Moritz
General Secretary of CCME



PRESENTATIONS

This chapter provides summaries of the different presentations of the keynote contributors. Some of the full texts can be found in the annex.

REV RÓBERT BALOGH, RCH – THEOLOGICAL KEYNOTE ADDRESS



Rev Róbert Balogh, RCH

Rev Róbert Balogh identified himself as a Roma Reformed theologian and minister, so a voice from the Roma community and the church in Hungary.

He began his address by considering definitions of Roma identity and their history. In particular, he looked at two different identifications: that of a condition/social status (so nomad, gypsy, poor) and that of a nation/ethnic group (of Indian-origin living across Europe).

He moved on to explore the concept of 'stranger' in the Old Testament. There were two groups of strangers in ancient Israel - those not living permanently in the land and those who were 'resident aliens'.

The term *ger* referred to the latter resident stranger who, like the widow and orphan, were poor but also protected. The people of Israel are called to service (diaconia) in respecting the widow, orphan and stranger.

Rev Balogh then introduced his vision of Roma mission as an inclusive, reciprocal ministry. This was done in the context of having identified parallels between the resident stranger in ancient Israel and the Roma in present day Europe.



The Nicene Creed affirms the Church as 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic church'. Rev Balogh posed the question, how then is this oneness of the Church expressed in the bringing together of people on the margins and people from the non-margins?

Furthermore, the Church is God's mission to the world. It is missionary by its very nature and is called to witness (martyria) to all people.

Roma mission is like any other mission involving service and witness, but its special behaviour is that it is *mission from the margins*. However, it is not a specialised activity for Roma.

Rev Balogh warned against making it a unique Roma issue and objectifying Roma people as needing a solution. Instead, Roma mission is an opportunity for the Church to rediscover itself and its relationship with God.

In seeing people on the margins as active missionaries with gifts to share, Roma mission becomes a possibility to renew the Church. Roma mission is not *to* the Roma but rather *with* and *from* the Roma. These Roma communities then become a reminder to the Church of who we are.

Rev Balogh referred to the three key strategic foci of Roma mission in the Reformed Church in Hungary: Reconciliation, Health and Hope. To achieve these, we have to be in community with one another - it involves Roma and non-Roma together.

Roma mission is not just about mutual acceptance and reconciliation, however, its main purpose is to evangelise and renew the whole Church and its relationship with Christ.

The disadvantages of the Roma are not unique, so it is not about help but rather about love and good news. You love your neighbour because in Christ your neighbour is just like you. As mission is the main purpose of Christianity, Roma mission has potential to renew the Church and the world.

"In that sense Roma mission might be a field in which we can find the possibilities of renewing our local congregations and church-structures, but renewing can also mean returning to the roots.

Listening to the Word of God and following the Good News, this is the only one and the best method of Roma mission." (in the conclusion of Rev Balogh's address).

"When CCME approached us with the mandate of its General Assembly to hold a conference, I was glad to say 'yes' to the request knowing that the Reformed Church in Hungary and the Hungarian Reformed community has significant experience in ministry among Roma people. I deem it very important that the cooperation within Eastern, Central and Southern Europe was deepened and we heard directly from Roma people what churches' responsibility could be.

It was great to experience that the conference heavily focused on community building and inclusion. We acknowledge that there is a barrier between us, which we must break down from both sides, and this can only happen with the help of the Gospel. The truth found in Christ is not a dry truth. It is my hope that this change will continue in the future by the grace of God."

Balázs Ódor, Head of the Ecumenical Office of the Synod Office



REV ESZTER DANI, HEAD OF THE MISSION DEPARTMENT OF RCH



Rev Eszter Dani, RCH

Rev Dani opened her address showing a map of Hungary. Interestingly, some of the regions where the presence of Roma people is strong are also the areas where the Reformed Church in Hungary is particularly present. She then introduced the audience to the ‘Cigány misszio’, the Roma mission of the Reformed Church in Hungary. She clarified that the term ‘Roma mission’ is not commonly used in the contexts where Roma people are part of the congregation. However, as congregations in many places are still not addressing Roma, there is a need to use the term ‘Roma mission’.

The Roma mission strategy, approved by the Synod, can be summarised as follows:

‘Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH) as a sign and agent of God’s Kingdom will be a church of personal and social transformation, a community where irrespective of origin or race, people can experience the welcoming, reconciling and healing power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.’

Keystones of the strategy are Reconciliation, Health and Hope. Reconciliation concerns reconciling with God, with ourselves, with our brothers and sisters, and with the world. Health refers to a holistic mission towards Roma people (physical, spiritual and mental). Finally, Hope affirms that ‘what is impossible with man is possible with God’ (Luke 18.27).

The overall goals are that:

- Congregations of the RCH proclaim the life-shaping message for socially marginalised groups, including the large Roma community.
- Roma people can experience God’s restoring and healing love in all dimensions of life.
- The RCO and its congregations serve the mutual reconciliation between Roma and the majority of the population.



In following Christ, the RCH is to confront the problems of the Roma community. It is not a matter of changing the Roma people, but rather of converting oneself.

The vision of this ministry is that: The congregations of the RCH will strengthen in their mission identity and become open and integrating communities, which glorify the Lord, and where reconciliation with God opens new perspectives for individuals, families and the wider community. As a result of this, social solidarity will be strengthened and tensions will be decreased in society. The RCH's ministry contributes to the improvement of people's quality of life in areas with serious disadvantage.

Within the church, called to embody the order of God's Kingdom, the RCH aims to help congregations become welcoming, multiethnic, God-glorifying communities, where Roma church members are equal members of the community and their culture is reflected in the congregations.

Particular targets include:

- 1) Making Roma mission a priority;
- 2) Helping congregations to be inclusive; and
- 3) Strengthening school inclusion;
- 4) Fostering Christian Community Development involves training of Roma and non-Roma people together. Very often the ones in charge in congregations are non-Roma Hungarians. The training helps participants to realise the gifts of each member of the community and empowers Roma to participate more fully in positions of responsibility;
- 5) Supporting the preservation of traditional Roma culture, for example through incorporating it into church services; and
- 6) Building Reconciliation, thereby decreasing inter-ethnic tensions. The latter are real on both sides and transmitted from one generation to another. Reconciliation is the mandate so that Roma and non-Roma can serve together in the love of God.

"I serve as a missionary in three Roma congregations in the region over the Tisza river in Ukraine. We operate a small kindergarten and an after school for Roma children.

I'm also local pastor of the Reformed congregation in the city of Beregszász/Berehove. We run a mission centre in Csonkapapi, and established the 'Chance for Life' Foundation, which supports Roma children and organises summer camps for them.

As chair of the Foundation, I see how difficult the situation is. Therefore, it is encouraging to see that in Hungary too, people stand on the side of Roma and support them. We are grateful because we can also experience this attitude in Ukraine. Without the support from Hungary, without our unity and mutual support, our situation would be even worse."

Barta Elemér - Pastor of the Reformed Church in Ukraine



MS DOTSCHY REINHARDT, CHAIR OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL OF ROMA AND SINTI, BERLIN-BRANDENBURG IN GERMANY

As Dotschy Reinhardt could not attend the conference, her contribution was submitted in writing and read to the participants by Burkhard Paetzold.

Dotschy Reinhardt's address focuses on the situation of Roma and Sinti people in Germany. Her message to the conference was that the inflammatory speeches against those who do not correspond to 'being German' are now popular in all social classes. At the same time, the trauma of persecution and mass extermination under National Socialism is still deeply rooted in the Roma and Sinti minorities. Although at least 500,000 fell victim to the Nazis, Roma and Sinti were denied recognition as victims until 1982, and thus financial aid and reparations were also denied.

German Sinti and Roma have been part of German society for many generations. Since 1998 they have enjoyed legal recognition as a national German minority, when the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities became German federal law (see Zentralrat Dt. Sinti u. Roma 2018).

The legal status of migrated Roma people, however, depends on their migration history and personal background. According to UNICEF, approximately 80,000 to 120,000 Sinte*zza and Rom*nja with German citizenship and approximately 50,000 who have the status of refugees or labour migrants live in the Federal Republic of Germany (cf Benz 2007).

Roma from the former Yugoslavia came to Germany in the 1960s in the course of the acquisition of so-called guest workers. The second and third generations live today with German citizenship or permanent residence.

It should therefore be emphasised that the aims of the Sinti civil rights movement differ from those of the Roma rights movement in one respect.

The former fights for the recognition of the minority as a part of German society and demands a fair participation in all areas, while the latter is mainly concerned with the right of residence of the Roma in Germany. The fight against antigypsyism, though, unites the two groups.

Christian churches have a historic responsibility in the discrimination of Roma and Sinti. The historian Wolfgang Wippermann, a founder of antigypsyism research, was one of the first to point out the role of Christian antigypsyism since the end of the Middle Ages. In particular, the assistance of the German Protestant Church in the preparation of the Nazi genocide of the Roma and Sinti minority is an aspect which needs to be further explored.

"I am glad that people are coming from different countries, this is a great achievement. Having Roma people in the audience and in the discussions is great, as we can have an exchange with Roma people instead of talking about them."

Burkhard Paetzold - Representative of the Presbyterian Church USA



Church representatives provided the National Socialists with church documents such as baptismal books. This contributed to the racial-biological registration of people as 'gypsies' or 'gypsy crossbreeds', which was usually tantamount to a death sentence.

The Stuttgart Confession of Guilt of October 1945 does not mention the Roma and Sinti minority at all.

Since then there has been no real discussion in the German Protestant Church about these entanglements in the crimes of the Second World War.

Despite the challenges, there are women and men today who are taking responsibility and actively working for human rights and against racism. Alliances, networks, working groups and the resulting cooperation are a good tool for civil-political exchange and work in solidarity.

Dotschy Reinhardt brought the example of some initiatives at regional level, such as the working group 'Sinti/Roma and Churches in Baden-Württemberg' founded in 1999 with the aim to raise awareness of the churches about the problems of antigypsyism and discrimination in the Protestant and Catholic communities in Baden-Württemberg.

A major initiative in Germany is the 'Working Group Sinti-Roma and Churches' (AKSRK), initiated in 2017 by both cross-denominational church representatives and representatives of the Sinti and Roma community.

The AKSRK has a national meeting once a year and aims at building mutual trust, which requires transparency and a protected place to discuss difficult issues, such as the processing of the participation of the churches in National Socialism and the accompanying persecution of the Sinti and Roma.

The AKSRK also organises events, like the church service and concert commemorating the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, which took place in the Berlin Cathedral in January 2020.

A new generation of emancipated and self-determined Sinti and Roma is interested in helping to shape their country and uphold democratic values such as freedom, equality and human dignity.

"I serve as a Reformed pastor in the congregation of Árkos in Transylvania, Romania. At the same time, I am the founding director of the Diaconal Foundation in Sfantu Gheorghe.

For nearly eight years, together with my colleagues, we have been organising programmes supporting underprivileged children. Our ministry has connected us directly with the Roma as most of the disadvantaged children come from the Roma communities.

The positive examples and good practices, which have been presented, and the contributions during the conference encourage us and me personally to address this issue more deeply and commit to the ministry among Roma in a more reflective and profound way. It's good to know that we are not alone in this."

Péter Makkai – Pastor of the Reformed Church



Initiatives such as 'Initiative Rromnja', an association of Roma and Sinti women based in Berlin, no longer accept that hostility and violence against Roma and Sinti be concealed, trivialised or even justified. Similarly, the 'Sinti Power Club' supports young Sinti in Ravensburg in southern Germany.

Roma and Sinti associations are active and creative in their projects. They plan cultural events and opportunities for networking between Roma/Sinti and non-Roma/Sinti.

They issue publications and hold seminars and conferences. Such initiatives are well suited for participation in the Interkulturelle Woche (Intercultural Week), a nation-wide initiative of the German Bishops' Conference (DBK), Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the Greek Orthodox Church.

It is important to recognise the urgency of including the topic of Sinti and Roma in such a big event and to pay as much attention to this racism as to other misanthropic attitudes.

