

SLOVAKIA'S ROMA POPULATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT: DOES PUBLIC TRANSPORT QUALITY MATTER?

Richard Hluško*, Marcel Horňák*, Zuzana Poláčková**

* Comenius University in Bratislava, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Department of Economic and Social Geography, Demography and Territorial Development, Ilkovičova 6, Bratislava, Slovakia, hlusko1@uniba.sk, marcel.hornak@uniba.sk

** Slovak Academy of Sciences, Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences, Šancová 56, Bratislava, Slovakia, polackova.zuzana@savba.sk

Slovakia's Roma population and unemployment: Does public transport quality matter?

Most of the Roma population in Slovakia have been reportedly facing poverty and social exclusion. Included in this, access to stable jobs has been one of the major issues. Mobility is considered as one of the key prerequisites ensuring access to the labour market. Due to the generally poor economic conditions of the majority of Roma households in Slovakia, public transport is expected to play an important role in Roma population's mobility as a cheap mode of transportation. The paper seeks to reveal the spatial relationship between public transport accessibility and quality, the concentration of the Roma ethnic population, and unemployment rate, thereby highlighting the most vulnerable municipalities in Slovakia. For this purpose, typology of municipalities based on the three mentioned indicators was carried out. Although the quality of public transportation services cannot be considered as the only factor of access to jobs, our intention is to point to the fact that, according to the analyses in the paper below, areas with a low quality of public transport in Slovakia largely correspond with regions of a high unemployment rate and high concentration of the Roma population.

Key words: unemployment, public transport serviceability, labour market, barriers, Roma population, Slovakia

INTRODUCTION

Slovakia is characterized by diverse ethnic groups, each with its unique cultural, historical, and social attributes. Among these, the Roma population has been historically marginalized, facing various forms of social exclusion and economic disparities (Džambazovič and Jurásková 2002). Social exclusion as one of the key objects of research is defined as a systematic process involving marginalization, isolation, and weakening of social connections, observable both at the individual and societal levels. It involves being deprived of participation in the regular flow of social life (Strobel 1996). Social exclusion results in restricted opportunities for engagement in societal life, social isolation, and disconnection from society (Džambazovič and Gerbery 2005), correlating with a spatial exclusion (Džambazovič 2007). In Slovakia, a segment of the Roma population residing in segregated settlements is identified as particularly susceptible to poverty, social exclusion, and discrimination (see e. g. Filadelfiová et al. 2006, Strategy ... 2011, Mušíňka and Kolesárová 2012, Rusnáková and Rochovská 2014, Rochovská and Rusnáková 2018, Kahanec et al. 2020, etc.). We agree with Zeman (2018) or Šatara et al. (2020) who claim that the Roma population's poor access to the labour market is one of the key factors of social exclusion and poverty of Roma in the country.

On the other hand, we believe that accessible public transport (PT) is one of the key factors of inclusiveness (see for example Bastiaanssen et al. 2022). Hence, researching how the accessibility and quality of PT services intersect with the experiences of the Roma population in accessing and sustaining on the labour market is the core of our research. PT is an important component of urban and rural infrastructure, influencing mobility, access to job opportunities and overall quality of life (see Marada and Květoň 2016 or Hernandez et al. 2020). To recognize the significance of the PT quality factor for the social exclusion of Roma in Slovakia, a comprehensive examination has been undertaken.

Our intention is to reveal the relationship between PT accessibility and quality and concentration of the Roma ethnic population in Slovakia in the context of labour market accessibility. Therefore, the main goal of the paper is to show the scale of the spatial relationship between the areas of low PT quality and accessibility and the areas where a high share of the Roma population combines with high unemployment rates at the level of municipalities. Also, our intention is to identify the most vulnerable municipalities from this aspect.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Spatial isolation within the municipalities and location in regions suffering with long-term high unemployment rate have been reported as a vicious combination for the Roma population's prospects to succeed at regional labour markets in Slovakia (Filadelfiová et al. 2006, Rusnáková and Rochovská 2014, Rusnáková and Rochovská 2016 and Šatara et al. 2020). Reportedly, conditions of the Roma population in many of Slovakia's municipalities have not been very supportive for their adaptation to the changing labour market in the country (Havířová and Šatara 2020, Kahanec et al. 2020, etc.).

