ROMA CHILDREN IN "SPECIAL EDUCATION" IN SERBIA:

overrepresentation, underachievement, and impact on life

Research on schools and classes for children with developmental difficulties

OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE

2010

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Open Society Institute
New York – London – Budapest

Published by

OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE

Október 6. u. 12.
H-1051 Budapest
Hungary

400 West 59th Street
New York, NY 10019
USA

Cover Photograph by Teodora Kulman

Website
<www.soros.org>

Printed in Budapest, Hungary, 2010
Design & Layout by Q.E.D. Publishing

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Christina McDonald and Katy Negrin conceptualized this research for the EUMAP program of the Open Society Institute. Its original conception was the result of discussions with the Roma Education Fund, in order to have comparative data on several countries in Central and Southeast Europe where the representation of Roma in special schools is a problem.

The parameters of the research were designed by Christina McDonald, Katy Negrin, and Milena Mihajlović (director of the CIP-Center for Interactive Pedagogy of Belgrade, Republic of Serbia). Milena Mihajlović oversaw the entire research in Serbia. Her tireless efforts and dedication to creating a robust report that would seriously contribute to the improvement of education for Roma in Serbia is very much appreciated. We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of CIP-Centre for Interactive Pedagogy for their professional support and technical assistance during this research project.

Milena Mihajlović and Christina McDonald prepared the research for publication. Katy Negrin acted as external and peer reviewer for the final draft of this report; her input is gratefully appreciated.

The field researchers who undertook data collection in schools, performed interviews, and undertook focus groups are (in alphabetical order): Gordana Djigić, Danijela Djordjević, Bozidar Nikolić, Zoran Petrović, Angelina Skarep, and Slavica Vasić.

The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia is also gratefully acknowledged for its cooperation and support in order for this research to be undertaken. Without this, gathering data from schools would not have been possible. Special thanks are given to Tunde Kovacs- Cerović and the Regional Department counselors who helped make connections with schools and who participated in the research.

The important role and contribution of the Roma coordinators and NGOs to this research is also gratefully acknowledged. Their names are too many to list here, but are printed in Appendix D.

Many persons in the education system of the Republic of Serbia also made this research possible: school staff; students; parents; former Roma students; experts; representatives of Local Self-Government; and representatives of the Child Classification Boards. OSI and the authors of this report wish to express their gratitude to them.

PREFACE

The overrepresentation of minority children, specifically Roma children in special education, is well documented in Central Europe, with studies materializing as early as the mid 1990s. Numerous reports and research studies have shed light on this issue in countries such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. In the Czech Republic in particular, published studies have contributed to making important policy changes to correct and put right the problem.

Though the problem was also suspected of being present in Southeast Europe, little had been published on the topic, especially in the English language. This is certainly the case with the Republic of Serbia, where no study could be pointed to as having comprehensive, reliable, or externally verifiable data on the problem. Yet Serbia, with its ongoing education reform, participation in the Decade of Roma Inclusion, and the country's movement towards accession to the European Union, needs to have statistical evidence in order to inform its policy decision-making process.

The present study thus provides, for the first time, a comprehensive picture of the overrepresentation of Roma within special education in the Republic of Serbia. The data gathered in this research are close to earlier estimates: approximately 30 percent of children within special education in the Republic of Serbia are Roma. Although these numbers are not as high as those in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, they are nonetheless alarmingly high, in view of the fact that Roma make up only about 1.4 percent of the population (based on the 2002 census), or about six percent (based on the approximate number of 450,000 Roma out of the total population in Serbia). It is clear that the vast majority of these children do not belong in special education.

However, this study goes beyond the original concept of the research that was discussed in its early stages. It provides a comprehensive overview of the status of Roma within the Serbian educational system, explores areas that are neither discussed much, nor written about (such as Roma students' and parents' feelings, impressions, and opinions about their education), and looks at such factors holistically against the backdrop of incorrect placement in special education. The study also reveals that discrimination, bullying, and prejudice are strong factors in Roma children's placement within the special education system. It demonstrates that special education is a losing proposition for young people: they cannot further their education, or be gainfully employed. Clearly, this is also a losing proposition for the state, which uses up money in their support of this parallel system.

The report makes concrete, constructive and specific recommendations – important not only for the government, but also for local self-governments, schools, civil society organizations and experts, as well as for the international audience of researchers and policymakers. The system of wrongfully placing Roma students within special education in Serbia is unfortunately not an isolated phenomenon in Europe, and the changes that must take place will benefit not only Roma, but all of society.

Bernard Rorke, *Director, Roma Initiatives, OSI – Budapest*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research project was undertaken to document – with reliable primary data – the following: whether it is true that Roma children are overrepresented in special schools/classes in Serbia, especially in those for children with intellectual disabilities; to better understand the number of Roma children within the special education system; the mechanisms which misplace Roma children into such schools; the impact which special education has on students and their lives; and the cost-effectiveness of continuing the special education system.

This study is part of a set of initiatives intended to produce comparable data on the representation of Roma within special education. The other two studies (on the Czech Republic and Slovakia) were undertaken by the Roma Education Fund. However, as this is the first comprehensive report covering this topic for the Republic of Serbia, the study went beyond its original research goals to provide as much quantitative data as possible, as broad an overview as possible, and to document the complexities of the situation in Serbia.

This research focused on all special schools in Serbia, but went deeper in those schools which educate children with intellectual or multiple disabilities, where it was suspected the majority of Roma children are represented; the research consisted of a literature review as well as the collection of primary data, both quantitative and qualitative. Because so many data could not be collected in all special schools in Serbia due to time and financial constraints, two sub-samples were chosen to collect data on two levels: a larger sample collected data on a more general level, and the smaller sample collected data in more detail.

Sample overview

	Number of special primary and secondary schools	Number of special primary schools	Number of mainstream primary schools	Number of special secondary schools
Sub-sample I.	9	5	14	–
Sub-sample II.	19	13	7	1
Total in the samples	28	18	21	1
Total in Serbia	28	19	unknown	1
Number who filled in the questionnaire	25	16	16	1

In addition to the questionnaires for schools which were included in sub-sample I, further detailed and more qualitative information was gathered through questionnaires for teachers, **semi-structured interviews** with experts, and with **focus groups** with other stakeholders.

KEY FINDINGS

Using government sources, and verifying the situation in the field, this research has established a total number of 48 special schools in Serbia. These include: 19 special primary schools (SPS); 28 primary and secondary education schools (PSES); and one special secondary school (SSS).

Establishing the total number of mainstream schools with special classes was too extensive a task for this research; it does cover 21 mainstream primary schools (MPS) with special classes. Of these, 19 (90 percent) had special classes for children with intellectual disabilities.

There are two types of special classes in special and mainstream schools: grade and multi-grade classes. It is understood that the quality of education in multi-grade classes is lower than in grade classes. This research has established that in special classes in mainstream primary schools, multi-grade special classes predominate (64 percent in the 2007–2008 school year, 61 percent in the 2008–2009 school year), pointing to, among other things, the lower quality of special education. In special schools on the primary level, multi-grade classes make up 14 percent of classes, and on the secondary level only one percent of classes for both school years.

Six percent of classes in PSES and 16 percent in SSS are *zero-grade*, a year between primary and secondary education, which is not regulated by any law.

This research also sought to understand what kinds of disability the classes were organized for. In mainstream primary schools, 98 percent of special classes are for children with intellectual difficulties. In special schools, classes for children with intellectual difficulties also predominate, with more than 80 percent of classes belonging to this category (in 15 percent of those classes children with multiple disabilities are also enrolled).

This research also confirmed the hypothesis that there is indeed an overrepresentation of Roma students in special education. According to data collected from 85 percent of special schools in the 2007–2008 academic year, the total number of students stood at 5,639, of whom nearly 30 percent (1,683) were Roma. In the 2008–2009 academic year, data from 88 percent of special schools shows a total of 5,579 students, of whom 1,775 (or 32 percent) were Roma. For special classes in mainstream primary school, 12 of these schools reported having Roma students. In the 2007–2008 academic year there were a total of 273 students, 103 of them Roma (38 percent). For 2008–2009, 13 mainstream primary schools reported a total of 330 students, out of which 126 (38 percent) were Roma. The percentage of Roma children in the 2007–2008 school year was 75 percent in primary and 25 percent in secondary schools; and in 2008–2009, 76 percent of Roma students were in primary and 24 percent in secondary school. For 2008–2009, 13 MPS reported a total of 330 students out of which 126 (38 percent) were Roma.

According to data collected from schools, 86 percent of all special school students attended schools for students with intellectual disabilities, both in the 2007–2008 and

2008–2009 school years. Ninety-four percent of all Roma students at special schools attended such schools for those years. At both the primary and secondary levels, there is a larger percentage of Roma boys attending special schools than Roma girls.

Special curricula are abridged both in terms of volume and the content of mainstream curricula; special curricula do not fully satisfy the specific needs of the children. Most interviewed experts agree that school-leaving certificates from special schools do not allow for further schooling in mainstream schools. Of the former Roma students in focus groups who had completed special secondary education, 71 percent had never held a job, and 76 percent were unemployed at the time the research was conducted. Such high percentages point to the seriously limiting experience of receiving special education, and the burden the state must carry for students who are only capable of going on to be unemployed.

In the schools surveyed for this research, 48 percent of the MPS, 74 percent of the SPS, and 71 percent of the PSES had two or more children from the same family, pointing to the disturbing issue of attendance of special education as a family legacy.

A large number of special schools and special classes in mainstream schools are educating students who had not directly enrolled in them but had initially gone to mainstream schools or classes. Sixty-one percent of students in focus groups (102 from 165) were transferred from mainstream to special schools, mainly because of poor achievement, class repetition, and aggressive behavior as a reaction to discrimination. Yet, only a total of 80 students overall have transferred from 21 special schools to mainstream schools in the last three years, and a total of 31 Roma students transferred from 10 special to mainstream schools. Four Roma students were transferred from special classes to mainstream classes in three MPS.

Evidence points to the fact that larger teacher/student ratios, higher salaries, as well as benefits to children and families attending special education, contribute to the higher costs of running a special education system than a mainstream education system.

This research found that Roma students and parents are motivated for education. When they choose special schools/classes, it is not only because of the financial benefits, but they see the classes as being safer, and assess that there are higher chances of completing school. Students like to go to special schools/classes; parents are satisfied with schools and teachers. Yet, at the same time, they see and feel the negative influence of special schooling on a child's present and future life.

The situation in special schools/classes reflects all the main problems in education: insufficient and unclear legislation; no consequences for incorrect implementation; mainstream schools unprepared/unwilling to support Roma children and families; widespread discrimination in the educational system; curricula are more oriented to the past than the future; and enrolment procedures are inadequate.

As the Serbian government undergoes education reform, and prepares for accession to the European Union, the recommendations in this report reflect the need for

immediate action in order to stop the trend of the misplacement of Roma children into special education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A comprehensive set of recommendations have been developed based on the results of this study. The following is a summary of the recommendations that can be found at the end of this report.

1. The Ministry of Education, teacher faculties, local self-government and educational institutions should endorse the inclusion of an anti-discrimination component of both initial and in-service teacher training in school development plans, curricula, and on school boards and parents' councils.
2. The Ministry of Education should carefully review all existing and draft law and bylaw regulations to ensure that inclusive education is adequately defined, and that the relationships between special and mainstream education institutions are clearly set out.
3. The Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy should ensure that the most up-to-date tools and methodologies are used in child assessment, to prevent misplacing Roma children within special schools.
4. The Ministry of Education should define and monitor procedures for the transfer of children from special to mainstream schools, providing appropriate support and follow-up, to ensure success. This process should be organized in the child's best interest; be transparent, supported and monitored by all civil society stakeholders, and by the MOE RD, education inspectors, and relevant local self-governments.
5. The Ministry of Education and its Regional Departments should focus on the prevention of new ways of eliminating Roma students from mainstream schools once the new enrolment procedure is established, and the doors for transfer to special schools are closed.
6. The Ministry of Education should regulate the work of school inclusion teams and provide training and support to create a learning environment in mainstream schools that meets the needs of all students.
7. Local self-government, educational institutions, parents, NGOs, professional associations, media, and other ministries and institutions should be more proactive in assuring the realization of the right to quality education for all children, and developing inclusion in schools and society.

List of Acronyms

CCB	Used for any board/commission that deals with assessing children's need for special education.[1]
CSW	Center for Social Work
EIB	Education Improvement Bureau
FASPER	Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation
FG	Focus Group
FRS	Former Roma Students
LSG	Local Self-Government
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoE RD	Ministry of Education Regional Departments
MPS	Mainstream Primary School
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PSES	Special Primary and Secondary Schools (these offer primary and secondary level education and some preschool as well)
PSES, PS	Special Primary and Secondary School, Primary School
PSES, SS	Special Primary and Secondary School, Secondary School
REF	Roma Education Fund
SPS	Special Primary School
SSS	Special Secondary School

[1] There are different titles in different periodicals and documents such as: *Child Classification Board*; *Commissions for Categorization of Children With Developmental Disabilities*; *Board for the Examination of Children with Developmental Difficulties*; *Medical Board for the Examination of Children with Developmental Difficulties*; *Boards Assessing the Needs of Children with Developmental Difficulties and Issuing Recommendations Thereof*; *Boards Classifying Children with Developmental Difficulties*; *Medical Board for the Examination of Children with Developmental Difficulties*; *Board for Assessing the Needs and Professional Guidance of Children with Developmental Difficulties.*

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1 Research objectives and methodology

In Serbia, as elsewhere in Southeast and Central Europe, the overrepresentation of Roma in the system of *special* education,[2] notably in schools for children with intellectual disabilities, has been identified as an endemic problem, especially with respect to access to quality education. Data for the Czech Republic, for example, suggest that between 75 and 85 percent of Roma children are enrolled in remedial "special schools." The situation is similar in other countries. Estimates cited in country reports put the share of Roma in special schools in Slovakia at 80 percent, Macedonia at 60–70 percent, 80 percent in Montenegro, and 50–80 percent in Serbia.[3]

Several important studies, national strategies, and action plans in Serbia have established that the problem exists (and that it affects the education of Roma and their employability) and most importantly, have indicated areas future research should focus on.

The documents mentioned above do provide information and data on schools, curricula, and categorizations, but most have not conducted primary research to gain a better understanding of the percentages and numbers of Roma represented in these institutions. Nor do they delve deeply and explore the root and systemic causes of this endemic form of segregation. Thus for Serbia, the real extent of the misplacement of Roma children in special schools remains unclear, and no definitive conclusions can be drawn until further investigations have been carried out on the situation.

The purpose of this research is to shed more light on – and to document – the number of Roma children in the special education system (special schools and special classes in mainstream schools) in Serbia and the education they receive, and to understand the systemic mechanisms by which they end up there. Its purpose is also to provide researchers, educators, policymakers, and third-sector activists in Serbia with more sound information in the form of primary research to support the process of achieving more equitable education for Roma in Serbia.

This research, initiated and supported by the EUMAP program of the Open Society Institute, was conducted during the period June 2008–November 2009. This study originated in consultation with the Roma Education Fund and with the Roma

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[2] Although there is only one education system in Serbia, the terms *mainstream education system* and *special education system* are ordinarily in use given that they, in practice, operate side by side. In Serbia, furthermore, the use of the term *special education* is not used in practice by the Ministry of Education. Their preference is for the term *Schools and Classes for Children with Developmental Difficulties.* This report will, for simplicity purposes, use the terms *special schools* and *mainstream schools.*

[3] World Bank, 2004, p. 11.

Initiatives Office of the Open Society Institute; it is to complement two other similar research projects that have been undertaken by the Roma Education Fund: **School as Ghetto: Systemic Overrepresentation of Roma in Special Education in Slovakia**; and **Persistent Segregation of Roma in the Czech Education System**,[4] which was published by the European Roma Rights Center but sponsored by REF. The intention of working in tandem with these studies was to produce comparable data on the overrepresentation of Roma in special education, a common problem in different settings.

The goals of this research, and which overlap with the two other studies, are as follows.

- To establish whether it is true that Roma children are overrepresented in special schools/classes, especially in schools/classes for children with intellectual disabilities. The research will contribute to having better, more accurate data in relation to special schools and Roma in Serbia, including:
    - the actual number of special schools;
    - the number of special classes in mainstream schools;
    - the number of Roma children in special schools and classes in Serbia.
- To better understand the mechanisms which misplace Roma children into such schools, including:
    - existing regulations and guidelines on the placement of children in special schools/classes;
    - procedures for placing children into special schools and special classes;
    - diagnostic tools;
    - "non-academic" reasons for placement into special schools and classes;
    - reassessment and reintegration of children into mainstream schools.
- To better understand the impact which special education has on students and their outcomes, including:
    - student achievement, dropout/repetition and extra curricular activities;
    - student acceptance in schools/classes;
    - employability.
- To better understand the cost-effectiveness of continuing the special education system, including:

[4] http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/publications

- the financing of special schools and special classes in mainstream schools;
- national spending on special education and mainstream education;
- the costs of sending a child to special school versus mainstream school.

The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia amply supported this research by providing expert advice and by asking Regional Departments of the Ministry of Education to appoint counselors to act as contact points for schools and to participate in interviews. The MoE's active role significantly contributed to the schools' willingness to partake in the research of this delicate issue.

This research fills in the gap in existing work by comprehensively and reliably documenting – in an unprecedented manner – the existing situation of Roma children in the system of special education in Serbia. Never before has such a thorough analysis and overview of the literature been carried out, and nor has an attempt been made to document the situation via primary data. These will make a valuable contribution to the Serbian policymaking sphere.

The research consisted of a **literature review** as well as the **collection of primary data**, both quantitative and qualitative. The literature review consisted of an analysis of documents on education in general, on special education, and on the education of Roma. Relevant laws and bylaws, strategies, action plans, research, and reports were also reviewed.[5] This research focused on all special schools, but went deeper with those schools which educate children with intellectual or multiple disabilities.[6] In Serbia, this consists of special classes within mainstream schools, and special primary and secondary schools for children with intellectual and/or multiple disabilities.

The issue of **how to identify students who come from the Roma community** became a very important topic from the very beginning of this work. For this research project, in agreement with the MoE, data were simultaneously collected from schools and Roma community representatives,[7] who were allowed access to school lists of pupils. The school principals and psychologists/pedagogues gave their estimates on the basis of the parents' declaration of ethnic affiliation or on the basis of their own assessments. Roma community representatives gave their estimates on the basis of their personal acquaintance with the children and/or their own assessments. The plan was to have Roma community representatives provide data on all schools included in the research, but this could not be ensured for 12 schools. Roma community representatives provided data for a total of 54 schools: 18 MPS (86 percent of the sample) and 39

[5] These documents are all included in the bibliography of this report.

[6] Focus groups were undertaken in such schools. Children with multiple disabilities are educated in schools for children with intellectual disabilities.

[7] See Appendix D for a complete list of all Roma NGOs and community representatives who cooperated in the research.

special schools (81 percent of the total number of special schools in Serbia).[8] For more on data sources and their validity, see Appendix A for details.

One of the research goals of this undertaking was to have a better grasp of the number of special schools in Serbia at all, as various reports and studies had given differing numbers. In the preparatory phase of this research, a list of all special schools was compiled using data from the official MoE website,[9] a directory of all schools and faculties in Serbia,[10] and from other resources.[11]

The sample was to have included all special schools: 19 SPS, 28 PSES,[12] one SSS, and 21 MPS with special classes. However, due to the miscounting of some schools, and also because five schools refused to take part in the research, the total sample only included 42 (88 percent of the total number of special schools in Serbia) out of the 48 special schools.

At the time this research was undertaken, there was no systematic way of knowing the number of special classes within mainstream schools. In the sample there were 21 MPS; the schools with the greatest number of special classes in each of the 21 districts (with such schools) were selected from the MoE list of mainstream primary schools. The list did not include data on the kinds of children these special classes were set up for (i.e. what disability they had); this information was collected during the research.

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[8] All percentages regarding special schools are calculated against the total number of special schools in Serbia, and not against the total sample size of special schools.

[9] Ministry of Education
– List of primary schools. Information was accessed from Infostat at http://www.infostat.mps.sr.gov.yu/adresar/osnovne/sveosnovne.htm. This database is no longer available. For a current database, see the Registry of Institutions, available at http://www.mp.gov.rs/index.php?page=1
– List of secondary schools. Information was accessed from Infostat at http://www.infostat.mps.sr.gov.yu/adresar/srednje/svesrednje.htm. This database is no longer available. For a current database, see the Registry of Institutions, available at http://www.mp.gov.rs/index.php?page=1
– List of secondary schools. Information was accessed from the Ministry of Education at http://www.mps.sr.gov.yu. This database is no longer available. For a current database, see the Registry of Institutions, available at http://www.mp.gov.rs/index.php?page=1

[10] Official list with names of schools.

[11] Education Secretariat in Vojvodina, www.psok.org.yu/skolevojvodine/SKOLE/specijalne; the websites of the city of Belgrade and other cities/municipalities.

[12] Special primary and secondary education schools (PSES) offer primary and secondary education. In this chart the PSES is counted as one school, of which there are 28. Later in the analysis, however, data are shown separately for the primary and secondary levels, which make the number seem higher.

Because no significant amount of data could have been collected in all special schools in Serbia due to time and financial constraints, **two sub-samples** were chosen to collect data on two levels.

- *Sub-sample I.* – Data on students and schools were collected in greater detail via: a questionnaire for schools; interviews with principals and pedagogues/psychologists; a questionnaire for teachers; and focus groups with students and parents. This sub-sample included: five SPS for students with intellectual disabilities; nine PSES; and 14 MPS with special classes (one within the jurisdiction of each MoE RD with such schools) in towns with the greatest share of Roma among the total population.
- *Sub-sample II.* – Data on students and schools were collected on a more general level, by having schools (primarily the principals) fill in a school questionnaire. This sub-sample included 13 SPS, 19 PSES, one SSS, and seven MPS.

Schools from both sets of samples were chosen based on an organization of cities/municipalities by strata which were defined especially for this research based on the share of Roma in their total population:

1. up to 0.9 percent;
2. from 1–2.9 percent;
3. over three percent.

In cases where two or more cities had the same proportion of Roma in their population, the city with the greater Roma population was chosen to partake in the research. Further, all districts[13] and all active MoE RDs across the country were covered by the samples; thus the research covered all parts of Serbia (excluding Kosovo).

Using these sources, and by verifying the situation in the field, this research has established a total of 48 special schools in Serbia.

[13] Serbia without Kosovo is divided into 24 administrative districts plus the district of the city of Belgrade.

Table 1. Schools for children with developmental disabilities in Serbia

Type of school	Number	Percentage of total of special schools
Special primary schools (SPS)	19	40%
Special primary and secondary education schools (PSES)	28	58%
Special secondary school (SSS)	1	2%
Total	48	100%

Data collection

Data were collected via a comprehensive **Questionnaire for Schools**,[14] designed for special primary and secondary schools and mainstream primary schools with special classes. The questions were formulated so as to obtain data on the following:

- the school (type of school, the educational levels it offers, working conditions, staffing, funding);
- the principals' views of the problem being researched (if there is such a problem, when it arose, who ought to be addressing it and how);
- data sources (i.e. how to assess that a student is Roma);
- the number of classes and students (current situation, changes in the student body size over the past three years, number of students in each class, enrolment policy, transfers from mainstream to special schools and vice versa);
- the education of Roma students and how they compare with other students (performance, attendance, drop-out rate, grade failure rate, attendance of extracurricular and elective subjects, cooperation with their family, their relationship with other children and teachers);
- material support to students while they are in school; and
- the assessment of the effects of special school/class education on the children's future lives.