Having highlighted the lack of historical reappraisal on the part of churches, Dotschy Reinhardt also mentioned the important support of the German Protestant Church for the civil rights movement. The hunger strike in the former concentration camp Dachau in April 1980, for example, was made possible by the support of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, which made the premises of the Church of Reconciliation on the memorial site available to Roma and Sinti people.

Furthermore, the German Protestant Kirchentag lay assemblies have been important platforms for the civil rights movement to create awareness - especially about the political and social recognition of the genocide.

Today there are important initiatives from the church base (grassroots), which are engaged against antigypsyism, such as the nationwide Working Group Sinti/Roma/Church.

Against the background of intensive Jewish-Christian dialogue, it is essential too that the German Protestant Church deals with the topic of antigypsyism and sends a clear signal in which the Church acknowledges its responsibility towards the Roma and Sinti minority.

"I have been living in Croatia since 2011 and I am in leadership in a Roma-majority church. I also do a lot of research and writing regarding Roma churches, the relationship between Roma and non-Roma, and the situation of Roma communities.

To hear some of the other work, especially the work in Greece, has been very inspirational. It's encouraging to see how empowering young people and stirring their creativity can make a difference in other people's perception of Roma.

Considering denominational lines, it is very exciting to see Evangelical and Reformed and Orthodox churches with some of the same goals and in such a nice spirit of friendship at the conference."

Melody Wachsmuth - Church lay leader in Croatia



ATHENAGORAS LOUKATARIS
ORTHODOX PRIEST OF CHURCH OF GREECE

"I have been working for 16 years in the Roma area in Thessaloniki, the biggest Roma ghetto in Northern Greece. My children are an active part of the city of Thessaloniki, the activities they do are very interesting. They are very happy, they can go to the centre of the city and the people love them."

From an early age Father Athenagoras wanted to become a priest and a missionary. When he was finally ordained, he dreamt of going to Africa. But his Metropolitan encouraged him to go to Dendropotamos and find "his own Africa" there.

When he arrived in Dendropotamos, the neighbourhood of Roma people in Thessaloniki, this community became his family. That's how the 'Faros tou Kosmou' (Lighthouse of the World) and its activities began in 2004. At the beginning he served meals to children in the basement of a church and organised sport activities.

Father Athenagoras has adopted 17 children, who are now his closest family. One of the children was adopted when he was five years old when nobody knew where he was born and who his parents are.

Today the 'Faros' fulfils not only basic needs of the children, like food and doctor visits, but also offers foreign language classes, sport and other creative activities. The 'Faros' organises robotics classes and some of the Roma youngsters from Dendropotamos have taken part in an international robotics competition in the USA. They were considered representatives of Greece, which was a very meaningful moment for their self-esteem.

More Roma children are now attending schools and colleges. Until a few years ago the area was cut off from the rest of the city and most bus lines were not accessing it. Nowadays most school buses enter the area.

Father Athenagoras believes firmly that segregation is a sin.



MIKI KAMBEROVIC
PASTOR OF A PENTECOSTAL CHURCH IN SERBIA

“I am a pastor of a Roma church in the central part of Serbia, which was started in 2003. Since then, we have established the Roma work and have a social NGO called ‘Roma Central Oasis’. Through the different activities of this organisation, we have reached up to a thousand people in our area. The greatest joy I have in the ministry is when I see that the people are happy because of who they are and not because of what they do or achieve. And this is only possible when they are falling in love with God.”



Rev Kamberovic shared how being a Roma impacted on his self-confidence as a child in Serbia. When he started attending school, his racist teacher made him believe he was wrong and had no possibility of succeeding. In his community, well-educated and wealthy Roma families are not spared discrimination.

When a small Roma church was built in his neighbourhood, his life changed. He thought God was calling him to call the Roma, but, in fact, God was calling him to a broader mission. At some point he took down the sign ‘Fellowship for Roma’, which was displayed outside the church, because it became clear to him that salvation is for everyone. He also recognised the need to reach out to non-Roma people, open the doors to them, build trust and overcome stereotypes.

He shared that there are communities where coexistence between Roma and non-Roma is still difficult to imagine. In some communities, life together has become normality, but in other contexts Roma are completely excluded from the cities. In some cases if Roma were to enter church, other fellow members would not be willing to attend the church anymore. But, as Rev Kamberovic asserted, God loves everyone and Roma people can forgive non-Roma.

He stated that there is already an existing Roma network of Evangelical and Pentecostal churches in South-Eastern Europe, which is looking forward to cooperating with other churches and partners.



VISIT TO THE REFORMED ROMA COLLEGE



It is difficult for Roma youth coming from rural areas to find their way to the cities to attend University. The Roma College, founded in 2016 in Budapest, is not only affordable accommodation but also a comfortable and welcoming home for Roma students.

The participants of the conference had great pleasure in visiting the Roma College and receiving a warm welcome from some of its residents.

After a quick tour through the building, everyone moved to the spacious room in the attic of the house. On the wall of the room is a special cross, a piece of art made of nails. The students proudly stated that the cross was a gift from a pastor of a disadvantaged Roma community.

“The idea of creating dormitories for Roma students came from a former Hungarian State Secretary” said a young student and resident of the College, “the same person who thought that churches could be good partners for such a project.”

Initially it used to be supported by the EU, but after some years the Hungarian government took over the responsibility.



Currently in Hungary there are eleven such dormitories. Today the Roma College is financed both by the Hungarian government and the Reformed Church of Hungary. Scholarships are available for students who cannot afford to pay for accommodation.

One of the students briefly shared his story with the visitors. As he grew up in an orphanage for mentally disabled children, he was denied a proper education from an early age. When he started attending a regular school, he struggled with the educational gaps he had compared to other children who had received a regular education since the first class. Thanks to the support of the Roma College, he is currently able to study Social Work.

Non-Roma students coming from disadvantaged situations are also welcome in the College. According to its residents, one of the big values is that Roma and non-Roma students are living together. One Roma student shared that living together with non-Roma people helped him gain self-confidence and overcome some prejudices and insecurities.

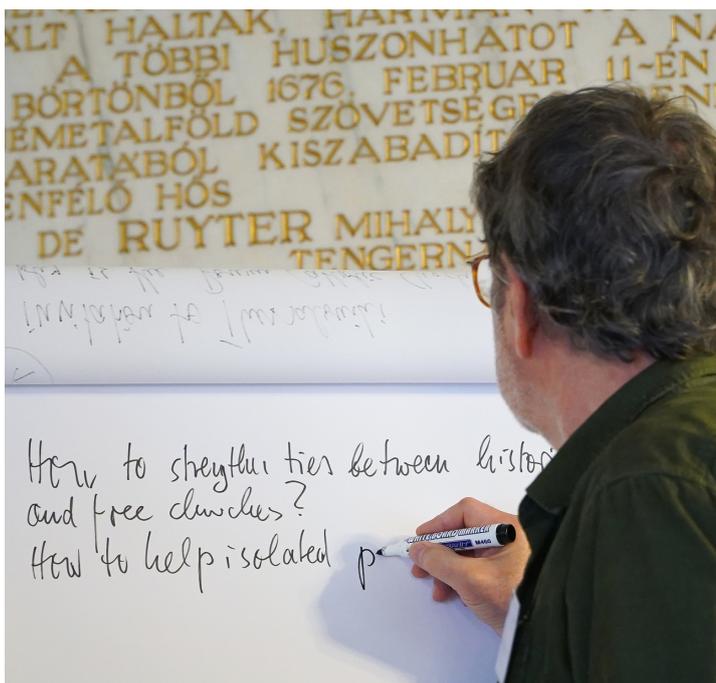
One of the activities at the Roma College is the Romani language class. Although the majority of Roma in Hungary don't speak Romani, it is a good opportunity for students who want to learn or improve their language skills and be empowered.



OUTCOMES OF THE CONFERENCE

For many among the participants, the conference was the first occasion to address Roma issues in an ecumenical context. In fact, the planning group was able to gather together Roma and non-Roma leaders and representatives of Evangelical, Orthodox and Protestant churches from several European countries.

Participants welcomed the opportunity for broader ecumenical engagement and exchange.



The participants of the conference acknowledged historical church involvement in discrimination: during Nazism and the tragedy of the Holocaust, and during Communist Totalitarianism with its forced assimilation.

They also acknowledged church involvement in present day exclusion, evident in the current segregation under which Roma people are suffering. Although each regional context is different, all recognised discriminatory practice and division between Roma and non-Roma communities and respective churches.

They commented, nevertheless, that it was heartening to see the extent of networking which already exists of persons (many of them Roma/Sinti themselves) and churches (mainly from Central, Southern and Eastern Europe and an Evangelical/Pentecostal background). This network is a solid basis for future cooperation.

“It was great to see and experience that people from different countries and denominations attended the conference. We could talk and have honest conversations as Christ’s followers about issues which matter in our everyday life and ministry.

It was useful to learn from brothers and sisters from abroad about good practices, which God laid on their hearts, and they were able to implement in their own context by His power. We could also hear, and this was surprising to me, that they are facing the same problems we face. This encourages us, and the awareness grew during the conference that we should solve these problems together, mutually supporting each other.

It warmed my heart and I was even proud when we presented best practices and our ministry in Hungary. The attitude of the Reformed Church in Hungary toward local Roma communities made me proud.”

Dénes Gyirgyó - member of the Reformed Church in Hungary





Towards the end of the conference, a sense of gratitude and of unity could be perceived. One participant highlighted the importance of joining hands with other Christians and different churches. Instead of focusing on the differences in theological understandings, it is important to find common ground.

Churches have much to do to challenge prejudices at different levels and faith is needed in a deep way. Dr Torsten Moritz, General Secretary of CCME, stated: “Most of all we’ve seen and felt the transforming power of faith and forgiveness, which can move us from division and discrimination to unity and reconciliation.”

The participants shared hope and joy in seeing that God is connecting them and what they do for God. They expressed commitment to collaborate in the future and to reach out to even more partners. They felt empowered by the exchange and stronger for the mission.

Hearing about encouraging practices from other countries and churches motivated them to do more in their own contexts and many felt that the exchange was going to have an impact on their everyday ministries.

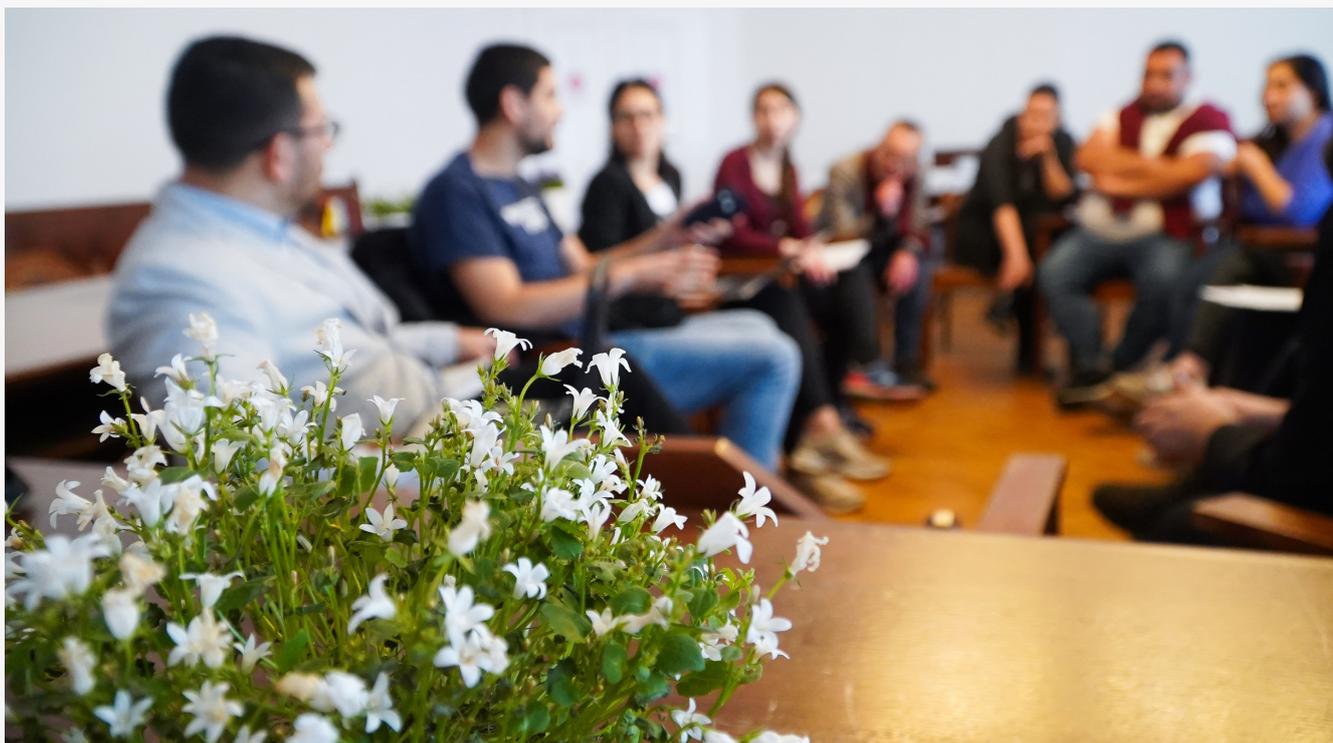
CCME will probably not be the driving force behind exchange but rather could add a broader ecumenical dimension to existing networking and support efforts to make justice for Roma within the church an issue.

