

**THE IMAGE OF ROMA
ON BULGARIAN TV**
(MONITORING REASEARCH OF SIX TV
STATIONS)

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Author: Ilona Tomova

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1. Methodological notes

In November 2013 "Integro" Association launched a project for monitoring the levels of hate speech towards Roma in electronic media. It includes three main components: theoretical and practical training of young Roma (university students and graduates) for monitoring the examples of hate speech in media products; monitoring programs and TV reports about Roma in ten newscasts of six of the most popular TV channels in the country; addressing the issues and the established cases of hate speech on television to the Commission for Protection against Discrimination and the Council of Electronic Media.

Over 20 Roma and Bulgarian students and graduates participated in the first stage of the training module. After this a team was formed by 15 Roma activists to monitor TV programs and reports about Roma in the news broadcasts of six TV stations for a period of six months - from 01/01/2014 through 30/06/2014. In the same time the members of this team continued their trainings in monitoring the electronic media in a course conducted by prof. Ilona Tomova. The team was instructed to monitor and record all programs and reports in the morning and evening news broadcasts, which explicitly mention words like "Roma" and its related words, "Gypsy", "dark-skinned", "swarthy cousins", "some of our compatriots", etc. euphemisms that are unambiguously associated to "Roma" by the mass audience. Additionally, the team also monitored programs and shows, which do not specifically mention the ethnicity of the main characters of the reports, but the visual materials suggest that they are Roma (e.g. footages of Roma neighborhoods, people who anthropologically look like Roma or people who are publicly associated with Roma, or known as Roma). The team included programs, comments, news reports on important social problems such as unemployment, problems of education, healthcare, security, housing, demographic issues, elections, etc., in which the anchors/presenters/reporters or guests make

unambiguous allusions or explicitly say that mostly Roma created those issues/problems that are being discussed.

Each TV program/show was assessed by two monitoring team members (Roma youth) and they used a set of indicators and criteria. The team summarized what were the key topics related to programs for Roma; what is the social context in which Roma are placed; what are the key social roles of Roma in the news programs; what are the main explanatory diagrams of their behavior; who submits the information; how the behavior of the Roma is characterized in the broadcasted report. We had a particular focus on prejudicial¹ and stereotypical² representation of Roma: we monitored to see whether journalists, experts and interviewing reporters openly or implicitly express their stereotypes and prejudices against Roma; whether there is a purpose in the implicit and unobtrusive activation of negative attitudes or cognitive structures about Roma stored in the memory of the mass audience ("priming"); whether the information is presented in a context that triggers (and reinforces) negative stereotypes and prejudices ("framing"); whether journalists use, promote or do not respond to hate speech. We tried to assess the level of professionalism and ethics of journalists in presenting the news/reports/materials about Roma and related to Roma.

In the beginning stage of the monitoring project the entire team participated in two three-day meetings and all together discussed and analyzed the broadcasts of the selected six TV stations in order to align the monitoring and evaluation criteria and also develop the skills of the young team members in media monitoring techniques. After that, the team leader and a Roma student, studying Journalism at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" watched and reviewed once again all the programs and shows that were downloaded before and made a second evaluation. Thus, each program/show/report that was included in the monitoring list was evaluated by at least four people, which made it possible to check whether there are differences between the evaluations of Roma activists and "objective observers" (with all the conventionality of the term "objective"). In the course of the analysis we discussed the most significant differences in the two assessments.

¹Under "stereotype" we mean any generalizations about a group, cognitive structure, configuration of knowledge and beliefs about typical features of representatives of a group.

²Nelson suggests the following identification for "prejudice" and we accept it as a working definition in this analysis: "biased assessment for a group based on actual or imagined characteristics of the members of this group" (Nelson 2002). This biased assessment justifies the social situation of the group compared to other groups in society and serves to maintain its status or position. Jackson pays special attention to the prejudice that is ingrained with negative feelings and stereotypes, which makes it resistant to rational arguments and accepting information other than the stereotype. (Jackman, 1994).

This text presents the main results of the monitoring of six electronic media: the National Bulgarian TV (BNT), the two most popular private TV stations: bTV and NOVA and three private TV stations connected to political parties- two of them belong to the Nationalist party Ataka³ and the National Front for Salvation of Bulgaria: respectively ALFA TV and SKAT; and one-TV7- belongs to one of the financial and media magnates, who has a very significant influence over political processes in the country- Delyan Peevski. In 2014 together with his partner- the banker Tsvetan Vasilev, he ensured the political representation and personal TV time to one of the most popular journalists, who also managed three of their TV stations- the executive director of TV7, News7 and Super7 -Nikolay Barekov. Barekov took the leadership of the newly created party "Bulgaria without Censorship". After the European Parliament elections in May 2014 he was elected for the EP and went to Brussels and became a member of the Executive Board of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group in the European Parliament. The higher interest in the programs of TV7 was driven by the curiosity of the mass audience to see how a TV and a populist program will actually manage to attract part of the supporters of Ataka and part of BSP's disappointed voters with conservative ethno-centric views, and moreover how will they deal with the challenge to not completely repel the Roma as voters, as it was assumed that in the months prior to the election N. Barekov and activists of the party would try to buy Roma votes⁴.

In four of the televisions we watched two newscasts on weekdays –morning and evening news block: "The Day Begins" and "Home and Abroad" on BNT , "This Morning" and "central news block of bTV," Hello Bulgaria"and"News" on NOVA,"Good morning, Bulgaria"and the central news block on TV7. SKAT TV and ALFA TV do not have special morning news block or any special shows and programs. All their reports, discussions, shows

³Ataka party in coalition with other nationalist parties united in the National Union Attack, first entered the Bulgarian Parliament in July 2005. Its leader Volen Siderov registered the party after entering the 40th National Assembly, managed to surpass the 4% target barrier and become a member of parliament and in the 41st and 42nd National Assembly. The party is named after his popular far nationalist talk show on SKAT TV. After cooling of relations between him and the owner of TV SKAT Valeri Simeonov, Volen Siderov created a new TV station- ALFA TV, while the owner of TV SKAT Valeri Simeonov became the leader of the newly established in 2011 party National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria. This party entered the Bulgarian Parliament in the autumn of 2014 and it is participating in the supporting coalition of the government in the state governance. Bulgaria without censorship also entered the Parliament, but without its leader who is a deputy in the European Parliament.

⁴After 1989 the old "vote purchasing" practice was revived in Bulgaria. This a practice of either directly buying the votes of poor voters in small towns and large urban ghettos or indirect vote buying organized by large employers (forcing the employees and their families to vote for the party designated by the employers); or local officials offer the possibility of including long-term unemployed people in the programs of the MLSP for temporary employment and also benefits from other social services and ask them to vote for a certain party in return. All political parties represented in the Parliament are tempted to use the first or both ways. During the European Parliament elections in 2014 the Bulgaria Without Censorship Party was one of the parties with the highest rates of registered violations related to vote purchasing.

have similar “typical⁵” messages (far-right nationalist), so we monitored onenews program on each of these two TV stations with total duration of about 2.5-3 h .: "The state today" on ALFA TV and evening "News" of SKAT. Monitoring and analyzing these three televisions, bound to nationalist parties, was particularly significant, as we consider that in the meantime all three parties -National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria (as part of the coalition Patriotic Front), Attack and the Bulgaria without Censorship - managed to cross the barrier of 4% to get seats in the 43rd National Assembly in the autumn of 2014.

2. Societal changes. Changes in the roles of the electronic media for influencing and forming the attitudes, knowledge, stereotypes and prejudices related to Roma and their public image

With the fall of the authoritarian regime of Todor Zhivkov in Bulgaria there were real opportunities to change the model of the national state, a model of promoting and supporting the dominance of the largest ethnic group while neglecting the oppressed/disadvantaged position of the rest of the ethnic groups that are minorities (this model is typical for Central and Eastern Europe). There were opportunities to shift to a political organization of the state or to the Western model of organizing principles, according to which all citizens regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliations are equal before the law. This was much more than a theoretical opportunity. If this shift had happened then, probably the social status and the media image of Roma would be better now. In order to explain what actually happened we need to digress a little bit from the major topic of this report.

The Communist regime adopted the Manichaean dualistic ethics, that represents the world divided to "good" and "bad" and therefore divided people and social groups in the same categories; any distinction is likely to be morally condemned as "evil" and also every minority group is seen in this way. At times when Western Europe and the United States rationalized the lessons of the two world wars and reflected on the factors that led to dehumanizing and genocide of millions of people because of their differences; in times when national laws, international agreements, school programs and social policies were changed in order to prevent such an apocalypse happen again, such a reflection and discussion did not happen in

⁵ALFA is a TV station that is created with the same ideas and vision like TV SKAT and it is a result of the understandings of extreme-nationalist Ataka party and a consequence of interpersonal clashes and intrigues of the two far-nationalist leaders. Themes and rhetoric in both televisions are almost identical, very simple, black and white, openly xenophobic. We decided to include in our monitoring one program from each of them only to delineate more precisely the nuances of the political messages of the two xenophobic parties represented in the Bulgarian Parliament.

Bulgaria. Instead, all troubles and atrocities associated with nationalism and ethnocentrism were attributed to the capitalist regime. We flattered ourselves for the exceptional tolerance of the Bulgarian people, without being aware of the fact that for large parts of the population we could not even talk about tolerance but simply about a mere indifference and some kind of lenity to the difference. This indifference and lenity was lodged within the mass belief, which was also institutionally settled, that the inequality between the majority and minority groups is natural because "the State belongs to the Bulgarians" and also fair - because it corrects past injustices. For long periods of time ethnically different groups were systematically presented as embodying various "evils" or some social and cultural vices. One specificity of the communist regime in Bulgaria was the indoctrination of negative presentations of minorities through the use of negative characteristics of minority communities in key party documents, speeches of eminent party leaders in the reports of the Interior Ministry and State Security, which afterwards were conveyed as clichés - always delivered in the same way - in the media, in reference books, in mainstream "educational" events of the political "year" and the activities of the "Fatherland Front", the party's unions and women's organizations - to reach each member of the party, each person and thus be sealed in their minds. This vast exposure of the public to all the clichés and negative presentations of the "different", provoking suspicions to and fear from large ethnic and religious minorities, as well as the involvement of ordinary citizens from mixed regions in the repressions against the minorities during the assimilation campaigns resulted in a huge rise of ethnic nationalism among Bulgarians.