On the other hand, the flexibility and mobility of the labour force seem to have been increasingly reported as inevitable factors for one's success in the labour market in global neoliberal capitalism (see for example Eamets and Jaakson 2014). The shift from earlier or rather traditional approaches point to geographical distance and commuting as important factors of labour market accessibility (such as Wachs et al. 1993, Levinson 1998 and Reggiani et al. 2011). Emphasizing the complexity of mobility due to globalization, transport systems improvement, the launch of virtual mobility (see e. g. Sheller and Urry 2006, McKenna and Richardson 2007, etc.) is evident. Bastos et al. (2021) explain that an approach to labour force mobility, or as they say 'concept of mobile labour' should include 'movements for labour (migrant trajectories, economic-induced displacements), movements as labour (highly mobile jobs), and movements of labour (labour-related geographical displacement and its different rhythms)' – Bastos et al. (2021, p. 155).

Focusing on the issue of the Roma population's unemployment in the country, we should rather apply a more traditional job accessibility concept (see Levinson 1998 and Reggiani et al. 2011). Simultaneously, respecting the low estimated motorisation rate of Roma households in Slovakia (due to their low incomes, see Rochovská and Rusnáková 2018 and Kahanec et al. 2020), we can assume that large part of the potential Roma labour force will be dependent on public transport (Hluško 2020). The PT accessibility concept has been applied in numerous studies (such as Polzin et al. 2002, Saghapour et al. 2016, Albacete et al. 2017, Saif et al.

2019, and many others). We agree with Geurs and Van Wee (2004) or Ribeiro et al. (2021) who recommend considering various components of transport accessibility, including walking distance to infrastructure, land-use and urban design features, travellers' capabilities, and subjective economic possibilities (such as income, car ownership, etc.), travel costs, and specifically public-transport scheduling and frequency. Inspired by Kenyon et al. (2002), Preston and Rajé (2007), Stanley and Lucas (2008), Ribeiro et al. (2021) and many others, we assume a very narrow relationship between PT accessibility (and/or quality) and social exclusion of Roma, specifically regarding their (poor) access to the labour market. In our previous research (see Hornák et al. 2023), a relationship between the micro-location of Roma settlements within municipalities and accessibility of PT infrastructure was revealed, proving the worst position of segregated Roma settlements (those spatially isolated from the rest of the municipality) in terms of PT availability. As Sari (2015), Marada and Květoň (2016), Bastiaanssen et al. (2020), or Hernandez et al. (2020) conclude, PT accessibility is closely related to labour market availability. We agree with Bastiaanssen et al. (2022, p. 317) who claim that 'providing better public transport job accessibility increases individual employment probabilities'. No similar systematic research has been carried out in Slovakia. A spatial relationship between the PT quality and accessibility and unemployment rate (indirectly indicating the availability of labour opportunities) has not recently been a subject of scientific research in Slovakia. Several studies (Mašek et al. 2015, Hornák et al. 2016, Brumerčíková and Buková 2020 and Székely and Novotný 2022) indirectly indicate the importance of Slovakia's PT system for employment and job accessibility. Yet, no specific focus has been placed on the relationship between spatial aspects of PT accessibility, labour opportunities and the Roma population's territorial distribution and concentration.

MARGINALIZED ROMA SETTLEMENTS IN SLOVAKIA: HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT AND LOW MOBILITY ISSUES

The multifaceted nature of poor access to the labour market for the segregated Roma population in Slovakia underscores the need for comprehensive interventions. Addressing stereotypes, improving educational opportunities, upgrading living conditions, enhancing mobility, and combating spatial remoteness are essential components of a holistic approach toward dismantling barriers and fostering inclusive economic participation within the Roma population.