“This European conference offered us the chance to look into the ministry among Roma of other denominations and countries.

It was interesting and encouraging to see that we are facing very similar challenges and to realise how God makes us creative, what kind of solutions He gives us and how He inspires awakening among Roma people locally. We were able to reflect together in a very honest way.”

Rev Eszter Dani - Head of the Mission Department of RCH





ANNEX

THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WERE THE BASIS FOR THE ORAL PRESENTATIONS AT THE CONFERENCE

FULL ADDRESS OF REV RÓBERT BALOGH

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**ACTION PLANS OF THE REFORMED CHURCH
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**CONCEPT OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN
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Full address of Rev Róbert Balogh, RCH

Motivation of the research

In the last couple of decades the Roma issue has become one of the most important issues in Europe. Numerous papers and researches are dealing with the unemployment, under-education, health problems and religious questions as well.

As a Roma Reformed theologian and minister I consider myself obliged to contribute something to this debate on the Roma. I believe participants in the current debate are expecting a voice from the Roma community and they would want to listen to a voice from the margins.

Chapter I Who the Roma people are? A historical overview

In this part we provide a general overview on the Roma and issues related to the Roma people, or who is Roma and why he or she is Roma. By real historical scientific materials trying to show up the difficulties and opened questions which are waiting for correct answers. In this place we need to claim that to find solutions or to speak politically is not our task but even more to use real historical sources and according to them analyse the historical and social background of gipsies.

1.1 Terminology

Roma (gipsy) - we will use both terms because we consider them as interchangeable terms, although Roma seems as a more politically correct expression. -Roma are an ethnic minority, that live all over the world but most of them live in Europe, more precisely in Eastern-Europe. They possibly came from India, at least most of the scholars think according to linguistic markers in the Romani language. They have no country of their own, that is why Roma are described as an ethnic minority in general.

1.2 Standard Classification of Roma

Basically there are three major groups of Roma in Hungary, differentiated according to their mother tongue:

- Romungro (means Hungarian man, whose mother tongue is Hungarian in context of Hungary)

- Vlax gipsies (their mother tongue is Romani or gipsy language, sometimes some people call them "real gipsies")

As we can notice from this study, the language (Hungarian and Slavic languages as well, actually where the most Roma people live historically) has a connotation between “szegény” (poor) and cigány (gipsy). Furthermore, to be gipsy also can mean that the person is poor (*conditio*) or the one belongs to an ethnic minority (*natio*) and in which case which one was used and what were the criteria no one knows that today.

1.4 Problems with the identification

Who is Roma or gipsy?

Analysing the archives sources (mainly from Hungary) two definitions could be followed:

1. Roma or gipsy is who was born as Roma or Gipsy
2. Roma or gipsy is who has become a gipsy or looks like a gipsy. Not just about appearance but as well as their social status.

Furthermore, what we can notice that there is no *differentia specifica* to define what does the Roma mean or who are they are. Historical sources often call and consider a person “gipsy” who is not a gipsy originally, and most interestingly some of them say: “*Necessary to declare that these people are no longer gipsies*”. (sic!). In this case and by this source we can prove that historically to be gipsy has never meant clearly that it is an ethnic one because in the quoted context they used the term “gipsy” in the sense of *conditio*. Recent debates on Roma or discrimination and marginalisation are trying to claim that criminal and social issues may be come from the ethnic origin of Roma people. However, as we can see, it is historically incorrect.

1.5 Roma History: an atypical history. Paradigms of coexistence

Notable, that when we want to see a gipsy-history, there are no typical historical events (wars, philosophical systems, religious reforms etc.), however, the sources were written by non-Roma part of the society about the gipsies! We also have to understand and emphasize that it is normal in the case of a group which has had no intellectuals (except some of them) and has lived for hundreds of years by oral traditions and by the own rules of the group but within the society in coexistence with the non-gipsies!

Towards an appropriate investigation on the issue scholars technically use two paradigms to explore the coexistence between gipsies and the non-gipsies:

1. Paradigm of the affection and suffering, which want to show the history of gipsies as the story of suffering and run away from the persecution. If we might to follow this paradigm every phenomena would be seen as a response to the affection.
2. Paradigm of the models' shifting of coexistence. In this paradigm the segmentarist gipsy groups could be seen more precisely and correctly. Affection against them is not the cause but rather the result of a local or wider economic and/or societal crisis. After a crisis necessary to find a new model of coexistence or in other words, to sustain their life.

Models on coexistence between gipsies and non-gipsies we have informative instances from Hungary in different eras of the country.

1. InThe 15th and 16th century were the periods of making the basis and possibilities for a long-time coexistence.
2. The second half of the 18th century that was the era of enlightenment and the first bid to integrate the gipsies into the society. Mainly in terms of paying taxes to the state officially.
3. During the late 19th century the modernisation raised up again the question of Roma-integration.
4. In the communist era, especially from the 1950's the industrialization of Hungary (following the Soviet method) integrated a large number of Roma people into the labour market.
5. Finally, after the economical-political changes in the 1990's integration of Roma population has been becoming a crucial point of political and daily life not only in Hungary but in the whole Europe, as well.

1.6 Explanation of the problem: changes in the Roma's situation throughout the history

A quite short explanation on these five points below is going to be helpful to understand the Roma issue. In the feudalistic society gipsies and non-gipsies had lived together in harmony and symbiosis based upon mutual interdependence. The local country-folk needed the special work of gipsies (metal-work, wood-work, special services) to sustain their own daily agricultural life. This lifestyle of gipsies is called in Romology papers *mendication*. In this sense what the *mendication* means is that gipsies were moving around to find a place where their work was needed. However, they have participated in the economy of the state or country but haven't paid taxes to the state officially. The absolutist emperors (Maria Theresia and her son

Joseph the second II) recognized that they need to integrate gipsies and make them “yokels” to receive taxes from them. Necessary to mention in this place that some of the gipsies have become yokels during the centuries and in this case according to historical sources they were no longer gipsies. Certainly when the sources say that in this context we should notice that to be a gipsy has meant a condition and didn't refer to an ethnic group. In other words that was still really unclear who is and especially why is that person gipsy?

The first problems with gipsies and the time when the sources called them “thieves and robbers” was the late 17th century, the time of a huge economic crisis in Europe. At the same time the emergence of guilds and companies supplanted the handmade metal and wood products, so that gipsies have had to find alternative methods to earn money or at least to sustain their own daily life. There were two options to survive, the first one to find another place where their job is needed or begging, wizardry or getting hold of things from the non-gipsies with “clever gipsy manners”. Historically the 18th century was a milestone because the process of acculturation begun. There were more and more mixed-marriages and in the daily life interdependence was stronger. In that sense to be a gipsy or how can we define the term gipsy is rather *conditio* than *natio* which is referring to a nation, or an ethnic minority.

Due appropriate investigation on the historical background of gipsies we need to clarify that since the 18th century a strong differentiation-process within the gipsy communities' observable until this very day. More precisely, there were gipsies who were settled-down and lived in a local place such as the others or non gipsies and had not different lifestyle from the non-gipsies and on the other hand there were gipsies who were travellers and they travelled within the country to find places where their work was needed. These two types of life were interchangeable with each other, even in the life of one family or in the history of one concrete family we have some examples that say for instance the grandfather was a traveller who lived a typical *mendication* lifestyle and the grandchildren were non-travellers who lived such a country-folk lifestyle. That could be confusing very easily when we are trying to explore the history of gipsies. Political speeches from that era and declarations by non-gipsies sometimes considered gipsies as an ethnic group and other documents claim that there is a gipsy-lifestyle. That means the second perspective is focusing on profession/*condition*, meantime the first one is focusing on nation and they are making sense in different ways, even though they are speaking about the very same people! In the 19th century a new attitude of policy was getting started in Hungary that wanted to see the Roma issue in the context of the whole country. What we can note of this period is that it was the era when large number of gipsies became a gipsy-

musician or in other words they found their place in the modernised society, and on the other hand the metal-worker gypsies still lived in terrible conditions. In 1893 led by some real scholars the first census of gypsies took place and concluded that: there is no one organic gypsy nation or ethnic group even one gypsy language rather there are many differentiated communities who live in varietal sub-cultures and social positions.

The next big step towards a so-called gypsy or Roma integration was the communist era in Hungary. At that time the state followed the Soviet-Stalinic policy and the theory of “everyone has to work to build up the communism” was the main path in the political life. What would this mean how did it concern the gypsies? From the 1950’s a strong-industrialization started in the big cities of Hungary which were led by government-established constructor companies. Most gypsy men went to work there and found their place or even were able to earn enough money to live, to sustain their family’s life. (Even though they actually lived far away from their families, came back home one time in a month and just send the money to their wives). The real challenge started at 1990 by the economic-political change in the Eastern-block. Former labourers lost their job and couldn’t find their place in the new political system because of their under-education. Since 1990 unemployment, poverty, health issues have become extremely high and no one knows what is going to be the next step.

1.7 A philosophical insight: How does the language create an image behind the notion?

As we have already noticed throughout the history the notion of gypsy or to be or to live as a gypsy has changed a lot. In philosophical terms, it is necessary to understand the process of how the term and the meaning of that is changing in different circumstances. In order to get this point, we are going to trace very briefly Ludwig Wittgenstein’s philosophy. Summarizing his Magnum Opus *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* we need to see that when a language creates an image, a notion behind the term is understandable only the relationships between *Sachverhalts*.(facts, circumstances) Par excellence to recognize and realize that in this case what does the modern and post-modern society mean by the term gypsy cannot refer to an ethnogenetic or ethnospecific group because the image. In this sense and following Wittgenstein the meaning “behind the word” is always related to what does the term in a very local and concrete context mean. Furthermore, the meaning of the term is changing and developing how is it used in different circumstances between the societal situations. In other words what the real *substantia*, (substance) of gypsy is always relative and depends on the circumstances in which the language creates and refers to one thing or entity. Much more

easily, a person who considered in America gipsy that doesn't mean he or she is gipsy in Easter-European sense, yet, the same person could be gipsy in one local context and could become non-gipsy in another context.

Chapter II- Strangers in the Old Testament

As we have seen so far in the first part the understanding of who is the Roma or gipsy is absolutely unclear and the meaning of the notion has changed during the centuries. In the second part of the presentation we are investigating the places of strangers in the Old Testament in order to find biblical affirmation and parallels towards a proper and contextualized Roma mission. After a general overview on strangers in the Old Testament we will try to explore the issue of resident aliens or sojourners, and how their place has changed in the society of ancient Israel.

2.1 General overview: Strangers in the Old Testament

Basically there were two major groups of strangers in the society of Ancient Israel. In Hebrew terms *nokhrim* and *zarim* were the ones who were considered real strangers because they do not live permanently in Israel. (See Ex 21:8; 29:33) They were not obliged to follow the rules of Jahweh but *zarim* and *nokhrim* were standing under the protection of strangers (See especially Job 31:32). In religious speaking two mentioned groups haven't had to follow prescription according to the law so that it was permissible for example to sell them died animals etc. (Deut 14:21)

However what is most interestingly related to our topic is the circumstances of "resident-aliens" or sojourners. There is a technical term in biblical Hebrew called *Ger*.