The communist regime in Bulgaria did not adopt the model, imposed from the Soviet Union of federal organization of our state, despite the pressure and the initial clues that the government will be prone to such a decision, especially after pressing hundreds of thousands of Bulgarians to be registered as Macedonians. After Stalin's death Todor Zhivkov came to power in Bulgaria and this ethnic nationalistic model of "nationalizing national state" was reinforced (Brubaker 1996, 2000). The communist Party implemented a number of policies aimed at the assimilation of large ethnic and religious communities in the country. All these policies had a common content, although the details differed in accordance to which group the assimilation practices were aimed. The first actions were aimed at limiting the influence of religious institutions and leaders through political repression of all kinds and at different scales, economic pressures and aggressive atheistic propaganda. The second step was taken towards the largest minority community - Bulgarian Turks - and it aimed at reducing their absolute number by emigration: two agreements with the Republic of Turkey were signed for

emigration and therefore as a result 155 000 Bulgarian Turks left the country in the period 1948 -1951, and 113000-130000 more - after the refugee convention of 1968⁶.Afterwards, the communist government created a "uniform system of socialist holidays and rituals", aimed at streamlining and unifying the entire festive system of traditional rituals and holidays. They started with imposing models for common rituals in celebrating labor and initiatory events (proms, ceremonial sending off boys to serve in the army, etc.) and also atheistic events and rituals such as "naming" of newborns, and "socialist wedding ceremonies."Later the funeral rites were also made unified and atheistic, which was particularly traumatic, especially for believers of all faiths. In order to make this "cultural engineering" less painful the government created a new "intelligentsia" with members of different ethnic groups, including representatives of ethnic and religious minorities. These members were trained and empowered and they were the so called "party activists"- loyal to the communist ideas, whose tasks included efforts for accelerating changes in the lifestyle and culture of minority communities to make them much more involved and integrated in the "socialist nation."Next, after active ideological work on a local level, the ruling communist party decided to change the names: first- of the Muslim Gypsies (1960-1962), then the Bulgarian Muslims' names (1969-1973), of "descendants of mixed marriages "between Turks and Bulgarians (1980-1984), then the rest of Muslim Roma (1981-1983) and finally- the names of all Bulgarian Turks (1984-1985).Along with the change of names, which was often achieved by brutal force and even in some places - with excessive violence, the government also banned the traditional clothing, listening to Turkish music, speaking Turkish in public places and practicing any rituals associated with the Muslim faith (circumcision of boys, religious weddings, funerals, rituals showing reverence to the dead, celebrating religious holidays, etc.).All this happened in the context of the celebration of the 1300th anniversary of founding the Bulgarian state, which went on for long years. It was accompanied by actively rewriting history textbooks, aimed at blaming the contemporary Bulgarian Turks in Bulgaria for the violence of the Ottoman Turks, who conquered Bulgaria in the 14th century and oppressed the Bulgarian population during their rule. Moreover, a huge sense for guilt and responsibility was imputed to Muslim Bulgarians and Roma Muslims for their ancestors' decision to convert to Islam during the years of Ottoman rule⁷.

⁶Jews and Russians in the country were the target of the first mass deportations after the Second World War, but their exodus was rather imposed on the country by outside forces - under pressure respectively from the Soviet Union and Israel and its allies.

⁷This was actually an ideological violence that was carried out with different methods. It was achieved through organized school classes in history and literature and the teachers were obliged to psychologically distance the children from their

The media participated with all the power of totalitarian propaganda in this process of incitement of Bulgarian ethnocentrism, related to the celebrations of the anniversary of the first Bulgarian state. Controlled by the Communist Party, they played an important role in the presentation of the "different" as "dangerous" and/or "inferior". But despite taking these huge and extreme measures for assimilation of large ethnic minority communities, they were generally conducted without publicity in the national media. Each time, prior to every assimilation action, the party created a complete media "spiral of silence" about the nature and scale of the events. While the completed assimilation actions were presented in general like a voluntary act of the assimilated communities, who "enthusiastically adopted Bulgarian names and unified rites", "on their own initiative and entreaties". But while this model worked with the Muslim Gypsy communities and to some extent with the Bulgarian Muslims, applying it to the Turkish groups met a number of difficulties. To ensure the success of the silence and disinformation, the communist authorities imposed restrictions on visiting mixed areas where they had already conducted the renaming of Bulgarian Turks in December 1984 - March 1985; the authorities began actively to diminish Western radio stations, to prevent Bulgarian citizens listen to "uncensored" information about these events; penalties and punishments were introduced for listening to "enemy radio stations" and comprehensive censorship was imposed over the media presentation of events in the country. In parallel, the authorities spread rumors for sabotage and terrorism of hundreds of secret organizations of Bulgarian Turks and Muslims and sparked fears of possible mass conflicts with Turkey, presented as a country, inspiring the "demands" of illegal groups for autonomy, irredentism and secession of Eastern Bulgaria and its accession to the Republic of Turkey. In the atmosphere of the Cold War it was perceived by people as a threat for war, including fears of a new world war.

Ethnic tensions became the subject of intensive media attention and hysterical propaganda campaign in 1989, when Bulgarian Turks organized a series of protests against the forced assimilation policy. What was really striking even for people, who has been accustomed to authoritarian media propaganda, was the ease with which social problems in the country

Muslim communities and their Muslim group identity and thus facilitate the adoption of the imposed Bulgarian / atheist identity. There were systematic efforts to make the children hate their communities, and in fact - to hate themselves as the group identity is an essential part of the personal identity. This had a devastating effect on the personal development of many people. Another method was folklorization of people's thinking about the past, and thus collective subconscious fears were unlocked and rationality was blunted. Imposing the folkloric perception of "the other" as dangerous and "foreign" was regulated in methodologies for teaching history (Isov 2005), and also applied as tested method in the works devoted to the explanation and research of the "revival process", especially in the books of Dulgerov (2000) and Mikhailov (1992), as well as in the electronic media in this period. This unleashed irrational, subconscious and elemental perception of diversity as extremely dangerous through constantly referring to the folkloric memory fixed in songs, legends and myths. On the other hand, the Roma were not present at all in textbooks and historical literature, increasing the perception of them as insignificant and inferior group.

"turned into" ethnical issues, i.e. what Gosiyo called "pervasive ethnization" of the public and private life. This term includes "ethnization" of the narrative and interpretive frames, of perceptions and evaluations, of thinking and feeling: in every case in which social actors can be seen as representatives of ethnic minority groups, for the descriptions of the "other"- the media used emotional and extremely simplified stereotypes, demonizing our fellow citizens. The victims of the assimilation policies were systematically presented by party leaders and the media as responsible for the assimilation policy undertaken because of their systemic damage to the national interests, "a threat to the national security", "supporters of Turkey," "saboteurs", "terrorists", "religious fanatics". This tactic aimed to justify the assimilation policy and violence against the victims and even blame them for the slowdown in the economic development of the country through their "subversive activities". Moreover, it aimed to mobilize the majority of the population and reinforce the prestige of the Communist Party and its leader Todor Zhivkov, who were presented as 'saviors'. In this way, under the influence of media propaganda, the ethnic nationalism of the majority of Bulgarians strengthened tremendously, while people who were skeptic about the communist interpretation of events imposed by leaders and journalists, were confused, frightened and unable to organize action against the violent assimilation policy towards their fellow citizens.

The shock from the protests drowned in the blood of Bulgarian Turks in May 1989 and the subsequent forced emigration of nearly 370,000 people to Turkey changed the situation: for three months a huge number of Bulgarian citizens had a complete collapse of their confidence in the Communist Party. There was a huge moral indignation among people against the violence of the regime and against the restriction of fundamental freedoms and rights of all citizens, along with the disappointment from the economic stagnation and political inability to manage the processes in the country. This indignation became a base for a mass enthusiasm and united millions of people around the hopes for a quick political change from an authoritarian regime to democratic government, for a change in the economic system towards a market economy, and for overcoming the ethnic tensions, after the announcement of the fall of Todor Zhivkov from power. The first political decisions of the still-ruling Communist Party to restore the Muslim names of Bulgarian Turks and Muslims and to suspend the sales of the properties of people, who left for Turkey, to third parties- gave some hope that it is possible to solve the ethnic crisis without shedding blood and change the national model. A public debate on solving ethnic problems started and the Committee for National Reconciliation took an active participation. This Committee was founded in the late 1989 from the members of the

Clubs for publicity and reconstruction (Perestroika). Its members were scientists, writers and poets, musicians, filmmakers, journalists, representatives of Bulgarian intellectuals from all ethnic communities from all over the country. The moral authority of these people legitimated the struggle for the restoration of the rights of ethnic and religious minorities and the argument that democratization cannot happen unless the equality of rights and dignity of every citizen, regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation is guaranteed. In the beginning of the transition to democratic reconstruction of the country, many journalists from the press and electronic media provided a platform for their calls for reconciliation, for recovery of the violated fundamental rights of minorities, for punishing those responsible for the ethnic tensions and distrust.

In 1990, President Zhelev invited and assigned advisers and experts on ethnic and legal issues some of the leaders and activists of the Committee for National Reconciliation. Ideas to change the type of national state –from ethnic (state of the ethnic Bulgarians who exercise political power, who have concentrated economic power and who impose their culture as a benchmark for the national culture) into a civil state (a nation of equal citizens, united by common laws and common rights) began to inspire the activities of a number of NGOs, research centers, artistic groups. Also the number of journalists who share and promote these ideas outside the capital-Sofia-was growing.

Along with these processes of democratization of the Bulgarian society counteractions against them also started, as soon as December 1989. Some of the Communist party activists in regions with mixed population (employees of the State Security Service and individual business leaders) in Eastern Bulgaria decided to use the fear of the majority from losing their superior positions, from possible revenge of the Muslim communities for the "revival process"; as a result they mobilized a significant part of the population from the mixed areas against the restoration of the rights of minorities, against the democratic changes in the country, and for restoring the status quo before 10.11.1989.⁸ They supported the founding of nearly 20 national and regional nationalist organizations to actively counteract the decision of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers from 29/12/1989 on the change in the national policy to restore the rights of ethnic and cultural minorities. Released from prison, Ahmed Dogan,

⁸Here we adopt the definition of "ethnic mobilization" given by Beatrice Drury: "a process, in which members of a particular ethnic group in certain situations: first, develop higher levels of group consciousness than other groups; Second, use cultural criteria or other symbols of reunification (including religion and phenotype) to sharpen the boundaries between themselves and others; Third, prepare, organize and consolidate their resources to prepare for collective action and, fourth, take action, usually political, to protect, implement and/or create a collective whole, as opposed to striving to achieve individual goals" (Rex, Drury 1994).

again with the support of the Communist Party and the governing circles of the State Security Service created the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, which was originally defined as protecting the interests of Turks and Muslims in the country. Putting an ethnic character of the existing political and social conflicts in the country has become a major explanatory model of existing and emerging conflicts and major political tactic to mobilize "their own electorate" for all parties. The huge economic depression created additional conditions for deepening the alienation from the state of a great part of the population, and therefore reinforced the growth of insecurity and criminality, the isolation of communities and demonstrations of ethnocentrism in various situations. The acts of mobilizing the ethnic and religious symbolism in order to achieve benefits of some narrow political groups are the most dangerous patterns of political behavior in post-totalitarian society.

The interest of the media was shifted from debating the model of organization of the state and developing a new civic culture (that includes the importance and meaning of civil rights and freedom) towards ethnic parties' struggles for power. The media continued to focus even more and more on the fears⁹ and losses of the ethnic Bulgarians, who were presented as and made to feel as a "threatened minority" and therefore the focus was also on the need to limit the rights of the "others", of "minorities" and thus preserve the "national interests" in the ethno-centric meaning. The politicians and journalists have been constantly seeking and discovering new arguments - real or imaginary - securing the conviction that ethnic Bulgarians are victims of direct or relative deprivation. It was alleged that the state represented by its main institutions - the National Assembly, Government, President, Court - systematically "betrayed" this population in the name of political interests, and they are all committing a "betrayal of national interests." The main pointed evidence was the "breakthrough" of minority representatives in power structures and their inclusion at key positions in the main state institutions. It was widely spread that the Movement for Rights and Freedom (MRF) is an organization that is not even protecting the interests of Bulgarian Turks and Muslims but

⁹There were various factors increasing the sensitivity to the problems of ethnic identity or supporting a high background field of tension, not allowing these problems to "get off the stage". Some of them were: fear for the integrity of the state; fear of the "demographic invasion of minorities"; deepening economic crisis and the drastic increase of unemployment rates; concerns related to Islamic expansion worldwide and fears about its possible repercussions in our country; fear of the developments in the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union and their potential effects on Bulgaria; sense of relative deprivation compared with the Turks, who in the period 1990-1992 restored their names, religious rights, the right to education in their mother tongue, their properties, etc., while Bulgarians were displaced from key positions of power and had to return their homes that were purchased after long waiting and difficulties, had to bear a moral responsibility for the actions during the "revival process" and had fears about the worsening crime situation in the country.

rather working for the interests of the Republic of Turkey and plans to destabilize the situation in the country and exacerbate ethnic tensions in order to achieve full cultural, economic and political autonomy of the regions with mixed Bulgarian-Turkish population and their gradual separation from Bulgaria and joining to Turkey. Hence: the open hostility and aggression towards the MRF and Bulgarian Turks and Muslims was "natural" and easily predictable reaction. Obviously, the short period of time for restoring the cultural and political rights of the minority communities conflicted with the long period of indoctrination of ideas that the minorities represent a threat to the Bulgarian national interests. Having this in mind and adding the lack of proper public debate and proper educational and media campaigns, we can see how the public was made to believe and accept the nationalist rhetoric of local party activists and the newly formed nationalist organizations. Moreover, there was also a huge confusion caused by the apparent loss of state power in this transitional moment, a fear of increased social entropy, the lack of civil structures and democratic traditions, a crisis of moral values – all these were factors, increasing the fear of "disintegration of the Bulgarian nation."

