

Brigitta Vadász, who submitted the following interview to Duj Džene – Two Together, was a temporary member of our participatory ethnographic project. Alongside her paid employment in the government-sponsored public work scheme, she volunteers as a community organiser through one of the evangelical churches active in the bilingual Roma neighbourhood. She participated in the [roundtable discussion](#) organised by our research group in December 2024 with local government representatives, employers, and education leaders; Brigitta Vadász represented Roma women's issues and voice in the debate.

Brigitta Vadász: There is a way out

Translated from the Hungarian by Mihály Köntös

English editing on Eszter Tarsoly's translation seminars by Hayley Anderson, Joe Bates, Richard Hayward, Sára Szakál, and Simon Watson

The person I interviewed started a family early. And when the topic of livelihood came up, the picture that emerged was that there was a way out of even the most difficult situations. She used to struggle to make ends meet and her parents helped her to get by. But now she is working and everything has come together in terms of livelihood.

Tell me about your life, how did it all start?

I grew up in a Roma neighbourhood in a loving family with four siblings. My parents always tried to improve our circumstances, so my father worked a lot as a bricklayer and he still works in this field today. I was brought up in a family of musicians, and it gave me great pleasure when the family got together and played music and danced. The joy spread, the neighbours would come over, and we all had a good time. When I was 14, we moved out of the Roma neighbourhood, which we were very happy about. I had big dreams of becoming a hairdresser after finishing primary school and I did start the course, but because I was the only Roma in the class, I was ostracized, didn't fit in, and left school.

Why did you want to become a hairdresser?

I used to dye and braid the hair of many girls in the area. And the feedback I got was that I should continue. They told me I should train so that they would have a hairdresser in the Roma neighbourhood.

What did you like about it?

That I could create different hairstyles and bring joy to others.

What was it like when you were ostracized by your classmates?

It was very bad, I was disappointed and a dream broke inside me. I never foresaw this, and unfortunately, I experienced racial discrimination first hand.

Why did this happen?

I think there was a lot of racial discrimination at that time. It is completely different today, and I am glad that my children haven't had to live through this.

If this happened to your child, what advice would you give them?

First of all, I would let them know that they are important and valuable people. And if there are some who are not welcoming, they shouldn't be discouraged. Because unfortunately, that's the way things are in this world. They must stand their ground, and they're there to learn, because it is learning that will help them get ahead in life.

Why do you see things differently today?

As the years went by, I've seen many things, and I've learned from my mistakes.

What has changed?

My way of thinking.

How has your faith changed you?

I had a personal relationship with the presence of God, and I knew that He was always with me. The Bible is a guide for me, and I try to do as is written.

What experience do your children have in their studies?

Unfortunately, my eldest son hasn't learnt a trade, but he is currently working in a grocery store and studying for his high school diploma. Three of my older daughters graduated as women's dressmakers. My middle daughter is currently graduating from high school. My youngest is finishing eighth grade and has applied for admission to law enforcement school.

When is motherhood too early?

I can tell you from experience that giving birth at the age of sixteen is very early. I was still a child when I gave birth. A child was given a child. Learning should always come first, as the foundations for the future must be laid. That's what I teach my children, and they accept it.

Do you think it's wrong or even a sin to be in this situation?

It's not a sin, but it is not right. I believe that giving birth early can easily lead to a reckless, hopeless future. Without my parents, we would have been lost in this big world. Starting a family early is not at all a good thing. Life is full of challenges, and you must be able to cope. I consider it important to be able to love each other, because what we give is what we get back. Livelihood is a topic that plays a vital role in everyone's life. Livelihood has foundations, and if we build good foundations, we will be able to manage things more easily. For example, choosing a decent occupation, education, a well-paying job. This is where many people get it wrong by not thinking about life the right way and taking things too easy. They start a family too young. They leave education behind, and then comes a relationship, possibly followed by a baby soon after. This makes it harder for them to find a job. Love found me, too, and we moved in together very quickly; something my parents were not happy about. But after the baby came, they accepted my situation. We got married when I was sixteen. We have one son and four daughters, who were brought up with the help of my parents as we lived with them. It was also my parents who helped us buy a house. After that, my husband and I could raise

our children in a separate house. Our life became truly complete when we came to know the Lord Jesus and became Christians. Today, I see things differently. My children go to school, and some of them have received a diploma. My son works, and I have completed a course in social care and nursing. I worked as a social worker, but I had to quit because of my health condition. Then I worked as a cleaner in a school for five years. In the meantime, I became a certified nursery assistant and, thank God, today I still work in a nursery. I want to tell young people who started motherhood early that there is a way out, you can get back on your feet, you just need to have a will to break out and not get stuck. And of course, anything is possible for someone who HAS FAITH.