2.2 *Gerim*. Their name and origin, historical and social background

According to the most relevant lexicons of the Old Testament *ger* (in plural form *gerim*) means: sojourner, temporary dweller, new-comer, who has no inherited rights. (Cf. Ex 12:19; Lev 24:16 etc.) The verb *gur* in qal and hitpo form means to sojourn, abstract derivative form of the verb is *gerut* what is a name of place (Jer 41:17). *Megurim* which is also derives from the verb *gur* (this is a participium) means stranger hood. The verb *gur* and its derivatives were mostly used in the exilic and post-exilic time. *Ger* occurs 92 times in the Massoretic Text. "Term (*ger*) has used in the Code of Covenant (you can find it in the book of Exodus) 6x but the frequent usage only toward the end of the state Judah.

Bible mentions them first time in Gen 15:13 "...your offspring shall be *ger*." *Ger* is different from *nokhri* or *zar*, the *ger* is a person who has settled and established himself or herself for a particular period in the land and a special status is granted to him or her. At the same time *ger* cannot enjoy the full rights of an Israelite. About daily life and social settings, a *ger* is a servant of an Israelite, who is lord and patron (Deut 24:14). In general, *ger* is poor (however see Lev 25:47) consequently economically weak like widows and orphans.

It is notable that how these three groups are treated and protected in the Old Testament theology. In other words criterion of *diaconia* to serve and love one another was already emphasized in the Old Testament. Therefore, results of biblical theology provide useful details to help a better understanding on migration and racism issues.

Issue of strangers and poor are not new problems. People on the margins are always struggling against social issues and they are wearing a stamp that they are "other" than the major part of the society. Summarizing social rights of them in the Old Testament we can say that they have right to glean to sustain daily life. (Lev 19:10; 23:22 etc.) Most of *gerim* were day labourers and artisans.

As we mentioned above, strangers consequently *ger* stands under divine protection (Deut 10:18). Israelites should love them as themselves because they were sojourner in Egypt, (Lev 19:34 and Ex 22:20) In addition, they have to not to oppress on *ger* (Ex 22:20). However they enjoy almost the same rights like an Israelite and very important to see that in this sense they were not "second-class citizens". Even though there is difference between *gerim* and native Israelites, namely, that a *ger* possesses no land (especially Ez 47:22.)

In terms of religious prescriptions the same duties were valid for Israelites and *gerim*. (Ex 24:49, Num 15:5f) A *ger* also must keep the Sabbath, (Ex 20:10) the fasts of the Day of Atonement, (Lev 16:29) and the Passover (Num 9:14) on the condition that he is circumcised (Ex 12:48). He can sacrifice (Lev 17:8, Num 15:15f) and participate in the festivals (Dt 16:11, 14). They could participate in, (Deut 14:29), Sabbath year (Lev 25:6), or they had right to runaway to cities of refuge (Num 35:15). So, what we can discover that Israelite and *ger* are subject to the same law, in daily life no distinction between *gerim* and Israelites.

2.3 Theological importance of *gerim*.

Summarizing theological importance of the issue is the following:

1. Yahweh himself cares for the sojourner, God of Israel is God of widows, orphans, strangers, weak people and He commands not to oppress them but love them. (Lev 19:33, Dt10:19)
2. Understanding of notion of nation in the Old Testament. Deuteronomistic theology in particular (ex 22:20b, 23:9b Lev 19:34b are secondary) is a development and draws a connection between the ethical requirement with reference to the *ger* and Israel's sojourn in Egypt. However, *gerim* was an unknown class before the exodus.
3. Some biblical passages consider the nation Israel like Abraham as a type (Gen 23:4) or as *ger* in Canaan in Yahwe's land (Lev 25:23). What is more important is that the divine focus started to be on Abraham the father of faith? God promised the land to him and yet, the blessing of all nations. Briefly and concerned to our topic: in the salvation-history of the Old Testament the fact that Israel itself was *ger* plays a kind of main role.

4. Concept of “You were strangers...” in the Old Testament, special focus on The Priestly Writing.

After a more general overview it is necessary to examine one concrete passage from the Bible which is going to be in our case the concept of “*Love your neighbour... because you were also strangers*” in Egypt from the Lev 19. According to the most-accepted introductory studies on the Old Testament the Book of Holiness (Lev 18-20) within the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26) is the youngest of the three law books of the Pentateuch. Furthermore, by interpreting this latest text we can see how the understanding of strangers and the attitude towards them have changed throughout history.

2.4.1 Notes on translation of Lev 19:33-34

The text which we interpret is Leviticus 19:33-34 which locus says:

“When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.” (New American Standard Bible)

Some notes on translation of the Hebrew text which are might be useful. Yahweh says: “I am the LORD your God”. In Hebrew is a plural form what we cannot see in English but the text wants to emphasize with this grammatical form that I am (the LORD, Jahwe) the God of native Israelites and the *Gerim* as well, there is no distinction between them in that sense!

However, the translation of “*love him as yourself*” could be interpreted in this way: “love him because he is like you!”

2.4.2 Exegesis of Lev 19:33-34

Our verses are part of the Book of Holiness. As part of priestly writing that means the texts refer to the context of the exile. During the exilic period the society of Israel and their self-understanding was shaped and influenced by the Babylonian religion and circumstances, so that after the exile they needed to clarify their identity. Who we are, who are strangers and why and of course their relationship with Jahwe. At that time (so called Second-Temple period) synagogues have emerged like diaspora Jewish communities. (Mainly in Babylon and in Egypt)

In terms of genre Lev 19 is a kind of catechism, catechism for a responsible life on what God emphasizes by using the formula: “I am the LORD”. Within this chapter in the Hebrew text singular and plural forms of “you” are used interchangeably. In our case, Hebrew text uses a plural form of “you” to show up that the message is addressing the whole community, the entire congregation, representing God’s will explicitly like commandments. (Typical formula: “You shall” which can be also found in Dt and that proves the relationship between these passages, historically and theologically, as well.)

These verses, namely 33-34 are concerning the second section of the chapter, which is a unit within the chapter 19. After a redactional work this coherent unit fits with the context of exilic-postexilic period and the text has only one goal: to orientate the congregation towards life-together.

What we can notice and that seems very important to our topic is that to re-define who are they as a community and a religious corpus was most critically important. In addition to this theological concept of purity, to accept one another, and yet to love the neighbour is an ethical principle of the “pure congregation” *coram Deo*. In the worldview of priestly writing the human division is based on three covenants with Jahweh: 1. With persons (Noah Gen 9) 2. Israel (Patriarchs stories) 3. With the priesthood (cf. Num 24.12-15). This chapter following these divisions considers *gerim* such a legal part of the covenant. In that sense the covenant between Israel and Jahweh should to be a dynamic one with strangers in itself, because in this viewpoint what is pure is common, more precisely purity of Israel as a holy nation depends on the dynamic understanding of their covenant with Jahweh who wants to protect strangers and every type of marginalized people.

Yet, the love what we can find here does not concern to a theoretical understanding of love (like a Platonic one). However it emphasizes a very practical way to love one another in terms of mutual acceptance. Who is my neighbour? The main Christian and Jewish interpretation on that this verse refers to the whole humankind. It is a wider ethical approach on what we can follow and accept but this very concrete passage is concerned with *gerim* as a part of the congregation of Jahweh. The “elected” nation Israel cannot consider itself an ethnocentric nation rather should be inclusivist in the sense of manifest of God’s love with whom Jahweh interacts the world. This universalism of the Old Testament theology can be found in the exilic and post-exilic literature such as in the prophecies of Deutero and Trito-Isaiah.

The Hebrew text says *ger* so we can either translate this verse like this: “*Love your ger as yourself, or Love your ger because he/she is like you.*” In a new historical, economic and religious context the native Israelites rediscovered their *ger* roots from Egypt and considered this as the basis of treating others. *Ger* and non-*ger* are standing under one roof, both group are part of one congregation. This is proved because the laws referring to intra-community i.e. only to people within the community that means sojourner or resident alien and native Israelites had the same right in the *qahal*, in the congregation of Jahweh.

2.4.5 Theological conclusion of Israel’s *ger* origin

To close this part of the presentation and as a conclusion it seems that there is no clear definition on who native Israelite is and who is stranger. Yet, a relevant historical catastrophe or social change raises up the necessity of redefining who they are and how can they follow Jahweh and be His holy nation. In other words how did Israel treat the big triada (widows, orphans, and strangers) was a criterion of diaconia or the imitation of God. Related to the holiness and purity in the three law books of the Pentateuch without treating correctly people on the margins the holy nation cannot be fulfilled. Furthermore, Israel cannot be the kingdom of priests among the nations and a sign of God’s mission.

Speaking about the *ger* roots of Israel this motif is woven into the whole story of Exodus, for instance Moses in Midian (Ex 2:15-22). And this note links to all the three law books we can find in the Hebrew Bible. These verses are located in a chapter which is written in the style of casuistic law. However when the Exodus or Deuteronomy either the Leviticus refers to the *ger* identification of the nation of Israel is never contains a casuistic argument but always has a theological-psychological background.

In this place we also need to speak about important stranger figures in the Old Testament not even stories but either in the *Heilsgechichte*. Among many just to give some examples the Pharaoh's daughter who saved Moses's life, or Ruth the Moabite who was the ancestress of the Great King (David). Finishing this part of the presentation we would like to show up this approach of love one's neighbour by a quotation from the Genesis Rabbah (it is a rabbinical source): "*So that, one should not say: 'since I despise myself, let my fellow be despised with me; since I am cursed, let my fellow be cursed with me.'*"

Roma Mission: Re-Evaluated

3.1 The Church is missionary by Her very nature

"*We believe in one, holy, catholic, and Apostolic Church*" emphasizes the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. In this part we have a special focus from a special scope on "oneness" of the Church. This is the main topic the main goal and probably the main issue too in the practical missionary service. However the question is how does the Church express this oneness (even in terms of a local congregation) of people from the margins and from the non-margins. In other words how can the Church understand herself in this case in the viewpoint of "oneness as mission".

The church is missionary by its very nature, because as we have seen within the second part God's purpose is call the entire inhabited world to praise His name. During the Old Testament period Israel was the sign of God's mission to be light and witness for the "others" and including those who lived among them, namely the strangers, orphans, widows, marginalized people. However, the Church's understanding on mission has been changing during the centuries until now.

For now our task is to clarify why the Church is One and missionary related to the Roma mission. First, we need to see the concept of *Missio Dei* which is probably the most relevant viewpoint on mission in the 20th century.

1. *Missio Dei*. God's mission with the world.

Earlier understanding of mission was extending the Church from the Christian-West to the non-Christian rest of the world. This attitude still exists within the Christendom mainly that the aim of the Church is to find new members who will join the community. After the World War 1 and World War 2 theologians recognized that they followed a wrong direction because the liberal theology of the 19th century assumed an understanding-circle on God, human-being.

The Creation which starts from the human being and goes back to the humankind. However, a new voice has emerged in the field of theology which has criticised that viewpoint and emphasized that the most crucial point is the relationship between Christ and His Church. In this theology Christ is in the very centre of the interpretation and self-understanding of the Church herself. Contrary the previous attitude of this theological system assume that the understanding-circle should to start from God Himself because only in this case we could go back to Him keeping the Good News, (euagelion) the Word of God which has created the Church. Yet, the Church could be the Church only if She follows the Word of God by listening to it or in other words if the Church define herself in connection with God's self-disclosure. By listening to Word of God what can the Church learn? First of all, we would like to demonstrate paraphrasing the aim of the mission: according to the first attitude, expanding the Christendom mission is for the Church, in the viewpoint of *Missio Dei* the Church is for mission! This is the real meaning of the Church being missionary by its very nature. As God has been giving Himself (the whole Trinity!) to this world, as the Father sent the Son and as Both sent the Holy Spirit to this world the Church was sent in the same way to this world to be witness. The discussions in the second part of the presentation raised the question of *diaconia* and service. While this third part is basically on witnessing and *martyria*.