Since 1990 Roma (not just Muslims but all the Roma as a "community") have also become the subject of constant media attention and constant negative presentations. Their image in the media was presented as "criminals torturing the impoverished Bulgarians with ongoing thefts and burglaries" while the police and security/legal institutions completely failed to intervene and enforce the law. It is a real paradox that exactly during the period of post-socialism, when we enjoyed the so much cherished and awaited for decades- freedom of speech, the influence of media for the formation of negative images, attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices about the Roma in the country increased drastically. Many Bulgarians living in direct contact with the Roma population began to fear from them and it is difficult to determine whether these feelings have become the subject of increased media interest or were generated by media coverage of skyrocketing criminality in the country (often as labelled as "Gypsy crime ") and the inability/unwillingness of the police to resist it. In some places, some shadow political forces and interested groups exacerbated this fear from the Roma even more through the media and as a result many Bulgarians participated in various forms and actions against the Roma population, some of which were openly racist. To a large extent this is due to the way the media presented the social changes in the country. The content analysis of the publications in eight newspapers with nationwide circulation and 5 regional newspapers for the period

between February and June 1994¹⁰ showed that 33.3% of the monitored publications have been devoted to the "Roma criminality", another 17.5 percent -about group conflicts between Roma and Bulgarians that are beyond the single damage to property and violence against an individual, 11.6% - about Roma participation in political life, their links with various political parties, buying and selling of votes (i.e. in all situations Roma are delinquents), 7.0% - the activities of various organizations for the integration of Roma into society. The overall impact of all publications from the subtopics like "Thefts and robberies" is that the average reader remains convinced of the "genetically based criminal tendencies in the Roma community". The naturalistic descriptions of violence and murders committed by Roma imposed the idea that the Bulgarians as a community are threatened by Gypsies as a community. Typical titles for this period were: "The Bulgarian land throws up Human blood " ("Night Trud", 16-17.03.1994); "A Gypsy stabs 70 times his victim and then rapes the cooling body" ("Novinar" 13-19.03.1994); "Gypsy victims take revenge" ("Night Trud", 24-25.03.1994); "Slain corpse in a bag floating in Slatina River" ("Yellow Trud" 18-24.02.1994); "Roma from Stolipinovoroving around the cemetery" ("Plovdiv News" 04/07/1994), "Destitute Gypsies rob graves" ("Democracy", 03/07/1994); "The Roma- 10 times more active in crime" ("Trud"-17.02.1994)-(KZMP 1994).

So, as soon as the 90s, the media have been actively participating in rewriting the public agenda; in shifting aside the topic of consistent democratization processes, including freedom, equality and equal rights for all its citizens, regardless of their ethnic or religious background; the media actually participated in the replacement of the real problems in the country with the theme of "relative deprivation" of the Bulgarians and "privileges for minorities", characterized as "treason". Another change in the media were the bigger number of entertainment media products in order to attract bigger audience/public, so therefore violence, crime and all the "bad news" have gradually become the main information events in newscasts. Minority ethnic origin of the perpetrators/criminals was seen by journalists and editors as an additional attraction and communicating the ethnicity of the suspects became a norm for writing/speaking in the media. These two trends evolved over time and led to a dramatic drop in the level of probability for any change in the national model and also they reinforced the

¹⁰ This study includes monitoring of publications about the Roma in the national newspapers: "Democracy", "Word", "24 hours", "Standard", "168 Hours", "Trud", "Night Trud", "Yellow Trud" and Plovdiv editions "Plovdiv news", "Voice", "Maritza", "Sunday news", "Municipal newspaper".

negative representations of Roma to such an extent that they are seen within a completed dehumanization.

In the years of the transition the role of electronic media as the main information channel and source of knowledge, attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices against different social groups increased dramatically. On one hand this strengthened position of media and its wider influence is explained by the removal of censorship imposed for decades by the Communist party system. On the other hand it is due to purely quantitative changes: during this period the number of private television and radio stations in the country highly increased. With the advent of new technologies it has been possible for the media to improve the quality of TV broadcasts, to increase the range of events from around the world and from every corner of our country, to present more and better structured information for a shorter time. Furthermore, all televisions (and national/local press) carried out major changes in their work to directly engage members of the audience, or at least "get closer" to everyday problems, joys and sorrows of the "average person". Television began to claim that TV holds the major role for channeling the positions, attitudes, feelings and demands of this "ordinary person". All this led to a tremendous increase in its psychological impact on the public: from short-term influence on the mood to developing confirmed attitudes, behaviors and perceptions about the surrounding world (Bryant, Zillman 2002).

In addition to technology and discursive changes in the TV itself, other major social changes have contributed to the increase the influence of the media in shaping attitudes and stereotypes about the Roma. The most important of these is the constant narrowing of the opportunities for the majority of non-Roma to form their own knowledge and attitudes about this ethnic group as a result of equally active interaction with the Roma. The mass long-term unemployment among Roma, the enhanced spatial and school segregation made contacts with them rare, episodic, non-personalized and too unequal¹¹. So media representations have become a major source of information about them and thus displaced the personal experience.

¹¹According to the representative survey "Strengthening the socialist way of life among Bulgarian citizens of Roma origin" from 1980, 84% of Roma have worked on permanent jobs/positions in the socialist industrial enterprises, in agriculture or services. The majority of them have spent their entire working experience in ethnically mixed environments and had non-Roma friends. Mass unemployment among Roma started after 1990. High unemployment rates in the country and lower educational and qualification level of the majority of Roma made it difficult to include them in the regular labor market and limits very much the possibility of forming a more open-minded and positive attitude towards Roma as colleagues. Only in recent years due to the reduced number of school-age children many schools are at risk to be closed if they do not accept Roma children. So, this is the reason to increase again the number of Roma in mixed classes. Very often, however, these Roma children in mixed classes are less prepared for school than their Bulgarian peers and contacts are far from equal, not only in terms of the social status of the parents. During the transition period the majority of Roma children, due to financial difficulties, could not attend kindergarten and therefore were not prepared for the requirements of the school. Also the majority of the Roma parents are not educated and they were not able to prepare their children at home for this

Throughout the time of socialism the official ideology tried to diminish the importance of ethnic differences through cultural assimilation, through mass involvement of representatives of different ethnic communities in the socialist educational system, economy and orchestrated "public activities". Despite the widespread inclusion of Roma in the socialist labor market and the rapid overcoming of mass illiteracy in their community, they continued to be the group with the lowest social status in the Bulgarian society. In the years of post-socialism linguistic and religious rights of minorities were recovered and also their right to develop their culture and to assert their right to an ethnic and a religious identity. Despite of this, the economic status of the largest minority communities deteriorated dramatically, while on the other hand- the slogan for freedom of speech imposed and promoted as "normal" the xenophobic representations of some of them, especially of the Roma: in the media, on the political stands, in everyday life. Only in the pre-accession period there were more serious attempts to restrict the free circulation of hate speech in the media; the Law on Protection against Discrimination was adopted, which criminalize the incitement of enmity and hatred towards people and groups based on their differences in racial, ethnic, religious, cultural or social status; the Commission for Protection from Discrimination was established and started work; the Code of Ethics was passed, which formulated the principles and rules of the journalistic ethics. Media researchers indicate that the result of all these changes, the open and direct (traditional) hate speech has decreased in the majority of the printed and electronic media in comparison to what we have read, watched and listened in the 90s of 20th century

important moment of transition from childhood to school requirements and discipline, i.e. Roma children do not have an equal start. Moreover, for the majority of them Bulgarian language is not a mother tongue, so they start school without any fluency in the official language and this seriously hampered their possibilities for achieving good results in school. Due to a chronic lack of funds in the public funds for education, preparatory and extracurricular activities with children who have difficulty in learning the school material were suspended for years, and then when they were introduced, they were a paid service in many schools, which again excluded the majority of Roma children. Teachers were not prepared to respond when some of the children bully their classmates because of prejudice for their ethnic difference or for their poor command of the Bulgarian language or because of the poverty of their families. Many Roma children have been becoming victims of hostility, some of them respond to this hostility with aggression. So, even if the children are together in class, they do not always have positive relationships or always form positive attitudes towards peers from different ethnic groups. Even if this happens, the relationship stops after leaving school, and other factors start to play a more important role in the formation of attitudes towards Roma. The hate speech that is used by a growing number of the Bulgarian politicians in Parliament, the stereotyped portrayal of Roma in the media and the conformism to massively shared stereotypes of them as an inferior group, can erase good memories of friendship with Roma children at school. In other cases, the contradiction between the positive experience of interaction with Roma colleagues or classmates and the media image of Roma as a group leads to an understanding that the widespread negative stereotypes is valid for the group, while the Roma classmates/colleagues or friends are put into the sub-group of "exceptions". Throughout the transition period the spatial segregation of Roma increased dramatically and, so fewer ethnic Bulgarians have Roma neighbors with whom they could maintain good neighborly relations. Those who live close to large ghettos, where the ghetto culture is practiced and it is strongly different from that of the rest of the population, do not usually have good contacts and positive personal impressions of them, but rather the opposite. So, fewer Bulgarian citizens are able to enter into equal relations with Roma and to build their own positive image for them. Instead, media forms their knowledge and feelings for this community along with the knowledge taught at home, or even more.

(research of BHC, OSI, MBMD, etc.). This study aims to verify whether these observations are valid for the most popular TV channels in the country.