The marginalized status of the segregated Roma population in Slovakia is linked to a confluence of socio-economic factors that collectively contribute to their poor access to the labour market. Discriminatory perceptions of the Roma as a homogeneous group with lower capabilities have led to systemic exclusion from employment opportunities (Kahanec et al. 2020). The EU SILC_MRK 2020 data points out that within 12 months prior to the survey, 23% of Roma men and 19% of Roma women experienced discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin when looking for work, in employment, when looking for housing, in healthcare, in education, when contacting the authorities or in services. The highest level of discrimination was registered when looking for a job (33% of respondents, see Markovič and Plachá 2021)

Education plays a pivotal role in this scenario, with the Roma population often facing substandard educational conditions. This educational deficit hinders their skills development but also perpetuates negative stereotypes, reinforcing a cycle of

limited opportunities to succeed in the labour market (Kahanec et al. 2020), accompanied by a frequent and often involuntary use of short-term and part-time contracts (Markovič and Plachá 2021). According to the EU_SILC_MRK 2020 data, the employment rate of Roma reached 23% compared to the general population, where it reached 76%. The differences appear also with secondary level of education (ISCED 3 to 4), where the Roma employment rate is 42% compared to the national average of 77%.

The spatial remoteness of numerous Roma settlements also contributes to their economic isolation. Geographical segregation leads to a lack of proximity to economic centres, exacerbating challenges related to job availability and economic integration. According to the Atlas of Roma Communities (2019), there are 705 municipalities in Slovakia where Roma settlements are located. The total number of Roma settlements is 1,052, and these are divided into three categories (according to their micro-location characteristics):

- settlement within the municipality (356 settlements, i.e. 34% of the total number),
- settlement at margin of the municipality (502 settlements, i.e. 48%),
- settlement outside the municipality – segregated (194 settlements, i.e. 18%).

For the purpose of the Atlas of Roma Communities (2019), the term Roma settlement is understood as an integral part of a village/town/city, such as a street or a cluster of dwellings, which is inhabited by at least approximately 20 – 25 Roma inhabitants, and which is referred to in the municipality as ‘a Roma settlement’ or a ‘Roma colony’. The data from the Atlas of Roma Communities (2019) about walking distances to services in Roma settlements indicates that the worst accessibility to various services (namely secondary school, high school, gynaecologist clinic and also railway stations) is generally observed in Roma settlements located in segregated sites (spatially partly or completely separated).

In an effort to eliminate barriers related to transport to work, standard employment service policies implemented in OECD countries include measures to help commuters get to work. In Slovakia, disadvantaged jobseekers registered in the national job seekers registry for three months or longer can apply for ‘a commuting allowance’ (Section 53 of the Act 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services). This is paid monthly for 6 months and is intended to cover part of the travel expenses for commuting. In 2022, the allowance was paid to 17,813 participants (UPSVaR 2023b). Some evaluations of the allowance confirm the positive impact of the allowance on job retention (Dulíková et al. 2022), and on reducing commuting costs, however, in cases of poor transport service, low accessibility to PT or the absence of the possibility to use one’s own car, the allowance is irrelevant.

In cases where there is no PT and employers are willing to offer their own transport services to employees, the Employment Services Act has in the past offered employers the possibility to apply for a commuting allowance, too. Although a number of large companies offer transport for their employees by company buses, this allowance is rarely used. In 2019, only two employers were supported by a total of EUR 31,697. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the payment of the allowance was suspended on 1 April 2020 and has not been resumed since (UPSVaR 2023b). Thus, it seems that active labour market policies to support commuting do exist in Slovakia, but they are largely inaccessible to people from Roma settlements.

DATA AND METHODS

Our research has been focused on PT deficits as one of the potential barriers in access to the labour market for the Roma population. In the theoretical part, the study discusses the complex issue of Roma unemployment and simultaneously contextualizes the accessibility of PT and its impact on various groups of the population e.g. the unemployed population, low-income population or marginalized Roma population. Therefore, we focus on three key indicators that we comprehensively evaluate within the context of Slovakia:

- unemployment rate,
- Roma population ratio,
- PT serviceability (PTS).

The unemployment rate can be described as share of registered job seekers (data obtained from UPSVaR 2023a) and economic active population (data obtained from SOSR 2023). The second indicator represents the share of the Roma population in the total population within a municipality. It should be noted that the number of Roma is not directly reported in the Atlas of Roma Communities (2019) which records only percentage intervals of the Roma population's share in Slovak municipalities. Therefore, we calculated the mean values representing mid-values of these intervals. Specifically for Bratislava city districts and Košice city districts the citywide average values were used. The last indicator applied here is PT serviceability (Rodríguez-Núñez and García-Palomares 2014) represented by the sum of weighted average of regional bus and train services. To measure public transport serviceability (PTS), the number of services at individual stops of regional bus and railway transport was utilized, considering the weight of each stop within a municipality as the percentage of the total network of stops within the municipality (Fig. 1). This was done, in order to take into account a certain centrality of some stops of regional bus transport in Slovak municipalities. It has been done also within the context of railway transportation. The minimum value of PT serviceability is 0, as there are municipalities in Slovakia without railway and regional bus transport services (some of them are served by urban transport system). The maximum value of PTS reaches the value of 443.14. PTS uses the following formula:

$$PTS = \bar{x}_{ib} + \bar{x}_{ir} ,$$

$$\bar{x}_{ib} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n x_{ibj} \cdot w_{ibj}}{\sum_{i=1}^n w_{ibj}} , \text{ where } w_{ibj} = \frac{x_{ibj}}{\sum_{i=1}^n x_{ibj}} ,$$

$\bar{x}_{ib}$ = weighted average of regional bus services at municipality i ,

x_{ibj} = number of services of regional bus at stop/station bj at municipality i ,

w_{ibj} = weight of regional bus at stop/station bj at municipality i .

$$\bar{x}_{ir} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n x_{irj} \cdot w_{irj}}{\sum_{i=1}^n w_{irj}} , \text{ where } w_{irj} = \frac{x_{irj}}{\sum_{i=1}^n x_{irj}} ,$$

$\bar{x}_{ir}$ = weighted average of railway services at municipality i ,

x_{irj} = number of services of railway stop/station rj at municipality i ,

w_{irj} = weight of railway stop/station rj at municipality i .

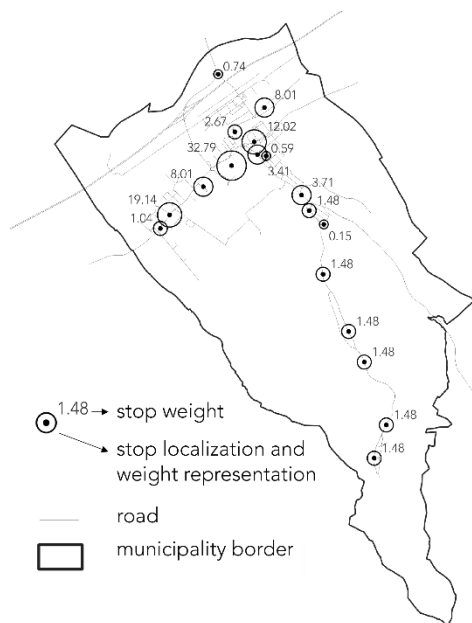


Fig. 1. The proportion (weight) of individual stops of regional bus services in a municipality (an illustrative example of Ilava town)

Source: authors' calculations and elaboration based on data from ÚPSVaR (2023a), ÚGKK (2021) and CIS CP (2023).

The number of regional bus services was obtained from the database of CIS CP (2023). The railway transport services database was obtained from the GTFS (General Transit Feed Specification) data source published by ZSSK via ŽSR (Railway Company Slovakia, Railways of the Slovak Republic), the railway infrastructure manager and operator. Data of the number of PT services refer to the turn of 2021 and 2022. Workday and weekend regimes of PT were analysed for our purposes. Weekend PT services are taken into account as Slovakia has high rates of shift work, weekend work and night work compared to other countries, which is particularly relevant for people with a low education (EUROFOUND 2022).

In our paper, the above-described variables were approached from the following perspectives:

- 1) Gaining the basic spatial picture of how the values of the three key input indicators (unemployment rate, share of Roma population and PTS) are distributed in the territory of Slovakia at the level of municipalities. In this step, a general categorisation of municipalities was carried out by spatial analysis.
- 2) Identification of the most vulnerable municipalities where high unemployment rates and a high share of the Roma population combine with poor PTS.

For the first approach, a method of typology was applied. As a source of spatial data the map database of ZBGIS® was used (ÜGKK 2021). Based on the above-

mentioned indicators, we proceeded as follows: for each indicator, the arithmetic mean was calculated, for each municipality and indicator, an evaluation was assigned based on whether the indicators' values reached above (expressed as “+” sign) or below (“-“ sign) the national average value, and the evaluation categories were created (see Fig. 2). Such a typology enabled us to generate a more detailed categorization of municipalities to identify the most vulnerable communities/ location.