Roma mission such as any type of mission is standing between those two notions. (Diaconia and martyria). How does the understanding of dyaconia-martyria *relatio* send the Church to serve this world? Is the Roma mission a unique and special one which needs a special scope or behaviour from local congregations or just all about ecclesiological self-understanding? Is it hospitality, a humanitarian approach or rather the very heart of the Community itself? To answer these questions we need to introduce briefly the concept of *Mission from the margins*.

3.3 Mission from the margins

God's mission with the world has only one main purpose: to re-create and re-new this world with the whole creation in itself. Naturally the Church has always considered marginalized and discriminated people the object of the mission. In this sense there is no huge difference between a government-organised program and the "mission" because both of them try to find a solution to bring those people from the margins into the centre of the society. What we need to see and recognize is that this is only one aspect of the issue. In this place we also need to explore and explain why do we cannot accept the term "Roma issue" in this context?

Well, because speaking of an issue provides an anonym object that is waiting for a solution and hides the real faces behind the notion that those people are starving and living in poverty.

So, the other direction of mission look at people on the margins as active missionaries. They have special gifts given by God. People in the margins have abilities and skills to show up to the people from “ the centre” another aspect of life, other type of virtues and especially another way of understanding of Community and spirituality. Perhaps the most important thing we can learn from the Mission from the margins is how do the margins are called to evangelize the Church As we have seen even in the Old Testament already, God is also God of weak, poor, discriminated people and their Saviour. Jesus declared this God by His life (always went to the *Am Haaretz that is a technical term means about marginalised people*) and by His preaching as well. It is not just about mutual acceptance because the “love your neighbour” has first of all a practical than a theoretical meaning. Rather, in a secularised or post-secularised world, mission from the margins is a possibility to renew the Church self-understanding in terms of ecclesiology.

3.4 What the Roma mission could be and should be?

However if the Church wants to be a renewed Community, renewed by the Holy Spirit it is necessary to listen to the Word of God and reinterpret what the Church is. Because the Body of Christ should be the light of the world such as Israel was in the Ancient Near-East and the criteria of *dyaconia* is still how do the congregation of God treat people from the margins. It is a fact that it is not easy to be opened and accept one another especially in a context where is several conflicts between Roma and non-Roma people, and I do believe, most of them are based upon cultural and historical misunderstandings. The crucial point in terms of Roma mission is the Church wants to rediscover Herself and Her relationship with the Triune God or not? A living and renewed relationship with the Triune God has to send the Church to this world to be witness and to do the mission. Roma people and Roma history is not a unique, so that Roma mission shouldn't be a special field using different methods under the umbrella of contextualised mission. Due mission among Roma rather should be mission with Roma or a bit provocatively should be mission from the Roma communities. Roma communities could be a reminder for the Church of who we are? Where are we standing *coram Deo*? There is a strategy for Roma mission in the Hungarian Reformed Church. Three key points of that are: reconciliation, health and hope. God reconciled Himself with the world in Christ and in this reconciliation there is health in every aspect of life (health of body, mentally health and wealthy). The hope might be the link between them. What we mean is hope for reconciliation

and hope for health. Yet, there is one hope that is addressed towards to the Kingdom of God and the Church must be eschatology-oriented. If we want to evangelise this world unavoidable to be in community with one another in spite of the other is “totally other” for me.

In Jesus Christ “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is [aj]neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*” (Gal 3:28). It is very easy to reflect upon this verse as this biblical passage is speaking about the Kingdom of God especially within the Reformed theology in which we use the images of visible and invisible Church when the invisible Church is the Kingdom of God and the visible Church (let’s say the institute) can participate in it. It is true in this world we cannot reach the eternal justice and peace because we are all sinners, but the redeemed Church despite She is living here and stands for human-beings always has a visible aspect which should be referred to Jesus Christ Himself who is the Head of the Church! In other words the human and divine in the Church can never be separated. In addition only the human and divine can show up together the visibility of the Church. Furthermore, not only a mutual acceptance and reconciliation cannot be the main purpose of the Roma mission. The main purpose of Roma mission should be evangelising and renew the whole Church’s life and Her relationship with Christ and to be in one real community Roma and non-Roma people together towards life.

Conclusion

The issue which is related to the Roma people one of the most important social problems nowadays. The Church should to be able to give a correct biblical and theological response to find a solution or integrate them into the Church. However every time when we want to find a solution we can forget that mission means more than to use an appropriate method. Mission is the main purpose of the Christianity and the Church is missionary by Her very nature. In that sense Roma mission might be a field in which we can find the possibilities of renewing our local congregations and church-structures but renewing can also mean that returning to the roots. Listening to the Word of God and follow the good news this is the only one and the best method of the Roma mission.

Biblically, treating with the strangers or widely treating with people of the margins is the criteria of diaconia. Yet, Israel has recognised its own *ger* roots and defined itself according to that in the later biblical time, actually in the Deuteronomist and Priestly Writing. Consideration of who is stranger and why is he/she stranger has changed a lot during the history

of Ancient Israel. In different historical context the authors have given different types of answers. Even in the biblical times definition of resident alien was totally unclear.

Romology part of the thesis also refers to this issue. Recently, in those countries where a large number of Roma people live a voice which is consider the Roma issue an ethnic problem is getting stronger. Analysing historical sources and use the special scope of atypical history of Roma we explored that the meaning of Roma is not obvious. History of Hungarian Roma is a very good example to prove that the term has two connotations: the first one refers to condition, profession social background, the second one refers to ethnic or national identity. Sources sometimes use them altogether about the same person or group and that could be confusing.

Any initiation (organised by the Church or either a government) which doesn't want to accept it and want to base its project upon unscientific things are foredoomed to failure.

Ecumenical contribution of this dissertation is wider than reflect upon the Roma mission. Migration, marginalisation, discrimination are all ecumenical issues. The ecumenical movement has to struggle against them but people of the margins could be a field where different denominations can serve together. There are some practical experiences from the field of Roma mission when pastors and priests recognised the mission is more important than dogmatically differences. Furthermore, ecumenical movement is able to demonstrate the practical manifestation of the love of God. It has the chance to be witness in a sense when no matter who are you and from which church, because the real matter is to fulfil the main task of the Christendom: to be in *koinonia* to be in fellowship with one another and evangelise this world by this.

Our last consequence on Roma mission is Roma people are not a unique in the European societies who are waiting for solution. Looking at them who are disadvantaged and need help is not the path of the integration. Some times when an organisation tries to find a way to help them can lose the essence of the life: the practical way of love what is more than mutual acceptance. This is the good news what the church should to proclaim all the time! A short thesis cannot provide practical insights only to show the theoretical background of the issue up to help for those pastors, social workers, teachers who want to get involved the Roma mission. Paraphrasing the Great Commandment: "*Love your neighbour because your neighbour is just like you*". This is the last accord of our investigation and the main essence of living-together.

Sinti and Roma - one of the most rejected minorities in Germany and Europe (Dotschy Reinhardt)

Sinti and Roma have a common country of origin: India.

But all groups have lived in their ancestral lands for centuries. The first *German Sinti* were registered in 1647 in Hildesheim. *German Roma* came to Germany at the end of the 19th and in the 20th century and live - like the *German Sinti* - mostly well integrated as German citizens in the different federal states. The "*Burgenland Roma*" have also lived in Austria for several centuries. This also applies to the *Italian Sinti* or the *English Romanichal*. The *Romanian and Bulgarian Roma* also have a long history with their countries.

The promotion and preservation and freedom of culture, language and identity of the German Sinti and Roma are granted by the *Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*. In addition to the *German Sinti and Roma*, the Sorbs, Frisians and Danes are recognized as minorities in the federal states. Roma and Sinti are historically grown minority groups, which, due to their heterogeneity, describe themselves as such. Together, Sinti and Roma form the largest minority in Europe with eight to twelve million. The mother tongue of both groups is called "Romanes", whose language roots lie in Sanskrit. However, the numerous dialects here also reflect the heterogeneity of the groups.

"Roma and Sinti have played a decisive role in shaping the European cultural landscape"

They belong to those ethnic groups which have had a decisive influence on the European cultural landscape. Many people are not even aware, for example, that flamenco was imported to Spain by the *Cale people* and became the *cultural figurehead* of Spain. European jazz was established by a *Belgian Manouche* with German roots, the Sinto Django Reinhardt. His musical heritage is an integral part of the *savior-vivre* and belongs to France and Paris like the Eiffel Tower or champagne. Herbal medicine is also partly based on Sinti and Roma, who were long denied access to doctors and conventional medicine due to their history of persecution.

There were also dignitaries from the ranks of Sinti and Roma who served their country faithfully. Writers*, artists*, musicians* and scientists* such as Philomena Franz, Ceija Stojka, Mateo Maximoff, the London-born and worldwide renowned professor of linguistics, Ian Hancock, the guitarist Carlos Santana, Robert Plant (Led Zeppelin) or even the great Charlie Chaplin as well as Rita Hayworth, Ricardo Quaresma Michael Caine, Bob Hoskins - they all are and were Sinti*ze and Rom*nja or at least have such roots.

The different groups of Sinti and Roma in their diversity and cultural richness form the diversity of Europe per se. They enrich their countries as authors, artists, scientists or in other professions.

"Most of the cliches and enemy images are due to heteronomy and antiziganism, which is firmly rooted in the European racial ideology".

Nevertheless, society is often dominated by at best half-knowledge about the citizens who have been living integrated with the majority society in their traditional countries for centuries. Most of the cliches and enemy images are due to heteronomy and Antiziganism, which is firmly rooted in the European racial ideology. Members of these minorities are still fighting against stigmatization and misinterpretations about their life and culture.

It is not surprising that Sinti*ze and Rom*nja hide their origin. Sinti*ze and Rom*nja also deny their origin for fear of discrimination in important areas of life such as work, housing, equal treatment by authorities and education.

"The inflammatory speeches against all who do not correspond to "being German" are now popular in all social classes and are rewarded with votes. The trauma of persecution and mass extermination under National Socialism is still deeply rooted in the members of these minorities. At least 500,000 fell victim to the Nazis. Even after the war, they were denied recognition as Nazi victims for racist reasons until 1982, and thus also financial aid and reparations.

Although there was solidarity on the part of politicians on the long road to recognition and reparation, the mistrust and fear of being persecuted and marginalized again are deeply rooted. And current political developments in Germany confirm these fears. The inflammatory speeches against all those who do not correspond to their own idea of "being German", which is based on nothing other than Hitler's *blood-and-soil ideology*, are now popular with all sections of the population and are rewarded with votes. Intellectual arsonists accuse immigrants from Romania and Bulgaria of crime and social fraud. We also view with concern this increase in verbal violence in the light of racists that have once plunged this country into misery, divided it and stained its history with irreparable guilt for the death of millions of people, including six million Jews and 500,000 Sinti and Roma. This racism affects us all. It may be that minorities are repeatedly the first to suffer from it - but an unfree tyranny affects every person in Germany.

"Cooperation at eye level with the churches"

The challenges are big, but there are women and men who are taking up this responsibility and are actively working for human rights and against racism. Alliances, networks, working groups and the resulting cooperation are a good tool for civil-political exchange and work in solidarity. A good example of this is the "Working Group Sinti-Roma Church" (AKSRK), initiated in 2017, in which both cross-religious church representatives* from all federal states and representatives* of the Sinti and Roma community participate.

This was preceded in 1999 by the founding of the working group "Sinti/Roma and Churches in Baden-Württemberg" by Prof. Dr. Andreas Hoffmann-Richter. It was brought into being "in order to raise the awareness of the churches and their members for the problems of antigypsyism and discrimination in the Protestant and Catholic communities in Baden-Württemberg".

The nationwide AKSRK meets once a year on the basis of cooperation at eye level for a conference in order to sound out possible actions and cooperation, but also to bring unspoken things to the table and to deal with grievances, for example in the processing of the participation of the churches in National Socialism and the accompanying persecution of the Sinti and Roma. Building mutual trust requires transparency and a protected place to discuss even difficult issues.