3. Main results of the media monitoring

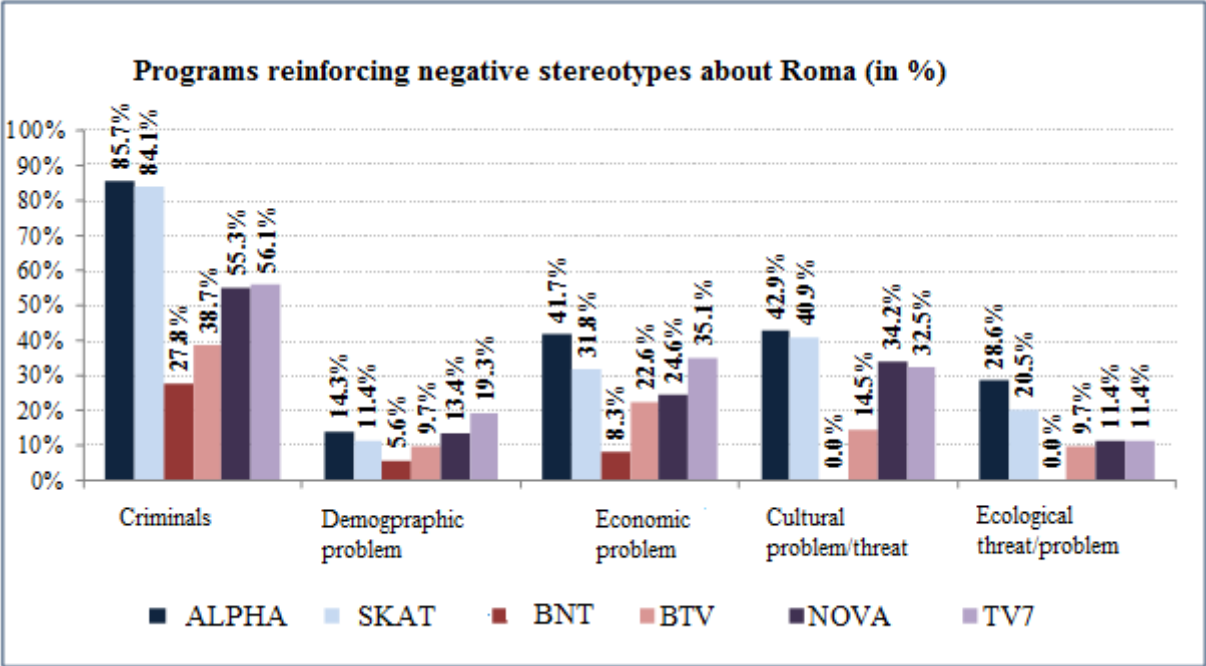
During the research period (01/01/2014 to 30/06/2014) totally 426 programs related to Roma were broadcasted in the monitored 10 TV programs. So the vast majority of the audience had the opportunity to watch in the morning and evening an average of 2.5 programs about Roma, in case they switched most popular televisions. Given that BNT, bTV and NOVA broadcast their central news blocks also on radio and have web pages so that the public can watch/hear/read them at any convenient time, it becomes clear that their role in shaping attitudes and stereotypes of this minority are extremely large. We have to consider also that Roma are very common "main characters" of other TV programs and shows, which are not included in this monitoring, so researched televisions actually have the most powerful tool for the design, validation and reinforcement of stereotypes about the Roma in the country.

Newscasts are usually preferred by senior audiences, but the TV is often turned on as background in many homes, so a huge amount of people are exposed to television's influence even when not watching carefully while dealing with other routine activities. The unemployed, the pensioners and the non-working women at home spend more hours in front of the TV screens, so that they are exposed more often and more massively to the impact of television. Even assuming that some of the adult people have formed positive attitudes towards Roma through personal contacts with representatives of this community in the

kindergarten, school, in the army, and in workplace, still the constant broadcasts showing stories about how young Roma rob and rape defenseless elderly and lonely people in small communities- definitely have a negative impact on their attitude. A big number of the taxi-drivers, hairdressers and others usually turn on the radio (all major TV stations have broadcasts in the radio). So virtually all age groups are exposed to influence from the electronic media. The more stereotyped their messages are, the more uncritically accepted by the biased public and audience. People, who are not in general so much prejudiced, also remember more easily widespread stereotypical messages, when watching TV in the meantime while doing something else (like: preparing an outfit for work, preparing breakfast or dinner, sending their children to school or doing other routine activities). Those who have positive attitudes towards Roma are exposed to massive pressure both from colleagues, friends, acquaintances, and the electronic and printed media to change attitudes in a negative direction. If they are frustrated by any negative and stereotypical TV program or show about Roma and they decide to switch to another channel, it is likely to hear and watch even more biased messages from another TV. In this way they are also subjected to the negative effects of the media, even when the media is not actually targeting directly to change the attitudes of clients of their products but just attract more people, who like their programs.

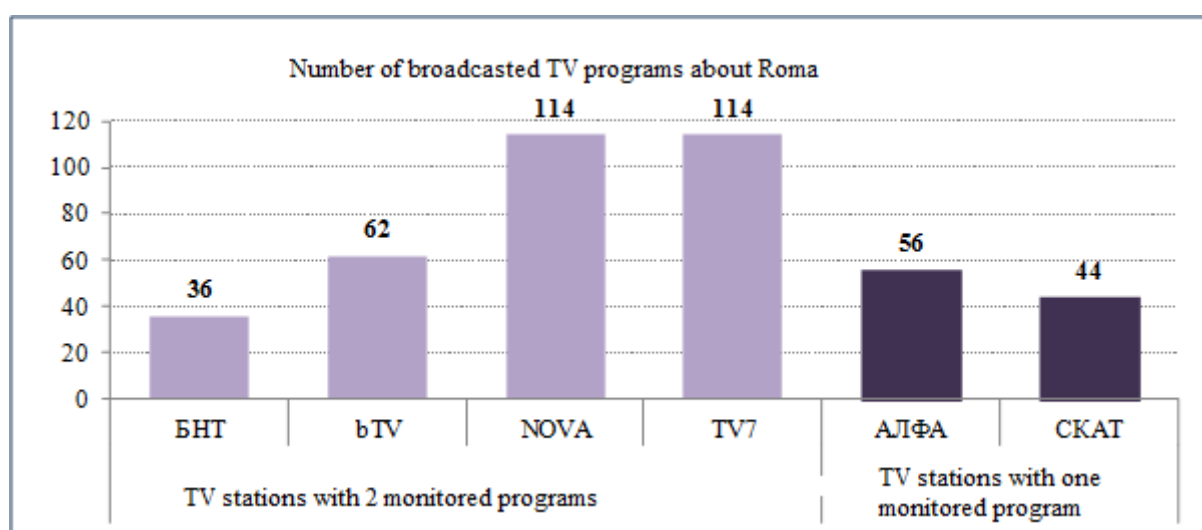
We have to make a note that the monitored TV stations differ widely in the way of representation of ethnicity and Roma in particular.

Fig. 1. Profile of the TV stations according to the ways Roma are presented



The graphic shows that the national TV- BNT has least focused on ethnicity of Bulgarian citizens and aired the smallest number of shows for Roma: only 36 for the entire period of this monitoring study. For editors and journalistic of this TV the ethnicity of Roma is related mainly to cultural differences, so many of their programs present cultural event, holidays and rituals of different Roma subgroups in a positive way. The presentations and reports on important social issues or criminal records, in which Roma are involved in most of the cases are presented professionally-attracting the opinion of experts on the problem and Roma- as participants or witnesses of the certain events or invited as experts.

Fig. 2. Number of broadcasted TV programs on Roma issues in the period:01.01.2014 – 31.06.2014



Private TV stations make incomes only by advertising, so for them the higher number of their audience has an existential importance. They try to keep their audience ratings through more entertaining shows, therefore materials with violence and "exotic characters" are supposed to keep the interest of the clients. As observed in the news blocks included in the monitoring study, the number of reports on crimes and press releases of the police is expectedly bigger compared with BNT. In order to keep the interest rate of their clients (and because of limited

TV time) they are more likely to present complex social issues in a simple and stereotyped way. Therefore, through their morning and evening news blocks (surveyed within this monitoring study) the private TV stations try to entertain and/or frighten their clients with a bigger number of programs about Roma: bTV has 62 broadcasts; NOVA-114; TV7- also 114.

The two TV stations of the extreme nationalist parties SKAT and ALFA were monitored with only one program each. Throughout the period of the research ALFA TV aired 56 broadcasts for Roma in the surveyed program and SKAT- 44. As expected, all the shows about Roma on these two televisions were negative. The common images of Roma, which they spread are simple generalizations (without any reasoning) and they present the entire community as “criminals”, as a “group, representing a serious threat to the economic and cultural development of the country”, more and more - as a “demographic threat”. Their messages and suggestions for solving the problems are formulated in a very extreme manner, but consistent and clear: “Roma should be under the permanent control and force (even violence) of the police, institutions and civil society; and the best way to deal with the issues would be to isolate the Roma in a separate space”, but recently this option is not discussed as often as in the time of Father Gelemenov; “the Roma should be put under constant pressure in order to make them respect the country's laws; their illegal houses have to be destroyed” (without spending state budget funds or money from European funds for the construction of social housing for the homeless, because "it is an undeserved privilege" for them); “there should be harsher sanctions for any "offenses" or "breaches" they carry out”(the strange thing is that it is not just intolerance of violations of the law and order- something that even MPs of Attack Party do constantly, but intolerance towards Roma as a community, because some of them break the law); “there should be further restrictions on their access to medical services for not paying health insurances“, notwithstanding the provisions of the law that - consistent or not – regulates the access issues; “additional restrictions on the use of social services and benefits by the Roma should be introduced, because there are many Bulgarians who are deprived of social support”; “Roma have to be chased out of the cities because they are noisy and litter the spaces between the blocks of apartments; the Roma have to be also chased out from the villages, because they commit crimes”; and all who do not share these ideologies or do not fulfill these calls for action should be considered as “corrupt national traitors”.

3.1., Press review“ rubrics

In addition to the observed and analyzed TV programs, Roma are often referred to in the “press review” rubrics of the morning news blocks on the first four televisions. Since these rubrics were not analyzed and not included in the monitoring plan, some general trends in the presentation of Roma in these sections will be mentioned. This is important to be done because the selection of the "most important" and "most interesting" from the press, which is done in the morning newscasts of the monitored TV stations, is another selection and focus on topics that journalists choose to present as the most important social issues around which the attention of civil society and/or of politicians should be focused, or around which a public debate should be started. This selection of the "hottest topics" in a particularly great extent reveals the influence of media in shaping the "agenda" of civil society.

BTV is the station that mentioned Roma most often in their “Press review” rubrics of the morning news blocks- totally 17 times during the period of monitoring. The news presenters of the morning news on this TV station focused on: six posts for criminal behavior or deviant behavior of Roma, three publications for upcoming construction of public housing for poor Roma with EU money, four publications on early marriages and births, etc. The majority of the selected publications on the press reinforce the already existing negative stereotypes about Roma as “criminals” and “demographic threat”, or enhance the feeling of the majority of Bulgarian citizens that “Roma are privileged”. Therefore, a hypothesis could be made- that this biased selection of articles reinforcing the negative stereotypes of this much disliked minority, and re-focusing the attention of the public on them as "the most important from the press" is an indirect evidence that the publically shared prejudices and fears, related to Roma, are also shared (to some extent) by the editors and news anchors or that they use this topic intentionally for mercantile reasons. Either way, this focus turns the negative stereotypes and attitudes into a dominating ideology in the Bulgarian society.

Often the news presenters make comments that further reinforce negative stereotypes and prejudices against Roma. Moreover, there are even cases when the anchors’ comments actually change the message of the author of the quoted publication in order to reinforce existing stereotypes by putting information in a different context (researchers categorize such media effects as "framing"). A typical example for this is an article in the “SEGA” newspaper

from 03.02.2014 about some plans for constructing public housing for Roma¹². The author of this article focuses on the fact that usually there are many plans for future and discussions for improving the situation of Roma housing, but it is extremely rare that any of those plans become real, that even steps are not usually taken in this direction. Nevertheless, the anchor Genka Shikerova (bTV news), made some comments on it that actually the problem is not that there are more discussions than real things done for the integration of Roma and reducing the social inequalities between them and the rest, but just the opposite: she implied that there was very much done and thus reinforced the feelings of many poor Bulgarians that Roma are rather privileged, although they do not deserve such special treatment, and they do not value the received privilege, they even destroy social housing that was built specifically for them. Here are her comments: *"...some time ago we showed you a similar result from a construction project in Plovdiv, Shekermahala- where some blocks were given to Roma families, very nice-looking apartments...when they were still new. Now they do not look so good, although it was not such a long time ago when they moved in..."* These words of the anchor automatically unlocked the memory stores of stereotypical images for "ugly looking damaged and looted blocks of apartments" with social housing provided to Roma in different periods of time. Moreover, it confirms once again the recently formed stereotype that "these people do not deserve to spend any money on them –neither for their education, nor-for housing, or- for improving their infrastructure." In fact, this is a very distinct effect of the so called "priming" (a term, introduced by media researchers, surveying the media effects to denote the process of unobtrusive and discreet activation of various attitudes or cognitive constructs stored in memory).