There were three versions of the questionnaire which differed slightly depending on whether the school was a mainstream or a special one, and on its educational level:

[14] In some cases, the questionnaire for schools was filled out during interviews conducted by the field researchers in schools covered by sub-sample I.

1. a questionnaire for mainstream schools with special classes;
2. a questionnaire for SPS and PSES providing primary education;
3. a questionnaire for PSES providing secondary education, and the SSS.

The questionnaires were filled by 16 SPS, 25 PSES, one SSS, and 16 MPS.

Data were also collected via a **Questionnaire for Teachers** structured in a similar way to the Questionnaire for Schools, except that, instead of data on schools, the questionnaire was comprised of questions about the teachers themselves (their profession, length of service, professional training). This questionnaire did not include questions on the number of classes and students. It was filled out by 143 teachers: 31 in nine MPS; 23 in five SPS; and 89 in nine PSES (44 at the primary, and 45 at the secondary school levels).

In addition to the questionnaires for teachers from schools which were included in sub-sample I, further detailed and more qualitative information was gathered through **semi-structured interviews** with other stakeholders, including the following.

- 56 staff in 24 schools: 21 school principals, 13 pedagogues, 11 psychologists, four social workers, six special educators, one school secretary.
- 55 representatives of the relevant institutions at the local and national levels and Roma community representatives: the State Secretary of the MoE, and 15 MoE Regional Department counselors; six local government representatives (from the Directorate for Education, culture and sports departments, and the city council); the Medical Board for the Examination of Children with Developmental Difficulties;[15] six representatives from five first-instance CCBs (two MDs, three special pedagogues, and a social worker); one head of the Roma National Strategy Secretariat within the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights; a representative from the EIB; one testing expert; a CCB expert; a Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation[16] professor; an expert on the employment of persons with disabilities; 19 representatives of Roma NGOs focusing on education; and two municipal Roma coordinators.

Focus groups with students and parents were organized in cooperation with schools, and most were held in the schools themselves. Most schools were cooperative and helped rally the students; several were extremely supportive. Some pressure was exerted by a principal of one school who was disconcerted by the research.

- **Focus groups with Roma students.** Thirty focus groups were held: eight in MPS; four in SPS; nine in PSES PS; and nine in PSES SS. A total of 165

[15] Hereinafter, Child Classification Board, or CCB.

[16] The Faculty of Defectology, founded in 1975, was renamed the Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation (FASPER) in 2006.

students were involved: 57 percent male and 43 percent female. Seventy percent of the students attended primary school (23 percent MPS, 15 percent SPS, 32 percent PSES PS) and 30 percent the PSES SS.

- **Focus groups with parents of Roma students**. Thirty focus groups were held: eight in MPS; four in SPS; nine in PSES PS; and nine in PSES SS. A total of 142 participants attended: 76 mothers and 49 fathers; nine grandparents; seven foster parents; and one parent of a child who was attending a boarding house. Of the total number of parents, 70 percent had children in primary school (21 percent in MPS, 15 percent in SPS and 34 percent in PSES PS) and 30 percent in secondary school (PSES SS). Of the total number of students and parents/grandparents in the FG, more than 90 percent were related to the children (or foster parents), while several parents in the FG had two children in such schools/classes.
- **Focus groups with former students of special secondary schools.** A total of 21 FRS were included in the focus groups: 20 of them (75 percent male and 25 percent female) had graduated from school and only their data were included in the research. Sixty percent of the participants were aged 19–28, 20 percent were 29–38, and 20 percent were 39–49.

We received data on Roma students during the research from:

- 21 MPS (100 percent of the planned sample);
- 42 special schools (88 percent of all special schools in Serbia);
- 15 SPS (79 percent of such schools in Serbia);
- 25 PSES (89 percent of such schools in Serbia);
- one SSS (100 percent of such schools in Serbia).

The research was designed and overseen by the lead researcher, assisted by six field researchers (three psychologists and three Roma leaders), all active and experienced in the education of Roma.

Limitations of the research

There were a number of limitations experienced during this research. The lack of relevant and valid data disaggregated by ethnicity is a problem faced both by education policymakers and implementers in Serbia. This has been consistently highlighted in strategic documents and reports. The difficulties we faced in collecting data for this research corroborates the view that it is difficult to access systematized data, even with support from the MoE. There are several reasons, for which there is no easy solution. The total Roma population in Serbia is unknown. Under the law, and in accordance with regulations on human and civil rights, only a person who has declared his/her

ethnic affiliation may be deemed a person belonging to a specific ethnicity.[17] The only data that schools possess on ethnicity are those which parents provide when filling in primary school enrolment forms, with only a few schools gathering data by other means. In Serbia, few Roma parents use this opportunity, as they are afraid of the consequences, and are used to concealing their ethnic identity.

Most schools gave accurate and full data, but some claimed that they did not have any on their students' ethnicity and thus did not provide data on the number of Roma students, rendering it difficult to process information. At the same time, however, they did respond to questions entailing a comparison of the schooling of Roma and non-Roma students. The number of schools which replied to each particular question is specified in the presentation of the research data.

Table 2. Data sources on the numbers of Roma students (2008–2009)[18]

	Schools, Roma NGOs and Roma coordinators	Only schools	Only Roma NGOs/Roma coordinators	No data	Total number of schools in Serbia
MPS	18	3	–	–	21*
Special schools (primary level)					
SPS	9	5	2	3	19
PSES PS**	23	2	1	2	28
Special schools (secondary level)					
PSES SS	23	2	1	2	28
SSS	1	–	–	–	1

* Twenty-one such schools were included in the sample, while the number of MPS with special classes remained unknown.
** Data were obtained separately because the researchers wanted to compare the primary and secondary educational levels.

[17] In Serbia, the Roma now have the status of national minority, and in Serbian, this minority is referred to as a *nationality*. Previously, they were denied that status and were referred to as an *ethnicity*. For the purposes of clarity in the English language, however, this report will stick to referring to the Roma as an ethnicity.

[18] For the 2007–2008 academic year, the research gathered data from 15 SPS, 25 PSES, one SSS, and one MPS.

The subject of this research is a delicate one for all participants. The researchers tried not to distress interviewees, and to minimally influence their views. With the exception of questions requiring precise answers (school achievement, kindergarten attendance), the questions were open and neutrally formulated ("What do you think …?", "What is your opinion of ...?") without offering or suggesting answers. This approach proved to be a correct one, but made it difficult to process data. Some answers were too general and unfocused and could not be categorized. It was also extremely difficult to process the replies children and parents gave in open conversations and in focus group discussions. Data given in the research refer to the data source and the number of categorized answers, varying from question to question.

There are also missing sources of data from this work. The researchers had planned to cover all special schools in Serbia, but some did not participate in the research for reasons which are described above. Further, not all schools provided complete data – some schools failed to respond to specific questions and it was impossible to ascertain whether or not the specific issue pertained to these schools or whether they merely failed to reply to the questions.

Often, a school would provide data for one academic year, and not for another – either because they did not care to respond, or possibly because they did not have the data. Or, schools would often respond to only one set of questions on the questionnaire, and not to another. This made calculating percentages very difficult.

To present the available data as clearly and impartially as possible, the researchers strove to specify the number of schools that provided replies to specific questions in the tables and the narrative part of the report.

1.2 Roma population in Serbia, educational status, and initiatives for improvement

Roma population: official and unofficial statistics

According to the 2002 census, 108,913 or 1.44 percent of Serbia's citizens declared themselves as persons belonging to the Roma national minority. Estimates of the number of Roma living in Serbia, however, vary greatly from official data to external estimates. Some estimate there are 250,000–500,000;[19] 350,000;[20] 400,000–450,000;[21] or as high as 600,000–700,000 (Roma Cultural and Literary Society).[22] The estimated number that most sources agree on is 450,000, and this figure is used in

[19] Government of Serbia, 2009.

[20] Open Society Institute, 2007, p. 17.

[21] Centre for the Rights of the Child, 2006.

[22] Kočić, Rakočević & Miljević, 2003.

official documents. The most comprehensive survey conducted to date,[23] however, only registered 247,591 Roma living in Roma and other small settlements, but not in cities. Roma account for the third largest ethnic community according to the 2002 census; if one considers the unofficial estimate of 450,000 Roma, however, then this group would account for six percent of Serbia's population, and its largest minority.

Preschool, primary and secondary education level cohorts

Roma are the youngest ethnic community in Serbia. Their average age stands at 27.5 years, whereas the average age of the general population stands at 40.2; as many as 41.2 percent of Roma in Serbia are under 20, and 71.8 percent are under the age of 40.[24]

Given that the actual number of Roma is unknown, the number of Roma children and youth who should be included in the education system can only be calculated by applying the 2002 census age breakdown to the estimated Roma population of 450,000. The kindergarten age cohort (the under-sixes) is estimated at around 70,000; the primary school age cohort (7–14 year olds) at 74,000; and the secondary school age cohort (15–19 year olds) at around 41,000. Yet, other estimates exist as well. OSI research, based on secondary sources, estimates the number and percentage of Roma children under 18 to be anywhere between 44,375 and 194,818.[25]

Educational status of Roma

The 2002 census data show: 62.2 percent of Roma have not completed primary school; 28.2 percent have only primary education; 9.2 percent have completed secondary education; and only 0.4 percent of Roma have a junior college or university degree. The educational breakdown of the overall Roma population is probably even lower, given that residents of Roma settlements were the least-covered by the census.

Roma attend school for an average of 5.5 years, while the population living alongside them attends an average of 11 years.[26]

The educational levels of Roma are much poorer than those of the majority population and most other minorities, with the exception of Albanians, Vlachs and Muslims. The disparity in favor of boys is even more prominent than in other communities.[27]

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[23] Jakšic & Bašic, 2002.

[24] Republic Statistical Insitute, 2002

[25] Open Society Institute, 2006.

[26] This is data regarding 1,580 surveyed Roma, UNDP, 2005.

[27] World Bank, 2004.

Roma school enrolment: preschool education

Based on data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, in 2006, 34 percent of children under seven years old attended preschool institutions.[28] Preschool is defined as the time before the Preparatory Preschool Program, which occurs the year before first grade. Preschools in Serbia begin taking children from six months to five years old. The Preparatory Preschool Program begins at age five, and the child usually turns six during the school year at some point. Preschool is not obligatory and parents pay fees, whereas the Preparatory Preschool Program is obligatory and can be in the same building as the primary school, grades 1–8. First grade starts from ages six or seven.

The analyses conducted to date lead to the conclusion that the number of 3–5 year-old Roma children attending preschool is negligible: between four and seven percent.[29] According to the *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 3* (*MICS 3*),[30] 3.9 percent of children aged 36–59 months and living in Roma settlements attended some form of organized early childhood education, as opposed to 33.4 percent of children from the majority population. There are no data on any Roma children under three attending preschool.

The Preparatory Preschool Program (PPP)[31] was introduced in the 2006–2007 school year. The six-month program is free of charge and obligatory for all children between 5.5 and 6.5 years of age, and lasts a minimum of four hours a day. As of the introduction of the 2009 Law on the Basis of the Education System, the program now lasts at least nine months. It takes place directly before children enter first grade, and children who have attended the PPP are issued the certificates required for enrolment in the first grade. In 2006, the National Education Council adopted the *Rulebook on the General Basis of the Preschool Programme*, which also covers the PPP.

The *Report on the Analysis of the Effects of Introducing the PPP*[32] states that the data on how many children altogether were covered by the PPP in the 2007–2008 school year varied considerably from source to source (from 83–99.6 percent). The *Report* cites the 2008 Living Standard Survey data, according to which Roma children attending PPP

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[28] Pešikan & Ivić, 2008.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey – MICS 3 in Serbia was carried out by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and the Strategic Marketing Research Agency. Financial and technical support was provided by UNICEF. The survey was conducted as part of the third round of MICS, carried out around the world in more than 50 countries in 2005–2006 following the first two rounds of MICS surveys that had been conducted in 1995 and 2000. Survey tools are based on the models and standards developed by the global MICS project, designed to collect information on the situation of children and women in countries around the world.

[31] The Law on the Basis of the Education System, 2003.

[32] Pešikan & Ivić, 2008.

accounted for 45 percent of the sample. It also cites the preliminary data after the evaluation of the PPP (by the state Education Improvement Bureau (EIB), 2008), according to which, only 20 percent of the preschool groups in the sample included Roma children. The authors concluded the following: the number of Roma children covered by the PPP, and the drop-out rate remain unknown; Roma children as a rule attend the PPP only to meet the legal six-month minimum, or even less; Roma parents are not highly motivated to have their children attend the PPP; the status of Roma class assistants, who have helped improve quality, and have facilitated work with Roma children, remains unregulated; the methodology of the preschool program is insufficiently developed and not tailored for Roma children; the effects of attending PPP on school performance cannot be precisely determined yet.

The League for the Decade Report[33] states that 89 percent of children in the general population, and 62 percent of Roma children attended the PPP in the 2006–2007 school year. This percentage would have been smaller had it not been for the activities of Roma NGOs and projects establishing cooperation between kindergartens and the Roma community. Some kindergartens have reportedly issued certificates to children who did not attend the PPP regularly throughout the whole six months, or have organized shorter programs for Roma children during the summer on the request of local administrations.

Roma school enrolment: primary education

Information on Roma students based on internal MoE data[34] (available only for the 2002–2003 school year) shows that 14,232 Roma children were enrolled in mainstream primary schools. That would mean that 90 percent of Roma students at primary school age were enrolled in primary schools if the 2002 census data were taken as accurate. However, according to the estimated cohort (see section 1.1), less than 20 percent of Roma children attend primary school.

According to *MICS 3*,[35] 66 percent of Roma (as opposed to 94 percent of the total population) enrol in the first grade at the primary school enrolment age; 74 percent of Roma children (as opposed to 98 percent of the population) aged 7–14 attend primary

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[33] League for the Roma Decade, 2007. The League for the Roma Decade, founded at the initiative of the Fund for an Open Society in 2005, is a coalition of non-governmental organizations, aimed at contributing to the efficient implementation of the Serbian government action plans related to the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005–2015) in the areas of education, employment, healthcare and housing. The League has four committees, the Education Committee being one of them.

[34] World Bank, 2004.

[35] MICS gives primary data, almost all other documents use secondary or tertiary data taken from this study.

school; 28 percent of Roma children (as opposed to 98 percent of the population) of primary school completion age attend the eighth grade.[36]

Roma school enrolment: secondary education

Estimates are that only 10 percent of secondary school age residents of Roma settlements (as opposed to 84 percent of the total population) attend secondary schools.[37] According to Roma NGOs and from interviews with stakeholders, even those going on to secondary schools usually enrol in vocational schools lasting 2–4 years, and do not require students to take the qualification exams. Very few Roma children enrol in reputable high schools or vocational schools which offer better opportunities for further schooling and employment.

According to Roma Education Fund (REF) data,[38] 8.3 percent of young Roma were enrolled in three- or four-year secondary schools in 2004. According to a Centre for the Rights of the Child survey,[39] only 0.96 percent of Roma children complete secondary education. MoE data reveal that only 16 percent of Roma (as opposed to 95–96 percent of all primary school graduates) enrol in secondary school. According to MoE data, 551 young Roma have enrolled in secondary schools since the 2005–2006 school year thanks to affirmative action measures implemented by the MoE in cooperation with the Roma National Minority Council (RNMC), the Roma National Strategy Secretariat (RNSS), and with the help of Roma NGOs in the field.

According to Affirmative Action for Roma in Education research,[40] around 500 Roma students were enrolled in secondary school in accordance with this affirmative action measure, 185 of them in the 2008–2009 school year. This is a small number considering the estimated total Roma population. The way this measure is being applied mostly prevents Roma from enrolling in the more prestigious secondary schools, because they cannot attain the number of points needed (even when the additional 30 points are added to the number their generally low primary school grade averages carry). The research has stated that the procedures and mechanisms for implementing this measure need to be defined, the enrolled students need to be supported, and the effects of the measure – above all, the students' school performance – needs to be monitored.

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[36] Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys – MICS 3.

[37] Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys – MICS 3.

[38] Government of Serbia, 2007.

[39] Centre for the Rights of the Child, 2006.

[40] Centre for Applied European Studies, 2009. The research supported by the Fund for an Open Society Serbia focuses on affirmative action, grounds for affirmative action in international and national documents, the analysis of hitherto measures, and the analysis of the needs to support Roma in education. It suggests affirmative action measures to be applied in the future.

Secondary vocational education is extremely important to Roma, given that most of them need to find a job as soon as possible. Secondary vocational education is also awarded greater significance in the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy paper for Serbia,[41] because data show that citizens without an education or a profession, or with a profession for which there is no demand in the labor market, are poor and unemployed. The Vocational Education Development Strategy in the Republic of Serbia was adopted in 2006. The following objective of vocational education was defined in accordance with the vision and mission of vocational education in Serbia: "To provide everyone with the opportunity for full social participation, to improve the quality of the environment and life in general, to make personal choices, with the opportunity for employment and with the opportunity for continued professional development."[42]

Roma school enrolment: tertiary education

According to REF data from 2004, only 0.9 percent of young Roma enrol in college or university.[43] Thanks to affirmative action measures, 560 Roma enrolled in college in the period 2003–2008.[44] According to other sources, 376 students have enrolled in tertiary education through affirmative action since the 2003–2004 academic year.[45] The Affirmative Action for Roma in Education research[46] shows, however, that less than 200 Roma students are enrolled in state colleges. The application of these measures has encountered a number of difficulties: one arises from the fact that Roma students are usually enrolled after other students, often after the beginning of the school year.

Adult education has been marginalized for years in Serbia. It is hardly recognized in the formal system, and is extremely undeveloped. The idea of lifelong learning and the need for additional qualifications and re-qualification led to the adoption of the Adult Education Strategy in the Republic of Serbia[47] in 2006. Under this Strategy, education

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[41] Towards the end of 2002, the Government of the Republic of Serbia initiated the development of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) for Serbia. The initial platform, strategic options, and the preparation process of this strategy and its implementation were all defined in the Interim PRSP. This was approved and adopted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. See Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for Serbia, p. 3, available at http://www.prsp.sr.gov.yu/engleski/dokumenta.jsp

[42] Ministry of Education, 2005b.

[43] Government of Serbia, 2007.

[44] Deputy Prime Minister, presentation at the Decade Steering Committee meeting, June 2008.

[45] *Ibid.*

[46] Centre for Applied European Studies, 2009.

[47] Ministry of Education, 2005a.

entails all formal and informal types of education of persons over 18 who do not have the status of being a school or college student in formal or informal education.

Roma account for a substantial number of students attending schools which provide primary education to persons over 15 years of age, and who did not attend or complete compulsory primary education. Fifteen is the statutory threshold for attending mainstream primary school (this problem is discussed in greater detail in section 1.3).

Governmental and non-governmental initiatives to improve enrolment: K – tertiary education

There are several projects implemented by the MoE in cooperation with NGOs which the researchers believe are important to mention. These projects target preschool, primary, and secondary education. Other relevant projects are described elsewhere in this report.[48]

The described activities are conducted in educational institutions and are aimed at increasing the coverage of children by mainstream education, improving the quality of education they receive, and supporting students in successfully continuing their schooling. Although it may not be possible to establish a direct cause and effect link, these researchers believe that the success of these activities and measures has undoubtedly contributed to a decline in the enrolment of Roma children in special schools and classes. The practical experience gained in the activities will hopefully be applied broadly in the future.

Introducing Roma teaching assistants[49] into primary schools. The introduction of Roma teaching assistants (RTAs) was launched in 2006 with support from the MoE and OSCE, and with expertise from CIP – the Center for Interactive Pedagogy. At the very beginning, 54 RTAs were trained, 28 of whom worked in schools. Due to financial constraints within the MoE, 28 RTAs worked only in March–June 2007. Later in 2008, 24 out of 28 RTAs were re-deployed in primary schools in Serbia by the MoE. In 2008 and 2009, their training continued and were joined by educators from

[48] The projects Creating Conditions for Achieving an Equitable Policy of Enrolment in the First Grade of Primary School and the Project on the Protection of Roma Children from Discrimination are presented in section 1.4. The Education of Roma: Solution for the Future, a project aiming at involving Roma parents in school management bodies – the School Board and Parents' Council is described in section 2.2.

[49] Roma Teaching Assistants were for the first time introduced in preschool groups in 1997, and to primary schools in 2002, through projects implemented by CIP-Center for Interactive Pedagogy, and the Foundation for an Open Society Serbia in cooperation with Roma NGOs and educational institutions. The Law on the Basis of the Education System introduced them for the first time in the position of pedagogical assistant, as a new position in the educational system which created the opportunity for RTAs to be officially engaged as part-time school staff, and not through projects.

respective schools. In 2009, a second generation of RTAs started their training: 26 of them, together with school staff. The OSCE mission funds the salaries of these second-generation RTAs and school supplies. It also organizes professional development and training courses for RTAs and school teaching staff. In 2009, a third generation of RTAs were deployed in Belgrade primary schools, and their training started. This group was supported by the City of Belgrade, and they worked with children of Roma origin who had been displaced from the non-hygienic settlement under the city's Gazela bridge. In addition, a publication focusing on the work of RTAs is currently being developed by the CIP-Center for Interactive Pedagogy, the MoE, and the OSCE. Its main goal is to promote the role of the RTA, and to motivate schools and local governments to employ them in order to improve access to and the quality of education for children of Roma origin.

A terms of reference for a project supported by the European Commission describes the intention to turn the use of Roma assistants into policy:

> With the support of the project **Education for All – Increasing the Availability and Quality of Education for Children from Marginalised Groups**, the Ministry's intention is to take forward projects towards national policies by further extending the scheme started by the OSCE project, and with the aim of covering a total of 128 pedagogical assistants in 128 schools (80 primary schools and 48 kindergartens) by the 2010/2011 school year. The purpose of this project is to increase the inclusion of children from marginalised groups in the system of preschool and elementary education by enhancing the policy making and implementation capacities, supporting systemic conditions including legislation, empowering relevant pedagogical groups, and increasing public awareness.[50]

The report, *Access of Roma Children to Quality Education*,[51] also acknowledges the importance of this position, as do participants in focus groups, representatives from the MoE, the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, the Provincial Secretariat of Education of the autonomous province of Vojvodina, the Provincial Office for Roma Inclusion, the Roma Secretariat, local self governments, the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, kindergartens, schools, NGOs, etc. have all agreed that RTAs represent the best practice so far introduced, which should be developed and reinforced. Finally, the Bureau for the Assessment of Quality in Education launched an evaluation of the work of the RTA, showing their positive impact.

The National Council of the Roma National Minority and the Ministry of Education have implemented a program titled **Expanding Access to Preschool Education of Roma**

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[50] Terms of Reference*: Education for All – Increasing the Availability and Quality of Education for Children from Marginalised Groups* (EuropeAid/128424/C/SER/RS).