In the following step, the indicators' values were divided into five intervals. Unemployment rates and the Roma population share were divided using the natural breaks method and then rounded to pretty breaks. PT serviceability was divided into intervals based on the number of departed PT direct services e.g. the 5th interval represents 0.00 – 9.00 services which means 1 direct PT service per 2 hours (an 18-hour day was taken into account). Based on this, we were able to filter out municipalities that performed the worst in terms of unemployment, the proportion of the Roma population, and PT serviceability (referring to the 5th interval in Tab. 1).

Then we focused on municipalities with a combination of an unemployment rate above 15.01% and a Roma population share more than 45.01%. We believe that municipalities with a combination of high values of unemployment rates and Roma population share deserve a deeper investigation in terms of PT serviceability.

Tab. 1. Municipalities selection criteria within analysed indicator

	Unemployment rate	Roma population share	Public transport serviceability
1st interval	0 % – 5.00 %	0 % – 10.00 %	100.01 – 443.14
2nd interval	5.01 % – 10.00 %	10.01 % – 25.00 %	40.01 – 100.00
3rd interval	10.01 % – 15.00 %	25.01 % – 45.00 %	18.01 – 40.00
4th interval	15.01 % – 25.00 %	45.01 % – 65.00 %	9.01 – 18.00
5th interval	25.01 % – 51.00 %	65.01 % – 100.00 %	0.00 – 9.00

Source: authors' calculations and elaboration based on data from Atlas of Roma Communities (2019), ÚPSVaR (2023a) and CIS CP (2023).

RESULTS

Typology of municipalities

Our first approach reveals a significant polarization of Slovakia in the context of spatial distribution of values describing employment, PT serviceability, and the proportion of the Roma population (Fig. 2). The typology of municipalities helped us to identify those where there is a relatively high rate of unemployment, poor quality of PT, and a relatively high percentage of the Roma population.

Municipalities in shades of red in Fig. 2 are considered as those with more or less undercapacious PT. Not surprisingly, the municipalities with above-average unemployment rates, above-average share of Roma population and below-average values of PTS (category A in Fig. 2) are mostly located in districts with long-term high unemployment rates and poverty (such as Rimavská Sobota, Rožňava, Gelnica, Lučenec, Revúca and others, see for example Švecová and Rajčáková 2013,

Michálek 2016 and Korec et al. 2022). Fig. 3 supports the above-mentioned facts illustrating the worst PTS levels in municipalities with the highest share of Roma population.

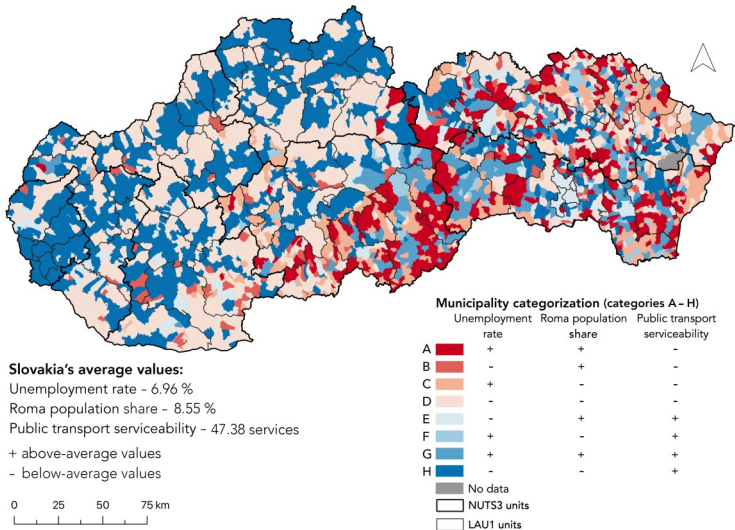


Fig. 2. Spatial distribution of the values of selected indicators in Slovakia at the level of municipalities

Source: authors' calculations and elaboration based on data from Atlas of Roma Communities (2019), ÚPSVaR (2023a), CIS CP (2023) and ÚGKK (2021).