Similarly, the news presenters and anchors consolidate and reinforce the stereotype of Roma as "privileged" and "embezzling" the social welfare aid. For example this is how the TV presenters comment on an article in the "24 hours" newspaper for the suggested plans of the nationalist party "Ataka" to change the laws in a way that only adult parents have the right to receive the monthly payments of children allowances: the anchor Konstantin Karadjov defines it as *"a very original proposal of "Ataka" party ..."* and Genka Shikerova hints her approval to this proposal with the words: *"There is logic in this suggestion because in practice both their parents receive these allowances and both the children up to 18 as they have already produced a new generation of children."* So, without even knowing well the existing

¹²The quotation from the article is: *„...Bulgaria will receive 86 millions leva from EU to construct public houses for 6300 Roma. Yet, none of the houses funded with 15 million leva is not ready yet. Citizens from Burgas and Varna are protesting against such construction projects..."*

regulations and how they are implemented in practice, without having a real idea how many cases of such "abuses" of the law would be prevented per year in case there is a new change in the regulations on social assistance, journalists actively participate in the formulation of pseudoissues and they influence the formation of public opinion about their relevance and levels of social fairness/justice. In practice, on this concrete issue, the journalists lobby for taking a decision for additional restrictions on social assistance eligibility on behalf of civil society and they demonstrate they do this "in the name of justice". Still, the most important effect of this journalistic influence is the reinforcement of negative stereotypes and prejudices against Roma and further undermining the almost non-existent solidarity and readiness to support vulnerable individuals and groups in the Bulgarian society.

In general, the comments and the selection of news items by the news presenters and anchors of TV7 are also as negative and reinforcing negative stereotypes about Roma as those on bTV, although their number is comparatively smaller (the monitoring team reported about only eight comments about Roma, included in the review of the press throughout the duration of the project). As usual, they refer to problems of petty crime, especially in rural areas; to the bad image of Bulgaria, created by Roma migrants (two shows). There were also materials about the illegal logging of Bulgarian forests. Again, the effect of "framing" is very clear in this material: as usual, the attention is fixed on petty offenders - Roma who cut firewood to survive during winter, not on big businessmen providing illegal felling of thousands of hectares of forests and exporting timber abroad, nor on the politicians and employees in the forestry administrations, which provide political and institutional umbrella on this crime. One particular article in the "24 hours" newspaper was presented by the anchor of this television as a "particularly interesting" and he drew a special attention to it: this article presents parliamentary debates over a century ago, led to limiting the rights of Roma without permanent residence and Muslim Gypsies to participate in the electoral process. Putting it as "particularly interesting" strengthens the so called "priming effect" of unlocking the negative attitudes towards Roma related to the launch of the election campaign for European Parliament deputies, fears of "buying of Roma votes" and "the crucial role of the illiterate Roma on the political governance of the country".

The monitoring team, who surveyed the news broadcasts on BNT did not report a single negative material for Roma in the press review rubrics in the period January - June 2014.

3.2. Ways of presenting Roma on the monitored TV stations

In the first half of 2014 in all the six monitored TV station there were materials that strengthen (to various degrees) the negative stereotypes and prejudices about Roma. Most often, this happens through **generalizations** (a single case is presented as typical for the entire ethnic group and as a **group characteristic of all its members**). Pure and direct generalizations from this type could be seen in materials, reports, comments, etc. of SKAT TV and ALPHA TV, but they are also used by presenters and reporters of bTV, NOVA and TV7.

Here's a typical example on ALPHA TV from 29.04.2014. The report has a characteristic topic called "**Gypsy crime with impunity in Stara Zagora**". The report describes a juvenile crime perpetrators in the village of Zmeyovo where several young children commit systematic thefts and robberies. The measures taken - probation for the younger ones and community service work for the older ones - proved to be ineffective. Dissatisfaction with the ineffective work of the institutions has led to serious tensions in the village. Nevertheless, the journalists from ALPHA TV do not focus on the inefficient work of the institutions. Moreover, the party for which they work is represented by a parliamentary group and therefore they could initiate monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the socializing institutions and/or measures to prevent and punish crimes committed by minors; and then based on the results they could propose more effective ways of dealing with problems of this type, including regulatory changes. Specifically for this case and for other similar ones, they could propose a discussion on a number of measures relating to juvenile delinquents and their parents and select and implement the most appropriate measures under the constant and effective supervision of relevant institutions. However, the journalists discuss the problem in a different way and put it in the frame of "ethnic relations". They interviewed the mayor of the village and several victims of these crimes. The mayor describes the situation as follows: "*A small group of younger Gypsies ... These are children, between 5 and 6, or 7-8 who act as a group. In daytime they do various mischiefs and during nights they steal. The situation here is very severe, I am not dramatizing ... Last year several of these young Gypsies were convicted for 16, 17 cases ... As a country we are not able to deal with 5-6 young guys! They are 5-6 small children! You can see how they sneak in the yards through small holes- 17 cm wide. They are in so easily!*"

The reporter summarizes the interview with the mayor and two villagers in the following way: "*The problem is that because these Roma are under-age, so they are untouchable. And **the***

result is a raging Gypsy crime - unpunished ... According to the mayor, the measures taken against this gypsy terror are insufficient... The horrified villagers are concerned about the apathy of the local authorities and the powerlessness of the prosecution so this is why they propose the following solutions for stopping the Gypsy crime in their village:

- 1) More severe punishment for the Gypsy minors;*
- 2) Sending the Gypsy minors to orphanages and institutions;*
- 3) Expel the families of these Gypsy minors.*

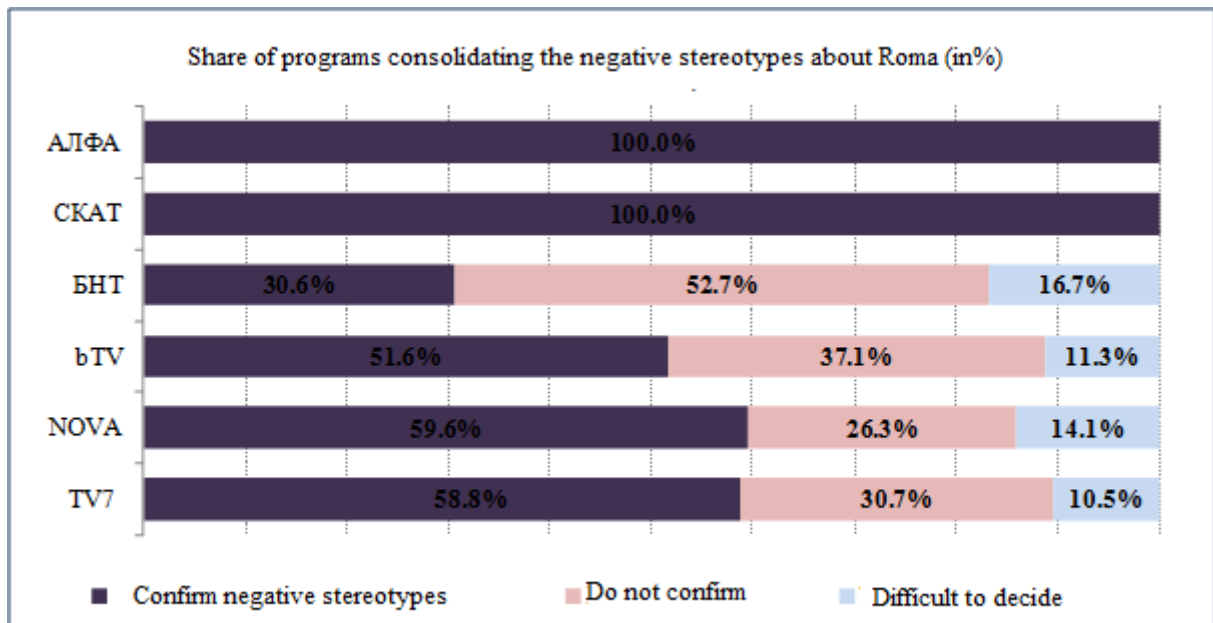
The local leadership of Ataka party did not remain indifferent to the victim of the Gypsy terror...”.

The above TV report is a clear example for an adept use of media “**framing**” to reinforce negative stereotypes. From the standpoint of the public interest it would be better to regard the case as a problem of a growing proportion of juvenile delinquency (at a steadily decreasing number of children in the country) and the ineffectiveness of the existing measures and the work of institutions. Then we could start looking for opportunities to improve the work of socializing institutions responsible for childcare and education, schools, families and others; coordination between the various institutions working for children's socialization and crime prevention through strengthening the interaction between them, etc. Moreover, legislative changes could be initiated in order to increase the efficiency of the institutions and the measures for prevention and correction. The journalists from the nationalist media reformulate this problem as a problem of interethnic relations, thus contributing to the escalation of the tension between ethnic groups and its growth into an ethnic conflict; they present the anti-social acts of few Roma children as typical behavior and intrinsic characteristic of all the members of the entire ethnic group; they are fueling strong negative public emotions against this community; they offer a variety of repressive measures and their effects in the best case would be to move the problem to another region or pass it to another time in future; they present themselves as “defenders of the terrified population”, unlike the non-working state institutions. Still, despite their role of “defenders”, they are not demonstrating any real capacity to deal with the actual problem.

A third way to strengthen the stereotypes and prejudices against Roma is the **constant reiteration** of identical negative characteristics of some of the representatives of the group when presenting the entire group; **associating the Roma over and over again with the**

same characteristics condemned by the society, such as: an unwillingness to work; not paying taxes, fees and insurances, parasitism on public funds for education, health and social assistance; irresponsible parenting; criminality in all its diversity, brutality and ruthlessness; defiance and non-compliance with legal and moral norms of society; adherence to cultural patterns that have nothing to do with those of the macro-society and even pose a threat to society. Virtually all the monitored TV stations are doing this in varying degrees. Figure 3 presents the "contribution" of each of the TV stations for forming and/or consolidating such stereotyped and prejudiced attitudes.

Fig.3. Number/percentage of TV shows, reports and materials, broadcasted on ALPHA TV, SKAT TV, BNT, bTV, NOVA and TV7, consolidating negative stereotypes about Roma (%)



Here we need to make a note: this refers to the programs for which team members were unable to agree whether or not they reinforce negative stereotypes. Often these are materials about serious social problems: early marriages and early births, criminal or deviant behavior, early school drop-out, etc. The two Roma university students, who evaluated the programs, thought that they are stereotypical, while the other two participants in the monitoring and evaluation process thought that these programs are not stereotypical. The difference in the evaluations is that usually the Roma evaluators underestimate journalists' position, disregarding the fact that journalists have advocated for a liberal/non-stereotypical point of view, unlike the guests of the show, for example, or have done an analysis of the social problems and tried to present objective arguments of both the Roma and non-Roma. Another group of TV programs and shows reveal ambivalent viewpoints of reporters and anchors, so again it was hard to be characterized and evaluated. Sometimes the program as a whole is not stereotypical, but there are some individual comments of respondents and guests of the show or the journalists themselves who are negative and stereotypical; or sometimes the title of the TV material is negative and stereotypical but still the material itself is relatively objective and the tone of the journalist is neutral. So, we decided to classify those programs under "difficult to evaluate".

The public broadcaster: Bulgarian National TV -BNT is the one that had the smallest number of programs focusing the attention of society on Roma, and very rarely these materials were stereotypical.