[51] Fund for an Open Society Serbia, *Indicators of Equal Access to Quality Education Report*, forthcoming.

Children with REF support. The program involved Local Roma Coordinators who linked parents, teachers, and local governments. There were three phases to the project:

- January–August 2006, where 632 children participated in preschools, 473 of whom became enrolled in the first grade of primary school in September 2006;
- January–July 2007, when 767 children were enrolled and attended preschool education; and
- September 2008–June 20–09, when approximately 450 children participated in pre-school.

There are no data for the latter two groups regarding the numbers starting first grade.

Inclusion of Roma in Education in Serbia, and Support to Continued Schooling by Establishing Links between Institutions and NGOs at the Local Level: Developmental Educational Centers in Ten Southern Serbian Municipalities. These activities, funded by UNICEF and the municipalities, have been in progress since 2005. They are carried out in Roma settlements, primary schools, Roma NGO premises, or in other premises provided by the local self-governments. Around 3,000 children have been covered by the program. Activities have consisted of educational work with preschool children, additional classes, and work with parents, local self-governments, and institutions.

Improvement of the Education of Roma in Southern Serbia. This program is supported by the Serbian government, the Swiss Development Agency, and the EU during 2005–2011. According to preliminary results, around 2,500 children and parents have been covered by the program; there has been 100 percent preschool preparatory program coverage; 92 percent of the children continue their schooling after fourth grade, and 27 assistants have been employed in preparatory preschool programs and primary schools.

Achieving Equality Together. The MoE implemented this program with the support of the Norwegian Government in 2006. The project supported the production of two documentaries on the education of Roma, created six school clubs, and Roma NGOs were established and equipped. There were 318 direct and 1,600 indirect beneficiaries.

Active Teaching/Learning Program, and Training Module for Teachers Working with Children from Ethnically Marginalized Communities. Activities within this project have been conducted since 2005 with the support of UNICEF. The project developed a module entitled "Pilot Program" which is being applied in schools.

Equal Chances in Secondary Schooling. This program is co-implemented by the Fund for an Open Society Serbia, the CIP-Center for Interactive Pedagogy, the NGO Association of Roma and Serbian Friendship *Stablo,* and the Roma Students' Union. It is funded by the Fund for an Open Society Serbia and the Pestalozzi Children's Foundation (1st cycle 2005–2007, 2nd cycle 2008–2010, and a possible 3rd cycle 2011–2013). Its goals are to develop a model of secondary schooling adapted to the needs of

Roma communities, and to contribute to the development of inclusive educational policies. The overall approach is to achieve the smooth inclusion of Roma students in vocational education and to open the system of education to systematic change. The philosophy of reaching both equal access as well as quality in academic performance is expressed through the change in Roma students' educational experience. This includes child-centered teaching practices, an attitude of social justice in secondary schools, improvement within the Roma community, and collaboration between the Roma and majority communities.

Roma Children IDPs/Returnees: from Language Barriers to Social Capital. This project was implemented by the Roma IDP Forum in cooperation with the MoE, and with REF's support in 2007–2008. The schooling of students from families repatriated to Serbia from the West has been rendered difficult by a number of open procedural issues. As a result of the project though, procedures and draft legal regulations were defined in cooperation with the MoE; standards and models were developed for Roma child returnees who will be learning Serbian as their second language.

Like other national minorities, Roma are entitled to study **Roma Language and Elements of National Culture.** The curriculum has been implemented more or less successfully in some communities for years now. In 2007–2008, the MoE and the Roma Information Centre focused on the curriculum of this elective subject for the first four grades, and the introduction of the subject in the higher primary school grades.

The MoE awarded scholarships for successful students to 117 Roma secondary school and 182 Roma university students in the 2008–2009 school year. Further, a **Scholarship Fund for Poor Secondary School Students** has been established within the State Program, supporting the education of vulnerable social groups under the framework of the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. In the 2007–2008 school year, the Fund offered 1,000 scholarships to students from impoverished families. Roma ethnic affiliation was one of the criteria taken into account when rating the applicants.

Three hundred secondary school students in Belgrade and Niš have been awarded scholarships via a project aiming to increase the coverage and performance of Roma secondary school students. This project was implemented by the Roma Education Center and the Child Roma Centre in the 2007–2008 school year with the support of REF. These organizations also implemented a project in 2008–2009 aiming to improve access to state scholarships and the performance of Roma secondary school students. The project involved 330 Roma students and 400 parents.

Under the project **Inclusion of Roma Students in Secondary Schools in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina** (implemented by the Vojvodina Education and Culture Secretariat in cooperation with the Vojvodina Roma Integration Council and the Roma College Student Association), financial and mentoring support was provided

for 353 Roma secondary school freshmen and their seniors during the 2007–2008 school year until graduation.

Functional Primary Education of Adult Roma was a pilot program implemented in the seventh and eighth grades in the 2006–2007 school year. Its primary purpose was to create a systemic solution for the primary education of adult Roma, and subsequently, other adults in Serbia with similar problems. The program set the strategic, programmatic, educational, and conceptual frameworks for designing and establishing the continued adjustment of the functional primary education system of adults – notably Roma.[52] The program was implemented by the Belgrade Faculty of Philosophy, Institute for Pedagogy and Adult Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Ministry of Education, the Human and Minority Rights Office (Roma Issues Department), the National Roma Council, the National Employment Service, and the Poverty Reduction Office. A total of 275 Roma between 15 and 35 years of age were involved in the program: 212 completed primary education, 168 underwent vocational training and 53 of them found a job.[53] The curriculum of functional primary education for the 7th and 8th grades was designed and approved – vocational training curricula was also designed, and teachers and assistants underwent training. A total of 319 people finished the 7th and 8th grades and were issued primary school certificates. Another 276 underwent vocational training.

Education for All: Increasing the Availability and Quality of Education for Children from Marginalised Groups. This is one of the two most important future projects, the other being the **Delivery of Improved Local Services (DILS)** project. DILS is being prepared and will be implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. It is supported by a loan from the World Bank/International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (2009–2012). A government website states that:

> The aim of this Project is strengthening institutional capacities in the Health Care, Education and Social Welfare Sectors at the local level in order to provide more efficient and accessible, equal quality services to the users, financed on "the money follows the person" principle, in a decentralized environment which considers the vulnerable user groups' needs.[54]

Improving the education of Roma is one of the project's priorities. Through DILS, training for policymakers and teaching staff will be organized, and school grants will be awarded to support inclusion.

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[52] Milivojević, 2008.

[53] *Ibid.*

[54] http://www.dils.gov.rs/indexe.html

Estimated number and percentage of Roma children not attending school

It is difficult to estimate how many Roma children never enrol in school, or drop out, but there is no doubt that the number of such children is extremely high, as attested by different sources:

- Roma children not enrolled in compulsory preschool (38 percent);[55]
- Roma children not enrolled in primary school (26 percent);[56]
- Roma children who have dropped out of primary school (74 percent enrol in primary school, 73 percent of whom drop out);[57]
- Roma children who have dropped out of secondary school (38 percent).[58]

The reasons for not enrolling in and/or dropping out of school are many and diverse, and include a family's financial situation,[59] the rigidity of the schools, the high levels of discrimination in them, and the lack of assistance to children in mastering the over-extensive curriculum. Exclusion from the education system is merely an indicator of the general marginalization of the Roma community.

Roma children: school performance and outcomes

According to the Centre for the Rights of the Child's survey of 76 schools in 2006, Roma children accounted for between 13 and 57 percent of children who had failed a grade.[60]

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[55] League for the Roma Decade, 2007.

[56] Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey – MICS 3.

[57] The explanation given for this is the following: 73 percent of 74 percent means if you have 100 children, 74 will enrol in primary school, but 54 of them will drop out, so only 20 will stay in school. Deputy Prime Minister, presentation at the Decade Steering Committee meeting, June 2008.

[58] Deputy Prime Minister, presentation at the Decade Steering Committee meeting, June 2008.

[59] A total of 117 of 262 (or 45 percent) of Roma between the ages 6–22 state that they are not attending school because of the high price of schooling. UNDP, *Vulnerable groups in Central and South Eastern Europe.*

[60] Government of Serbia, 2007.

Table 3. Data on the performance of Roma students in the 2002–2003 school year[61]

Student performance	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
% students*	7.4%	14.8%	33.7%	20.7%	23.4%

* Percentage of the total number of Roma students for whom performance data were available (14,070).

Although there are no data on 1st grade enrolment for every generation, 2002–2003 data from the MoE show that the number of 8th grade Roma students is three times smaller than that of 1st grade Roma pupils: 3,206 enrolled in 1st grade, and 944 in the 8th grade that year.

Data of national tests given at the end of 3rd grade by the national Bureau for the Assessment of Quality in Education in the 2003–2004 school year show that the performance of Roma children is much poorer than that of the majority population. The overall average grade (on a scale of 1 to 5, five being the highest grade) achieved by Roma students stood at 3.25, while other students attained an average of 4.36. Roma students scored an average of 2.79 in the Serbian language, while other students attained an average of 4.01. The average grade in Math was 2.79, whereas other students scored 3.75. Sixty percent of Roma students were in the bottom 20 percent for Serbian language tests; and 59.4 percent of Roma students were in the bottom 20 concerning Math tests. However, only 4.1 percent of Roma students in the Serbian test; and 2.1 percent of Roma students in the Math test reached the top-performing 20 percent.

1.3 Discrimination and segregation of Roma in education

Discrimination against Roma in Serbia

Results of the survey "Public Opinion about Discrimination and Inequality in Serbia" show that there is discrimination against Roma in Serbia, and that the Serbian public is aware of its existence. According to the poll, the most discriminated groups in Serbia are Roma, poor people, and persons with physical and intellectual disabilities (more than 60 percent of respondents believe that these groups are discriminated against quite a lot or very much). They feel discrimination is most prominent in the fields of

[61] World Bank, 2004.

employment, career opportunities, health, judiciary, political activity, social protection, police conduct, education (41 percent), and housing.[62]

A survey of families in 56 Roma settlements with 2,737 children attending 78 schools[63] demonstrates how many children complained to their parents because they had been victims of ethnic slurs. Their parents were of the opinion that schools had taken adequate measures in 226 out of the 345 cases in which the children's peers had been reported for ethnic taunting, and in 35 out of the 56 cases in which the teachers had been reported for insulting their children. Seventy percent of the parents think that teachers treat Roma children equally, while 30 percent think Roma are treated differently by teachers.

Table 4. Children's complaints of being victims of ethnic slurs[64]

Very often		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
By other children	By teachers	By other children	By teachers	By other children	By teachers	By other children	By teachers
111	15	435	92	584	346	1,592	2,193

Some forms of discrimination against Roma in education are covert. For instance, teachers tend to have lower expectations of Roma than of other students – lower expectations result in lower achievements. Further to the trend of teachers lowering the standards for Roma, it appears that Roma pupils are also more frequently placed in classes with a lower quality of instruction. Data from the National Assessment of Pupils of the Third Grade of Primary School reveal that over 40 percent of Roma pupils are in classes with the lowest quality of teaching, while only around 20 percent of non-Roma pupils are in such classes. The "quality of teaching" is here assessed based on an estimate of student achievements in each class, while applying a control to the data for socio-economic status. The sample included 5,000 students from 212 classes, within 113 schools. The situation is reversed in classes with the highest quality of

[62] This public opinion survey was conducted for the purposes of the project **Support to the Implementation of Anti-Discrimination Legislation and Mediation in Serbia**, implemented by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the United Nations Development Program with the support of the European Commission, February, 2009.

[63] Interview with Angelina Skarep, MoE RD Valjevo adviser, in reference to the project **Protection of Children of Roma Nationality from Discrimination** conducted by the MoE and the Minority Rights Centre with REF's support.

[64] *Ibid.*

instruction; around 39 percent of non-Roma pupils are taught in such classes, as opposed to just above 20 percent of Roma pupils.[65]

Forms of educational segregation in Serbia

Segregation in mainstream schools

Segregation is a process affected by numerous factors. In Serbia, it is not the result of a strategy (*de facto*), but the consequence of a number of factors, including: segregation in housing; insufficient accessibility to the education system; high social distance and discrimination from teachers, other children, and their parents; choice of, or transfer to a more friendly school; unwarranted enrolment in special schools; or transfer from regular to special schools. There are no official data on the number of students in various forms of segregated classes and schools in Serbia.

In Serbia, the instances of Roma-majority primary and/or comprehensive mainstream schools are not too common. There is one school which is well known for being a Roma-dominant school, and therefore a segregated school; Roma account for over 80 percent of the students of this primary school in Niš. The school is close to a large Roma settlement and a large number of children naturally tend to enrol. As the number of Roma students has risen over the years, the quality of tuition has fallen. Rather than providing additional support to the students to master the curriculum, the teachers have lowered their criteria to keep the students in school. A lack of concern from the city authorities has been reflected in the poor working conditions at the school. The community has a negative attitude not only towards the students, but towards their teachers as well. As time has gone by, fewer and fewer non-Roma students enrolled in the school; even well-off Roma families have transferred their children to other, more reputable schools in town.[66]

The literature mentions three schools with segregated classes, but there are probably a greater number of such schools. During Minority Rights Centre research, when asked about segregation, schools listed the following as reasons: Roma children were enrolled later when classes had already been formed; Roma children are older than the other children in class; parents of other children are opposed to having Roma children in class; Roma students do not speak the language spoken in school.[67] All these schools are undertaking specific desegregation measures and activities, but this problem is easier to prevent than to address once it appears.

There is justified apprehension in the educational and policymaking community that a greater ratio of Roma children in education will lead to an increase in various forms of

[65] Open Society Institute, 2007.

[66] Please see case study in Serbian report, Open Society Institute, 2007, p. 585.

[67] Open Society Institute, 2007.

segregation unless a whole set of necessary preparatory measures and activities are conducted, both within the education system and the Roma community.

Segregation in special schools and special classes in Serbia

Previous research has pointed to the fact that Roma children are overrepresented in special schools. This is certainly the case across Central-Eastern Europe.[68] Such overrepresentation of any one group of people in such institutions is alarming, since statistically it is highly unlikely (or not possible) that any one group of people would comprise such a high percentage in need of such education.[69] This points to the fact that Roma children are misplaced in such schools, via overt and covert systems and processes, which need to be uncovered and changed.

No extensive primary research on the number of Roma students in special schools had been conducted until this project. Up until now, the literature has mostly stated that Roma account for 50–80 percent of students within special schools for children with intellectual disabilities,[70] and most quote UNICEF as the source.[71] The competent institutions in Serbia, however, do not have official data on the ethnic breakdown of students in special schools or mainstream schools. This is expected to change in the future; data collected by the EIB in 2009 are being processed at the moment and the MoE is reforming its statistical system.

A survey conducted by Save the Children and the Centre for the Rights of the Child in five cities in 2006 (two Belgrade municipalities, Subotica, Vranje, Niš and Kragujevac) shows that around one-third of the students attending special primary education in these towns were Roma.[72] The share of Roma students in special secondary schools in these towns ranged from one-third in the lower grades to two-fifths in the senior grades.

It cannot be denied, though, that the problem of overrepresentation of Roma children in the system of special education has for some time been recognized as a problem. One research study from as far back as 1997[73] states that:

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[68] See, for example, ERRC, 2004.

[69] The Amici Brief in regards to D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic (with comments by the International Step by Step Association, the Roma Education Fund, and the European Early Childhood Education Research Association) pursuant to Article 36:2 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Rule 44:2 of the Rules of the European Court of Human Rights provides evidence challenging assertions that children from a particular ethnic group have learning disabilities immoderately out of proportion with that of a normal distribution.

[70] See Roma Education Fund, 2007; Kočić Rakočević & Miljević, 2003.

[71] UNICEF Belgrade, 2001.

[72] Centre for the Rights of the Child, 2006.

[73] Arsenović-Pavlović, 1997.

> Special school is not the appropriate institution for the social promotion and integration of Roma in our society (the majority nation) for a number of reasons. This paper outlines the empirical results of several studies aimed at researching the abilities and knowledge of Roma children in special schools on the one hand, and the content of undergraduate disability studies, on the other hand. These studies train professionals who will work with this population, which is still treated in psychology and disability studies as a 'psychopathological' or psychological category and not as an ethnoclass. The paper proposes specific solutions to the problem (how to organise the education of Roma children and how to incorporate the knowledge in undergraduate disability studies).

Segregation in adult education schools

Adult education within the formal education system is available to persons who did not attend or complete compulsory primary education, and are over 15 years of age (the upper age limit for attendance in a mainstream primary school). The curriculum is reduced to literacy and basic math operations, and persons who earn this formally valid certificate do not have the knowledge they need to continue schooling.

A large number of Roma attend adult education classes, many of whom are under 15 years of age and should be attending mainstream primary schools. Official data show that Roma account for 75–80 percent of students attending adult education schools.[74] UNICEF also notes this problem[75] (as do data in research conducted by the Roma Children's Centre),[76] declaring that Roma children account for as much as 90 percent of the students. Save the Children, and the Centre for the Rights of the Child, found that Roma accounted for 98 percent of the students[77] enrolled in the first grade in three Adult Education Schools in the 2005–2006 academic year. According to the same study, 66 percent of students graduating from those schools in the 2004–2005 academic year were Roma.

Views of social inclusion among future teachers

Professors of the Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation (FASPER) recently conducted a survey on the inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities at a number of university departments, such as the Teachers' College, the Faculty of Political Sciences (Social Policy and Social Work Department), the Faculty of Philosophy (departments of Psychology and Pedagogy), the Faculty of Economics, and the Faculty of Electrical Engineering. The survey (the results of which have not yet been

[74] Government of Serbia, 2007.

[75] UNICEF, 2007.

[76] Kočić Rakočević & Miljević, 2003.

[77] Centre for the Rights of the Child, 2006.

published) shows that future teachers are just as neutral towards inclusion as future economists and engineers. Future social workers, psychologists, and pedagogues have a positive attitude towards inclusion, while future kindergarten teachers have extremely negative views of it.

The survey showed that Serbian students have mixed positive and restrictive views in comparison to other countries (where students had a more positive attitude), where one instrument was applied.[78] Although the survey does not focus on views towards Roma, it indicates the need to effect changes in the teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of excluded groups.

1.4 Anti-discrimination activities

Discrimination against Roma in the education system has been recognized as a serious problem and is the focus of relevant national strategic documents: the *Strategy for the Integration and Empowerment of Roma*; the *National Strategy for the Improvement of the Status of Roma as of 2009*; one of the accompanying 13 action plans, *Discrimination and Similar Issues: Draft Strategy for the Improvement of the Education of Roma in the Republic of Serbia*; and the *Common Action Plan for the Improvement of the Education of Roma in the Republic of Serbia* in which the problem of segregation is elaborated within the 3rd goal, "Respect of diversity and development of multicultural values", of the latter document.[79]

Discrimination in education was one of the two topics selected during Serbia's chairmanship of the Decade of Roma Inclusion[80] (the other was housing). Experts put together a questionnaire entitled "Discriminatory Treatment of Roma Students in Public Education", which described 17 forms of discrimination. All Decade countries were asked to pilot this instrument, and results were shown at the XVI International Steering Committee Meeting of the Decade which was held in Belgrade in 2009.

The MoE filled in the questionnaire on behalf of Serbia and the League for Decade education committee filled it in on behalf of the civil sector. Their assessments are alarming as they maintain that Roma children are victims of all forms of discrimination. The committee estimated that over 50 percent of Roma children are subjected to 12 forms of discrimination, while the MoE assessed that they are victims of six forms. Segregation accounts for much of the discrimination against Roma in education. The table below reviews the forms of discrimination within the framework of the mainstream school system assessed by this questionnaire.

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[78] Interview with Professor Nenad Glumbić, FASPER.

[79] Text in the 2009 Action Plan, which does not differ much from the 2004 document.

[80] Serbia held the Chair of the Decade between June 2008–June 2009.

Table 5. Results of the questionnaire "Discriminatory Treatment of Roma Students in Public Education"

MoE Assessment	Form of discrimination	Committee* assessment
10–30%**	Segregation of Roma by enrolling them in separate classes in mainstream schools	Less than 10%
10–30%	Segregation of Roma as the consequence of "white flight"	Less than 10%
10–30%	Educational segregation of Roma on the basis of housing segregation	10–30%
10–30%	Lower quality of preschool education for Roma children	30–50%
30–50%	Barriers for school enrolment/Disproportionate number of Roma children are not enrolled in compulsory education	30–50%
30–50%	Roma student achievement at the end of compulsory education is lower compared to non-Roma students	50–70%
30–50%	Wrongful assignment to special education	50–70%
50–70%	Lower quality of education for Roma in regular compulsory education	50–70%
50–70%	Lack of textbooks and teaching materials for Roma	50–70%
30–50%	Harassment by peers and teachers	70–90%
30–50%	Disproportionately high ratio of Roma attending shorter vocational secondary schools	70–90%
30–50%	Lower completion rate of Roma students in compulsory education	70–90%
30–50%	Disproportionate dropping out of Roma students from compulsory education	70–90%
50–70%	Barriers for enrolment in preschool education	More than 90%
50–70%	Lower enrolment rate of Roma in post-compulsory education	More than 90%
50–70%	Roma students and parents are disproportionately less involved in available forms of student or parent participation in compulsory education	More than 90%
70–90%	Roma history and culture are presented in the curriculum and textbooks in a way that reinforces negative stereotypes and discrimination	More than 90%

* League for Decade education committee
** % of Roma children who are victims of a specific form of discrimination

The MoE described measures it had taken to address the problem of harassment of Roma by their peers and teachers because of their Roma identity. The MoE lists three strategic measures it implemented to counter forms of discrimination found in the questionnaire:

1. The *Special Protocol on safeguarding children from violence, abuse and neglect in educational institutions,*[81] published by the MoE in cooperation with UNICEF, the British Council, and Civic Initiatives, binds schools to carry out preventive activities and to apply established procedures in their everyday work to address violence in schools.

2. The *Manual for support to the development of an anti-discriminatory culture in educational institutions* includes and describes indicators and descriptors (i.e. indicators of forms of discrimination/desirable non-discriminatory situations) and procedures for encouraging and maintaining an anti-discriminatory culture. It also describes the roles of specific stakeholders in general and in schools, thus providing guidelines for protecting students from violence. The *Manual for support to the development of an anti-discriminatory culture in educational institutions* was designed within the **Project on the protection of Roma children from discrimination** conducted by the MoE and the Minority Rights Centre with support from REF. It amends the descriptions of school quality levels set out in the *Manual for the self-evaluation and evaluation of schools*. The 2009–2011 period will be devoted to training principals and school psychologists and pedagogues in applying the *Manual* and to parent outreach. The *Guidebook for Parents, Supporting the Development of an Anti-Discriminatory Culture and Resolution of Discrimination Cases* was also created and distributed to schools.

3. The MoE has issued official instructions to all primary and secondary schools to draft programs on safeguarding children from violence and to set up school teams to protect children from the same. These teams are duty-bound to regularly report on the situation to the school administrations, and to undertake activities to that aim.

