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## Primary and secondary school students' knowledge about Roma in the light of a questionnaire survey

*Translated by Dóra Babilai*

We carried out our research in scope of the research tender of Henrik Wlislöcki Student College (*szakkollégium*). The executors of research are Lilla Laboda, Georgina Laboda, Bernadett Tóth, students at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Pécs (PTE), and Krisztián Kőszegi, student of the Faculty of Sciences at PTE.

The purpose of our research is to become acquainted with primary and secondary school students' knowledge concerning Roma, how they think about them and what picture they have developed about Gypsies. We chose the questionnaire survey as our research method so that we can collect the necessary information in the most accurate way. We conducted our research in a primary and secondary school in Pécs with a mostly homogenous composition of students, where both primary and secondary school students were studying. During the survey, we had our questionnaire filled out in two fifth-grade and two tenth-grade classes, which involved a total of 78 persons. In the beginning of our research, we assumed that primary school students are not aware of the concept of Gypsies and they have little and inaccurate information, while secondary school students' knowledge is based on stereotypes. With our study results we intend to draw attention to the need of basic knowledge concerning the Gypsies among primary school students; without this understanding, they have merely knowledge based on stereotypes by the time they reach secondary school years. This, in turn, contributes to the spread of negative image formed about Gypsies.

We began our research with assessing pertinent scholarly literature. Then, we wrote the questionnaire. At this point, we had a better idea what we intended to ask in the questionnaire. We studied simultaneously the knowledge of students about Gypsies and what opinion students have of them. There were 12 questions included in the questionnaire, of which five were open-ended and the last one required detailed explanation. Getting in touch with the school was initially difficult, but they eventually welcomed us. Then we brought the prepared questionnaires and consent forms for parents, as the participants of the survey were not 18 years old yet. We visited the school two other times: once to question the two fifth-grade classes and the next time the two tenth-grade classes. In the end, our task was to evaluate the questionnaire. We wondered what the students that belong to different nationalities know and think about Gypsies. That was precisely the purpose of the second part of our questionnaire, where students could write down with which nationality they identify. Since we were interested whether the primary school students know basic information concerning Gypsies,

we asked whether there is a Gypsy anthem, whether they know Gypsy trades, or if they could point out the Gypsy flag. We also asked about the meaning of a few Gypsy words, such as *dikh* or *more*, for example. The 11<sup>th</sup> question was outside of the students' comfort zone, which related to objective opinions. In the 12<sup>th</sup> question it became clear what the present generation knows, thinks about Gypsies, when answering the following question: What comes to your mind about the word Gypsy? Answering this question, they described Gypsies practically with negative attributes only, often adding that "there are good ones too." After evaluating the questionnaires our hypothesis was justified. As a reflection on that, we propose that as early as in the primary school, information on the history and culture of Gypsies should be included in the curriculum. Our research also justifies the conclusions of scholarly literature on the topic (Ladányi-Szelényi, 1997; Ligeti, 2006).

## References

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