The biggest private television bTV presents Roma in a negative stereotyped way relatively rarely: both as an intensity of programs for Roma and as a way of presenting them. Yet, half of the materials about Roma issues on bTV were stereotypical and negative. The other two private stations- NOVA TV and TV7 - had an impressive number of programs about Roma and in the majority of cases (two thirds), these programs increase negative stereotypes about them.

The representation of Roma in the monitored TV stations of the two extreme nationalist parties- “Ataka” and the “National Front for Salvation of Bulgaria”- is relatively high, given that we have monitored only one program from each: ALPHA TV and SKAT. All are entirely negative and almost the same expressions reinforce negative stereotypes, creating and consolidating fears and hatred towards Roma: Roma are presented as “a demographic, cultural, economic and environmental threat”, as an “internal enemy, systematically threatening the national security”. At the same time politicians and journalists from these two parties and TV stations constantly repeat that the country's ruling elites refuse to counteract this threat under the pressure of the EU and because they rely on Roma voters, which they could buy for small amounts or benefits. In almost all programs about Roma, the nationalists try to incite an opinion that the "government lets the Roma parasitize on social funds and commit crimes with impunity”; that instead of taking care for improving the situation of the impoverished Bulgarian population, they use the scarce state budget funds and European subsidies mainly for Roma.

In this analysis we put the main stereotypes about Roma (as observed in the monitored televisions) in several types:

- Negative stereotypes about the reproductive behavior of Roma (early and extremely early marriages; early and extremely early births, extremely high birth rate; rapid increase in number; irresponsible parenting)
- Negative stereotypes about Roma related to violating accepted norms and laws - Roma as criminals (thieves, fraudsters, rapists, murderers, involved in human trafficking, selling their votes during elections, destroying the property of other people, building illegal houses on foreign land or moving in into empty homes of people temporarily absent, etc.)
- Negative stereotypes about their cultural characteristics (primitive, dirty, ignorant, uneducated, do not value education, rude, noisy, immoral, bad, do not respect other people's

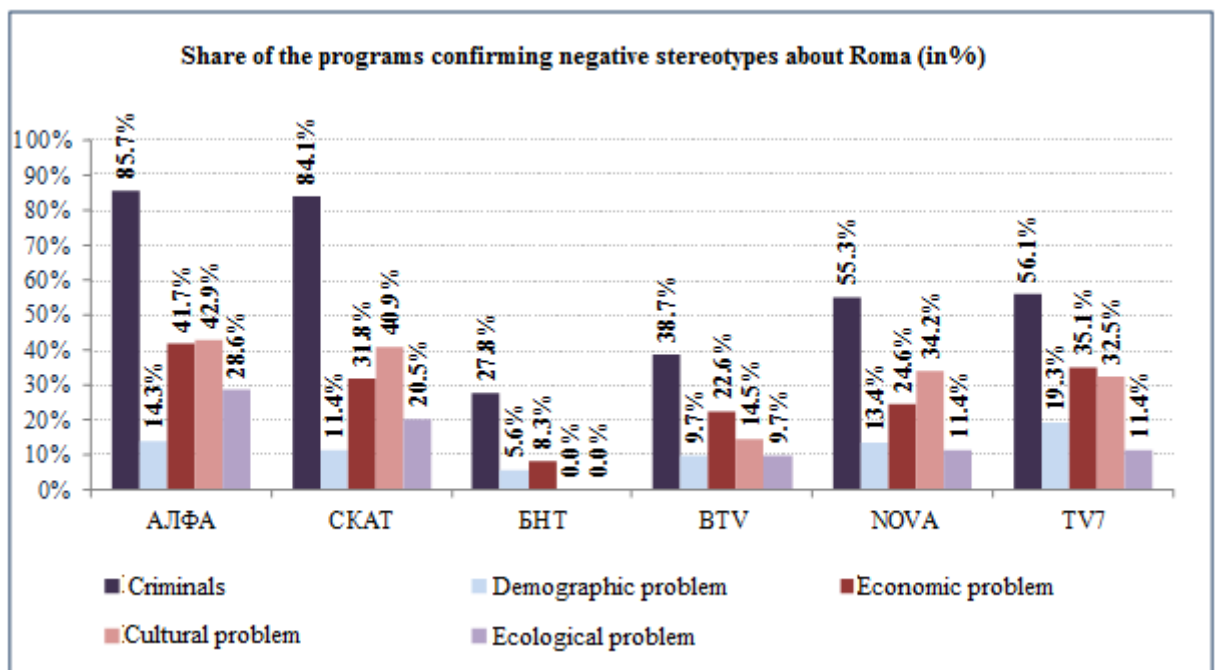
feelings, do not respect the religious feelings of others, do not respect the memory of the dead, etc.)

- Roma as socio-economic burden (do not want to work, lazy, irresponsible, do not pay taxes and insurances, do not pay utility bills - electricity, water, heating, living on welfare, exhaust social funds, etc.).

- Negative stereotypes of Roma as “polluting nature and urban environments” (they cut the trees in parks and forests, destroy protected plants, litter the riverbeds, turn the empty urban spaces into illegal dumps, etc.).

The observed televisions vary in the profile of the stereotypes about Roma (Figure 4):

Fig.4: TV profiles based on the type of popularized stereotypes about Roma:



The national television BNT had relatively the biggest number of programs about Roma culture, and they did not have even a single program, increasing the negative stereotypes about their "inferior cultural community" or environmental threat. The journalists from BNT almost do not make comments (if they have they are relatively rare) reinforcing negative

stereotypes about demographic characteristics, criminogenic and unacceptable socio-economic behavior of Roma.

Among the private televisions bTV seems to be most unbiased against Roma. This is the private TV with a relatively lower number of materials about this ethnic group and with relatively the lowest share of the programs, reinforcing negative stereotypes about Roma. bTV focuses on "unacceptable cultural characteristics of Roma" more than twice as rare than NOVA and TV7. There is a significant difference between bTV and TV7 in terms of stereotyped portrayal of Roma as "economic and social burden" and "criminals."

The programs on NOVA and TV7, "contribute" significantly to the spread and intensification of negative stereotypes about Roma. First, they have broadcasted an average of one program/material per day related to Roma on weekdays, and only 12% of these programs do not create or maintain any negative stereotype. The programs on both TV stations present the Roma in a very similar way, which further strengthens their influence on the public. In more than half of the TV programs Roma are presented as criminals; in one third- as people who create serious economic and social problems or demonstrate unacceptable cultural characteristics; in one sixth of the programs Roma are presented as people with problematic reproductive behavior or as a demographic threat, and over one-tenth of the materials are about how Roma pollute or destroy the environment.

NOVA TV proved to be the station with the largest internal differences based on the ways of presenting the Roma. Roma are presented in the "Central news program" in a much calmer tone than in the morning block. The attention of the reporters and anchors in the central newscast is focusing more on significant social phenomena and facts, not on the ethnicity of participants. The central news almost do not have programs about the "unacceptable reproductive behavior" of Roma. Often, Roma are presented in a non-stereotyped way, but as people like everyone else, that the society can feel compassion and empathy: they suffer and need support for surgeries and treatment, as most of us do; and they are looking for work; we see them as working poor, like many other Bulgarian citizens; victims of natural disasters and violence and they suffer just like us ...This is the only television among the monitored ones that did an independent journalistic investigation on the case of the stolen train-line items and damaged railway, widely presented by all the stations except BNT. Journalists from the evening news of NOVA presented their findings that opposed the interpretations of all other media on this case, made during the month of January. It turned out that the investigating authorities collected data proving that employees of the Bulgarian State Railway were

involved in the course of this crime commitment, i.e. it is not just another act of “Roma” vandalism, as the case was presented on the other five monitored TV stations during January.

On the other hand, the morning show "Hello, Bulgaria!" draws much more stereotypical image of Roma by presenting them primarily as people who do not share "our" values and who have very different behavior from "ours"; as criminals of which "we" are the victims; as irresponsible parents, etc. It could be qualified as ironical that the journalists from "Hello, Bulgaria!" perceive themselves: as "defenders of ordinary people" whose civic duty is to exert pressure on institutions to do their work appropriately, as people who are fighting against apathy and who are working for the development of the civil society. They focus the attention of the public and institutions on some painful social phenomena such as the lack of institutional protection of life, privacy and property of people from small villages and towns (who are often - adults and lonely); on the issues related to domestic violence and neglecting children; the lack of control over the felling of the forests, etc. They are convinced they are right and objective when promoting "our" values and when exposing those who systematically violate these common values of “ours), especially when it comes to values such as taking personal responsibility for the well-being of the family and children; hard work; compliance with law and order, etc. The problem, though, is that these journalists easily accept that those who "deviate" from those values, do it because of their ethnic/genetic/cultural differences and not, for example, because they are victims of multiple social exclusion lasted for decades (and more) and because they live in isolated ghettos, or because they have lost faith that they can achieve something, because their only opportunity to exercise power is to do so at the expense of women and children in the group, etc. Their strong bias that certain ethnic and/or religious groups are not able to accept liberal values and to respect the norms of a democratic society, makes it possible for them to be rejected, scorned and stigmatized not under the pretext that they are representatives of a particular ethnic group, but as violators of moral values. This is what some researchers call "symbolic racism" (reluctance to change the status quo of domination of the majority over the minority, not because of personal interest, but because of the belief that the minority groups violate basic moral values and norms such as: taking responsibility, hard work, individualism, rule of law, etc.). The problem is that this bias against the group leads to the generalization of "moral inferiority" of the entire minority group based on the assessment of few individuals and their behavior, and there are "immoral individuals" in every community. The problem is also the

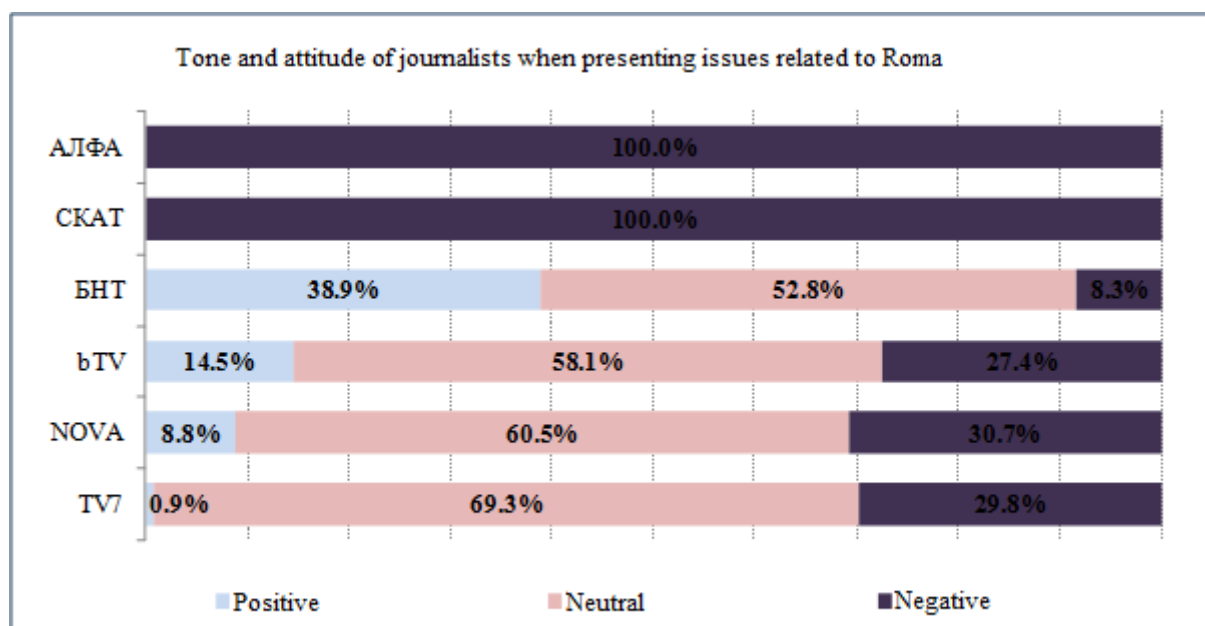
tendency to popularize moral judgments about the consequences, without attempting to understand how it came to such a behavior or characteristic, that is qualified as “deviant”.