The new 2007 *Rulebook on Professional-Pedagogical Supervision* regulates professional-pedagogical supervision and defines the criteria for evaluating the work of educational institutions. Supervisory activities of educational advisers involve the evaluation of the quality of work of the schools; they will also be obliged to establish the degree of anti-

[81] The Protocol, adopted in 2007, is in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the National Action Plan for Children, and the General Protocol on Safeguarding of Children from Violence, Abuse and Neglect. The Protocol lists preventive activities and defines procedures for safeguarding children from violence, specifying the roles of all those involved in the work of educational institutions.

discriminatory culture developed in schools.[82] More on achieving quality assurance will be discussed in section 2.8.

The MoE has announced that it plans to address this problem systemically and that special attention will be devoted to the anti-discriminatory approach for all students.

Efforts on behalf of civil society are also an important step forward in ending discrimination in education. The implementation of the project **Creating Conditions for Achieving an Equitable Policy of Enrolment in the First Grade of Primary School**,[83] has the main goal of radically suppressing discrimination against Roma children in education by cutting down their number in special schools and creating conditions for achieving an equitable policy of enrolment in the first grade of primary school. The aims of the project include: to analyze the existing practice applied during enrolment testing (testing methodology, the content of the test, the testing environment, and possible preparation for testing) by professional services and the Roma community; and to formulate recommendations on the basis of the analysis and disseminate them to preschool institutions, primary schools, the Roma community, and professionals. The recommendations are to focus on abolishing the current bad practice which leads to an eliminatory enrolment policy and the referral of Roma children to special schools. The timeframe for implementation was October 2008–January 2009. The project, however, is still not completed. The implementers are preparing a brochure and recommendations, but not all documents have yet been made public.

[82] Interview with Angelina Skarep, MoE RD Valjevo adviser, leader of the MoE Team for monitoring the implementation of the (Common) Action Plan for the Improvement of Education of Roma.

[83] The project is implemented by the Child Roma Centre on behalf of the League for the Roma Decade Education Board, and is funded by the Fund for an Open Society Serbia (2008/09).

2. THE SYSTEM OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN SERBIA

2.1 Regulations/Legislation

Interpretations of legislation on schooling children with developmental difficulties are quite diverse. Some believe that special schools, staffed by professionals applying special curricula, protect the rights of children with specific developmental features. Others argue that such schooling constitutes a violation of the child's rights because such a child is excluded from the mainstream education system, and has more difficulty in continuing school and finding a job. Many experts, parents and NGOs perceive the separate education of children in special schools and classes as an act of discrimination, and advocate the children's right to be placed in mainstream schools and receive professional support there, or from specialized institutions.

Legislation and policies governing special schools and special classes

"Everyone shall have the right to education. Primary education is mandatory and free, whereas secondary education is free. All citizens shall have access under equal conditions to higher education." (Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, 2006, article 71: Right to Education)[84]

The establishment and work of special schools is regulated by general and specific laws on education; most of their provisions regard schools in general. The specific features of special schools are defined in separate chapters and/or articles. Special classes and their formation are mentioned only with respect to curricula/work programs.

Valid Laws on Education:

- Law on the Basis of the Education System (2009),[85] for all levels of education; the only law regulating preschool education;[86]
- Primary School Law;[87]
- Secondary School Law;[88]
- Law on Higher Education.[89]

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[84] http://www.parlament.gov.rs/content/eng/akta/ustav/ustav_ceo.asp

[85] http://www.parlament.gov.rs/content/cir/akta/akta_detalji.asp?Id=382&t=Z

[86] http://www.parlament.gov.rs/content/eng/akta/ustav/ustav_ceo.asp

[87] *Official Gazette,* 22/02.

[88] *Official Gazette*, 23/2002, 62/2003 and 64/2003.

[89] *Official Gazette,* 76/2005.

The Law on the Basis of the Education System (2009)

The new Law on the Basis of the Education System was adopted during the creation of this report, in 2009, and is described in more detail later. This report contains references to the old Law, because it regulated education at the time the research was being conducted, and describes the chief changes that it brought about.

The Law on the Basis of the Education System (2004)

"The education system shall provide: education suiting the child, i.e. student's level of development and age" (Art. 2, para. 4); and "equal opportunities for the education of children and students with developmental difficulties" (Art. 2, para. 5).

Right to Education, Article 4 states: "Citizens of Serbia shall be equal in realising their right to education notwithstanding their gender, race, language, national or religious affiliation, age, physical or psychological constitution, social or cultural background, economic status, political orientation or another personal feature" (para. 2).

"Persons with developmental difficulties, adults and persons with special abilities are entitled to education respecting their particular educational needs in accordance with this Law and a separate law" (para. 4).

Article 29 of the Law provides for the schooling of children with developmental difficulties in primary and secondary schools, which may also provide the students with boarding. Preschool education of children with developmental difficulties is mentioned in Article 30, which allows for the implementation of special and tailored curricula in preschool institutions, primary and secondary schools.

In Chapter 6, entitled "Education of Students with Developmental Difficulties", the Primary School Law defines the types of disabilities and regulates various issues regarding the referral of children to special schools, curricula, number of students per class (Art. 90), special school teaching staff, parental rights, etc. The following sections provide more detail about the provisions of this Law.

"A child with developmental difficulties shall acquire primary education in accordance with this Law and enrol in school on the basis of a decision establishing the type and level of developmental difficulty" (Art. 83).

The Law provides for the schooling of children undergoing medical treatment in hospital or at home (Art. 29). The correctional pedagogical work with students with minor physical or psychological disabilities provided for by Art. 31 is not implemented in practice. Evidence for this is found in the EIB document which says:

> The Primary School Law does not oblige mainstream schools to open special classes for children with developmental difficulties or to enrol such children in mainstream classes; therefore mainstream schools are totally inaccessible

> and discriminatory with respect to the realisation of a child's right to education.[90]

In the chapter entitled "Schooling", the Secondary School Law regulates enrolment in secondary school in exactly the same way as the Primary School Law – pursuant to a decision taken by the municipal administration and the number of students per class, duration of classes, adoption of curricula, etc.

According to the Law on the Basis of the Education System (2004), it "does not stipulate the enrolment of children with disabilities and developmental difficulties in mainstream primary and secondary schools and kindergartens. It merely provides for the following interpretation: that the decision to establish a special class, or include such students in mainstream education shall be taken by the management authority and principal. It may be presumed that the realization of this right depends on individual decisions."[91]

New regulations facilitating positive changes

In 2008, the Serbian authorities adopted a Strategy for the Improvement of the Status of Roma and an Action Plan for its implementation, which includes an education plan.

The Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination was adopted in 2009.

The Law on the Basis of the Education System, also adopted in 2009, includes a number of important items. This section shall focus on those that will impact the most on the schooling of Roma students and students with developmental difficulties.[92]

The Law essentially opens mainstream schools to all children. Mainstream schools have to date been closed to children from marginalized groups. Such children shall no longer attend special schools, which will enrol only children with multiple disabilities who cannot attend mainstream schools. Under the new Law, students of special schools will be able to transfer from special to mainstream schools (only the opposite has been the case to date). Mainstream schools are to provide all the additional support to students from now on. The education system shall focus on the strengths and abilities of the child, and his/her needs and potentials. The teaching program and

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[90] Education Improvement Bureau, 2007, p. 14.

[91] Education Improvement Bureau, 2007.

[92] The researchers were told about the changes to be introduced by the Draft Law and the MoE's plans to develop quality inclusive education during their interviews with MoE State Secretary, Tinde Kovač Cerović and MoE Adviser on Education of Students with Developmental Difficulties, Danijela Vuković.

methodology shall no longer concentrate on the type of developmental difficulty, but will be planned and implemented to suit individual students.[93]

The new Law defines the system of education as inclusive for all children; all other laws regulating various levels of education are to be harmonized with that principle.

Importantly, the new Law contains crucial anti-discrimination legislation:

- "Activities endangering, degrading, discriminating against or singling out a person or a group of persons on grounds of race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, sex, developmental difficulty or disability, health, age, social and cultural origin, financial standing or political orientation and encouragement of, or the failure to prevent such activities on grounds specified in the anti-discrimination law shall be prohibited in the institution.
- "Any direct or indirect, open or tacit exclusion or restriction of rights and freedoms, unequal treatment or omission to act or unjustifiable differentiation by obsequiousness or preference shall constitute discrimination of a person or a group of persons.
- "Special measures introduced to achieve full equality, the protection and progress of a person or group of persons not enjoying an equal status shall not constitute discrimination.
- "The following shall be prohibited in the institution: physical, psychological and social violence; abuse and neglect of children and students; physical punishment and personal insult, and the sexual abuse of students and employees. Article 45 [on] social violence shall denote exclusion of a child and student from a peer group and from various forms of social activities of the institution."[94]

According to the 2009 Law on the Basis of the Education System, general principles of the education system, general outputs and education standards, especially those regarding the access, quality, and function of education are defined quite differently from the 2004 Law. The right to education is elaborated in greater detail. The provision clearly sets out that: "[p]ersons with developmental difficulties and disabilities shall be entitled to education recognising their educational needs in the mainstream education system and shall be provided with additional individual or group assistance in a special preschool group or school in accordance with this Law and a separate law" (Art. 6).

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[93] The researchers were told about the changes to be introduced by the Draft Law and MoE's plans to develop quality inclusive education during their interviews with MoE State Secretary, Tinde Kovač Cerović, and MoE Adviser on Education of Students with Developmental Difficulties, Danijela Vuković.

[94] 2009 Law on the Basis of the Education System, Article 44.

In the Law, the prohibition of violence, abuse, and neglect is explicit and elaborated in detail. Further, it states that: "[t]he funding of activities of educational institutions shall be based on the economic price of implementing the education programme per child and student".

Mainstream education: preschool education

Preschool institutions will still be able to establish developmental groups to enable the inclusion of all children in the education system. The new Law on Preschool Education, which was being drafted at the time this report was completed, is to ensure that these groups are open and that children are not isolated from their peers.

All children, both those in developmental and in so-called mainstream preschool groups, shall attend the identical compulsory Preschool Preparatory Program (PPP). A new PPP curriculum is to be designed.

Enrolment in primary school

According to the 2009 Law, every child between six and a half and seven and a half years old at the beginning of the school year shall be enrolled in the first grade. Children from vulnerable groups can enrol without having complete documentation. The Law states: "[t]he examination of the child enrolled in school shall be conducted by the school psychologist and pedagogue in the child's native language by the application of standard procedures and instruments recommended by the competent bureau i.e. authorised professional organisation. In the event the child cannot be assessed in his/her native language, the school shall hire an interpreter at the proposal of the national minority council. The assessment of children with motor and sensory disabilities shall be conducted by applying the form of testing the child can reply optimally to" (Art. 98).

The *modus operandi* and purpose of the CCB shall change entirely. These CCBs shall become Inter-sectoral Commissions for the assessment of needs for additional educational, health, or social support for children with developmental difficulties and disabilities. The MoE formed a working group of government and civil sector experts that will coordinate activities on drafting a decree on the assessment of child needs, and the work of such commissions (composition, procedures, etc.). The working group includes experts from, and cooperates with, the MoE, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry for State Administration and Local Self-Government. It will also develop models of support to be provided to each child during his/her schooling in mainstream schools. The Inter-sectoral Commission will be entrusted with assessing the type of additional support each individual child needs, and how that support can be provided.

The Law also states: "[p]rimary and secondary school curricula comprise compulsory and elective subjects by grade and forms of educational work (regular, catch-up and advanced classes and other forms of educational work)" (Art. 73).

Mainstream education: primary school education

The 2009 Law does not mention the possibility of forming special classes; it is assumed they will be abolished. As an alternative, students in need of additional support will receive it individually and in groups.

Support to children during schooling shall be provided as necessary in mainstream schools in accordance with the assessments of the Inter-sectoral Commission and inclusive education teams, which shall be established by the school principals. The teams shall design individual educational plans in cooperation with the children's parents and other experts if necessary. "In the event funds are required to provide the additional support, the school shall submit a request in writing to the delegated doctor in the competent outpatient health clinic to assess the needs for providing additional educational, health, or social support." (Art. 98)

Under the 2009 Law, the individual educational plans for children with developmental difficulties may be adjusted at two levels:

1. methodologically for children with physical disabilities or sensory impairments – they will still be expected to fulfill the set achievement standards, but teachers will apply different working methods and/or introduce new didactic aids;
2. the achievement standards in specific subjects will be adjusted for students who cannot achieve national standards – these students shall be graded in accordance with the adjusted standards.

Schools will be able to hire new staff: pedagogical assistants. This position will allow them to hire Roma teaching assistants, and let personal assistants of students with developmental difficulties enter the school when necessary.

There are several pre-emptive mechanisms designed to preclude dropping out and/or being transferred to special schools:

- pedagogical assistants shall monitor the schooling of Roma students and take pre-emptive measures;[95]
- grade and subject teachers shall spend 24 hours a week working directly with the students, holding regular, advanced, and catch-up classes and helping out individual students;
- discrimination of students shall be explicitly prohibited – the MoE is planning a set of activities to deal with this problem;
- the school (i.e. the principal) shall be held responsible for students' achievements;

[95] The establishent and work of the Roma teaching assistant is described in section 1.2 under the heading "Governmental and non-governmental initiatives to improve enrolment K – tertiary education".

- parents of students belonging to a national minority, and students with developmental difficulties shall be proportionately represented in school parent councils.

Secondary education

Under the 2009 Law, in Article 91, persons from vulnerable social groups and under 17 years of age may acquire secondary or vocational education without attending class (i.e. by taking end-of-year exams in subjects) in the event that they can justify why they are unable to attend class regularly. Such persons may be exempted from paying tuition fees, with a view to ensuring full equity in education.

Special education

Special schools shall continue to operate, but they will take in children with severe or multiple disabilities. Such children shall be enrolled in such schools in the event the Inter-sectoral Commission has reached the expert assessment that they cannot attend mainstream school, and the parents have given their consent. These schools are mostly educating children with light (and more rarely, moderate) disabilities, but hardly any students with severe or multiple disabilities. The vast majority of the latter do not receive any education at all.

Mainstream and special schools shall establish links and networks, and a model of their cooperation shall be developed.

The MoE shall, over the following year, draft the subsidiary legislation, collect good practice examples, and conduct training. Inclusion shall begin in the 2010–2011 school year, first in well-prepared and experienced schools with a positive attitude towards inclusion, and will over time expand to other educational institutions. The MoE is aware that a lot of time and effort will have to be invested to transform the current educational system into an inclusive one. There is still quite a lot of resistance to inclusive education among experts and the public at large, although the long-standing work of civil society has yielded results, and increased awareness and understanding of the need to integrate individuals and groups who are now excluded from normal life and mainstream education.

The MoE is currently working on drafting a preschool education law, and the adaptation of the Primary School Law and the Secondary School Law to the new Law on the Basis of the Education System.

Other relevant regulations

Social and health-care laws regulate the specific rights of children who have been declared by relevant decisions as suffering from developmental difficulties; they also regulate the rights of these children's families. For instance, the Law on the Social Care

of Children[96] lays down the right to allowances such as child benefits for families with low incomes even after the child turns 19, caretaker allowances, etc. The Healthcare Law states that children with special needs shall have health insurance on the basis of their parents' insurance and, if the parents are not insured, their children's healthcare shall be provided at the expense of the Serbian state budget.

Prohibiting discrimination

Article 46 of the Law on the Basis of the Education System from 2004 prohibits discrimination in educational institutions: "activities jeopardizing, disparaging or discriminating against groups and individuals (on the grounds of their color, gender, ethnic or religious affiliation, language, physical or psychological constitution, social or cultural background, economic status or political orientation), and incitement to such activities shall be prohibited in educational institutions. Discrimination of a child (i.e. a student) shall entail every direct or indirect differentiation or privilege, exclusion or restriction, the goal of which would be to prevent the realization of the rights, derogate the rights, or end the equal treatment of the child (i.e. the student)."

In 2009 the Serbian Assembly adopted the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination regulating the prohibition of discrimination in general, forms and instances of discrimination, and procedures for protection from discrimination (Art. 1). Article 2 lists in detail the personal features on the grounds of which no-one may be subjected to discriminatory treatment. The Law states in Article 19, Discrimination in the Fields of Education and Vocational Training, that:

> Everyone shall be entitled to preschool, primary, secondary and higher education, and vocational training under identical conditions pursuant to the law.
>
> Hindering or preventing a person or a group of persons from enrolling in an educational institution on the grounds of their personal features, or excluding them from such institutions, hindering or preventing their attendance in class and participation in other educational activities, classifying students by their personal features, the abuse, unjustified differentiation or unequal treatment of students in any other way shall be prohibited.
>
> Discrimination of educational institutions conducting activities in accordance with the law and other regulations, and of persons who had been the beneficiaries of these institutions in accordance with the law shall be prohibited.

The discriminatory feature of a separate schooling for children with developmental difficulties becomes even more prominent in light of this Law, especially in cases where

[96] *Official Gazette* 49/92, 29/93, 53/93, 67/93, 28/94, 47/94, 48/94, 25/96, 29/01, 16/02 & 62/03.

parents want their children schooled in mainstream schools, and where children are able to successfully complete such schools with specific support.

Strategies and action plans

In 2002, the Draft Strategy for the Integration and Empowerment of Roma (Federal Ministry for Minority and Ethnic Communities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) was completed, but not officially approved. In 2004, within the preparation for the Decade of Roma Inclusion, action plans in housing, employment, health, and education (Common Action Plan for the Improvement of Education of Roma – CAP) were created and adopted by the government of the Republic of Serbia as a part of this strategy.

The Common Action Plan for the Improvement of the Education of Roma in the Republic of Serbia is based on the Strategy for the Improvement of the Education of Roma, which was created (but not officially approved) in 2003 by the Ministry of Education and Sport (now the Ministry of Education) in cooperation with the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, experts, and the civil sector. CAP describes measures within four goals:

1. inclusion of Roma in the education system and ensuring continuity in schooling;
2. ensuring quality education;
3. developing tolerance and respect for diversities; and
4. nourishing cultural identity.

The Strategy for Integration and Empowerment of Roma was amended and adopted by the Serbian government in 2009 and is now called the National Strategy for Improving the Status of Roma. The chapter on education focuses *inter alia* on the issue of overrepresentation of Roma in special schools. An action plan for the implementation of this strategy included 13 action plans (amended or developed), including a (Common) Action Plan for the Improvement of Education of Roma (amended Common Action Plan for the Improvement of Education of Roma).

The MoE formed a core team comprising experts in all departments for the implementation of the Action Plan for education. The broader implementation team also includes representatives of the civil sector and international organizations. Apart from a set of measures and activities aimed at preventing the unjustified enrolment and transfer of Roma children to special schools, there are plans to elaborate the reclassification procedure after the first educational cycle, and to have a program for transferring children from special to mainstream schools.

A number of local strategies/action plans[97] for the improvement of education of Roma are developed based on experiences in Niš and Kragujevac.[98]

The *Poverty Reduction Strategy*, the *National Plan for Children* and other relevant documents focus on the education of Roma from the viewpoints of child rights, increasing employability, and reducing poverty.

2.2 Structure of the system

The position of the special education system within the education system in general

There is only one education system in Serbia. However, regulations and practice have led to the *de facto* parallel existence of two independent systems: the so-called special schools for students with developmental difficulties, and the so-called mainstream schools. These two systems rarely cross paths, usually only when children are transferred from mainstream to special schools.

The establishment of special schools or classes is regulated by the Law on the Basis of the Education System, 2004, which states: "[t]he institution may be established by the Republic, autonomous province, local self-government unit, [or] another legal or natural person" (Art. 31). "The institution may organize a separate class outside its headquarters, which shall not have the status of a legal person" (Art. 34).

The institution may be established, begin work, and conduct educational activity in the event it has a sufficient number of students, a curriculum, facilities, human resources and financial means, and fulfils hygienic and technical requirements. According to the Primary School Law, Article 91: "a school of a minimum of eight classes may be established for the education of students with developmental difficulties". The school may conduct preschool, primary, and secondary education activities for children suffering from the same type of developmental difficulty in accordance with the Law. The school may provide accommodation and food in the form of day care or permanent placement.

The establishment of special classes in mainstream schools and developmental groups in preschool institutions is not regulated by law. In practice, such classes and groups are established in accordance with a decision taken by the school board (i.e. the kindergarten management board, with the consent of the MoE).

Special schools cooperate with the relevant authorities dealing with education, health, social care, the local administration, boarding homes, NGOs and donors.

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[97] Available online at http://www.prsp.sr.gov.yu

[98] These cities created action plans within the Fund for an Open Society Serbia and the CIP-Center for Interactive Pedagogy project Equal Chances – Integration of Roma Children and Youth into the Educational System.

School management and administration

The law does not differentiate between the management of mainstream and of special schools. The regulations applying to both are laid down in the 2004 Law on the Basis of the Education System.

Schools are managed by their boards, and kindergartens by management boards (the ensuing text refers to both boards). The board comprises three staff representatives, three representatives of parents, and three representatives of the local self-government unit who are appointed and dismissed by the local self-government assembly.

The school parents' councils comprise a representative of each class (at least 15 parents in kindergartens) who refer their proposals, questions and views to the board, the principal, and the institution's professional bodies. The parents' council nominates parent representatives to the board and proposes measures for ensuring the quality and advancement of educational work and elective subjects. It reviews the use of funds, working conditions, and student safety; it gives its consent to excursions and school nature programs, etc. (2004 Law, Art. 57).

Historically, the actual involvement of Roma parents in parents' councils has been a challenge, with little real involvement. The **Education of Roma: Solution for the Future** project, which is aimed at involving Roma parents in school management bodies, has successfully implemented a school board and parents' council in five Valjevo primary schools thanks to REF support. The project is conducted by the Roma Centre for Democracy, the schools' management, the MoE RD, and the local self-government.

As a result of this program, Roma parents have been included by affirmative action in the parents' councils, and school boards and have undergone the appropriate training to partake in the work of these bodies. A Forum of Roma Parents has also been set up. The schools in which the project was implemented conducted analyses of the needs of the Roma community, and revised their school development plans accordingly. There are plans to implement the project in other cities as well.

The 2009 Law introduces some changes regarding parents' involvement: parents of children from national minorities, and children with developmental disabilities shall be proportionately included in the parents' council; the councils participate in the procedure of textbook selection, they review and evaluate school documents and their implementation (Art. 58).

Article 66 of the 2004 Law states that professional bodies shall be charged with ensuring and advancing the quality of education, monitoring the realization of the education program, and evaluating the work of school and kindergarten teachers, pedagogues/psychologists, children and students, etc.

According to the Law on the Basis of the Education System 2004, "Kindergarten professional bodies shall comprise the educational council and professional sections established in accordance with the statute. School professional bodies shall comprise: a

teachers' council; a class council; professional subject councils; development planning; professional sections concerned with school program development; and other professional sections established in accordance with the statute. Schools providing boarding shall also have pedagogical councils. Chairmen of professional councils and professional sections shall comprise the pedagogical board chaired and run by the principal or his/her deputy. Class councils shall be chaired and managed by the homeroom teachers."[99] The 2009 Law adds the School Inclusive Team as a professional body and calls for the participation of pedagogical assistants in its meetings.

The secretary of the institution shall be charged with administrative, normative, and legal affairs (Art. 67).