But the AKSRK also works outwardly: Events are organized, such as the church service and the concert commemorating the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, which took place in the Berlin Cathedral at the beginning of the year in cooperation with many participants. An emancipated and self-determined generation of Sinti and Roma has since grown up who are interested in helping to shape their country and who uphold democratic values such as freedom, equality and human dignity, as activists* or private individuals. They are involved in initiatives such as "Initiative Rromnja", an association of Berlin Roma and Sinti women who no longer want to accept that the rejection of Roma and Sinti, hostilities and violence against Roma and Sinti are concealed, trivialized or even justified, or the "Sinti Power Club", which supports young Sinti in Ravensburg.

The Roma and Sinti associations are active and creative in their projects. With themed cinema evenings, readings, concerts, panel discussions, youth camps and educational excursions to various institutions, meeting places, communication and opportunities for networking between Sinti and non-Sinti are to be created. In addition, publications on the topic will be issued and

seminars and conferences will be held. All these are formats that are well suited for the organization of the "Intercultural Week" on site. It is important to recognize the urgency of including the topic in the Cultural Week and to pay as much attention to this racism as to other misanthropic attitudes.

The Central Council of Sinti and Roma

An important role in the fight against Antiziganism and for the recognition of the rights of Sinti and Roma is played by the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and the associated Documentation and Cultural Center of German Sinti and Roma. The Central Council has its roots in the early civil rights work of *Romani Rose*, *Reinhold* and *Ilona Lagrene* and many other German Sinti human rights activists* from the very beginning.

On 27 October 1979, the first commemoration event to commemorate the genocide of 500,000 Roma and Sinti in Europe took place. Survivors organized themselves into a civil rights movement and drew public attention to their cause. In 1980, Sinti went on hunger strike at the Dachau concentration camp memorial site. They demanded the official recognition of Sinti and Roma as victims of the Nazis, the publication of Nazi files and the initiation of proceedings against the perpetrators who were still alive.

The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma was founded in 1982. On 21 December 1982, the genocide on racist grounds of the European Sinti and Roma was finally recognized under the then Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt.

With its commemorative work, the *Central Council*, the member associations and independent Sinti and Roma organizations commemorate the Sinti and Roma who were victims of National Socialism. On 2 August 2019, a large commemoration ceremony in the former Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp commemorated the liquidation of the last remaining Sinti and Roma in the concentration camp on 2 August 1944. The Evangelical Academy of Berlin also devoted itself to this topic and in November 2019, in cooperation with the (state council) *Landesrat der Roma und Sinti Berlin-Brandenburg e.V.*, organized a commemorative event at which Berlin schoolgirls went in search of traces of the Sinti biographies of Nazi victims and presented the results in a presentation.

To *Romani Rose*, "It is desirable that Protestant church historians should in the future take a closer look at the still open research questions., the relevant studies on population attitudes towards Sinti and Roma - from the study by the *Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency* to the studies by the Universities of Leipzig and Bielefeld - show a frighteningly high level of rejection: according to them, almost 60 percent of the population reject Sinti and Roma as neighbors. After the centuries-old history of Antiziganism, which culminated in the state-organized genocide of 500,000 Sinti and Roma in Europe, these population attitudes are proof of how tough and long-lasting the prejudices against our minority are.

At the same time, however, the survey results are also an expression of social failure. For while antisemitism was publicly outlawed after 1945, the power of antiziganistic thought patterns remained alive even after the collapse of the Nazi dictatorship, especially with regard to the so-called social elites in politics, administration and science. Only within the framework of the political self-organization of those affected and the foundation of a civil rights movement have we succeeded in confronting this racist view with our own history, breaking the power of interpretation of the former perpetrators and finally initiating a social process of rethinking.

The Christian churches have a special responsibility with their history. The historian Wolfgang Wippermann, one of the founders of Antiziganism research, was one of the first to point out the role of Christian Antiziganism since the end of the Middle Ages.

His book "Wie die Zigeuner" (Like the Gypsies), published in 1997, in which he compares the

history of antisemitism and Antiziganism, consciously takes up a quotation from Martin Luther. In Luther's writings we find a conglomerate of malicious "gypsy" stereotypes, ranging from the robbery of children to accusations of espionage. Such negative ascriptions remained effective for centuries and were spread in ever new variations.

Another chapter that urgently needs further research is the assistance of the Protestant Church in the preparation of the Nazi genocide of our minority. As we know, church representatives provided the National Socialist racial researchers with church documents such as baptismal books. This contributed to the racial-biological registration of our people as "gypsies" or "gypsy crossbreeds", which was usually tantamount to a death sentence. The *Stuttgart Confession of Guilt* of October 1945 does not mention our minority at all. Even after that, there was no real discussion in the Protestant Church about these entanglements in the Nazi crimes against our minority.

The report ... also deals with this aspect of the lack of historical reappraisal, but on the other hand I would also like to mention the important support of the Protestant Church for the civil rights movement. The hunger strike in the former concentration camp Dachau in April 1980 was made possible by the support of the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria*, which made the premises of the *Church of Reconciliation* on the memorial site available to us. During this time, the *German Protestant Kirchentag lay assemblies* were important platforms for the civil rights movement to create awareness of our political goals - especially the political and social recognition of the genocide.

Also today I see important initiatives of the church base (grass roots) which are engaged against Antiziganism, such as the nationwide *Working Group Sinti/Roma/Church*. Especially against the background of the intensive *Jewish-Christian dialogue*, I consider it essential that the EKD as a whole deals with the topic of Antiziganism and sends a clear signal in which the Protestant Church acknowledges its responsibility towards our minority.

..., the expert report on the long history of Antiziganism in the Protestant Church, as mentioned at the beginning, shows many topics which deserve, indeed challenge, a more intensive occupation, especially on the part of *research institutions close to the Church*. The Church must take on significantly more responsibility and use the possibilities of its own structures and educational institutions in order to sensitize society for the widespread and still effective Antiziganism. A clear commitment of the church to this social responsibility can be an important step towards outlawing Antiziganism in our society just as much as antisemitism.

(*Research Report on the State of Research on the Topic of "Protestantism and Antigypsyism"*, The full Report ... can be found on the homepage of the *Central Council of German Sinti and Roma*.)

German Sinti and Roma have been part of German society for many generations, have German citizenship and speak the German language. German Sinti and Roma have enjoyed legal recognition in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1998, when the *Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* became federal law (see Zentralrat Dt. Sinti u. Roma 2018). Thus, these groups of persons are regarded as recognized national German minorities. This legal recognition applies only to German Sinti and Roma.

The legal status of *migrated Roma*, on the other hand, depends on their migration history and personal backgrounds. They can have German citizenship, be refugees, have the status of stateless or internally displaced persons, have a toleration certificate or live under the fear of deportation.

According to UNICEF, approximately 80,000 to 120,000 Sinte*zza and Rom*nja with German citizenship and approximately 50,000 who have the status of refugees or labor migrants live in the

Federal Republic of Germany (cf. Benz 2007). Roma from the former Yugoslavia came to Germany in the 1960s in the course of the acquisition of guest workers. The second and third generations of them live today with German citizenship or permanent residence. It should therefore be emphasized that the aims of the Sinti civil rights movement differ from those of the Roma rights movement in one respect. The former fights for the recognition of the minority as a part of German society and demands a fair participation in all areas, while the latter is mainly concerned with the right of residence of the Roma in Germany. *The fight against Antiziganism though unites the two groups.*

Dimensions of Multiple Discrimination against Sinti and Roma

There are experiences of multiple discrimination that Sinti and Roma experience in Germany therefore they fight against it in the civil society organizations.

The experiences of multiple discrimination are present to this day for these women and men. The example of Sinteza and Romnja illustrates the interconnectedness of experiences of discrimination in a white majority society and the decades-long suspension of compensation and reparations with feelings of alienation, isolation and non-belonging in a country these people call home.

Sinteza and Romnja experience discrimination on several levels: for example, because of their ethnicity, age, class, gender, religion or nationality etc. As women they are additionally exposed to exoticization, eroticization, the attribution of supernatural powers, as well as their perception as "impure" and "criminal". Furthermore, they experience discrimination and institutional and structural disadvantages at all levels of everyday social life. They are less likely to find a new apartment, work or training place and they are structurally disadvantaged in the education system.

Civil society organizations and political activism are central to the placement of minority politics in the public discourse. The fact that the sense of belonging to Germany and the sense of "German-ness" is not only the responsibility of individuals, but predominantly depends on the legal recognition and social appreciation in the majority population.

I do not have to explain that we women are still discriminated against in many areas. But as a Sinteza, I still have to fight against racist prejudices such as sexualised ascription. The Carmen myth still haunts too many minds. And the image of the hot-blooded, seductive, dishonest gypsy woman is still very much alive."

In the white majority society, there are three common stereotypes towards these groups of women:

a) The highly erotic and seductive representation of the Romnja/Sinteza example of Carmen. Since the history of film there have been over 50 editions of Carmen in opera, ballet and film. She has been embodied as a femme fatale who shows magical-demonic traits, prostitutes herself, uses manipulative tactics and vulgar language, dances seductively and at the same time shows childlike behavior

b) The image of the innocent and pure Sinteza/Romnja using the example of Esmeralda (cf. Victor Hugo, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* 1831). This "purity" is based on the idea of a kidnapped European child raised by "dirty" Romnja/Sinteza.

c) Last but not least, the representation of the old, "ugly" Sinteza/Romnja - the witch - is widespread. Historically, these women have always been considered to be psychic talents: The life of the Sinteza/Romnja as "nature-men" in relation to the European "culture-men" also finds echo in their alleged lack of religion and the practice of mystical rituals. This super sensuality is

pointedly attributed to the Sintezza and Romnja, because in the general (patriarchal) world view women tend to be more emotional and therefore less rational.

A fourth stereotype, which has become entrenched in recent years, is the image of Romnja, who fled southeastern Europe and gave birth to numerous children, thereby plundering the economic and social system. These women are also associated with criminal behavior, especially theft and fraud.

"After Romania and Bulgaria were accepted into the EU in 2007, there was also a visible migration from Rom*nja to Germany, which was often the subject of discriminatory media coverage. Similarly, the visa liberalization of 2009 for Serbia and Macedonia led to an increase in asylum applications from these countries as well as negative reporting on allegedly unjustified asylum seekers. The media and political defamation of Rom*nja as false asylum seekers who had fled to Germany only because of social benefits ultimately led to the declaration of Serbia, Macedonia and Bosnia as "safe countries of origin".

Let me end with the words of Romani Rose, Chairman of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma on the European Holocaust Remembrance Day for Sinti and Roma in Auschwitz-Birkenau on 2 August 2019:

Auschwitz is a place of remembrance and at the same time a place of legacy. Because the victims complain millions of times in the face of today's crimes against humanity. Auschwitz is the conscience of the community of values of democratic states. Today we are confronted in Europe, but also around the world, with a pathological nationalism that for some years has again been directed against the European idea, against our democratic values, against human rights and thus against all of us. Since the pogrom of Rostock in 1992 - which was first targeted against Roma refugees, since the murders of the so-called "National Socialist Underground (NSU)", until the murder of the district president Walter Lübcke in Kassel in June this year, and now a few days ago the racist attempted murder of an Eritrean in Germany, and the murder of a Roma in Kosovo committed by far-right nationalists, we know that right-wing extremist networks exist in Germany and far beyond in Europe as well as in all other parts of the world. However, these networks are only the tip of a new violent nationalism that questions and wants to eliminate all the fundamental values of our democracy. But the really scary thing is that this nationalism now dominates much of current politics. If Sinti and Roma are to be seized separately in member states of the European Community in order to expel them, then this will invalidate the foundations of our European community of values for our minority. Moreover, the violent nationalists are still justified by state policy. It is rightly being warned against growing antigypsyism, antisemitism and racism. Because not only for us Sinti and Roma the aggravating social conflicts mean a great danger. We know it from history: anti-democratic currents need images of the enemy in order to exploit the fears of people for their political purposes. Hate crimes - up to racially motivated murders - are now part of the agenda in many countries.