ALFA and SKAT present the entire Roma population as a “demographic, cultural and economic threat”. In about 85% of the programs they are presented as criminals. Two fifths of the programs emphasize that Roma are not just culturally different, but even as “people with only negative characteristics, carrying an anti-culture that poses a cultural threat to our country”. Again, in almost two-fifths of the materials the Roma are qualified with some economic terms as “parasites” or as “pests”. If we add the topic for the pollution/destruction of the natural environment, the total number of programs on both of these nationalist televisions will be more than two-thirds, where Roma are presented as pests and/or parasites. These two televisions have the biggest share in presenting and popularizing a dehumanized image of Roma. These are the only televisions with no program, presenting a more individualized image of Roma. The monitored news program of SKAT was the only one not having a single report on the water-flood disasters in June 2014 that killed 13 people and caused the collapse of dozens of houses –the killed people and the ones left homeless were Roma, so it was not a “big deal” for this TV station! ALPHA TV had four news and reports for the disaster but, as expected, the Roma were presented as guilty “because of their illegal construction of houses and illegal logging of trees, while the authorities do not investigate and punish them for the damages because they rely on their votes during elections”.

3.3. The atmosphere and tone of the programs about Roma

This survey had a special focus on the tone of the TV materials and programs about Roma and issues related to Roma (positive, neutral or negative). It varies between the different, TV stations.

Fig.5. What is the tone of the TV materials/programs about Roma (% from all materials about Roma)



Journalists from the national television BNT in general have programs about the culture, customs and holidays of Roma, or show them in situations typical for all Bulgarian citizens, demonstrating understanding, and often even empathy. When preparing and showing materials on social problem involving Roma, the journalists from BNT most often demonstrate analytical interest towards the problem and try to explain it objectively; they are not so much interested in the ethnicity of the characters of the story. Their journalistic tone when presenting Roma is mostly neutral or positive.

In a contrast to the above, journalists from ALPHA and SKAT TV openly reveal their negative attitude towards Roma and present them very schematically and stereotypically with entirely negative characteristics. When they invite experts who express an opinion that differs from theirs, they do everything possible to discredit them or present a counterpoint through interviews and reports with citizens, who are members of the nationalist party and thus they show how "ordinary people" see the "Gypsy outrages" and the "irresponsible actions of the institutions". Here's a typical example for this:

SKAT TV, 04.13.2014 - "Improvements of" Stolipinovo" neighborhood continues!?"

SKAT TV reporter: *"Outdoor fitness, street lights and asphalted streets are only some of the new benefits of the crowded Gypsy neighborhood. 90% of buildings in Stolipinovo are illegal. None of the gypsies pay any taxes. Instead of dealing with the lawlessness here, the municipality still takes care of the Gypsies. According to the mayor of the "East" region- Petar Petrov, however, the state did not take enough care for this neighborhood and he even asks for more money from the state."*

Petar Petrov, mayor of the "East" region (Plovdiv): *"The larger municipality, the state and non-governmental organizations have to intervene here, as it is very hard for our district municipality to deal with such a large ethnic neighborhood. I mean, that here we need target subsidies"*.

Reporter of SKAT: *"On the other hand the citizens of Plovdiv are unwilling as regular taxpayers to pay for the carefree life of Gypsies."*

Popova, a resident of Plovdiv (Bulgarian): *"We pay their bills- we do! And not only for Stolipinovo but for all the Gypsies from all over Bulgaria: we pay their electricity, water and everything. What could I comment? No comment. The state is not doing its job! "*

Usually when interviewed people try to present an objective and more balanced viewpoint, the journalists from SKAT TV and ALPHA TV interrupt and repeat their negative claims. Sometimes they include in their TV reports "the perspective of the Roma" and to do so they use all their capacity to demonstrate their manipulative and biased attitudes openly: through selecting only extremely marginalized and illiterate people, unemployed for years, living in miserable conditions in slums. The nationalistic journalists ask them sets or hostile and provocative questions in order to reinforce the negative stereotypes and to demonstrate and

justify the correctness of the negative attitude towards them, as the “Gypsies deserve it”. For example a reporter visited a village and met a Roma man on the street. She surprised him with the question: *"Who is beating people and stealing there during nights?"* The startled man answered *"I do not know!"*, but this response is explained by the journalist as a typical "aptitude of Gypsies to lie and justify their crimes". Or another typical example: a number of programs were prepared and showed on the TV about the problem of illegal Roma houses and about the decisions of some of the mayors to demolish them. The reporter explains how "Gypsies are used to live as parasites" and to prove this she met with intimidated, illiterate people from the ghetto, ostensibly to present their "perspective":

K. Abadzhieva, journalist: *"Are your homes legal?"* (A question to an old woman from the neighborhood)

Old woman: *"No, my child. We do build, but our homes are not legal. What else could we do?! We have 12 children and these children have their own 11 children, or 7 children ... They get married at 11 years or at 20 years ... At 17 they give birth, have 7-8 children and they all sleep in one room ... "*

K. Abadzhieva: *"Where is your water-meter? Do you pay your water bills? "*

A middle-aged woman: *"We do not pay for water. This is the truth before God. Cause we are here illegally and we take water to drink from that place over there..."*(The woman shows a collapsed shack).

Thus the statements of the journalist are confirmed by the Roma themselves.

The reporters and presenters from bTV, NOVA and TV7 try to follow a neutral tone of programs and materials, but still approximately one third the of all the programs are negative or hostile. Programs with a positive tone are rare or completely absent, even when presenting cultural festivals or examples valiant deeds of Roma. Researchers of modern racism explain that it is characterized by a much more moderate expression compared to the traditional overt racism. They characterize the “modern racism” as excluding any positive presentations or attitudes of the stereotyped group and any contacts with its representatives are seen by modern racists as “unpleasant and undesirable”. This is could be clearly seen in the programs of TV7. Often TV7 present even Roma holidays in an ironic way, expressing hidden negative emotions towards the Roma through criticism or mockery, even in TV reports, intended as positive. Here is an example:

TV7, 28.01.2014 - "A Roma man from our country hits 7 mln. Euros from the Greek jackpot"

TV presenter 1: *"One of our Roma hit 7 million euros from the Greek jackpot, and more over- as it is known- with the cheapest lottery ticket ... It was brought to our knowledge that after getting the money he did something very noble things to help his fellow villagers: he gave bags full with food to each household. He laid asphalt on the road to the local church and paid for the lunches of all the children in the local school for the entire school year. Despite of this, however, it turned out that he is not particularly friendly ..."*

TV presenter 2: *"It also appeared that he had been in Greece not for work but and has been engaged in begging. He earned 5 euros a day. One day he bought food ... and with the remaining 1.5 euros he bought a lottery ticket ..."*

Reporter: *"We tried to reach out to this man, but he was not particularly open for that. He fears bad things might happen to him and he even stopped his son from school and hired bodyguards... Our camera crew was chased with shouts and threats from his bodyguards who did not allow us to take any pictures."*

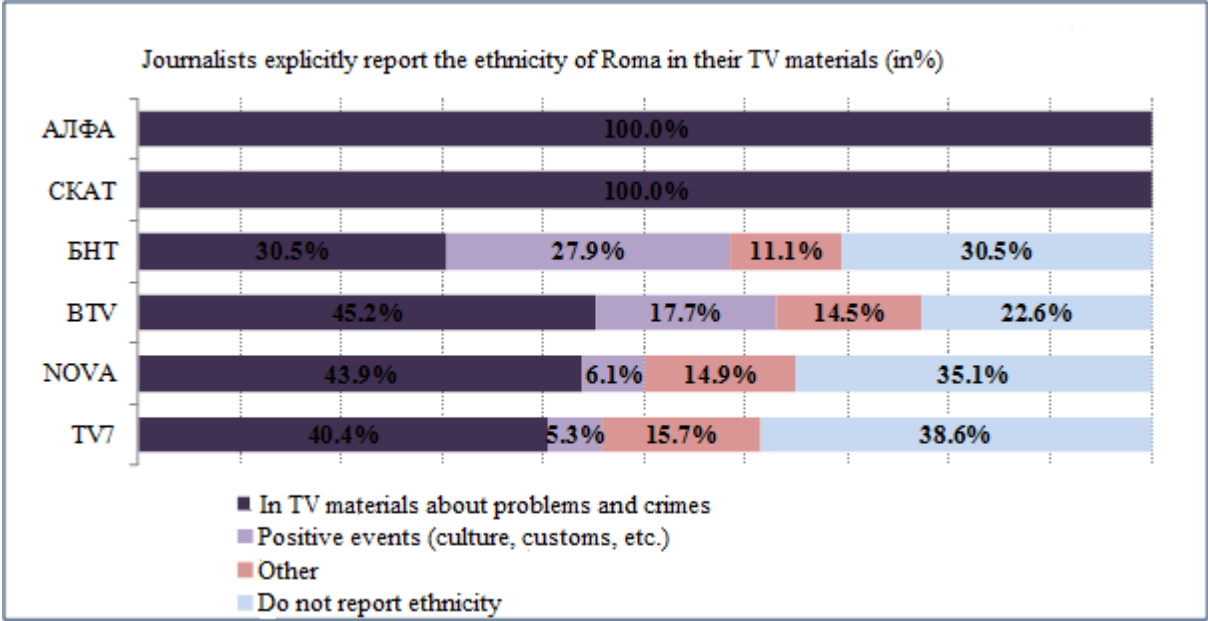
Despite of the fact that both Bulgarians and Roma residents of the village told only good things about this man in the TV report, the journalists demonstrated their lack of any positive attitude towards this man. They were not able to experience any empathy or try to understand why he was afraid to be shown on television, although kidnapping of children or wives of wealthy people for ransom had become a popular business for certain criminal groups for many years in our country.

Another example of "modern racism" is from bTV: On April 15, 2014 the morning block presented a long TV report and an interview with a Roma designer from the Roma neighborhood "Faculteta" in Sofia. The report was dedicated to the upcoming proms and celebrations in the neighborhood. The designer- Papuzha showed official dresses, designed and made for the graduating girls from the neighborhood- lavish dresses- a "princesses" type with accessories. Then the conversation in the interview shifted to the early marriage and the dress-maker expressed her delight that more and more girls from "Faculteta" now complete secondary education and they do not get married early. The anchor of the morning block made skeptical smile after showing this report and muttered a barely hidden contempt: *"Not all school graduates chose to dress up lavishly. Some have decided to donate the money for their proms to poor children in institutions!"* This remark is made by the anchor in the context of other news onbTV: some students from elite schools in our capitaldecided to

donate their funds for their proms to the children from institutions and this initiative was widely and warmly popularized by a number of TV stations, including bTV. But the comment of the anchor revealed her deep bias, absolute lack of empathy towards the Roma, a complete misunderstanding of "other people's perspective". For a first time in many years, a big number of girls complete secondary education in the Roma neighborhood. It is a very important achievement for them and for their families which they are proud of and they would like to show it. There is also something more: in Roma ghettos higher education of girls is not always perceived positively. Girls, who study in high schools are often referred to as "rotten girls" and many mothers of boys advise their sons not to marry such girls because they fear that it will be more difficult to "get along with them" and to control them. These girls are seen as rebellious and free-minded and it is feared that they do not become "obedient and good wives". Therefore, the parents of these girls really want to show their daughters as "princesses" in dresses resembling lavish wedding attires, to show that they not only achieved a high education, but also that they are ready for the transition from girlhood to the family life of married women. These parents are desperately trying to change the negative attitudes and they are doing it through celebrating the proms of their daughters with many guests in the public - on the streets and the square in the neighborhood, in the school yard- hoping to bring this positive change. It is unfair to demand and expect exactly those girls and their families to give up the "lavish celebration" for their completion of the school! It is unfair to expect from them the same calm and even indifferent attitude towards the completion of secondary education, demonstrated by students from elite schools, for which university education is a family norm for generations.