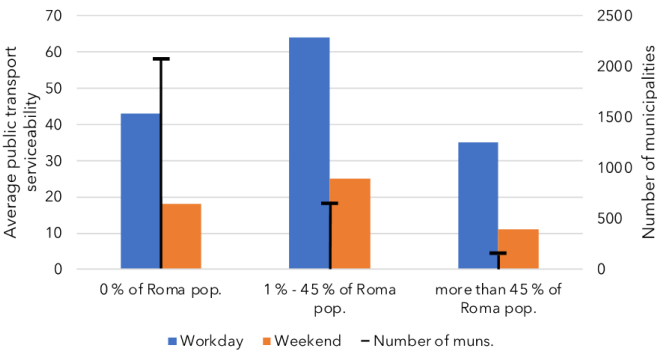


Fig. 3. Public transport serviceability in the municipalities of Slovakia from the Roma population share perspective

Source: authors' calculations and elaboration based on data from the Atlas of Roma Communities (2019), and CIS CP (2023).

Identification of the most vulnerable municipalities

A final detailed analysis has focused on 158 municipalities that were selected based on the featured selection criteria (see Tab. 1, the highlighted 4th and 5th intervals). Out of these, 5 municipalities show more than 100 direct PT services,

three of these are also served by railway transport. As many as 125 municipalities show more than 18 PT services per day.

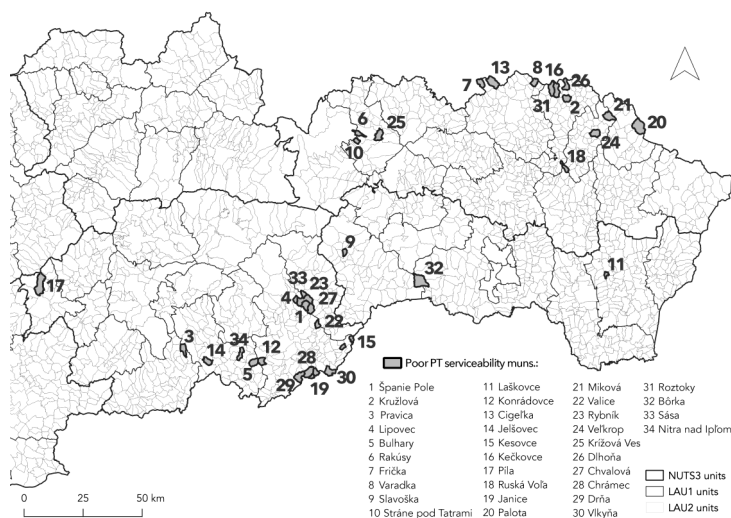


Fig. 4. Identification of the most vulnerable municipalities with high unemployment rates, high share of Roma population and poor PT serviceability

Source: authors' calculations and elaboration based on data from the Atlas of Roma Communities (2019), ÚGKK (2021) and CIS CP (2023).

Within the group of 158 municipalities selected in the previous step, we identified 34 municipalities with fewer than 18 direct PT services, indicating a relatively poor PTS (see Fig. 4), with only one direct service per hour. Most of these municipalities are situated near borders of the administrative units (regions or districts) and some of them are located at state borders. They typically represent endpoints on transport lines, located in valleys surrounded by mountainous environment. The administrative borders (both of self-governing regions and districts) often represent the boundaries of operational territories serviced by regional bus operators. Conversely, some of these municipalities lie in the hinterland of larger cities or towns, such as Bulhary located close to Filákov, Jelšovec and Nitra nad Ipľom close to Lučenec, Krížová Ves close to Spišská Belá, or Stráne pod Tatrami near Kežmarok. Nevertheless, the analysis indicates poor PT accessibility within their territory. In total, these 34 municipalities have 507 inhabitants on average, and 17,243 in total (as of 2022). From the perspective of age structure, these can be considered as relatively young. The population age structure analysis shows that almost 32.54% of the population is younger than 15 years. This is likely related to the relatively high birth rate among the Roma population (Veselovská and Pirová 2014, Szabo et al. 2021 and Šprocha 2023). Only 6.73% of the residents of these municipalities were older than 65 years. More than 60.73% of the population in these 34 municipalities is economically active (age group of 15 – 64 years, cca 10,200 residents in total). However, out of this population group, 26.63% are registered as job seekers (more than 3,000 residents). In the context of our selection criteria, we can say that Roma residents within these municipalities are possibly affected by the issue of inadequate PT quality in terms of accessing the labour mar-