Main school documents

The 2004 Law states that an institution shall have a statute, "The statute constitutes the main general enactment of the institution regulating in greater detail the organization, work method, management of the institution, and other issues in accordance with the law" (Art. 47). The 2009 Law adds: "that Statute shall govern the organization, manner of operation, governance and management of an institution, actions of the institution's bodies for the purpose of ensuring the exercise of the rights of children and students, protection and security of children, students and employees, and measures preventing the violation of prohibitions stipulated by this law and other issues" (Art. 47).

Schools also have development plans and annual work programs. The development plan of an institution sets out the priorities of implementing educational work, the plan of activities and who will conduct them, the criteria and standards for evaluating the planned activities, and other issues relevant to the development of the institution. The plan shall be adopted by the management authority for a period of 3–5 years. The implementation of an institution's development plan shall be evaluated in a procedure for evaluating the quality of the institution's work.[100] The 2009 Law adds that: "the institution development plan shall be passed on the basis of a self-evaluation report, a report on the attainment of achievement standards, and other quality indicators of the operation of an institution" (Art. 49).

The Annual Work Plan shall define the time, venue, method and stakeholders implementing the education program in accordance with the development plan.[101]

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[99] The Law on the Basis of the Education System, 2004, Art. 65.

[100] *Ibid.*, Art. 48.

[101] *Ibid.,* Art. 81.

2.3 Types of special schools and special classes at the primary and secondary education levels

Special schools provide education at the preschool, primary, and secondary levels. Some provide all three levels of education, some only primary and/or secondary education. All three levels of education are provided in general, but not all three are available to children suffering from all types of developmental difficulties.

The existing system provides for education of children with developmental difficulties in:

- schools for students with developmental difficulties (*Škole za učenike sa teškoćama u razvoju* [children with the same types of difficulties]);
- classes for students with developmental difficulties in mainstream schools;
- mainstream school classes together with other children.[102]

Special education is provided at the primary and secondary school levels, and at the preschool level, within developmental groups in kindergartens and special schools. There are no provisions on where children with developmental difficulties are to attend PPP and whether its curriculum is to differ from the mainstream one.

Under Article 84 of the Primary School Law, children with developmental difficulties comprise:[103]

1. children with physical or sensory impairments (children with physical disabilities; blind and visually impaired children; the deaf and hard of hearing);
2. children with intellectual disabilities (light, moderate, severe, or profound);
3. children with multiple developmental disabilities (two or more disabilities, the autistic, etc.).

The Law on the Basis of the Education System (2004) also stipulates that the "primary education of children with developmental difficulties shall last eight years and follow the mainstream primary school curriculum, or a special curriculum pursuant to a separate law" (Art. 86).

The Law on the Basis of the Education System (2004) stated that the "secondary education of students with developmental difficulties shall last between two, three, and

[102] Given that the system of support has been neither defined nor developed, such classes are not inclusive; rather, they merely physically integrate the children.

[103] The same terminology is used also in the Decree on Criteria for Classifying Children with Developmental Disabilities, the Composition and Working Methods of the Medical Board for the Examination of Children with Developmental Difficulties, *Official Gazette* 7/94.

four years, and follow the curricula of general or vocational secondary schools, or of secondary schools for students with developmental difficulties pursuant to a separate law."[104] The new Law on the Basis of the Education System (2009) defined secondary education in general and does not mention children with developmental difficulties.

Education in special secondary schools lasts two, three or four years. The surveyed schools offer different levels of secondary schooling: three PSES provide two-year schooling; 12 offer two- and three-year schooling; five offer three-year schooling; two provide two-, three- and four-year schooling; one school offers three- and four-year schooling and one provides four-year schooling.

The SSS provides two- or three-year schooling. Seven PSES and the SSS also have a so-called zero grade (also called one-year work education or 9th grade) providing students with an opportunity to learn more about the offered occupations. Students waste one year if their education in this grade proves inadequate, because they are not issued a certificate.[105] It remains unknown which regulations apply to this grade and what curriculum is followed.

Types of special schools

There are five types of special schools:

- schools for students with intellectual disabilities[106] (*Škole za mentalno ometene učenike*);[107]
- schools for students with hearing impairments (*Škole za učenike oštećenog sluha*);
- schools for students with visual impairments (*Škole za učenike oštećenog vida*);
- schools for students with physical disabilities (*Škola za telesno invalidne učenike*);[108]

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[104] Law on the Basis of the Education System, 2004, Art. 87.

[105] Interview with Ms. Gordana Nikolić, the head of the Education of Children with Special Needs Sector within the EIB Strategic Development Centre.

[106] Schools for students with intellectual disabilities sometimes also include children with multiple disabilities. There are no separate special schools for these children.

[107] It should be noted that the Serbian translation used here reflects the common usage by old regulations, and not civil society, which chooses to phrase the names of schools differently. For example, schools for children with intellectual disabilities are commonly called schools for children with difficulties in mental development by civil society.

[108] Two Belgrade primary schools have specialized in educating children suffering from cerebral palsy: the Miodrag Matić primary school is attended by children with light or moderate cerebral palsy and multiple disabilities. This is the only *special* school whose students cannot continue secondary education. The Dragan Hercog primary school at the Cerebral Palsy Institute organizes tuition for hospitalized students.

- schools for students with emotional and behavioral disorders *(Škole za učenike sa emocionalnim problemima i poremećajima u ponašanju).*

In regards to schools for students with emotional and behavioral difficulties, there are two such schools in Serbia: the PSES Vožd in Belgrade and the SPS Mladost in Knjaževac. Both were established to provide education to youth in juvenile correctional facilities and had initially been part of those institutions. The SPS Mladost provides schooling for 36 children in the youth-correctional facility in Knjaževac, while the PSES Vožd provides for other children and youth, not only those in the Vasa Stajić correctional facility; quite a large number of these students attend secondary school. Most students in both schools are Roma. These schools have been operating as *experimental* rather than as special schools for ten years.[109] Although they are listed by the EIB and MoE as special schools, they do not take in children assigned to special schools in accordance with the procedure for assigning students with developmental difficulties to a special school, but school children in the correctional facilities. These two schools are not analyzed in detail in the research.[110]

2.4 The network of special schools, and mainstream schools with special classes

Special schools

There are major discrepancies between data provided by the MoE, the EIB, municipal and city websites, and the analysis of documents on the total number of special schools. It is for this reason that to date there has been a lack of clarity on the actual number of such schools. This discrepancy is due to the following factors: whether schools in Kosovo are taken into account; whether the PSES are considered one institution or two (both as primary and secondary schools);[111] whether they list only schools for children with developmental difficulties or also schools for gifted children (e.g. music and ballet schools); whether they take into account schools for children with emotional and behavioral difficulties; whether the change in the name of the school has been registered, etc. The EIB is in the process of creating a complex database of schools that

[109] By "experimental" the MoE means a school which is offering something new and different, but that has not yet been monitored or evaluated on its effectiveness. Interview with Ms. Gordana Nikolić, the head of the Education of Children with Special Needs Sector within the EIB Strategic Development Centre.

[110] One school was to have been part of the sample but refused to take part in the research, while the other was left out of the sample by mistake.

[111] For example, the OECD counts each PSES as two schools, and say that the total number of special schools is 85. OECD, 2007.

is to become available in 2009.[112] Appendix B gives an overview of the existing data from the MOE and EIB.

Forty-eight special schools were identified at the beginning of the research, and the authors of the research found a total of 48 special schools in the field, but the structure of the schools differed from the official MoE data.[113] The EIB also states that there are 48 special schools.

According to the findings of this research, the 48 special schools include: 19 SPS; 28 PSES; and one SSS.

Table 6. Total number of special schools by type of students' developmental disability

	Hearing impairments	Visual impairments	Physical disabilities	Intellectual disabilities (ID)		Behavioral difficulties
				ID	ID+ multiple disabilities	
SPS/19	2	1	2	13	–	1
PSES/28	5	1	–	17	4	1
SSS/1	–	–	–	1	–	–
Total	7	2	2	35		2

[112] At the time of this research, this database was still not complete.

[113] The sample according to MoE data was: 17 SPS (the Belgrade school Miodrag Matić is an SPS, not PSES; the SPS Mladost in Knjaževac for students with behavioral difficulties is an independent school but was registered as part of the PSES in Pirot which has the same name); 30 PSES (the PSES Miodrag Matić is an SPS; the PSES 9. maj in Šabac has been renamed the SPS Sveti Sava); 1 SSS.

Table 7. Total number of special schools by educational level

Education level	Preschool	Primary school	Secondary school
SPS/19	5*	19	–
PSES/28	8**	28	28
SSS/1	–	–	1
Total	13	47	29

* Schools for students with visual difficulties – one; with hearing difficulties – two; with intellectual difficulties – two.
** Schools for students with hearing difficulties – four; with intellectual difficulties – four.

Table 8. Localities of special schools

	SPS	PSES	SSS	Total number of SS	% SS*	% population**
Vojvodina	4	11	–	15	31.30%	27%
Belgrade	10	5	1	16	33.30%	21%
Central Serbia	5	12	–	17	35.40%	52%
Total	–	–	–	48	–	–

* Share of special schools from the total number
** Percentage of residents *vis-à-vis* total population of Serbia (2002 census)

Three out of 25 districts (Kolubara, Braničevo and Danube) in Serbia do not have special schools. Sixteen special schools are located in Belgrade alone (two districts within the city have two special schools each, and two have three special schools each); there are two special schools in Niš and two in Kragujevac (the third and fourth largest cities in Serbia respectively), and two in Subotica.

Twenty special schools are in municipalities or cities, the population of which does not exceed 80,000; 17 are in municipalities or cities with 80,000–160,000 inhabitants; and 11 are in municipalities or cities with over 160,000 inhabitants. Fifty-five percent of the total population and 52 percent of the Roma population live in towns in which special schools are located.

As regards the Roma population, there are 23 special schools in towns where Roma account for up to 0.9 percent of the population; 21 special schools are in towns where they account for 1–2.9 percent of the population; and four special schools are in towns where Roma make up over three percent of the population. Twenty schools are located

in municipalities with less than 1,000 Roma residents; 19 are in municipalities with 1,000–2,000 Roma; three are in municipalities with 2,000–3,000 Roma; and seven are in municipalities with 4,000–7,000 Roma residents.

According to the 2009 Law on the Basis of the Education System, the number and geographical breakdown of schools is to be set out according to an enactment on the network of institutions, passed by the local self-government assembly under criteria established by the government.[114]

Most of the interviewed representatives of institutions qualify the network of special schools and classes as enough, or too big regarding capacities, but not adequate regarding the needs of children with different difficulties.

Boarding accommodation

There are 48 special schools for children with various developmental difficulties and many of the students are separated from their families at an early age and accommodated in schools that have boarding accommodation, sometimes in towns very far from those their families live in.

Mainstream primary schools do not have boarding homes because their students live in the area and do not need accommodation.

According to our findings, six SPS (32 percent of all SPS) have lodgings which accommodate from 0 to 80 percent of their students (i.e. from 38 to 100% percent of all their Roma students); nine PSES (32 percent of all PSES) stated that they provide boarding; while students of two PSES (7 percent) were accommodated in boarding homes that were not operating as part of the school. Depending on the PSES a range from 0 to 100 percent of all students, including Roma, are accommodated in boarding homes.

[114] The Ministry shall give its consent on the network of primary schools. In local self-government units where education is provided in national minority languages, enactments on the school networks shall be passed with the consent of the national minority national councils. The enactment on the network of secondary schools shall be adopted by the government on the basis of: the demographic projection of the student population; the specific features of the region(s); the accessibility and equity of education; ensured communication; and financial possibilities (Law on the Basis of the Education System, 2009, Art. 29).

Table 9. Boarding homes and other forms of accommodation of students (data from schools)

	Students are accommodated in:					
	school boarding homes	**boarding homes operating as separate institutions**	**hospitals, undergoing treatment**	**juvenile correctional facilities**	**school does *not* provide boarding**	**no available data**
MPS	–	–	–	–	100% (21)	–
SPS	16% (3)	–	11% (2)	5% (1)	63% (12)	5% (1)
PSES	32% (9)	7% (2)	–	4% (1)	50% (14)	7% (2)
SSS	–	–	–	–	100% (1)	–

Mainstream schools with special classes

Establishing the total number of mainstream schools with special classes was too difficult a task for this research. The available data differ from source to source and the numbers change every year. It was beyond the scope of this research to determine the number on its own.

There are some data, however, from secondary sources, which also vary. In the 2007–2008 school year, based on data that the Education Improvement Bureau sent to the MoE for the purpose of this research, the total number of mainstream primary schools with special classes was 58, with 168 special classes and 1,121 students. Data from the OECD differs slightly. According to that data,[115] 70 mainstream primary and 11 mainstream secondary schools have special classes (see Appendix B for more details).

This research, however, did cover 21 mainstream primary schools with special classes, one in every district with such schools, and in towns with the highest numbers and percentages of Roma. Of these 21 schools, 19 had special classes for children with intellectual disabilities (four of which enrol children with intellectual and multiple disabilities); two had special classes for children with hearing impairments.

Of the total sample of 21 schools, 13 MPS (62 percent) said that they have Roma students, and seven (33 percent) responded that they don't. One school (five percent) failed to answer. Out of those latter eight schools, Roma NGOs confirmed that in five

[115] OECD, 2007.

there are no Roma students; and for three schools, the researchers could not find a source from the Roma community to confirm information.[116]

2.5 Number of classes and students in special schools and in mainstream primary schools with special classes[117]

The EIB is currently establishing a detailed database on students with developmental difficulties in special and mainstream primary schools, which will include the degree of their developmental difficulties, and their ethnicity. The database will serve as a basis for planning the support that students need. The analysis of the situation in special secondary schools shall be conducted at a later date.[118]

The current data on classes and students provided by the MoE and EIB are given in Appendix B.

Number of classes

According to the data collected from 42 special schools (88 percent of the total sample of special schools in Serbia),[119] this research established that there were a total of 797 classes in the 2007–2008 school year, and 808 in 2008–2009. In 15 out of 21 MPS, there were a total of 55 classes in the 2007–2008 school year and 57 in 2008–2009. The trend in special schools is that the number of classes slightly increased, while in the MPS the number of classes is almost the same.

[116] Five schools out of these eight stated that they did not have any Roma students at all and refused to fill in the questionnaire; three of the 16 MPS that filled in the questionnaire also stated that they don't have Roma students.

[117] Sixteen MPS filled in the questionnaire; 15 had special classes for students with intellectual disabilities and one has a special class for students with hearing impairments.

[118] Interview with Ms. Gordana Nikolić, the head of the Education of Children with Special Needs Sector within the EIB Strategic Development Centre.

[119] 16 SPS, 25 PSES, and 1 SSS.

Table 10. Number of classes in special schools and special classes in mainstream schools (data from schools)

Type of school	Total number of schools	Data from	2007/08			2008/09		
			Grade	Multi-grade	Total	Grade	Multi-grade	Total
MPS	no data	15	20	35	55	22	35	57
Total MPS			20	35	55	22	35	57
SPS	19	16	190	41	231	188	41	229
PSES PS	28	25	321	43	364	326	42	368
PSES SS		25	199	3	202	209	2	211
SSS	1	1	40	–	–	37	–	–
Total special schools			710	87	797	723	87	808

Grade and multi-grade classes

There are two types of special classes in special schools and in mainstream schools: grade and multi-grade classes. Grade classes comprise students who are in the same grade, while multi-grade classes comprise students of different grades. It is the norm in mainstream schools in Serbia to organize grade classes. In mainstream schools, multi-grade classes can only be organized in schools in villages where there are a small number of students, thus making it impossible to organize grade classes. The existence of multi-grade classes in mainstream and special schools means that there are not enough students for more classes, so they put all the children together. Classes may comprise children suffering from the same kind of developmental difficulties, while combined classes comprise children suffering from different types of difficulties. It is understood that the quality of education in combined and multi-grade classes is lower than in grades classes, as most teachers in Serbia are not familiar with, nor have been trained in, differential instruction.[120] Thus, this research asked for those separate numbers.

This research has established that in mainstream primary schools, multi-grade special classes predominate (64 percent in the 2007–2008 school year, 61 percent in the 2008–2009 school year). Students of two, three, four or even five successive lower or higher grades, or even students of all eight grades, go to the same class. It remains

[120] To differentiate instruction is to recognize students with varying background knowledge, readiness, languages, preferences in learning, and interests, and to react responsively. Differentiated instruction is a process to approach teaching and learning for students of differing abilities in the same class. See T. Hall, *et al.* 2003.

unclear how one teacher can simultaneously teach students of five grades suffering from different disabilities, which curricula such teachers would follow, what the quality of the education is, and what knowledge the children can acquire.

Multi-grade classes also exist in SPS and PSES PS, combining two or three grades in the lower or upper levels, although there are also multi-grade classes attended by students of all grades. These classes, however, do not dominate as they do in special classes in MPS. In SPS, 18 percent of the total classes are multi-grade classes, in both school years. In PSES on the primary level, 12 percent of the total number were multi-grade classes in the 2007–2008 school year, and 11 percent in the 2008–2009 school year. Multi-grade classes are rarely established on the secondary level in PSES, with only one percent in both school years; in SSS there are no multi-grade classes.[121]

Number of classes in special schools, and special classes in mainstream schools according to developmental difficulties

This research also sought to understand what kinds of disabilities the classes were organized for, and therefore collected data on the number of classes by type of developmental disability. In MPS, 98 percent of special classes are for children with intellectual difficulties, with only two percent for children with hearing difficulties (in both school years).

In special schools, classes for children with intellectual difficulties also predominate, with more than 80 percent of classes belonging to this category (15 percent of whom are also for children with intellectual and multiple disabilities). Classes for children with hearing impairments make up 12 percent; children with visual impairments five percent; physical disabilities and cerebral palsy comprise one percent.

Number of classes of special schools placed within mainstream schools

Apart from classes within their own facilities, special schools may establish classes in mainstream schools. This usually occurs when a locality does not have a special school, and therefore classes are created in a mainstream school. These classes function within the mainstream school, but organizationally and managerially they are part of the host special school. This research sought data of this kind because there is confusion if the same classes are counted in special schools and mainstream schools (they can be counted twice as classes in mainstream education and as classes in special education).

Research findings show the location of the classes. Of the 797 total special classes belonging to special schools in the 2007–2008 academic year, 763 (96 percent) were located in special schools, and 34 (four percent) in mainstream primary schools. Of the total 808 special classes belonging to special schools in the 2008–2009 academic year, 775 (96 percent) were located in special schools, and 33 (four percent) in mainstream

[121] There were no data on how multi-grade classes were formed in two PSES or on the number of students in the 2008–2009 school year.

primary schools. All those special classes that operate in mainstream schools are multi-grade classes for children with intellectual disabilities. They make up 39 percent of all multi-grade classes in both academic years, and have a high percentage of Roma students.

Number of zero grade classes (one-year work education or 9th grade)

Five PSES and the one SSS stated that they have this kind of class. There were 30 such classes in the 2007–2008 academic year (14 in five PSES, and 16 in the SSS), and 29 in the 2008–2009 academic year (13 in five PSES, and 16 in the SSS). Around 40 percent of classes in the SSS are zero grade.

Two more PSES did not mention that they have this type of class, but did give the number of students in this type of class.

Total number of students and Roma students

Special schools

According to data collected from 85 percent of special schools in the 2007–2008 academic year, the total number of students stood at 5,639, of which 30 percent (or 1,683) were Roma. In the 2008–2009 academic year, data from 88 percent of special schools shows a total of 5,579 students, of which 1,775 (or 32 percent) were Roma.

There were a total of 60 fewer students in the 2008–2009 school year, and 92 more Roma students.

In both school years, 67 percent of the total number of students in special schools were in primary and 33 percent in secondary school. The percentage of Roma children in the 2007–2008 school year is 75 percent in primary, and 25 percent in secondary school; in 2008–2009, 76 percent of Roma students were in primary, and 24 percent in secondary school.

The percentage of secondary students in the zero grade is much higher in the SSS than in PSES. In the former, 46 percent of Roma and 44 percent of other students were in zero grades in the 2007–2008 school year. In the 2008–2009 school year, 52 percent of Roma and 45 percent of all students were in zero grades. In PSES SS in the 2007–2008 school year, 11 percent of Roma and nine percent of other students were in the zero grade. In the 2008–2009 school year, nine percent of Roma and eight percent of other students were in the zero grade.

Table 11. Total Roma students in special schools (data from schools)

	2007–2008		2008–2009	
	Total number of students (number of schools that provided data)	Number of Roma students (number of schools that provided data)	Number of students (number of schools that provided data)	Number of Roma students (number of schools that provided data)
SPS (19)	1,150 (15)	350 (14)	1,242 (16)	465 (15)
PSES PS (28)	2,636 (25)	909 (25)	2,508 (25)	890 (25)
PSES SS (28)	1,549 (25)	329 (25)	1,549 (25)	343 (25)
SSS (1)	304 (1)	95 (1)	280 (1)	77 (1)
Total	5,639	1,683	5,579	1,775

Eighty-six percent of all special school students attended schools for those with intellectual disabilities both in the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school years, whereas 94 percent of all Roma students of special schools attended such schools for those years. Table 12 shows the breakdown according to the different disabilities (for a more detailed Table, see Appendix C).

Table 12a. Numbers and percentages of total and Roma students in different types of special schools by academic year (data from schools 2007–2008)

2007–2008	Intellectual difficulties		Visual impairments		Hearing impairments		Physical disabilities		Total students	Total Roma students	% of Roma students
	Total	Roma students	Total	Roma students	Total	Roma students	Total	Roma students			
SPS	908	332	134	10	70	8	38	0	1,150	350	30%
PSES PS	2,294	845	102	8	240	56	–	–	2,636	909	34%
PSES SS	1,358	313	50	4	141	12	–	–	1,358	313	21%
SSS	304	95	–	–	–	–	–	–	304	95	31%
Total	4,864	1,585	286	22	451	76	38	0	5,639	1,683	30%

Table 12b. Numbers and percentages of total and Roma students in different types of special schools by academic year (data from schools 2008–2009)

2008–2009	Intellectual difficulties		Visual impairments		Hearing impairments		Physical disabilities		Total students	Total Roma students	% of Roma students
	Total	Roma students	Total	Roma students	Total	Roma students	Total	Roma students			
SPS	1,012	444	116	13	72	8	42	0	1,242	465	37%
PSES PS	2,174	828	97	7	237	55	–	–	2,508	890	35%
PSES SS	1,364	325	41	4	144	14	–	–	1,549	343	22%
SSS	280	77	–	–	–	–	–	–	280	77	28%
Total	4,830	1,674	254	24	443	77	42	0	5,579	1,775	32%

The share of Roma students varies from school to school but is generally very high. According to official data, Roma account for 1.44 percent of Serbia's population and, according to unofficial estimates, which estimate the Roma population to be around 450,000, Roma account for six percent of the total population. The Roma population is young; children at the primary school level make up ten percent of the total primary school age population in Serbia and nine percent at the secondary level. There was a mild increase between the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 academic years in the share of Roma students in primary and secondary schools for students with visual and hearing impairments, and also in schools for students with intellectual disabilities (in all schools except special secondary schools).