Special attention was paid to the issues of explicitly reporting/announcing the ethnicity of the characters of the TV reports/interviews or guests of shows and programs and if it is announced - in what situations. The distribution of responses could be seen in Figure 6.

Fig. 6: Journalists (anchors, presenters, reporters) explicitly reporting the ethnicity of the person/persons presented in programs about Roma (in%)



Once again the National TV station-BNT- proved to be the most tolerant: two-fifths of programs related to Roma are devoted to presenting them as “some of us”, with a positive message; in one third of the TV materials the ethnicity of the characters is not reported/announced: these are reports about victims of disasters, people with health problems and children dropped out of school. Expectedly, ALPHA and SKAT always present Roma as posing problems, as criminals and as a threat for the country. Other private TV stations demonstrate highly ambivalent attitude towards Roma. In more than two-fifths of the programs the attitude is openly negative and the content of materials is similar to those of ALPHA and SKAT. Similarly to BNT, the journalists from bTV, NOVA and TV7 rarely or never report the ethnicity of the victims of natural disaster or of people in need of emergency assistance - medical, financial, social. The problem is that the ethnicity of perpetrators, criminal offenders, or violators of the public order still continues to be reported/announced in all media. Moreover, even when the identities of perpetrators are not proved, when people are only suspected- then ethnicity is reported (if the suspect or offender is a Roma). This is a violation of the journalistic ethics; This contributes to strengthening the stereotype that

“Roma are criminals”; reinforces negative attitudes towards Roma and increases the social distances of the entire Roma community.

3.4. The experts

One of the criteria for professionalism and objectivity of media products is the presentation of different perspectives on the discussed topics or issues, i.e. presenting at least one expert opinion on the issue and also providing an opportunity to the criticized or discussed people/person to present their arguments publicly. The monitored TV stations vary considerably with their levels of objectivity. ALPHA and SKAT TV most often present the "expertise" of their party leaders and MPs. When inviting experts such as mayors or representatives of the central institutions and/or their local branches, the journalists from these two TV stations recognize their expertise only when and as much as it coincides with their views and interpretations. They usually choose Roma interviewees, who are illiterate and highly marginalized. Thus the choice of experts or spokesmen of the "other perspective" is subordinate to the goal to convey the negative stereotypes and to justify the prejudices against Roma.

Private televisions, such as the monitored ones: bTV, NOVA and TV7 also often invite experts who are nationalist or share negative stereotypes about Roma such as: prof. Bozhidar Dimitrov, Alexander Karakachanov, Angel Dzhambazki, the pseudo-demographers like prof. Peter Ivanov and Iskren Veselinov etc. These experts are able to talk quietly and long to justify the correctness of the nationalist statements and to express the “dishonesty, corruption or lack of professionalism” of the people, who are promoting tolerance and advocating for addressing the social problems, not the ethnic or social relations. In this way these TV stations set the frame of discussions and wrap the liberal and democratic position with a spiral of silence, marginalize it and exclude it as a perspective deserving public attention.

It is noteworthy that when private televisions invite expert specialists such as prosecutors, judges, senior officials of the Interior Ministry and SANS, they rarely or never use definitions or assessments which are "politically incorrect", unlike the reporters and presenters. Since criminal offenses consist a large part of the programs about Roma in these televisions, it seems natural for the media to focus on the viewpoint of the security authorities, mainly the investigation and prosecution.

When these three private television stations present "Roma experts" or "representatives of the Roma community", they usually select individuals, who have only the capacity to reinforce

negative attitudes and stereotypes about the entire group, but not able to present the "different perspective" objectively. These are mostly current or former MPs with Roma origin (Tsvetelin Kanchev, Alexander Filippov, Alexander Metodiev), members of municipal councils or leaders of Roma organizations, who usually have a bad reputation in Bulgarian society because of proven or suspected corruption scandals, electoral fraud, related to vote-buying and so on. Moreover, journalists further reinforce the prejudice against "Roma representatives" with manipulative questions or statements, which remind the public that there are charges or suspicions against the "experts" and thus suggest that they should not be trusted. At the same time, these individuals are rarely able to articulate and formulate a point of view that is really different from the widely shared stereotypes. So, most often these invited Roma experts/representatives in practice consolidate the negative stereotypes about their community even more. The overall selection of Bulgarian experts and Roma experts or representatives is very unequal - Bulgarians are doctors, scientists, lawyers, prosecutors, judges, architects, school principals, ministers, deputy ministers, and heads of departments of national institutions or politicians. On the other side we see poorly educated people with problematic behavior. They are not able to change none of the existing negative stereotypes, but they can rather confirm and reinforce them even more.

The National television (BNT) demonstrates a higher level of professionalism in the selection of experts and invites more often experts who are able to articulate opposing viewpoints on some complex social problems and argue their statements. Although, this TV station has a smaller number of materials and programs about Roma compared to the rest of the monitored TV stations, the invited guests are nice, better prepared, more knowledgeable, more credible Roma as experts or representatives of the community.

4. Summary and conclusions

1. During the years of post-socialism the influence of electronic media (especially of television) for generating and formulating knowledge, stereotypes and attitudes towards Roma had a huge increase. This is due to the release from the communist party censorship, to the achieved degree of freedom of expression, the development of modern technologies, the changed societal situation in which direct contacts between Roma and non-Roma are extremely reduced.
2. Media from the second half of the 90s of the 20th century and up to the time of the survey have been always involved, along with politicians, in the so called "wrapping the spiral of silence" around the ideas for changing the type of the national state –from

ethnic (state of the ethnic Bulgarians who exercise all political power, in whose hands is concentrated the entire economic power and who impose their culture as a benchmark for national culture) into a civil state (a nation of equal citizens, united by common laws and common rights). In this way both politicians and media decreased the chances to implement a new civilizational choice and change of the model of the national state, and therefore decreased the chance to lower the risk of inter-ethnic problems, ethnic conflicts and ethnic minority mobilization.

3. To a large extent, the media, along with the politicians, keep reinforcing the ethnic nationalism as an ideology and practice, the ethnocentrism as the main attitude, consolidating the lower social status of minority ethnic communities, hampering equality and making it impossible to put the majority population and ethnic and religious minorities on an equal level, especially when it comes to the large minority communities and the Roma - in particular.
4. The electronic media (the monitored TV stations) typically reinforce the negative stereotypes, attitudes and prejudices against Roma and deepen the gap and social distance between the Roma community and the rest of the society through the choices of events and topics in which Roma are presented as "a problem or a threat" to the public: as the most significant issue of the country, as the agenda of the civil society and politicians.
5. The electronic media (the monitored TV stations) typically reinforce the negative stereotypes, attitudes and prejudices against Roma by the methods of media "framing" – focusing the news on the context of inter-ethnic relations and conflicts rather than solving real and significant societal problems.
6. Another way to reinforce stereotypes and prejudices against Roma is the constant repetition of identical negative events/deeds when presenting the entire community, a constant association of the Roma community with the same characteristics condemned by society: unwillingness to work; not paying taxes, bills and insurance; parasitism on public funds for education, health and social assistance; irresponsible parenting; criminality in all its diversity, brutality and ruthlessness; defiance and non-compliance with legal and moral norms of society; adherence to cultural patterns that have nothing to do with those of the macro-society, which pose a threat to society. In varying degrees, this has been done by all the monitored TV stations.
7. Throughout the duration of this research project there were a big number of programs strengthening the negative stereotypes and prejudices against the Roma in all the six

monitored TV stations. The most common and most popular method to do so is the generalization (certain cases are presented as typical for the entire group and all the negative characteristics- as a group characteristic of all its members). The pure form of generalizations from this type is mostly used in materials of SKAT TV and ALPHA TV, but they are also used by presenters and reporters of bTV, NOVA and TV7.

8. The ethnicity of the perpetrators of criminal offenses or violations of the public order is always reported in all the monitored TV stations, when they are Roma. Moreover, even when there are only suspects with no proves and real convictions, the ethnicity is reported if the suspect is a Roma. This is a violation of the journalistic ethics and it contributes to strengthening the stereotype that Roma are criminals; reinforces negative attitudes towards entire Roma community and increases the social gaps and distances.
9. TV journalists often select experts that strengthen nationalist and ethnocentric attitudes in Bulgarian society and the widespread negative stereotypes and attitudes against Roma. In presenting the crime news journalists give priority to the police point of view, but still the experts- senior officials of the Interior Ministry, prosecutors and others- keep in line with the politically correct tone, avoiding the ethnic generalizations in abigger extend compared to the journalists.
10. Negative stereotypes about Roma are also aggravated by the unequal selection of "representatives" of the two communities: on one hand we have top experts- Bulgarians, ministers and deputy ministers, doctors, scientists, lawyers, prosecutors, judges, architects, school principals, heads of departments of national institutions and politicians. On the other hand we see poorly educated people with problematic behavior. They are not able to change the existing negative stereotypes, but they can rather consolidate them.
11. When two nationalist and the three private TV stations present "Roma experts" or "representatives of the Roma community", they usually select people, who could only reinforce negative attitudes and stereotypes about the entire group, rather than presenting objectively the "different perspective." The National TV station (BNT) demonstrates a bigger level of professionalism in the selection of experts and invites experts who are able to articulate stronger viewpoints on complex social problems and provide arguments to their points. Although they have a smaller number of programs about Roma than any other television, they invite better prepared, more knowledgeable, more credible Roma as experts or representatives of the community.

12. The National Television BNT is the TV station which focused on the ethnicity of Bulgarian citizens to the lowest level and they aired smaller number of programs about Roma- only 36 for the entire period of the monitoring project. Most probably, the editors and journalists of TV relate the topic of ethnicity mainly to cultural differences. Therefore, many of their programs popularize the culture, holidays and rituals of different Roma subgroups in a positive way. Significant social problems or criminal records, in which people with Roma origin are involved, are usually presented professionally and they always refer to the opinion of different experts and invite Roma participants or experts, or witnesses of the discussed event/case/ issue.
13. Private TV stations are benefitting from only advertising, so the bigger number of people in their audience has an existential importance. In order to attract their public they try to keep making the programs and shows more interesting and more entertaining, therefore they prepare materials with violence and "exotic characters." The monitored news programs and shows include much more information on crimes and information from the press releases of the police compared to BNT. These TV stations prefer to present complex social problems in a simple and stereotyped way in order to attract the audience and also due to TV time constraints.
14. All the materials about Roma on the two extreme nationalist TV stations- SKAT and ALPHA are negative. The image of Roma, which they popularize is based on unfounded generalizations presenting the entire community as criminals, as a group, posing a serious threat to the economic and cultural development of the country, more and more - as a demographic threat. Their messages and suggestions for solving the problems are formulated in an extreme tone, but they are consistent and clear: Roma should be constantly under the control and pressure of the law enforcement authorities, institutions and civil society; more restrictions should be introduced on their access to medical services and make additional restrictions on the use of social services and benefits by Roma; Roma have to be expelled from the cities because they are noisy and pollute the green spaces amid the blocks of apartments; Roma have to be expelled from the villages because of their crimes and violations of the laws; and all those, who do not share this ideology or do not fulfill these suggestions are being declared as corrupt or as national traitors.

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