ket. It also indicates that a relatively large number of people must face issues related to the accessibility/serviceability of PT (mainly when considering the pre-productive age and post-productive age population groups and job seekers).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We are well aware of the complexity of the Roma population's social exclusion issue in the Slovak Republic. There are multiple barriers leading to a low employment rate throughout the Roma population, including their general low education rate, racism at labour market, low mobility, underdeveloped regional labour markets, etc. (Radičová 2001, Džambazovič and Jurásková 2002, Rusnáková and Rochovská 2016, etc.). We are aware that ignoring all other factors is misleading and this is probably the most serious limitation of our study. However, we believe that accessibility and the quality of PT is among the key elements that should be taken into consideration when examining the reasons for unemployment in Slovakia, where many regional labour markets are underdeveloped, hence high inter-regional mobility of labour force is expected. We must emphasize that our analysis of PTS (representing general accessibility and quality of PT) at the level of municipalities may be too general to show local specifics (cf Horňák et al. 2023). It is also worth mentioning that the data on the Roma population are obtained from the Atlas of Roma Communities (2019). These are, however, estimates made by experts for purposes of the Atlas and are not the results of a population census.

Therefore, our ambition was to show the pure fact, that Slovakia's municipalities where high unemployment rate is combined with a high proportion of the Roma population are facing a generally lower quality of PT serviceability compared to the rest of the country. This principal finding was approved also by a control table (Tab. 2) with the distribution of values of both average unemployment rate and average Roma population share in municipalities grouped by the PTS values. Our findings confirm the relationship between the unemployment rate and the quality of transport services. However, the Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) indicates some results (Tab. 3). Weak negative linear correlation between PTS and the unemployment rate at the level of Slovak municipalities has been observed, as well as between the PTS and the Roma population share. This suggests that improving PT quality increases labour market accessibility and it could potentially decrease the unemployment rate. Additionally, it implies that a higher quality PT is present in municipalities with a lower representation of the Roma population.

Tab. 2. Average registered unemployment rate and Roma population's share values distribution by PTS value categories (at the level of Slovak municipalities)

	Average PTS values	Average unemployment rate values	Average Roma pop. share values
1st interval	100.01 – 443.14	4.93%	6.18%
2nd interval	40.01 – 100.00	6.15%	8.62%
3rd interval	18.01 – 40.00	7.34%	8.90%
4th interval	9.01 – 18.00	8.50%	8.31%
5th interval	0.00 – 9.00	10.01%	10.64%

Source: authors' calculations and elaboration based on data from the Atlas of Roma Communities (2019), UPSVaR (2023a) and CIS CP (2023).

Self-governing regions responsible for regional bus PT as well as central state authorities controlling the passenger railway transport should pay more attention to vulnerable regions when creating or updating the policies aimed at PT capacities. However, the policy documents (see for example Prešovský samosprávny kraj 2020) used by regional authorities to set up PT capacities based on available financial budgets do not respect the specific social conditions of municipalities with a high share the population who are Roma. These documents also lack any reference to micro-location specifics of segregated Roma settlements positioned outside municipalities and therefore having very poor access to PT infrastructure (as confirmed by Horňák et al. 2023). Also, the commuting allowances implemented within the active labour market policies (under Act 5/2004 Coll, on Employment Services) cannot work properly without sufficient mobility opportunities and without PT adopted to specific needs of commuters from Roma settlements facing low individual mobility opportunities. Therefore, the regional authorities should increase their sensitivity to regions with high unemployment and a high share of the population who are Roma when planning the PT capacities, considering the high share of the Roma populations' productive component. The frequency of PT services in some regions can be increased without increasing the overall capacities (for example by operating minibuses instead of standard buses). This would also help the national authorities to distribute a commuting allowance more efficiently.

Tab. 3. Pearson's correlation coefficient values of analysed indicators (at the level of Slovak municipalities)

Public transport serviceability	1.000		
Unemployment rate	-0.178	1.000	
Roma population share	-0.051	0.726	1.000
	Public transport serviceability	Unemployment rate	Roma population share

Source: authors' calculations and elaboration based on data from the Atlas of Roma Communities (2019), ÚPSVaR (2023a) and CIS CP (2023).