Comparing data from schools and Roma NGOs

For 36 special schools (75 percent of the total number) data were obtained from both the schools and Roma NGOs/coordinators. There are 1,544 Roma students according to school data, and 1,424 Roma students according to Roma NGOs/coordinators.

Table 13. Number and percentage of special school Roma students according to level of schooling in the 2008–2009 school year (data from schools and Roma NGOs/coordinators)

	School data		Roma NGOs/coordinators' data	
	PS level	SS level	PS level	SS level
SPS (12)*	45% (430)	–	43% (408)	–
PSES PS (23)	37% (723)	–	36% (709)	–
PSES SS (23)	–	24% (314)	–	18% (230)
SSS (1)	–	28% (77)	–	28% (77)

* Number of schools for which data are obtained for both sources

The assessments of the two sources of data are generally similar; they differ ten percent or more only in four SPS and 4 PSES. The greatest discrepancies are that one SPS said there are 37 percent of Roma students, while Roma NGOs/coordinators asserted 55 percent; in one PSES at the primary level, one school said that 88 percent of its students are Roma, whereas Roma NGOs/coordinators said 59 percent. On the secondary level, one school said that 28 percent of its students were Roma, while the Roma NGOs/coordinators asserted that there were no Roma students in that school.

Table 14. (In)congruity of data on student body sizes provided by schools and Roma NGOs/coordinators

	Similar estimates by schools and Roma NGOs/coordinators (discrepancy under 10%)	School estimated greater number of Roma students (discrepancy exceeding 10%)	Roma NGOs/coordinators estimated greater number of Roma students (discrepancy exceeding 10%)
SPS (12)*	8 (67%)	3 (25%)	1 (8%)
PSES PS (23)	19 (83%)	3 (13%)	1 (4%)
PSES SS (23)	22 (96%)	1 (4%)	–
SSS (1)	1 (100%)	–	–

* Number of schools for which data are obtained from both sources

Gender breakdown of special school Roma students

Gender is an aspect of the special school issue that gets little attention. We thought it would be beneficial to see whether a specific gender is overrepresented (or not) in the special school system.

At both the primary and secondary levels, there are a larger percentage of Roma boys attending special schools than Roma girls. At the primary level, in the 2007–2008 academic year, 43 percent of all Roma students were girls, and 57 percent were boys; in the 2008–2009 school year, 38 percent of all Roma students were girls, and 50 percent were boys. There were no data for 12 percent of Roma students. The lower number of girls may be due to the fact that some Roma girls do not attend school at all, in order to marry. The numbers for girls attending special secondary schools is even lower than that for primary school, which might further confirm this conclusion. They would be closer to the age of marrying at the secondary level. In the 2007–2008 academic year, 30 percent of Roma students at the secondary level were girls (59 percent were boys), although there is no data for 11 percent of Roma students. In the 2008–2009 school year, 28 percent of Roma students were girls, and 52 percent were boys, while there are no data for 20 percent of Roma students.

Table 15. Breakdown of Roma students by gender in special schools (data from schools)

	Total Roma students	Girls	Boys	No data
2007–2008	1,683	638 (38%)	914 (54%)	131 (8%)
2008–2009	1,775	607 (34%)	862 (49%)	306 (17%)

Mainstream schools

Data from the Education Improvement Bureau, which was sent to the MoE for this research, shows that in the 2007–2008 school year, the total number of mainstream primary schools with special classes was 58, which had 1,121 students.

The new Law on the Basis of the Education System from 2009 does not mention special classes, so they, in theory, will not exist as of the 2010–2011 school year. The question remains where students from special classes will continue their schooling, because they have completely different curricula, especially in classes for children with intellectual difficulties.

Twenty MPS in the sample (95 percent) provided data on Roma students for the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school years. Out of those 21 schools, there were no Roma students in special classes in seven schools (two of those schools have special classes for children with hearing impairments, and the other five were for children with

intellectual difficulties.) Data on the overall number of students in special classes were gathered for the 2007–2008 school year from 14 schools, and for the 2008–2009 school year from 15 schools. Five schools with no Roma students in special classes did not fill in the questionnaire and did not give the overall number of students. One school that filled in the questionnaire did not provide data on the number of students for both school years, and one did not for 2007–-2008.

Twelve MPS reported that they have had Roma students. There were 273 total students, 103 of them Roma (38 percent) in the 2007–2008 academic year. For 2008–2009, 13 MPS reported a total of 330 students, out of whom 126 (38 percent) were Roma. Notwithstanding all the efforts towards inclusive education, there are an increasing number of students, and Roma students, in special classes in mainstream schools.

Table 16. Number of Roma students in different types of special classes (data from schools)

	Intellectual difficulties		Hearing impairments		Total students	Total Roma students	% of Roma students
	Total	Roma students	Total	Roma students			
2007–2008*	297	103	6	0	303	103	34%
2008–2009**	324	126	6	0	330	126	38%

* data for 14 schools that have data for both the total number and the number of Roma students
** data for 15 schools that have data for both the total number and the number of Roma students

Data on Roma students in special classes in the 2008–2009 school year were obtained from both the schools and Roma NGOs/coordinators in 17 MPS. Schools and Roma NGOs agree that there are no Roma students in four of the 21 MPS in the sample.

There were 126 Roma students in 13 MPS with special classes according to data obtained from schools, and 134 Roma students according to data obtained from Roma NGOs for the 2008–2009 academic year.

There is a high degree of congruity between school and Roma NGOs/coordinator assessments of both the total number of Roma students attending special classes, and of the number of Roma students per school. The discrepancy does not exceed 10 percent in the case of 13 schools. One school estimate was 10 percent higher than that of the Roma NGOs, while in three schools, the assessments of Roma NGOs exceeded those of the schools by 10 percent. A very small number of students are actually concerned, however; one student accounts for more than 10 percent.

Data presented in Table 17 shows the share of Roma students in different types of special classes, including data from schools and Roma NGOs. In half of the MPS in the sample, the share of Roma students is more than 20 percent; and in 10 percent of schools, it is 92–100 percent. Those numbers are alarming for the MoE.

Table 17. Share of Roma students in different types of special classes in mainstream schools in the 2008–2009 academic year (data from schools and Roma NGOs)

	Intellectual difficulties		Hearing/Visual impairments; physical disabilities	
	School	Roma NGOs	School	Roma NGOs
0%	5	5	2	1
Under 20%	3	1	–	–
21–40%	6	7	–	–
41–60%	2	2	–	–
81–100%	2	2	–	–
Unknown	1	2	–	1
Total	19	19	2	2

The table above shows how many schools have zero percent, how many have under 20 percent, and so on regarding Roma students. The *School* column and *Roma NGOs* column show numbers from these two sources. We can see that two schools for children with intellectual difficulties stated that they have 81–100 percent of Roma students. Roma NGOs also stated the same for two schools. We can see also that for five schools for children with intellectual difficulties, both schools and Roma NGOs stated there are no Roma students.

Breakdown of Roma students by gender

In special classes in mainstream schools in the 2007–2008 academic year, the share of Roma girls is higher (52 percent), which is different from special schools. For the 2008–2009 school year, it is not possible to come to a conclusion, because of missing data for 19 percent of students.

Table 18. Breakdown of Roma students by gender (data from schools)

	Total Roma students	Girls	Boys	No data
2007–2008	103	54 (52%)	49 (48%)	–
2008–2009	126	46 (37%)	56 (44%)	24 (19%)

Changes in the numbers of students over the past three school years

There are differences among changes in the sizes of the student bodies, as well as in the number of Roma students over the last three years.

Table 19. Student body size over the past three school years (data from schools)[122]

	Increased		Stayed the same		Decreased	
	Total students	Roma students	Total students	Roma students	Total students	Roma students
MPS	19% (14%)	19% (19%)	14% (5%)	43% (43%)	43% (48%)	5% (29%)
SPS	16% (11%)	16% (16%)	37% (11%)	21% (26%)	32% (58%)	42% (32%)
PSES PS	7% (18%)	11% (21%)	39% (11%)	54% (25%)	36% (61%)	21% (43%)
PSES SS	7% (43%)	4% (43%)	43% (4%)	50% (21%)	32% (43%)	25% (25%)
SSS	–	–	–	–	100% (100%)	100% (100%)

There are different processes in schools when comparing changes in the total number of students and of Roma students. In the MPS, we can see that the total number of students decreased, while the number of Roma students stayed the same. In the SPS,

[122] Data gathered from schools (schools' estimate). Data on the total number of students were obtained from: 16 MPS; 16 SPS; 25 PSES PS; 23 PSES SS; one SSS; Data on the number of Roma students were obtained from: 14 MPS; 15 SPS; 24 PSES PS; 22 PSES SS; and one SSS. The percentage calculated on data on the number of students that schools provided is in brackets. Both percentages of schools are calculated on the total number of special schools, and on the total number of MPS in the sample.

the number of Roma students decreased. In the PSES, the number of Roma students stayed the same, and only in one SSS did the number of all students decrease.

We can say that in spite of all the inclusion efforts on behalf of NGOs, the MoE, and mainstream schools, in 29 percent of MPS, five percent of SPS, and 18 percent of PSES PS schools, the total number of students has increased over the last two school years. The number of Roma students has increased in 19 percent of MPS, 16 percent of SPS, and 25 percent of PSES PS. At the secondary level, in 43 percent of PSES, both the total number and the number of Roma students has increased. Some may say that this represents a positive change – with completed special primary school, students have a theoretical chance to enrol in mainstream secondary school, and if they continue their schooling in special education, at least they continue to the secondary level.[123]

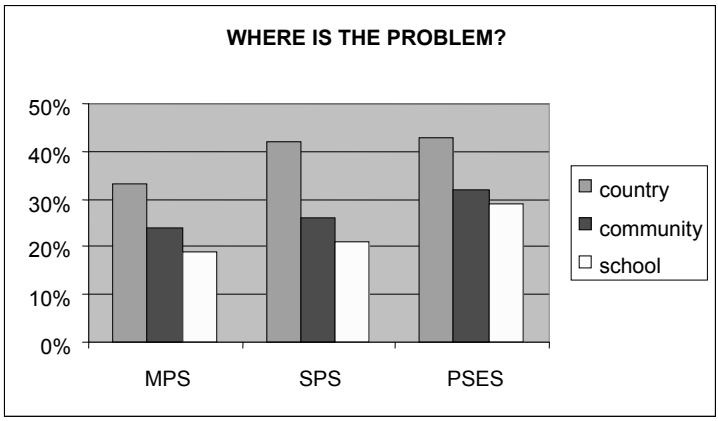
Some schools stated that the number of students has decreased, some that it is the same, and some that it has increased; we asked them for the reasons. The most frequently cited reason schools described for a drop in the number of students is (what was phrased as), "Inclusion". This usage, however, usually had a negative connotation and was described as *keeping on* the children in mainstream schools without adequately working with them. Falling birth rates was also a frequently mentioned reason for a decrease in the number of Roma students. Poverty, on the other hand, leads to an increase in the number of students (more students go to special schools because of the benefits), but at the same time to a decrease because the parents have to pay for their boarding. A positive assessment of the work of the CCBs is linked to the increase in the number of students in special schools.

Is there a problem, whose problem is it, who should address it and how?

We asked the school principals and psychologists/pedagogues whether they agreed with the statement that a large number of special school/class Roma students ought to have attended mainstream schools/classes. The following table gives the percentages of surveyed schools, which believe that Roma students are overrepresented in special schools at the state, community, and school levels.

[123] Referring to Table 19.

Table 20. School assessments showing the scope of Roma student overrepresentation in special schools



The largest number of schools perceives overrepresentation as a problem at the national level, less at the local level, and the smallest number perceive it as a problem in their own school.

The schools' replies to the question of who should address the problem of children capable of attending mainstream schools but are attending special schools vary to a great extent. Thirty-five percent of the 69 schools in the total sample said that the greatest responsibility lay with the state authorities and society as a whole. Nearly as many (25 percent) think the local administrations and local institutions ought to address the problem, while 18 percent are of the opinion that the parents, civil sector, and Roma community should try and resolve it. Only 10 percent of schools think that educational institutions are responsible for effecting the changes: six percent ascribed the responsibility to the CCBs; three percent to the media, and one percent to the National Education Council.

Table 21. Who should address the problem? (data obtained from schools)

	State	LA	Parents	Schools	Roma	NGOs	CCBs	Media	NEC	No reply
MPS	24%	0%	14%	10%	14%	5%	0%	5%	0%	29%
SPS	37%	26%	16%	0%	0%	11%	5%	5%	0%	16%
PSES	43%	43%	11%	11%	0%	0%	11%	0%	4%	11%
SSS	35%	23%	14%	7%	5%	5%	5%	3%	1%	18%

Asked how they thought the problem of overrepresentation ought to be resolved, 41 percent of both the special and mainstream schools in the sample proposed that steps be taken within the education system (systemic resolution of education-related problems, prevention of discrimination, ensuring PPP attendance, early treatment of children with developmental difficulties, retesting the children), while 38 percent proposed steps targeting the Roma community (educating the parents, improving living conditions of Roma, campaigns in the settlements, resolving the problems of the Roma community). One percent of special, and one percent of the mainstream schools in the sample suggested that the way in which CCBs work and the community's mindset ought to be changed.

Nine (82 percent) of Roma NGO representatives perceive Roma student overrepresentation in special schools as a problem at the national level; seven (64 percent) believe it to be a problem at the local level. They are of the view that the MoE and MoE RD are most responsible for dealing with this problem (91 percent), as are the CCBs, local self-government, schools and parents. They suggest better cooperation between the institutions and the Roma community (NGOs and parents) and emphasize the role of RTAs (73 percent) in overcoming this problem.

Twenty percent of interviewed CCB members perceive Roma overrepresentation in special schools as a problem at the national, and 20 percent at the local level. In their opinion, the problem emerged because the mainstream system is not stimulating and the curriculum is difficult, while some ascribe it to the attitudes of parents and teachers and material benefits.

Seventy-seven percent of MoE RD councilors perceive Roma overrepresentation in special schools/classes as a problem at the national, and 69 percent at the local level. One MoE RD counselor sees the problem being at the national, but not at the local level, while in the MPS within its territory, 26 percent of Roma students are in special classes, based on data from schools. Three MoE RD councilors do not perceive a problem: in regards to the first MoE RD, this assessment does correspond with data from schools. With the second and third MoE RDs, however, it does not. In the second jurisdiction, there is a PSES with 24 percent of Roma students at the primary level, based on data from schools; in the third MoE RD jurisdiction, there is a PSES with 42 percent Roma students at the primary, and 45 percent at the secondary level.

CCB members gave suggestions on how to improve the work of the CCBs:

- improve cooperation with other institutions at the local level;
- synchronize activities of schools, social and employment institutions;
- ensure professional empowerment of CCB members;
- change the way in which children and parents realize their rights to financial aid;
- educate parents, teachers and experts;

- improve the regulation of preschool (preparatory) program attendance;
- include members or associates who speak Romani (RTAs, Roma NGOs) in CCBs.

One suggestion concerns the role of development counseling centers in local health institutions: that these centers should monitor children from birth, recommend and implement activities with them, and participate in CCB activities.

Or, perhaps the problem lies with students themselves? There is an often-held belief that Roma students, and their parents, do not believe in education. Data collected during this research, however, points to the contrary. According to the students who participated in focus groups, 94 percent of primary special school/class students want to finish primary school, of whom 88 percent want to finish secondary school; 100 percent of special secondary schools students want to finish school. In regards to the parents' opinions, 100 percent of parents of primary special school/class students want their children to finish primary school, of whom 76 percent want their children to finish secondary school; 97 percent of parents of special secondary school students want their children to finish school.

2.6 Pedagogy and curricular content of special education

Legal framework

According to the Law on the Basis of the Education System, 2004, the general basis of the preschool program, the curricula for primary and secondary schools, and the basis of the educational program shall be adopted by the National Education Council.[124]

The school program is adopted by the school. It is elaborated in accordance with the prescribed curriculum to realize teaching plans and programs, and to satisfy the needs of students and parents, the school and the local self-government unit. The school program comprises compulsory, elective, and optional parts.[125]

Kindergartens shall adopt preschool programs in accordance with the General Basis of the Preschool Program.[126]

The 2009 Law (Art. 69) states that:

> An elementary and secondary school shall deliver the school curriculum and syllabus and it may also deliver an individual education curriculum for students and adults with developmental disabilities, individual programs of

[124] Article 76.

[125] The 2004 Law on the Basis of the Education System, Art. 69.

[126] The 2004 Law on the Basis of the Education System, Art. 68.

> the Serbian language, or a language of a national minority for students who are not familiar with the language that instruction is delivered in.

Primary and secondary school teaching plans shall comprise: compulsory subjects for every grade; elective subjects for every grade; forms of educational work applied in teaching compulsory and elective subjects; and annual and weekly numbers of classes per subject.[127]

The primary and secondary teaching program shall comprise: the purpose, objectives, and tasks of the primary and secondary school programs; the content of the compulsory and elective subjects; recommended types of activities in primary and secondary schools; ways to adjust music and ballet education programs; adult education; the education of students with developmental difficulties; students with special abilities; and education in minority languages, general and specific knowledge standards.[128]

A separate teaching plan and program (curriculum) shall be adopted for every type and level of developmental difficulty. The curricula shall define: the objective, tasks, content, and duration of education; the age and number of students in class; the weekly and annual number of classes and their duration; and vocational guidance for students.[129]

Curricula for work with students with developmental difficulties may be *mainstream*, *adjusted* and *special*. Mainstream and adjusted curricula may be implemented by mainstream preschool institutions, primary and secondary schools in developmental groups, and in classes for students with developmental difficulties.

The General Basis of the School Program (2004) recommends ways of: tailoring mainstream curricula to the needs of students with developmental difficulties; achieving outcomes in every education cycle; individualizing work and adjusting methods and techniques; adequate teaching implements; group work; ways of assessing students' progress and performance in the fields of social, cognitive and communication development; appropriate elective subjects, involving pedagogues and psychologists in the elaboration of individualized activities, assessing them and monitoring their efficiency and effectiveness, etc.[130]

Special educational institutions implement special plans and programs. Special programs also envisage compulsory extracurricular activities such as:

- group and individual speech therapy exercises;

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[127] The 2004 Law on the Basis of the Education System, Art. 70.

[128] The 2004 Law on the Basis of the Education System, Art. 71.

[129] Primary School Law, Art. 88.

[130] OECD, 2007.

- psychomotor and correctional exercises;
- games aimed at stimulating and correcting development, and preventing or compensating for developmental difficulties.[131]

Work in boarding schools and student boarding homes shall be conducted in accordance with the educational program.[132]

Curricular content of special education

The *EIB Guidelines for Developing the Education of Children and Students with Developmental Disorders and Difficulties* provides an analysis of the special curricula. According to that analysis, most rulebooks were adopted in 1987–1988, and have not been harmonized with the reformed mainstream school curricula, and some schools follow curricula not adopted in the manner prescribed by the law. Special curricula are abridged both in terms of volume and the content of mainstream curricula; special curricula do not fully satisfy the specific needs of children. Students with mild intellectual disabilities have only seven subjects (Serbian, Math, Nature and Society, Physical Education, Music, Art and General Technical Education) and their classes last 30 minutes.[133] Secondary special schools carry out the program in a small number of fields of activity. The curricula mostly preclude transfer to the mainstream system; enrolment in junior college and university is negligible due to the abridged special curricula.

The OECD report *Educational Policies for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities* states that special school programs comprise the acquisition of knowledge, habits and life skills (e.g. schools for students with visual impairments apply the mainstream school curriculum and provide rehabilitation and exercises working with the child's remaining vision, orientation in movement and self-help training). Most special schools apply abridged or modified mainstream curricula, but those working with children with graver intellectual disabilities follow only some elements of the mainstream curriculum. There are no plans or programs tailored to the developmental needs of preschool children that would prepare them for enrolment in mainstream primary schools. The process of elaborating special school curricula has not involved consultations with the children's parents, persons with developmental difficulties who had completed the school, the labor market, or employment bureau representatives. The schedule in mainstream schools is not tailored to students in special classes; they are taken out of class, for example, to undergo rehabilitation treatment. Some positive examples of school programs that have introduced contemporary work methods and a greater number of elective subjects are: Veljko Ramadanović, a school for visually

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[131] Education Improvement Bureau, 2007.

[132] The Law on the Basis of the Education System, 2004, Art. 74.

[133] There are 13 subjects in the upper grades in mainstream primary schools; one teacher teaches all subjects from the 1st to 4th grade, and there are subject teachers from the 5th to 8th grades.

impaired children, and the Dragan Hercog school for children undergoing hospital treatment.[134]

Schools for students with visual impairments apply an adjusted curriculum, but there are no instructions on how the curriculum should be adjusted. Special curricula are followed in schools for students with hearing impairments. The mainstream curriculum is applied when working with students suffering from cerebral palsy. The special curriculum applied when working with autistic children has not been updated since 1976.[135]

According to one expert, special schools should offer students more than mainstream schools do, not less. They should follow the mainstream curriculum, or a curriculum adjusted to children's abilities, and provide them with the additional support and treatment that they need.[136]

The same opinion follows through with another expert who states that: "[c]urricula of special schools for children with intellectual disabilities include content neither relevant nor adjusted to their abilities. Nor do they train them in skills needed in everyday life. Special secondary schools offer training in merely a small number of occupations, training the children to become assistant craftsmen."[137]

Interviews and focus groups with former students of these schools corroborate this evidence. Eleven out of 20 (55 percent) of former Roma students say that they were able to choose among only two occupations in special secondary school: that of textile worker offered to girls; and that of locksmith offered to boys. These are occupations which are much less relevant in today's information economy.

The OECD report states that secondary special schools train pupils in just a few areas, mainly orienting them towards manual labor (the exception being secondary schools for children with impaired eyesight). Graduation from special schools towards higher education is practically non-existent. Special schools have not been included in the reform of secondary vocational education which has focused on updating the curricula and introducing new occupations demanded by the labor market.

Students' and parents' opinion of curricular content

Despite the fact that some interviewed experts viewed the content of special school curricula as inadequate and of a lower quality than mainstream school curricula, such criticism was not so evident in data gathered in focus groups with students and parents

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[134] OECD, 2007.

[135] Interview with Ms. Gordana Nikolić, the head of the Education of Children with Special Needs Sector within the EIB Strategic Development Centre.

[136] *Ibid.*

[137] Interview with Professor Nenad Glumbić, FASPER.

of students. Perhaps this is due to the fact that a majority of students found it difficult to assess the curriculum as a whole, and they focused more on individual subjects and activities. A total of 105 (64 percent) of students are satisfied with curricula: they think it is adequate and good. A further 39 (24 percent) are not satisfied, and 21 (13 percent) didn't answer (the total number sampled was 165 students). From 39 students who are not satisfied, 28 see the curricula as too easy compared to regular school and their own capacity; eight see it as too difficult, and three just don't like it. Parents are mostly satisfied with curricula.

Students from one PSES SS think that school should offer more occupations; in another PSES SS, they see much possibility for the school's condition and technical equipment to improve; in one SPS and one MPS, they think they should also be taught other subjects, such as foreign languages, Chemistry, or Biology.

