About the author:

Ilius Rostas is the Chair of Romani Studies/Assistant Professor at Central European University, Budapest. He was an Affiliated Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies at CEU, Senior Fellow of the Open Society Foundations’ Roma Initiatives Office, and Visiting Lecturer at Corvinus University, Budapest. He has worked for the Open Society Foundations, the European Roma Rights Centre, and the Government of Romania and served as a consultant for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the World Bank, the European Commission, and the Roma Education Fund. Rostas is the editor of “Ten Years After: A History of Roma School Desegregation in Central and Eastern Europe” (CEU Press, 2012) and in 2011 he published Social Inclusion or Exclusion: The Rights of Persons Living with HIV in Romania (Carlier Publishing, 2011). He is the author of several articles and book chapters on Roma participation, Romani identity, Roma school desegregation, the Romani movement, and civil society.

Despite an increase in the number of EU and government initiatives in their favor, the situation of Roma in Europe has only worsened. This book explores the many misconceptions, misinterpretations, and biases that have led to this failure. For Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Romania, Rostas shows how policy makers in each country mishandled already confused EU policy, from failing to define “Roma” to not having anyone to evaluate their own progress. Rostas further argues that the alleged successes of these policies were the product of poor information and sometimes outright deceptions. Exposing these topics, among them school segregation and political representation, the author shows how often the so-called “success” of Roma policies can be fabricated and simply pave the way for further problems.

Rostas maintains that when the EU’s Framework for Roma program comes to an end in 2020, there must be a fundamental shift in policy for there to be any real improvement for Roma. Policy makers will have to address Roma issues not only in terms of poverty and social exclusion but also in terms of the particular nature of Romani ethnic identity. This shift requires recognizing Roma as a “politically marginal minority” and reimagining the power dynamics of local government to ensure that when the new era of Roma policy begins Roma themselves will have a voice in its formulation.