(March 09, 2020)

ACTION PLANS OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN HUNGARY'S SERVICE AMONG ROMA

Concept accepted at the 13th Synod Cycle 12th session

as a project maintained in the Synod's next cycle (2015-2021) with a continuous deadline.

ACTION PLAN 1.

Goal: The congregations of the RCH shall proclaim the life-shaping message of the Gospel to marginalized groups, including the large Roma population.

I. Develop and implement auxiliary background materials, events, and educational programs that help congregational Roma Mission activities

1. Organize national Roma mission conferences
2. Offer a diocesan (presbytery) Roma mission day and assist in organizing it with a complete program
3. Organize Roma mission trainings for mission workers
4. Develop and offer a Roma mission model for pastoral training and further training, and for elder and congregational trainings
5. Develop liturgical aspects of the Roma Mission to appear in pastoral trainings and further trainings
6. Develop auxiliary materials related to biblical stories from the perspective of those on the margin (Roma Mission Bible Class outline)
7. Conduct professional conferences and further training for (Reformed) specialists working among Roma and who often come into contact with them (health visitors, educators, police officers, social sector workers, ambulance workers)
8. Provide help for congregations organizing Roma evangelism
9. Prepare evangelistic ministry teams for serving Roma
10. Help congregations launch Roma Bible Charts, with local circumstances taken in to account, where there is need to launch/plant a Roma congregation.

II. Develop a communicational system for RCH Roma Missionary activities

1. Design and maintain a website for Roma Mission
2. Collect and display good examples and best practices in the media

III. The ministry among Roma appears as a priority on the presbytery, church district and Synod level of the RCH

1. Create a district and presbytery/diocesan Roma referent network
2. Ensure professional help and supervision for lay workers of the Roma referent network
3. Identify and address church legal issues arising from consideration of Roma Mission
 - Collection documentation and analyze specific wording of and motivation for questions

- Disseminate proposals for solutions to the legislative committee
- Develop and strengthen loving church practices to help the membership and ministry of the marginalized siblings.

ACTION PLAN 2.

Goal: Through the ministry of the church, Roma people will be able to experience God's restoring power and healing love in all dimensions of their life.

I. Generate Diaconia-Cooperation of MRSZ

1. Help create a conditional system providing learning possibilities for children (providing food, personal hygiene and health development tools, for example: glasses, mobile shower, shoes, clothes, Nyilas Misi Package [schoolbag – food])
2. Support diaconial lay training
3. Involve Roma communities in volunteer programs (Bridge of Life, Volunteer Diaconial Year Program, '72 hour without compromise')
4. Promote and facilitate Community Development

II. Work on the healing of personality and personal relations

1. Involve counselors and mental health professionals for counseling of Roma brothers and sisters, and organize Roma Missionary preparation and further training for them.
2. Provide counseling training for mission workers serving among Roma
3. Develop and supervise mentoring network for mission workers serving among Roma
4. Facilitate self-knowledge and utilize past processor groups for Roma (psychodrama, Bible drama, drama pedagogy, experimental pedagogical methods)

III. Offer trainings and educational projects that give opportunities for Roma children's potential and integration into society

1. After-School Programs (facilitate learning programs)
2. Certain Start House (programs for children 0-3 years and their mothers)
3. Children's homes(playful developmental program for children)
4. Life coaching and preparation (for example sexuality, marriage, family planning, family management etc.)
5. Health Education (meal, hygiene, exercise, environmental awareness)
6. Mentor Program 1
 - Helping Roma children in higher studies
 - Building a mentor network, further training for mentors
7. Mentor Program 2
 - Supporting Roma families from a lifestyle aspect
8. Scholarship Program

9. Open Roma University Collegiums as well as high school and vocational school talented Collegiums
10. Include Roma Mission and increased awareness into the Reformed Catechesis Plan
11. Increase awareness in the Reformed educational institutions for the reception of Roma, and increase the number of students of Roma descent
 - Support further training, awareness-increasing pedagogical models in higher education and teacher training
 - Involve students of Reformed gymnasiums and universities in the mentorship of Roma children, organization of joint programs

IV. Advocate for and support the improvement of healthcare in the areas that suffer from social, economic and infrastructure disadvantages and are mainly populated by Roma people

1. Conduct Screening Programs (RMK, Bethesda)
2. Facilitate prevention trainings and improving health awareness (EDUVITAL, Bethesda burn prevention)
3. Develop relationships with local health staffs and in the socially and spatially segregated communities to improve health awareness (involving reformed congregational members, general practitioners, health visitors)

V. Promote job possibilities in the areas that suffer from social, economic and infrastructure disadvantages and that are mainly populated by Roma people

1. Develop complex talent program
2. Support recirculation to the labor market (personal development, motivation, training, job search training, skills development)
3. Promote training and supporting Roma communities permanently excluded from the labor market to start agricultural operations.
4. Advocate for Reformed institutions to buy products produced by the Roma communities and involving congregational network to get products to markets
5. Experiment in the area of job creation, including sample or pilot projects
6. Develop job creation programs, including marketable employment mobility management programs

ACTION PLAN 3.

Goal: The RCH and its congregations pursue the mutual reconciliation between the Roma population and the majority population.

I. Support the congregations of the RCH to become welcoming, hosting, multiethnic, God-glorifying communities

1. Create guidelines for Bible study to sensitize people toward Roma Mission (questions, outline in the Bible, and Jesus's attitude, actions)
2. Offer common programs with Roma, local or national charities, addressing issues of social infrastructure, for example: Bridge of Love, the '72 Hours without Compromise program with Roma communities, and develop other new opportunities
3. Facilitate reconciliation based on Reformed values, including the development of topics and methods of common religious, leisure, and cultural occasions, making resources accessible on the website (for example common holidays, congregational cultural events with Roma congregations, Congregational Roma Mission Days, family camps, daycare camps, family worships, youth worships)

II. Work for reconciliation; shaping the approach of the majority and minority society, decreasing interethnic tensions

1. Provide intercultural, prejudice-reducing trainings
2. Conduct conflict resolution training
3. Provide trainings for Christian reconciliation, inner-healing
4. Organize a network for Reformed mediators to manage Roma-Hungarian tensions
5. Promote Christian Roma life stories – interview series, radio - making video reports
6. Develop sensitizing, thought-shaping campaigns for congregations and other regional and national events (Starpoint, Women's Association, Elder's Association, Reformed Youth Alliance etc.)
7. Develop sensitizing programs for Reformed schools
 - Reports, testimonies about Roma Mission
 - Intercultural training with experimental pedagogical methods
 - Required volunteer work for students: collecting and offering Roma projects
 - Reformed students mentoring Roma youth, helping them get into the higher education and organizing common programs
8. Help organize service with Roma communities in the Hungarian congregations

III. The RCH will support and promote the preservation and creative maintenance of authentic Roma culture with the inclusion of appropriate cultural elements in the RCH's liturgy, alternative church service order and music

1. Prepare Roma Mission hymnal (liturgical and musical development)
2. Collect and present caring worship practices of receiving Roma brothers and sisters in Christ
3. Support research in Roma ethnographical, historical, sociological, and social topics, involving institutions and specialists with Reformed backgrounds
4. Include/implement research results in the Roma Mission models
5. Support National Reformed Roma Festival

Reconciliation – Health – Hope
Concept of the Reformed Church in Hungary’s ministry among Roma
Working paper

I. Mission - Ministry

"Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH) as a sign and agent of God’s Kingdom will be a church of personal and social transformation, a community where irrespectively of origin or race, people can experience the welcoming, reconciling and healing power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” (1)

II. Theological and missiological principles

The basic attitude of the church’s ministry among Roma (2) is determined by the value and dignity of the man as a creature. God created man to live in loving community (communio) with Him and each other, and the evolution for this community glorifies Him. All ethnical, economic, social-based distinction, hierarchical or patronizing relationships harm this relationship-system and is a sin before God. It follows that the Church considers values to be important, such as mutual respect, acceptance, understanding, discovering each other’s values and enriching one another.

The Church is missional by its very nature. God shows His truth and redeeming grace to His chosen people. He blesses His people and in turn makes them blessings to all the nations. His selection is a privilege, which comes with responsibility: God called His people to be a presence and active participant of mission. In the Old Testament, Israel became an indication for God among the nations, as long it organizes its life to respect God and follow God’s law regarding social life. The Gospel of the New Testament is the arrival of God’s Kingdom in Jesus, the possibility of reconciliation, restoration of relationships and healing of the whole life. Jesus’ life and miracles – through which He emphasized, particularly service among the poor, the outcast, the sick and those living on the margins – as well as His death and resurrection, by which He will win the final victory and open the way toward the Kingdom of God, toward the restoration of creation for all the world, speak of this.

The Church received its call to mission from the Holy Trinity God, which also determines the method of its service: As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. (3) In the Church, God's love and grace opens a new perspective for the individual and the community. Therefore, the church as an alternative community is experiencing the Kingdom of God, it is its witness and sign in its environment. The church announces the Kingdom of God with hope, and it is called to organize its life according to the order of the Kingdom. It follows the welcoming of poor people, people who live on the margins, outcasts and the lifting of prejudices. Announcing the Gospel brings the hope and possibility of reconciliation, the healing of relationships and the hope of a new life, even in hopeless situations. The holistic nature of mission comes from Jesus' example, which is evidenced in words (church service and witness), in deeds (diaconia and fight for justice) and in practicing community (communio and worship). The manifestation of Jesus and His community with the downtrodden, calls the church to discover the reality and presence of Christ in the experience of those living on the margins.

The incarnation of Jesus entrusts the church the task of being the cultural embodiment of the Gospel. Every culture (4) can become a carrier of the Gospel’s message, but there are elements in each culture that contradict the order of God’s Kingdom. The contextualization is a missiological work, where in both communities, the Gospel confessing and the hosting, welcoming community, examines its culture with the aim of finding elements that serve the

order of God's Kingdom, in which these two communities can learn from each other and enrich each other. However, at the same time it also names the "life-destroying" elements of both cultures, and against them it bravely accepts the challenge of the Gospel. This work can be done accurately only by the members of the community in dialogue with other cultures. One of the tasks of the church's Roma ministry is to nurture a new generation of Roma theologians and church leaders, who do the work of contextualization in regards to the Roma culture.

In God's Kingdom the dividing walls will crumble. In Jesus *"Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all."* (5) The church is called to embody the order of God's Kingdom, which is beyond society's definiteness. Reflecting this order of God's Kingdom, the RCH aims to help congregations become welcoming, multiethnic, God-glorifying communities, where Roma church members are also important and equal members of the community, and their culture is reflected in the culture of the congregations.

On the basis of the above mentioned, we consider the following as basic values in our ministry:

Reconciliation – Health – Hope
Because we are the image of God in Christ!

1. Reconciliation with God, with ourselves, with our brothers and sisters, with the created world

The ministry of RCH among Roma people has an indispensable aspect: confessing the Gospel of God's Kingdom, which offers the possibility of reconciliation by Christ and the experiencing of real community. *"That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."* (II. Cor. 5:19-20)

2. Health (fullness)

The Gospel of God's Kingdom is holistic. Therefore, the ministries of the RCH among Roma serve for healing, reparation and health in all the areas of life, and they work for an environment where all dimensions of individual and community life can evolve. (Physical, spiritual, intellectual – human dignity, respect, equal opportunities, justice...)

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10)

3. Hope

The RCH in its ministry steps into even humanly hopeless situations with the certainty of the victory of God's Kingdom, hoping for the healing of God and the possibility of life evolving, which gives a perspective for the future of an individual and a community.

He will wipe every tear from their eyes (Revelation 21:4)

III. Situation

III.1. Social context

The fastest growing part of Hungary's population, an estimated 10%, is traditionally called Cigány in the Hungarian language, but is typically called Roma in some social science and political language. The census, because it is based on self-reporting, underrepresents the number of Roma. (6)

There is data showing the Roma's current focused location: 50% of the Roma population lives in 15% of Hungary's territory. Both economically and socially, the predominantly Roma areas are the most disadvantaged parts of the country. In these areas the employment rate is the weakest while the unemployment rate is the highest, most of the families live in flats without modern conveniences, the graduation rate is the lowest and the number of violent and aggravated crimes is the highest. A 2010 survey (7) shows that only 27% of the Roma population, ages 16-64, is employed, 15% are retired and 55% of households have no family member with a stable job. It follows that Roma life expectancy in Hungary is at least 10 years shorter than the average life expectancy of the entire Hungarian society. The areas with the worst indicators, where the population of Roma is very high, are most concentrated in Northeast Hungary and Southern Transdanubia, where the Reformed presence, compared with the national ratio, is also high.

