EU funding in Romania: Do Roma live in vulnerable areas?

Introduction

As part of the Roma Decade of Inclusion, several Eastern and Central European countries voluntarily agreed to create comprehensive National Roma Integrations Strategies (NRIS) addressing four categories of Roma integration: health, education, employment, and housing. Although the European Union funds almost the entire cost of education, access to running water, indoor bathrooms and kitchens, central heating, sewerage, and household size. Each of the seven attributes were given rankings based on their jenks (natural breaks), with five representing the most vulnerable and one the least vulnerable municipalities. Once all attributes were ranked, a map was created to show the aggregate vulnerability of all municipalities. Another map provided the percentage of Roma in each municipality. Lastly, the large map joins the municipalities that contained both a substantial Roma population—deemed at least ten percent of the population—with the general level of vulnerability for those municipalities. The least vulnerable category includes both municipalities with a Roma population of less than ten percent and municipalities with negligible vulnerabilities.

Methodology

This project mapped vulnerability in Romania by the following attributes: education, access to running water, indoor bathrooms and kitchens, central heating, sewerage, and household size. Each of the seven attributes were given rankings based on their jenks (natural breaks), with five representing the most vulnerable and one the least vulnerable municipalities. Once all attributes were ranked, a map was created to show the aggregate vulnerability of all municipalities. Another map provided the percentage of Roma in each municipality. Lastly, the large map joins the municipalities that contained both a substantial Roma population—deemed at least ten percent of the population—with the general level of vulnerability for those municipalities. The least vulnerable category includes both municipalities with a Roma population of less than ten percent and municipalities with negligible vulnerabilities.

Conclusion

The areas of vulnerability exist overwhelmingly in the Western and Southern part of Romania, whereas the Roma population lies mainly in the northwest of the country. The final map provides an alternative framework for understanding Roma vulnerability. Differences between this map and the aggregate vulnerability map means these funds would still help vulnerable populations. However, such actions suggest the government stands a higher chance of being susceptible to corruption and vote buying from these populations. Furthermore, such actions build increased animosity between the Roma and non-Roma in Romania as the latter believe the former are getting extra help, when in reality they are being further marginalized.

Limitations

Since the most vulnerable groups have a tendency to live in the northwest and southwest of the country, any Roma in these regions are more likely to be shown as vulnerable as opposed to Roma living in the rest of the country. Particularly, in the northwest part of the country, Roma might not show up as vulnerable since a population of ten percent living below the poverty level would be absorbed into a larger population living above the national average. Therefore, the maps serves as a good indicator of where the Roma live, with potential vulnerabilities. Depending on the Roma population within each municipality, the Roma vulnerability might be vastly different. The government should engage with local authorities to receive a clearer picture of Roma living conditions in individual municipalities. Given the typical level of spatial exclusion the Roma experience, a group living on the margins of a richer municipality would be well known to the community. The maps take into consideration rural regions, the areas most likely to suffer from spatial exclusion.

Sources:

1. Municipalities shapefile from M drive: M:\World\GfK\Europe\romania\add\on\romania municipalities.shp
2. Cities over 100,000 shapefile from M drive:M:\World\GfK\Europe\romania\add\on\romania cities 100k.shp

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