The main message emerging from our research is that for many people, and for the Roma in particular, participation in the labour market is made more difficult, by among other factors, poor transport services that make commuting to work impossible. Unsurprisingly, poor transport services particularly affect regions that suffer from a lack of local job opportunities, so people are forced to travel for work. These people find themselves in the absurd situation where they might want to work, but their possibilities to commute to work are very limited. Our work does not examine other variables that affect labour market entry and retention, and critics may argue that there is no need to increase the number of PT services or to adjust the PT schedules to standard working hours in localities with high unemployment rates. These arguments get us into a chicken-or-egg debate. However, if Slovakia wants to overcome the high level of long-term unemployment, in addition to the traditional investments in active labour market policy measures, attention should also be paid to strengthening the quality of PT, despite the risk that the positive effects of better transport services on the employment rate may only become apparent in the long term.

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Richard Hluško, Marcel Horňák, Zuzana Poláčková

RÓMSKA POPULÁCIA A NEZAMESTNANOSŤ NA SLOVENSKU: ZÁLEŽÍ NA KVALITE VEREJNEJ DOPRAVY?

Jednou z dimenzií chudoby a sociálneho vylúčenia Rómov na Slovensku je problematický prístup k stabilným pracovným miestam. Dostupnosť práce pre Rómov nie je len otázkou ich vzdelanostnej úrovne či diskriminácie. Za dôležitý predpoklad dostupnosti pracovného trhu sa považuje aj mobilita. Vzhľadom na všeobecne zlé ekonomické podmienky väčšiny rómskych domácností na Slovensku sa predpokladá, že verejná doprava bude zohrávať dôležitú úlohu v mobilite rómskej populácie ako lacný spôsob dopravy. Zámerom príspevku bolo poukázať na skutočnosť, že územia s nízkou kvalitou verejnej dopravy na Slovensku do značnej miery zodpovedajú regiónom s vysokou mierou nezamestnanosti a vysokou koncentráciou rómskeho obyvateľstva. Hlavným cieľom bolo odhaliť vzťah medzi územiami s nízkou kvalitou a zlou dostupnosťou verejnej dopravy a oblasťami, kde sa vysoký podiel rómskej populácie spája s vysokou mierou nezamestnanosti na úrovni obcí. Zároveň sme sa snažili identifikovať z tohto pohľadu najzraniteľnejšie obce s vysokým podielom Rómov.

V zmysle nášho zámeru výsledky naznačujú výraznú polarizáciu územia Slovenska. Potvrdilo sa, že obce s nadpriemernou mierou nezamestnanosti, nadpriemerným podielom rómskeho obyvateľstva a podpriemernou kvalitou obslužnosti verejnou dopravou sa väčšinou nachádzajú v okresoch s dlhodobou vysokou mierou nezamestnanosti a chudobou. Do veľkej miery sa obce s najhoršou úrovňou verejnej dopravy zhodujú s obcami s vysokým podielom rómskeho obyvateľstva. Zároveň bolo potvrdené, že obce s vysokým podielom rómskeho obyvateľstva sa vyznačujú horšou úrovňou verejnej dopravy. Kategorizácia obcí nám pomohla identifikovať tie, kde je relatívne vysoké percento nezamestnanosti, nízka kvalita verejnej dopravy a relatívne vysoké percento rómskeho obyvateľstva. V intenciách sledovaných indikátorov sme identifikovali 34 problematických obcí, ktoré mali nízku kvalitu verejnej dopravy predstavujúcu menej ako 18 priamych spojov verejnej dopravy denne a ktoré sme následne zanalyzovali.

Hlavným posolstvom vyplývajúcim z našej štúdie je, že znevýhodneným komunitám komplikuje účasť na trhu práce okrem iných faktorov zlá dopravná obslužnosť znemožňujúca dochádzanie za prácou. Nie je prekvapením, že zlé dopravné služby postihujú najmä regióny, ktoré trpia nedostatkom miestnych pracovných príležitostí, takže ľudia sú nútení za prácou cestovať. Títo ľudia sa ocitli v absurdnej situácii, keď by možno chceli pracovať, no ich možnosti dochádzať za prácou sú veľmi obmedzené. V prostredí s nedostatočne rozvinutou verejnou dopravou nie sú účinné ani nástroje na podporu dochádzky za prácou.



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