In 1893, the Roma census in Hungary reported that approximately 275,000 Roma lived in Hungary at that time, and from that population around 65-66,000 people were located in Hungary's current territory. In the 1940s, the number of Roma living in Hungary likely reached 100,000, and this population has now increased to about 800,000. Regarding the Roma population, we can say that the younger generations are more populous, while the number of younger Hungarians, on the contrary, is getting smaller. It should be mentioned that while the Hungarian population decreased by more than 100,000 people in the 10 years following the regime change, the Roma population increased by 100,000 people. If we take into account the age structure of the Roma and non-Roma population, we can conclude that within a few decades the young and adult portion of the Roma population will be increasingly significant. In some areas, the future of Reformed congregations depends on whether we can share the Gospel's message with our Roma brothers and sisters, and therefore become an inclusive, integrative congregation. All this would happen in a social context not without prejudices from both sides, when tension between Roma and the majority society is present in many cases and radicalization can be seen from both sides, which political parties occasionally reinforce. However, the provisions that aim to close the gap often end in failure.

The Roma, who live within the current borders of Hungary, traditionally can be divided into three major groups: Hungarian Roma, Vlach (oláh) Roma and Beás communities - sometimes referred to as "teknővájók." Therefore, the Roma are not a homogeneous entity, but consist of several groups and subgroups whose relationships are not without tension. These groups live in different situations and require different approaches.

We have little authentic data available regarding the religious attachments of Roma in Hungary. In our region most of the Roma people belong to the Roman Catholic religion, but as we look at their religious life as a whole, it is typified as folk religion with strong ethnic elements. The proportion of Roma in Hungary, who are historically connected to the

Reformed Church – based on uncertain, but relatively old estimates – is around 20%. Over the last few decades, considerable work has been done in the Roma Ministry by Pentecostal, Baptist, Methodist and Lutheran churches as well as other smaller churches too, which diversifies the Christian religious affiliation of Roma.

III.2. Church Context

In the history of the RCH, service, ministry and standing up for the most deprived, has always been present. Taking responsibility for the Roma is one of the most important ways to see this evidenced, the early signs of which appeared in the articles of Peter Meliusz Juhász, during the Debrecen Synod of 1567, the event that signifies our church's independence in the Carpathian Basin. In later sources, there is a reference to a Roma wedding reception in Nagybánya in 1613 as well as evidence of a 1626 baptism in the oldest Hungarian Reformed register.

Since the second half of the 17th century, Roma youth have appeared in Reformed higher education (David Belényesi Grausser, Mihály Császlai, Mihály Vistai Farkas, etc.), and in the middle of the 18th century, István Wáli Jr., a Reformed theology student, first discovered the “újind” nature of the Roma language, the indirect Indian origin of the Roma.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the Hungarian Reformed people's ministry among Roma has still not been clearly separated from other services of the church. Fine examples of our church's presence among Roma are the ministry of János Varga, pastor of Tiszaújlak Reformed Church and the ministry of János Krajnovics, pastor of Úljaniki Reformed Church, but we can list here the Reformed Roma Ministry that slowly started to be independent in the 1900s, from Válaszút from Cluj County through Cigánd to Karcag.

In the second half of the 20th century, several congregations severed among Roma the mapping of which is still in process. (9) After the change of regime, the RCH's 1995th Act II regulation – the so-called Mission Act – showed direction and defined the mission service of the last 18 years. The RCH is connected to the Roma ministries of member churches from the Hungarian Reformed Church, and is creating its mission concept considering the accumulated experiences from different fields of service. (10) Our hope is that this strategic document will contribute in shaping the future of our church.

III,3. Analysis of the research

Between December 2012 and February 2013, we carried out a nationwide questionnaire survey among the congregations of the RCH. We sought to record complete data, so our goal was to reach all of the Reformed congregations. On 5 March 2013, we recorded 587 questionnaires in our database, which means approximately 700 congregations.

In general we can confirm that the vast majority of the respondent pastors typically had little knowledge about the different Roma groups or about the Roma who live in the area of their congregation in general . The lack of knowledge is also reflected in the very high number of “I do not know” responses.

The awareness seemed significantly higher regarding the presence of Roma in the congregation and their participation in the congregation's life. There is data of Roma elders in roughly 6% of the congregations (34 congregations), in 33 of these cases the congregations

have 1-5 Roma elders and in one congregation they have 5-10. In 17% of the respondent congregations (98 congregations), we found Roma people who actively participate in the church service, in six congregations more than five, in three congregations more than 10. Almost 44% of the congregations (246 places) have Roma church members who pay the church tax (17 congregations from this have more than 20 Roma church members who pay). Among the congregations that answered the questionnaire, 27% (156 congregations) answered that members of the local Roma group appear among those who attend church weekly. An even greater number of Roma take part in church life on the occasions of “kauzália”, for example pre-marital counseling, marriage or a funeral. The importance of Roma ministry is more significant among children, because 22% of the respondents (131 pastors) reported that they conduct religious lessons without a single Roma child and 52% of the pastors (in 308 congregations) said there are no Roma children in their confirmation courses, or they are not aware of them (7%, 40 congregations).

Describing the inter-ethnic relations of Roma areas, pastors declared that the relationship between the major and minor population is basically distrustful (26%, 151 pastors, answered on the contrary), but usually they did not report about the tensions (19%, 109 pastors, reported there is not, or it is much less typical that the relationship between the Roma and non-Roma populations is strained). The relations in local inter-ethnic areas throughout the country have shown a slight improvement (around 15%, 90 cases) rather than the increasing of tensions (around 10%, 57 respondents); regarding the opinion of the pastors, the recent period is a time of stagnation.

Criminal problems often occur regarding Roma. The majority of respondents mentioned that stealing occurs more often (40%, 232 places) and violent incidents less frequently (30%, 174 places). The respondents think that the conflicts, which provoke the tension, are connected to certain families (49%, 289 respondents) rather than the local, wider Roma community (the latter only approx. in 25%, 144 congregations). Very few respondents felt that all Roma in the area are the “same”; based on responses, 48% (280 pastors) realize the diversity of Roma who live in their area. Although a significant portion of pastors who responded to the questionnaire are uninformed, in most cases we cannot speak about reinforcing the stereotypes or over-generalization of anti-Roma prejudices.

It is instructive, and in the future it can be an important resource, that in 12% (73 pastors) it is very typical and for 20% (120 pastors) it is rather typical for the pastor to feel personally responsible for the ministry among Roma. However, 33% (197 pastors) gave more reserved, dismissive responses. It is important to note that for the work and service in the Roma ministry, most of the pastors miss the material resources and the financial aid much less (23%, 133 pastors), and would rather the moral support (38%, 222 pastors), specialized knowledge (54%, 322 pastors) and assistance of trained staff (60%, 350 pastors). Nevertheless, the relative openness of the pastors is less true in the case of the congregational communities. Considering the opinion of the pastors, although 53% (309 congregations) do not, or do not typically, reject Roma, but less than 5% (27 congregations) have church members who are committed to the ministry among Roma. Only 8% of the congregations (42 places) reported that the presence of Roma in the church service creates uncomfortable feelings (although most of the congregations have not experienced this). At the same time, in 123 congregations (21%) at least 1 person, and in 7 congregations (1%) at least 5 people, serve specifically in Roma ministry.

Further analysis and exploration of relations, which come from the territorial distribution of the data, are still in progress. The data and evaluation typify only the respondent pastors and congregations, as we do not have current data from those congregations and church presbyteries that did not participate in the research. Therefore from these above mentioned results we should not conclude about national tendencies.

IV. Target toward vision

IV.1. Vision

The congregations of the RCH will strengthen in their mission identity and become open and integrating communities, which glorify the Lord, and where reconciliation with God opens new perspectives for individuals, families and the wider community. As a result of this, the social solidarity will be strengthened and tensions will be decreased in the majority and minority society. The RCH with its ministry contributes to the improvement of the people's quality of life in areas with serious disadvantages from a social, ecological and infrastructural point of view.

IV.2. Overall aims

1. Congregations of the RCH proclaim the life-shaping message for socially marginalized groups, including the large Roma community.
2. Through the ministry of the church, Roma people can experience God's restoring and healing love in all dimensions of their lives.
3. The RCH and its congregations serve the mutual reconciliation between Roma and the majority of the population.

IV.3. Particular targets

I. The congregations of the RCH proclaim the life-shaping message of the Gospel to marginalized groups, including the large Roma community.

1. The RCH congregations recognize their mission given by God toward Roma people and they undertake it.
2. The ministry among Roma appears as a priority on the presbytery, church district and Synod level of the RCH.

II. Through the ministry of the church, the Roma people can experience God's restoring and healing love in all dimensions of their life.

3. Working on the healing of personality and personal relations.
4. Offering trainings and educational projects, which give opportunities for Roma children's potentials and integration into society.
5. Supporting the improvement of healthcare in the areas that suffer from social, economic and infrastructure disadvantages and are mainly populated by Roma people.
6. Promoting job possibilities in the areas that suffer from social, economic and infrastructure disadvantages and are mainly populated by Roma people.

7. The RCH makes it possible and supports the preservation and creative maintenance of the Roma's authentic culture, whose cultural elements appear in the RCH's liturgy, alternative church service order.

III. The RCH and its congregations serve the mutual reconciliation between Roma and the majority of the population.

8. Supporting the congregations of the RCH to become welcoming, hosting, multiethnic, God-glorifying communities.
9. Reconciliation; shaping the approach of the majority and minority society, decreasing interethnic tensions.

(1) The concept of “mission” - based on theological contemplation – is not considered a special “proselytizing” field of mission, but we do consider it a mission of the church, that the church is a tool and a part of God's mission (missio Dei)

(2) We do not study the debate of “Roma – Gypsy” terminology in this document.

(3) John 20:21.

(4) We consider culture a totality of the human community's operational standards, which determine the relation-system between two individuals, between an individual and a community, between the individual, community and nature, and between the individual, the community and the man-made word.

(5) Col 3:11

(6) The last representative Roma survey was distributed 10 years ago, in 2003. During this survey, one of its creators, sociological professor István Kemény and his colleagues determined the number of the Roma population within the borders Hungary to be 600,000. They tried to present the data more cautiously, so they said: “in the beginning of 2003, the number of people living in Roma households is between 520,000 and 650,000.”

(7) Roma Society 2010, Marketing Centrum OPK Kft.

(8) The largest subgroup of Roma – who have the Hungarian language almost exclusively as their mother tongue – is the first group, the Hungarian Roma, 'Romungro' in Roma language, whose communities can be found practically all over the Carpathian Basin. While their biggest masses often live in deep poverty in Roma settlements, sometimes spectacularly wealthy people and families are also present within this group. Additionally, across the country you can find the Roma-language-speaking – “romani” – Vlach Romas, who besides maintaining the ancient, “újind” language, have quite often preserved what is considered the most traditional Roma cultural

patterns and values. The so-called Beás group, who speak the archaic Rumanian language dialect and make a living doing woodwork, live mostly in Southern Transdanubia. (The most recent survey in 2003 found that 86.9% of the Roma in Hungary had Hungarian, 4.6% the Rumanian and 7.7% the Roma language as their mother tongue)

(9) In this period, through the work and personality of Dr. Antal Hadróczy, Reformed pastor and sociologist, is significant. Through his work the Roma ministry of the RCH also joined the international mainstream of oikumene.

(10) In the list of „best practices” the Roma ministry of the Transtibiscan Reformed Church District as a standard and the „Theoretical and practical aspects of the Roma Ministry in the Transtibiscan Reformed Church District” as a theoretical primary working documentation from 2010, are outstanding.