Eighteen from 22 (82 percent) of the former Roma students in the focus groups found the curriculum had been easy and mostly good, especially the practical part, while six (27 percent) think that they had been offered a poor choice of occupations to train in.

Representatives of institutions and Roma NGOs have divided opinions about the quality of the curricula and work programs, textbooks and work methodology. Some find them adjusted to the capacities of students (46 percent MoE RD, 27 percent Roma NGO and 33 percent LA), while others highlight the need to change and improve them, or are not informed.

Elective subjects

According to Article 79 of the 2004 Law on the Basis of the Education System, educational work shall comprise teaching and extracurricular activities.[138]

Apart from compulsory subjects, mainstream schools also provide tuition in elective subjects. Schools are to offer students the following obligatory elective subjects: Civic Education and Religious Education. Schools also should offer other elective subjects if there is interest in such subjects among students and parents, and the schools have the capacity to deliver tuition. Unlike mainstream schools, however, special schools are not obliged to offer students elective subjects.[139] Programs for elective subjects are not adapted for special schools.[140]

According to data gathered during this research, however, the primary special schools seem to offer as many elective courses – or at a similar level – as the MPS in the sample. At the primary school level, 28 percent (19) of the total 68 schools in the

[138] The 2004 Law on the Basis of the Education System uses the term "school" and does not specify mainstream or special.

[139] Interview with Ms.Gordana Nikolić, the head of the Education of Children with Special Needs Sector within the EIB Strategic Development Centre.

[140] Tanja Živanović, Adviser in MoE RD, Niš.

sample that offer special primary education offer only civic and/or religious education; 24 percent (16) offer civic and/or religious education and other; and only five percent of the special schools said they offered the elective subject of Roma Language and Elements of National Culture.

At the secondary school level, 59 percent (17) of the 29 schools in the sample offer only civic and/or religious education; three percent (one) offer civic and/or religious education and other elective subjects; and for 38 percent (11) of schools, there are no data.

Table 22 shows the different kinds of elective courses that schools offer, the numbers of different schools which offer them (in the *Number of schools* column) and the number of schools that stated that Roma students opt for those subjects (in the *Number of schools RS opt for* column).

Table 22. Elective subjects (offered by schools) which Roma students opt for

	MPS		SPS		PSES PS		PSES SS		SSS	
	Number of schools	Number of schools RS opt for	Number of schools	Number of schools RS opt for	Number of schools	Number of schools RS opt for	Number of schools	Number of schools RS opt for	Number of schools	Number of schools RS opt for
Civic and/or Religious Education	5	5	10	7	17	12	16	6	1	–
Guardians of Nature	3	2	5	2	9	1	–	–	–	–
Introduction to IT	5	1	2	–	4	–	–	–	–	–
From Toy to Computer	1	–	3	1	5	–	–	–	–	–
Hands in Dough	–	–	4	–	2	1	–	–	–	–
National Tradition	2	1	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–
Sport	1	2	1	1	2	–	–	–	–	–
Roma Language and Elements of National Culture	1	1	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–
English Language	–	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–
Penmanship	1	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–
Everyday Life in the Past	1	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–
Drawing and Sculpting	–	–	2	2	–	–	–	–	–	–
Hungarian Language	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–
Health Education	–	–	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
No reply	–	10	–	1	–	5	–	11	–	–
All of the above	–	1	–	1	–	6	–	4	–	–

All schools that replied to the questionnaire are of the opinion that Roma students opt for elective subjects as much as other students. None stated that they opted for elective subjects to a lesser extent than other students.

Extracurricular activities

Data gathered from schools demonstrates that the most common type of extracurricular activities offered by all schools, both mainstream and special, are Drama followed by Sports, then Creativity/Art/Drawing, and other.

Table 23. Type of extracurricular activities that schools offer students

	MPS	SPS	PSES PS	PSES SS	SSS
Drama/Folklore/Rhythmic/ Dance/Choir/Music	8	9	24	16	–
Sports	8	6	19	16	1
Creativity/Art/Drawing	3	7	10	10	–
Other (IT, chess, biology, traffic...)	1	–	2	1	–

Interestingly, although schools list equally that they offer extra-curricular activities in a variety of fields, data gathered from parents and students show that most students choose Drama/Folklore/Rhythm/Dance/Choir and Music as their field.

Table 24. Types of extracurricular activities that students choose (data obtained from parents and students)

Type of extracurricular activities/sessions students choose	MPS		SPS		PSES PS	
	Students	Parents	Students	Parents	Students	Parents
Drama/Folklore/Rhythm/ Dance/Choir/Music	4	3	18	12	20	19
Sports	–	–	3	1	4	6
Creativity/Art/Drawing	–	–	–	–	4	2
Other (IT, Chess, Biology, Traffic...)	1	–	–	–	1	1
Do not participate	3	15	–	–	2	1

Data gathered at the primary school level demonstrate that children like performing and taking part in sessions and other extracurricular activities in school because they can sing, recite or act well, because of the company, because they have fun, and because their teachers signed them up, while some like to compete as well. Parents say their children like performing with the choir and winning prizes at competitions, and say that other Roma children also attend the sessions. A preference for the performance-based extracurricular activity also comes through at the secondary school level.

Data in Table 25 show that schools mainly stated that Roma students chose the same type of extracurricular activities as other students; Table 26 shows the frequency with which they participate in such activity. Schools have noticed that, in the main, Roma students frequent extracurricular activities equally. In MPS, this happens to a lesser extent, but in SPS and PSES it is to a greater extent than other students.

Table 25. Type of extracurricular activities chosen by Roma students, compared with other students (data obtained from schools)

	Same	Different	No reply
MPS (21)	67% (14)	–	33% (7)
SPS (19)	68% (13)	–	32% (6)
PSES PS (28)	79% (22)	–	21% (6)
PSES SS (28)	68% (19)	4% (1)	29% (8)
SSS (1)	100% (1)	–	–

Table 26. How often Roma students take part in extracurricular activities, compared with other students (data obtained from schools)

	To a lesser extent	Equally	To a greater extent	No reply
MPS (21)	10% (2)	67% (14)	–	24% (5)
SPS (19)	–	58% (11)	21% (4)	21% (4)
PSES PS (28)	–	82% (23)	4% (1)	14% (4)
PSES SS (28)	–	68% (19)	4% (1)	29% (8)
SSS (1)	–	100% (1)	–	–

Methodology used in special schools and special classes

According to the 2007 OECD publication, the pedagogical methodologies employed in special schools are not appropriate. Their text states that: "Distinct pedagogical approaches should predominate in special schools matching the type of impairments of each child. […] The approach towards children with disabilities remains authoritative and working methods are more concerned about curriculum presentation than learning."[141]

In its analysis, the OECD lists examples of schools using diverse methods. The schools listed, however, are schools for children with visual and hearing impairments,[142] and for children who are ill, not schools for intellectual disabilities. Regarding schools for those with intellectual disabilities, there is no evidence that appropriate or alternative methods are employed.

Here are a few examples of the methods used by the above mentioned schools.

- The Veljko Radmanović primary school for students with visual impairments applies the following teaching methods: topognostic; verbal-textual; demonstrative-illustrative. It uses experimental or laboratory methods: co-operative; creative; workshop; participative and active learning methods.
- In 2001, Stefan Dečanski, a school for children with impaired hearing became an experimental school, applying a new methodology (integral development of children with impaired hearing) which includes new subjects: sign language; musical stimulation; gestural stimulation; crafts and tools; and English language). The teachers also apply dramatization, computer games and similar methods.
- The Dragan Hercog primary school for students unable to attend classes in local schools on account of illness applies the following methodologies: interactive; creative; participative methods; learning through discovery; and problem solving.[143]

Yet, there is a discrepancy between what "experts" and pedagogues perceive as inappropriate methodologies, and how the users of the schools – students and parents alike – perceive those same methods.

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[141] OECD, 2007.

[142] The Law on the Basis of the Education System, 2004 states that: "educational work with persons using sign language shall be conducted in sign language and with the help of the means of sign language". The following methods are used in schools for children with hearing impairments: oral; speech-reading methods; auditory training methods; non-verbal methods; and combined methods.

[143] OECD, 2007, paraphrased from p. 17.

For example, 92 percent (58) of special primary school students qualified the teaching methods as good and adequate, only six percent (four) as poor, and for two percent (one) there are no data (in total there were 63 primary students in the sample). At the secondary school level, 78 percent (80) qualified the teaching methods as good and adequate, only four percent (four) as poor, and for 18 percent (18) there are no data (in total there were 102 secondary students in the sample).

Further, 45 percent (28 from 62 in the sample) of parents of primary school students who replied to the question also qualified the methods as good. All 50 percent (36 from 72 in the sample) of parents of secondary school students qualified the teaching methods as good, and all FG participants who had completed PSES qualified the teaching methods as appropriate.

Textbooks used in special schools and special classes

According to the 2009 Law on Textbooks and Teaching Aids,[144] the Minister shall approve textbooks at the proposal of the National Education Council or the Council for Vocational and Adult Education (the Council was first introduced by the 2009 Law on the Basis of the Education System). The need for new textbooks, their format and quality standards shall be established by the National Education Council at the proposal of the Education Improvement Bureau.

Article 4 of the Law focuses on equal opportunities and the prohibition of discrimination. It states:

> The content of the textbooks and other teaching aids is to enable the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities for boys and girls. The content or form of textbooks and other teaching aids may not jeopardise, denigrate, discriminate against or single out groups or individuals or incite such conduct on grounds of: race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion or sex, developmental difficulty, disability, physical or psychological features, health, age, social or cultural background, financial standing or political affiliation, or on other grounds listed in the law prohibiting discrimination.

With particular attention to children with special needs, Article 3 of that same law states:

> Textbooks for persons with developmental difficulties or disabilities shall be published to meet the special needs of the students and both in the Serbian language and the languages of the national minorities. Textbooks and teaching aids needed for the education of blind and visually impaired children shall be published in Braille, in electronic form or formats suiting

[144] This Law replaced the 1993 Law on Textbooks and Other Teaching Aids (amended in 2006).

> blind and visually impaired persons (large-font text, audio recordings, blown-up photographs and other forms and media).

Despite provisions being included in the law for appropriate textbooks for those with disabilities, the implementation of the law is still not in place.

Evidence from the OECD suggests that the textbooks used in special schools are as inappropriate as the teaching methods. They state that:

> As for textbooks, the use of uniform textbooks aimed at the majority population of regular schools predominates. There is a pressing need for textbooks for children with special needs developed in accordance with their abilities, the teaching process and the reformed curriculum for all groups.[145]

The same discrepancy exists between experts' opinions, and students' and parents' opinions, however, as with the subject matter and pedagogies discussed above. Parents (98 percent) and students (83 percent) qualify the textbooks as good and adequate. The others say they did not have textbooks for specific subjects, or that they were too easy and inadequate.

Some students are satisfied with textbooks; they see them as adequate and useful. Other students are not. Some mentioned that their books are second-hand, dirty, some pages are missing, etc. Students from one SPS don't have any opinion on schoolbooks. They don't use them because they are illiterate, or they read poorly (two are from the 2nd, two are from the 4th, and one is from the 6th grade!).

Students' and parents' opinions of special schools

Focus groups with students and with parents were organized in schools; school staff called them to participate. It is not possible to say if there was any influence from schools regarding the choice of participants.

Parents are by-and-large satisfied with special schools and the way their child is treated, particularly when compared with the negative experiences in mainstream schools. Likewise, the vast majority of students are also satisfied with special schools. They give positive assessments of almost everything, from the school building, to their relationships with their teachers and peers. Some think that the curriculum is too easy and regret that they do not study a greater number of subjects; others are really glad that they do not have to study hard.

The results are high as regards students' satisfaction with school. According to the focus groups, 71 percent (27 of 38) of students in MPS, 96 percent (24 of 25) in SPS, 98 percent (52 of 53) in PSES PS, and 84 percent (43 of 49) in PSES SS are satisfied, happy, and feel good in their school.

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[145] OECD, 2007.

On the other hand, special class/school students say they are ashamed of going to a special school, mostly because of others' reactions to this fact. Yet despite this, they are happy to actually be *in* school. They are often made fun of, insulted and ridiculed by their peers, neighbors, sisters and brothers, who think that they are "crazy", "cuckoo", or "mentally retarded". It is especially difficult for them at the beginning, but most get used to the situation later on. Some quotes follow which were taken from our interviews:

- "They make fun of me at home, my sister calls me 'special'";
- "One girl at the boarding home makes fun of me";
- "I was ashamed in the beginning";
- "My neighbors insulted me for going to a special school";
- "My friends said unpleasant things to me, they laugh at me in the street";
- "I was first ashamed to say I go to a special school; everyone is now surprised when I say I go to a special school".

Parents give similar explanations of how others treat their children; they say their children react by keeping silent, withdrawing into themselves, sometimes by starting a fight. Banter leading to fights is mentioned as one of the reasons why children transfer from mainstream to special schools.

Parents do have more diverse views on how special education impacts one's future in terms of employability. Some parents think their children belong in a mainstream school and are angry and embittered because they attend a special school, but do not know what to do about it. Others think that their children belong in a special school because they have trouble memorizing things and studying. Parents list various reasons that led to enrolment in or transfer to special schools and classes: poverty; inadequate work of the boards; lack of support; and pressure and discrimination in mainstream schools.

Sixty-three percent of the parents think their children would be better off if they attended a mainstream school; 30 percent disagree, while seven percent failed to state their opinions. Parents who are glad that their children attend special school say that the children are safe there and are treated better than in mainstream schools, that the curriculum is easier, and that they have a greater chance of graduating from school. The dissatisfied parents think that their children would have learned more in a mainstream school, and that they would have a greater choice of occupations to choose from, thus finding a job more easily.

Fifty-five percent of the parents believe their children would find a job more easily with a mainstream school certificate; 30 percent disagree, while 15 percent failed to state their opinions. While some parents worry about their children's future and employment because they have attended a special school, others believe that the

knowledge they have acquired there, and their diligence will help them find a job and support themselves.

The students' opinions of whether they would be better off if they attended a mainstream school are divided: 53 percent think they would be, and 47 percent disagree; 74 percent think they would be able to find a job more easily with a mainstream school certificate, while 26 percent disagree. Children who had transferred from mainstream school say they feel better in a special school because they feel accepted, and the teachers and other staff have a positive attitude towards them and their parents. Some statements that were collected during the research in regards to attendance at mainstream school are as follows:

- "I would have been better off there if the teachers were like the ones here, if they did not insult us and yell";
- "They immediately start yelling at you there if you don't know something and then they yell at your Mom too";
- "They beat me up there when the teacher wasn't around".

There are two interesting stories (which cannot be verified). One boy said he had prepared his responses for the mainstream school enrolment test in order to be referred to a special school: "I knew all the answers, but I gave wrong ones on purpose so that I'd be sent to this school; I wanted to come to this school because a friend of mine went to it and he taught me what to say." In another story, a father stated he had prepared his son in how not to answer in order to be enrolled in special school.

Some students which were transferred from mainstream school are happy that are not there anymore, but some are sad and would like to go back.

Perhaps students realize the impact of their attending special school only after they have completed their education. Eighty-five percent of the FRS think that they should have attended a mainstream school. They note the negative impact that schooling a large number of Roma in special education has on the Roma community (100 percent) and broader community (55 percent). Sixty-seven percent of the FRS know other Roma who have attended a special school; 62 percent have brothers or sisters in a special school, and the child of one FRS now attends a special school.

2.7 Teaching staff: pre-service education/qualification/licensing

Legal framework

An identical licensing procedure is envisaged for teachers, boarding parents, and professional staff in special and mainstream schools. They need to have the appropriate degrees, to have undergone a trainee program, and to have passed a licensing examination.

The trainee program and the licensing examination for professional staff in special schools/classes is prescribed by the Minister of Education. The program is comprised of training for work with children and students with developmental difficulties,[146] and the exam is taken at FASPER.[147]

The Law stipulates training professional staff who thus attain the following titles: pedagogical adviser; mentor; instructor; and senior pedagogical adviser. Professionals who have obtained the above titles are entitled to higher salaries.

Professional training programs are accredited by the EIB. Upon the proposal of the EIB, the MoE classifies training as compulsory or optional. The EIB 2008–2009 school year catalogue offered 23 specialized training programs within the chapter entitled "Education of Children with Special Needs"; the 23 training programs account for only four percent of the 563 accredited programs. Training programs in 11 other areas, notably Educational Work and General Teaching Issues, and Pre-School Education, are also relevant to the professional development of special school teachers.

The Minister of Education may also approve programs conferring credits upon trainees, which are needed for acquiring specific titles.[148] The Minister approved 16 compulsory programs in the 2008–2009 school year; two of these focused on teaching children with developmental difficulties, and one trained psychologists in applying the adjusted school enrolment test.

The *Rulebook on Continual Professional Training and Conferral of Titles of Teacher, Boarding Parent and Professional Associate*[149] stipulates that these professionals must undergo: a total of 100 hours of accredited training programs and/or programs approved by the Minister of Education; 60 hours of compulsory training; and 40 hours of optional training within a period of five years.

Professional training may be organized by the MoE, educational institutions, the colleges which teachers had attended, professional associations, or by NGOs. Teachers, pedagogues, and psychologists also undergo training that is not accredited but is of a high quality. Such training is usually organized by the civil sector.

The framework guiding the education that teachers who teach in special schools need is outlined in the Primary School Law, Article 92. It states the following:

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[146] Law on the Basis of the Education System, 2004, Art. 113.

[147] Primary School Law, Art. 92.

[148] Pursuant to Art. 23(2) of the Law on State Administration (*Official Gazette RS*, 79/05 and 101/07), Art. 120 of the Law on the Basis of the Education System (*Official Gazette RS*, 62/03, 64/03-amd, 58/04, 62/04-amd, 79/05-amd and 101/05-amd) and Art. 6(2). of the *Rulebook on Continual Professional Training and Conferral of Titles of Teacher, Boarding Parent and Professional Associate* (*Official Gazette RS*, 14/04 and 56/05).

[149] *Official Gazette RS*, 14/2004 and 56/2005.

- tuition in all subjects in the grades 1–4 (i.e. grades 1–8) may be performed by a teacher-defectologist[150] with a minimum junior college degree in the relevant field;
- subjects taught in grades 5–8 may be taught by teachers with a minimum junior college degree in the given subject, and trained for work with children with developmental difficulties at the Faculty of Defectology;
- the curriculum of the training for work with students with developmental difficulties shall be adopted by the Minister of Education, and the trainees shall undergo the exam at the Special Education and Rehabilitation Faculty;
- in the event tuition in grades 5–8 is combined, the grade classes may be taught by a teacher-defectologist in para. 1 of this Article and subject classes by a teacher in para. 2 of this Article;
- educational work in schools with boarding may be conducted by boarding parents with a minimum junior college degree in defectology (Art. 93).

Special pedagogues, for all types of impairments, are educated at the Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation (FASPER), an institution which offers Bachelor's (three or four years), specialist, Master's and Doctoral studies in the following six fields:[151]

1. Speech Therapy;
2. Special Education and Rehabilitation of Persons with Hearing Impairments;
3. Special Education and Rehabilitation of Persons with Visual Impairments;
4. Special Education and Rehabilitation of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities;
5. Prevention and Treatment of Behavioral Disorders;
6. Special Education and Rehabilitation of Persons with Motor Disorders.

Subject teachers are recruited from among graduates of various faculties such as the Faculty of Philosophy (History Department), Faculty of Geography, Faculty of Language, and Art and Music Academies. In secondary vocational schools, practical work is taught by experts in the relevant professions, and engineers.

Special schools employ, as do mainstream schools, psychologists, pedagogues, and social workers as members of a school advisory team.[152] In special schools, this team

[150] A defectologist is a special pedagogue.

[151] Titles are translated literally.

should comprise special educators. Pedagogues are educated at the Pedagogy Department of the Faculty of Philosophy; psychologists are educated at the Psychology Department of the Faculty of Philosophy; social workers are educated at the Faculty of Political Sciences.

An EIB analysis[153] shows that subjects are not taught by subject teachers, but by special educators in a large number of special schools. The students with developmental difficulties thus receive lower quality education in these schools and are essentially discriminated against.

Type and degree of professional development

This research explored the type and degree of professional development that special education teachers undergo. All teachers who responded had attended between one and eight seminars each, and 20 percent of the teachers failed to specify which training they had undergone. Teachers are mainly educated in the field of special pedagogy (29 percent of the total number of teachers that filled in the questionnaire); methodology (26 percent); psycho-social, communication skills, conflict resolution, child rights and anti-bias programs (24 percent); IT and project drafting (18 percent); and inclusive education 14 (percent). Only three teachers had received training to work with children from marginalized families and/or Roma children. Fifty-eight percent of secondary school teachers (who mostly teach practical subjects such as engineering) had undergone one-year training at FASPER, and only one had training in primary education.

Table 27 provides an overview of the type of training that teachers in special schools have undergone.

[152] Each mainstream, special school, and preschool institution in Serbia has an advisory team of psychologists, pedagogues, and some have special educators and/or social workers. Pedagogues work in schools and preschools institutions on pedagogical development; they advise teachers in planning, teaching methods, and teaching program implementation. Psychologists in school mainly work with students and parents. Both work on teachers' professional development.

[153] Education Improvement Bureau, 2007.

Table 27. Professional development of teachers in special schools

Type of training	Number of replies	% of teachers that gave this reply
Specific training programs (special pedagogy)	41	29%
Teaching Methods; Active Learning; Descriptive Grading; Montessori Method; Everyone Can Study with Ease; Teacher as Creator of Class Climate; Training for Homeroom Teachers	37	26%
Good Will Class; Mental Hygiene; Art of Growing Up; Communication Skills; Civic Education; School without Violence; Neither Black Nor White – Program for Overcoming Prejudice; Primer of Child Rights	35	24%
IT, Project Drafting	26	18%
One-year schooling at FASPER for teachers of vocational subjects	24	17%
Inclusive Education; Special School as Service Centre for Mainstream Schools; Kindergartens Tailored to Children; School Modeled after Children; Workshops for Children with Special Needs; Inclusion Index	20	14%
Cooperation with Families of Children with Difficulties	9	6%
Performance Evaluation and Self-Evaluation; School Development Planning; Teamwork; Mentoring	5	3%
Puppetry	3	2%
Education of Roma	3	2%

In their assessments of the quality of staff teaching in special schools and classes, representatives of local self-government, the MoE RD, the CCB, and Roma NGOs who participated in the research mainly state that they are expert, possess teaching and pedagogical skills, fulfil the legal requirements, that their performance is a higher quality than that of mainstream school teachers, and they highlight the added value of their additional training.[154] Some MoE RD councilors stated that teachers need more professional development.

Quite a large percentage of teachers in all settings for special education had worked for well over six years.

[154] In total, six representatives of LSG, 13 from MoE RD, 11 from Roma NGOs, and six members of five CCB were interviewed.

Table 28. Teachers' service in special schools

	Under 5 years	6–10 years	11–20 years	21–30 years	Over 30 years	No reply
MPS (31)*	9	5	2	5	10	–
SPS (23)	4	1	11	5	2	–
PSES (89)	24	22	21	9	8	5
Total	37	28	34	19	20	5

* Number of teachers who responded

2.8 Quality assurance

Monitoring the quality of special schools and classes

Bodies charged with ensuring the quality of education have been established pursuant to the Law on the Basis of the Education System, 2004. The National Education Council sets the direction of quality development and promotion. The Education Improvement Bureau and the Bureau for the Assessment of Quality of Education monitor, ensure, and advance the quality and development of the education system.

The MoE is charged with the administrative and expert pedagogical supervision of educational institutions. The MoE Regional Departments are MoE units in the field conducting expert pedagogical supervision, providing support to development planning, and the quality assurance of schools. Educational counselors are charged with expert pedagogical supervision. The Minister of Education prescribes the expert pedagogical supervision procedures, criteria for evaluating the quality of the work of the institutions, and the procedures for evaluating the work of the educational counselors.

The 2009 Law adds that educational counselors: "[e]xtend advice and offer expert assistance in ensuring the protection of children, students and employees from discrimination, violence, abuse, [and] neglect in the institution" (Art. 151). The 2009 Law has also introduced a new position, the Advisor – External Associate, whose role is: "[f]or the purpose of extending advisory and expert assistance to teachers, preschool teachers and psychologists/pedagogues and with a view to enhancing the quality of education and pedagogical work and activities, the Ministry shall determine a list of advisors – external associates for subjects, groups and areas of subjects and professional activities" (Art. 153).

Inspectorial supervision of schools is conducted by the municipal or city administration education inspectors supervising whether the work of the institutions is lawful, whether they fulfil the operating requirements, and whether the rights of

students, parents, and staff are realized. Local administration inspectors also supervise the enrolment of children, and the records and certificates issued by the institution. The MoE directly inspects the schools if the municipal or city administration fails to conduct such supervision, and reviews appeals of first-instance municipal or city administration decisions taken by the local administration inspectors.

Procedures for monitoring and improving the quality of work in special schools are the same as those applied with respect to mainstream schools. MoE RD counselors visit educational institutions once a year and review them in detail more rarely, depending on the number of institutions and counselors. Counselors paying calls to special schools/classes may (but need not) delegate because of their experience in the field, or their greater receptiveness to the issue; they, however, are not expected to have special training or knowledge of curricula or work programs of special schools/classes.

MoE RD counselors who took part in the research, are of the view that the quality of work in special schools is good but that these schools do not cooperate with mainstream schools, and that their staff do not undergo enough training. Some are of the opinion that the MoE RDs do not have the capacity to extend all the needed aid to schools. Local administration representatives mostly distance themselves from the issue because it is within the jurisdiction of the MoE RD. They too, however, have noted that the laws need to be changed. They say that it is not in their jurisdiction to judge and evaluate teachers' competence.

Some Roma NGOs that participated in the research highlight that teachers in special schools treat children better than teachers in mainstream schools.

School self-evaluation

The first steps towards developing a school self-evaluation system were taken in 2002, when the education reform began, and continued at a slower or faster pace during the legal and staff changes at the MoE. All school changes – including special – should undergo special evaluation. The MoE has indicated that self-evaluation is expected to again become one of the important elements of developing the education system; inclusivity is to become one of schools' self-evaluation criteria.

Self-evaluation includes the evaluation of the life and work of the whole school, its conditions, processes and products. The key areas comprise: the school program and annual work plan; teaching and learning; student performance; support to students; ethos; resources; management; organization; and quality assurance.[155]

Many experts advocate the idea that incorporating inclusivity in schools' development planning, annual work programs, and self-evaluation is of crucial importance for ensuring accessible quality education to all children. Schools would thus assume the obligation to plan the adaptation of their facilities, content and way of work to the

[155] Ministry of Education and Sport, 2005d.

needs and abilities of their students and their families. All schools – including special – should undergo self-evaluation.

2.9 School environment

Special schools and classes: premises, conditions, and equipment

The EIB states in its document[156] that institutions schooling children with developmental difficulties currently apply rulebooks for mainstream preschools and schools. A bylaw regulating requirements in terms of premises, equipment, and teaching equipment needs to be adopted to satisfy the specific needs of children with developmental difficulties.

According to this research, the poorest ratings of school conditions and equipment were given by the local administrations within the jurisdiction of which the schools are operating. The conditions and equipment differ from school to school, so the representatives of the institutions have assessed, noting that the conditions and equipment of some schools equal those of mainstream schools, and are sometimes even better because more attention is devoted to special schools.

School principals and psychologists/pedagogues are more satisfied with the state of the buildings than with their equipment, and parents and students are more satisfied with the state of the schools than are experts, probably because their expectations are lower: parents state that the schools are warm and clean.

The following tables provide a snapshot of the various perspectives on this issue from the different stakeholders.

Table 29. Assessments of special school conditions compared with mainstream schools by representatives of institutions and Roma NGOs

Interviewed	No reply	Same	Better	Poorer
LSG (6)	2 (33%)	1 (17%)	2 (33%)	1 (17%)
MoE RD (13)	–	–	12 (92%)	1 (8%)
Roma NGOs (11)	–	8 (73%)	2 (18%)	1 (9 %)

[156] Education Improvement Bureau, 2007.

Table 30. Schools' assessments of their own conditions

	No reply	School building/premises			Equipment		
		Excellent	Good	Poor	Excellent	Good	Poor
MPS (21)	6	19%	75%	6%	6%	75%	19%
SPS (19)	4	13%	60%	27%	20%	60%	20%
PSES (28)	4	42%	50%	8%	25%	54%	21%
SSS (1)	–	–	100%	–	–	100%	–

Table 31. Teachers' and parents' assessments of school conditions

	Good/Satisfied	Poor/Dissatisfied	No reply
Students (165)*	74%	13%	13%
Parents (62)	40%	7%	54%
FRS (20)	46%	6%	49%

Table 32. Schools' assessments of boarding accommodation

	Excellent	Good	Poor
SPS (6)*	1 (17%)	3 (50%)	2 (33%)
PSES (7)	5 (72%)	1 (14%)	1 (14%)
PSES (2)**	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	–

* Number of schools with boarding facilities
** Assessment of boarding homes that are not part of schools

Teachers' treatment of Roma students

Previous data collected in this research have given the indication that students – and parents of students – who attend special schools generally have a fairly positive attitude towards their experiences in these schools. This opinion is reflected in their thoughts on curriculum, teaching style, and on the quality of the schools' conditions. These opinions are in sharp contrast to those of experts, who are generally much more critical of these aspects. Therefore, it is important to look at how children are treated in such institutions. This research, and prior literature, has indicated that children are often

treated "better" in special schools than in mainstream schools, often not experiencing as much bullying or prejudiced treatment as they would in mainstream schools. It is important to look at this factor in analyzing why so many Roma children are represented in such settings.

Table 33 shows how students and parents of students assess their treatment by teachers. Their opinions are largely very positive.

Table 33. Students' and parents' assessments of treatment of students by teachers and other staff

Students' and parents' assessments of treatment by teachers						
	Good/Humane/Treat the students as their parents would		Poor/Inhumane/ Discriminatory		No reply	
	Students	Parents	Students	Parents	Students	Parents
MPS	92%	44%	8%	0%	–	56%
SPS	84%	81%	8%	0%	8%	19%
PSES PS	100%	31%	–	0%	–	69%
PSES SS	94%	50%	6%	19%	–	31%
Students' and parents' assessments of treatment by other school staff						
	Students	**Parents**	**Students**	**Parents**	**Students**	**Parents**
MPS	71%	44%	–	–	29%	56%
SPS	100%	76%	–	–	–	24%
PSES PS	81%	31%	4%	–	15%	69%
PSES SS	88%	47%	12%	–	–	53%

On the other hand, schools are mostly of the opinion that all students hold the teachers in the same regard. Some note differences in behavior and state that Roma students: "have less respect for the authority of the teachers, which is reflected in their absence from class"; "they show less cooperation, they show less interest"; "it is more difficult to hold students' attention"; Roma students "show disrespect and lack manners due to the lack of home discipline and poverty". However, data show that most schools believe that Roma students treat their teachers in the same way as students from the majority population. Table 34 presents these results.

Table 34. Treatment of teachers by Roma students (data from schools)

Compared with other students, Roma students' treatment of teachers is			
	Same	Different	No reply
MPS (21)	57% (12)	10% (2)	33% (7)
SPS (19)	47% (9)	16% (3)	37% (7)
PSES PS (28)	75% (21)	11% (3)	14% (4)
PSES SS (28)	68% (19)	4% (1)	29% (8)
SSS (1)	100% (1)	–	–

How students feel, and with whom they socialize

One of the indicators of how a child feels in his/her school environment, and to what degree he/she is accepted, is who he/she socializes and plays with. Thus, one of the questions this research sought to answer is with whom do Roma children and youth socialize in special schools and classes? According to data presented in Table 35, a large number of participants assessed that Roma students socialize with all students in school/class. Schools, rather than students, are inclined to think that Roma students socialize only with other Roma children, and list the following reasons: "they communicate more easily because of the language"; "they share interests and values"; "family relations"; "those who attend class socialize equally with all peers, while those who skip school socialize with their Roma peers"; "poverty"; and the "greater number of Roma children in school".

Table 35. With whom Roma children socialize (data from students, parents and schools)

	All students			Generally/Only Roma			No reply		
	Students	Parents	Schools	Students	Parents	Schools	Students	Parents	Schools
MPS (21)	74%	29%	53%	3%	15%	10%	23%	56%	37%
SPS (19)	96%	76%	53%	4%	0%	21%	–	24%	26%
PSES PS (28)	100%	25%	61%	–	6%	25%	–	69%	14%
PSES SS (28)	94%	50%	50%	6%	3%	14%	–	47%	36%
SSS (1)	n/a	n/a	100% (1)	n/a	n/a	–	n/a	n/a	–

And finally, it was important to learn more about how Roma students feel in special schools and classes. Of the 165 students in focus groups, 144 (87 percent) said they felt happy and satisfied in school. The reasons they quote the most are: companionship (35 percent); it is interesting (23 percent); they are treated well by teachers (13 percent). The remaining 15 percent list other reasons. Fifteen students (9 percent) are dissatisfied with school: they do not feel well there because they are bored (33 percent), while others say it is because the teachers treat them poorly (20 percent); because they have no friends (seven percent); or other reasons (40 percent). Six students (four perent) didn't respond to how they felt in school. Table 36 consolidates their opinions.

Table 36. Students' and parents' assessments of how students feel in school

	Good/Satisfied/Happy		Ill-at-ease/ Disappointed/Dissatisfied		No reply	
	Students	Parents	Students	Parents	Students	Parents
MPS	71%	37%	29%	10%	–	54%
SPS	96%	71%	4%	0%	–	29%
PSES PS	98%	25%	2%	6%	–	69%
PSES SS	84%	50%	4%	0%	12%	50%

The researchers organized discussions with students in focus groups about whether they liked going to school and why. Ninety-two percent of the primary school students said they liked going to school; more special school than special class students said they liked going to school (MPS, 82 percent; SPS, 96 percent; PSES PS, 98 percent). Ninety-eight percent of PSES SS students said they liked going to school.

Some of the reasons that students give for liking going to school are: the company (41 percent primary school and 53 percent secondary school students); the teachers (40 percent in primary and 41 percent in secondary schools); the things they learn (30 percent of primary and zero percent of secondary schools); the practical work (four percent of secondary school students); while two percent of primary school students gave other replies. As opposed to 146 replies about what they liked about school, only 68 said what they disliked about it: 16 percent of primary and eight percent of secondary school students said it was because they or the younger students were picked on in school, and because of the fights; eight percent of primary and 24 percent of secondary school students said it was because they had to study; eight percent of primary and two percent of secondary school students said they disliked school because they had to wake up early; 12 percent of secondary school students quoted the poor choice of occupations; six percent of the secondary school students said because of the school rules; six percent of the secondary school students said they disliked the practical

work; and one percent of the primary and two percent of the secondary school students mentioned problems with bus transportation to school.

The only conclusion that may be drawn from these findings is that students are well-off in special schools, that the curriculum is not difficult, that they are treated well, and have contacts with their peers notwithstanding their ethnicity. What is interesting and saddening is that, although they are aware of how special school education will affect their lives, they still think they are better off in a special school than in a mainstream school where they do not feel welcome.

Special schools are not *per se* the reason why an excessive number of Roma children attend them. They were enrolled in special schools either directly via the CCBs, or they unsuccessfully tried going to mainstream schools. Special schools opened their doors to them and responded to their needs and thereby become even more attractive to potential new students. According to one professional, some special schools allow their female students to continue their schooling even when they are pregnant; some allow students to stay when they have a family, some allow students to stay on a year upon completion until they find a place to live and a way to support themselves.[157]

Cooperation between special schools/classes and Roma parents

Another indicator of quality education is the degree to which there is real engagement and contact between the school, and the community it serves. This research thus looked at the degree to which special schools engage Roma parents in the educational process. Data are presented in Table 37.

[157] Interview with Professor Nenad Glumbić, FASPER.

Table 37. Forms of cooperation (data from special schools)

	Primary school level*	Secondary school level**
	School	Schools
Individual contacts***	66%	83%
PTA meeting	57%	62%
Family visits	36%	34%
Counseling, Professional Services	21%	10%
Parents' Council	15%	14%
Lectures/Panel Discussions	15%	7%
Parents' Corner/Club	4%	0%
Workshops	2%	0%
Field trips, Excursions, Get-togethers, Weekend Programmes	2%	0%

* % of schools in the sample that offer primary education (68 schools)
** % of schools in the sample that offer secondary education level (29 schools)
*** individual contacts are mainly in person, but also by phone, in writing, and in one school via the Center for Social Work.[158]

This research demonstrates that cooperation mostly boils down to classical forms such as PTA meetings and talks with individual parents, and that parents are rarely involved in school activities. Not one school or teacher mentioned the involvement of parents in the planning and implementation of the curriculum (e.g. individual educational plans).

Almost the same percentage of schools evaluate cooperation with Roma parents as poorer or the same as with other parents.

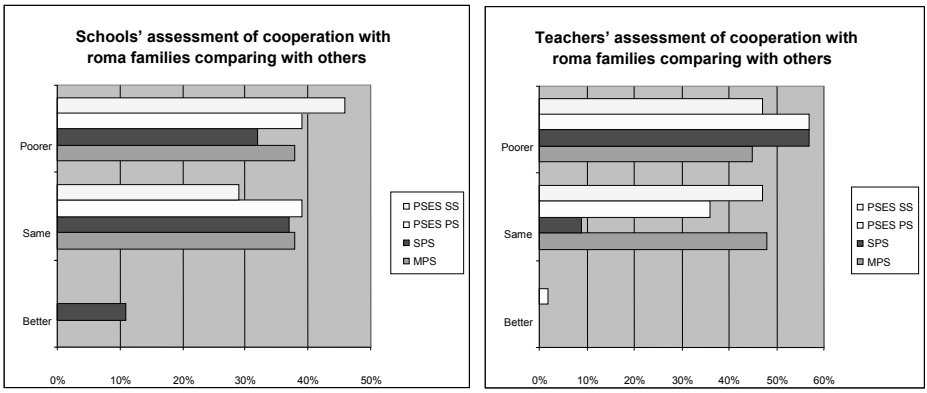
According to special school teachers, the data are similar. They assess that cooperation is most often in the form of parents' meetings (72 percent; 62 percent[159]), and individual contacts (48 percent; 54 percent). Family visits are mentioned by one-third

[158] Centers for Social Work (CSW) are established by the municipality and cooperate with the Ministry for Labor and Social Policy. CSW provide social care for children, youth, adults and the elderly, including documentation and financial aid. The social work is focused on child and family protection. CSW assess citizens' needs in the area of social care, recommend measures, and follow implementation.

[159] The first percentage refers to teachers in primary schools, and the second to the percentage of teachers at the secondary level.

of both schools and teachers; participation of Roma parents in the parents' council is mentioned by 15 percent of schools and teachers. Less traditional forms of cooperation are still rare, and only a few schools mentioned these. It would be interesting to compare those data with that of mainstream schools. The situation is similar in both special classes and mainstream schools.

Table 38. Schools' cooperation with Roma and other families according to schools and teachers



At the primary level, 74 percent of the schools, and 96 percent of teachers thought their cooperation with families of Roma students was the same or poorer than their cooperation with families of other students. Only four percent of schools and one percent of teachers said it was better than with other parents. At the secondary level, 72 percent of schools and 93 percent of teachers thought their cooperation with families of Roma students was the same or poorer than their cooperation with families of other students.

Laying the blame on parents for a lack of good school cooperation is customary in special schools, as well as in mainstream schools. Principals, school pedagogues, psychologists, and teachers mostly agree that the chief reason for the schools' poorer cooperation with families of Roma students lies in the parents' lack of interest in their children's schooling. This is reflected in the fact that the parents do not call on the school of their own accord, do not respond to invitations to come to school, and do not ensure that their children attend school regularly. Some parents are perceived as irresponsible, or abusive to their children in order to get material aid certificates. Expensive bus tickets, the need to work and baby-sit their younger children, the feeling that they are discriminated against, illiteracy, and a lack of education are perceived as the objective causes of poorer cooperation. Cooperation, however, depends on each family and cannot be generalized, according to some. Interestingly, it is precisely those institutions responsible for education that have problems communicating with

insufficiently educated parents. One teacher said that cooperation with parents of Roma children was better because of the calls made on their families.

2.10 Students' qualifications, certificates, and employability

Interpretations of certificates differ even in the law. While some sources state that special school/class certificates are equal to those issued by mainstream schools, others state that they are not. Though there are no formal differences between the certificates, the name of the school indicates that a student has completed a special school/class: special primary and secondary schools do not have the attribute "special" in their title, but everyone can recognize them by their names, especially in the towns in which they are located. Thus, the name of the PSES clearly indicates that a special school is being referred to.

Interviewed experts are also divided in opinion on the certificates, but most agree they do not allow for further schooling. Some underline that although the certificates are formally equal, the differences in attained knowledge are great because there are fewer subjects in special schools, and the ones taught both in mainstream and special schools follow an abridged curriculum. The students are thus prevented from continuing schooling in a mainstream secondary school after completing a special primary school or going on to college after a special secondary school. Students with such ambitions would have to take differential exams, in addition to classification/entrance exams, which is virtually impossible given the low level of knowledge acquired in special schools or classes for students with intellectual disabilities. Many other obstacles stand in the way of children and youth with hearing, visual, or physical impairments, even at the very start (when they wish to access a mainstream educational institution to take the entrance/classification exam).

Local administration and MoE RD experts gave different answers to this question of whether special school certificates allow for students to continue their education. Some think it is possible because the certificates are equally valued as mainstream certificates; others note that although the certificates are formally equal, special school/class graduates cannot continue schooling because they have much less knowledge than their peers who attended mainstream schools. Representatives of Roma NGOs and CCBs are of the opinion that the students cannot continue their schooling.

Schools have even more differing opinions on this matter. A high percentage of schools think that children can only continue their education in special secondary schools: MPS (62 percent); SPS (74 percent); PSES (54 percent). A smaller number think that students can continue their education in mainstream vocational secondary schools: MPS (10 percent); SPS (five percent); PSES (11 percent). Forty-four percent of PSES think that there is no possibility of continuing education after completing a special secondary school, apart from training in a new craft or requalification; seven percent of PSES think students can continue schooling at the university level, and three percent think that this depends on difficulties and family support.

Ninety-four percent of MPS teachers and 100 percent of SPS teachers think students can continue schooling only in special secondary schools. PSES teachers gave their opinions about the possibility of continuing secondary and tertiary education: 72 percent of teachers perceive special secondary schools as the only school which students of special primary schools can enrol in; 20 percent think they can attend any secondary three-year school; eight percent think they can train in a craft, or work in plants after special secondary schools.

With no clear policy or law guiding what students can or cannot do with a special education certificate, and with most schools, teachers, and students having the opinion that further education in mainstream schools is not possible, the outlook for continued education for students who attend special schools and special classes within mainstream schools is not good.

Employability with a special school/class certificate

Having a job is vital both to the individual and society as a whole, especially in Serbia which suffers from high unemployment rates, particularly amongst youth. It is generally difficult to find a job with a diploma, because few new jobs are created and many are eliminated because of lower economic activity, bankruptcy, redundancies, etc. Young people who finish primary school, and who do not continue their education, only have the opportunity to find manual jobs, work in public utility companies, or in similar unqualified jobs requiring only compulsory education. Special secondary schools provide professional qualifications in crafts and qualifications in some outdated occupations for which there is no demand on the labor market. Even when a specific job profile is in demand, special school/class graduates are not competitive on the labor market because employers discriminate against holders of certificates, indicating that their bearers have developmental difficulties. Roma, already exposed to the greatest discrimination in society, have the least chance to find a job in their professions, especially if they are labeled as special school graduates.

Focus group participants who had completed secondary education in a PSES trained in the following professions: locksmith (10); textile technician (3); assistant tinsmith (2); assistant locksmith (2); tailor (2); car-body sprayer (1). They completed school in the following periods: one in 1980–1990; five in 1991–2000; 14 in 2001–2008. Seventy-one percent of these have never held a job, and 76 percent were unemployed at the time the research was conducted. Fourteen percent held full-time jobs, and 10 percent held part-time jobs at the time the research was conducted.

Former secondary school students say that they chose an occupation to be trained for in a special secondary school because it was the only option on offer (55 percent), or to find a job more easily (10 percent). Those FRS who are currently employed work in textile plants. Those who had held a job in the past used to work in textile and rubber plants, or as bus drivers. The researchers asked them whether they were currently actively looking for a job, and how they supported themselves. This information is presented in Table 39.

Table 39. How FRS earn their living if unemployed

Manual labor (carrying wood, furniture, farm work)	30%
Not doing anything/live with parents/brother working abroad helps/spouse works	30%
By collecting secondary raw material	10%
Musician	5%
On construction sites	5%
House painting	5%

Seventy-one percent of FRS believe they would find a job more easily if they had completed a mainstream secondary school, because they would have been able to choose from a greater variety of occupations. Nineteen percent disagree, thinking that nowadays everyone has trouble finding a job, that they had at least finished some kind of school, and that they would have been unable to complete a mainstream school because of the way Roma are treated.

Representatives of institutions and Roma NGOs[160] also believe that graduate students of PSES have minimal chances of finding a job, while others think these students are stigmatized because of their certificates. Some were of the opinion, however, that – apart from persons with intellectual disabilities – they have a chance of finding a job. Others noted that local community initiatives for employing persons with developmental difficulties provided greater opportunities.

Representatives from schools are of the opinion that special school/class graduates have a slimmer chance of finding a job because of their abilities, the program, and because of employers' prejudices. Those who said their prospects were the same as those of mainstream school graduates mostly referred to those chances being negligible or nil due to the economic situation in Serbia. Some participants are of the opinion that employment prospects do not depend on the certificate, but on the community's attitudes and choice of occupation, the students' knowledge, and quality of their work. Some teachers think these graduates have even greater prospects of finding a job because of society's greater focus on and support to employers hiring persons with disabilities. Students who have only completed primary school have fewer prospects than secondary school graduates of both finding a job and choosing among a greater variety of jobs.

[160] In total, six representatives of LSG, 13 from the MoE RDs, 11 from Roma NGOs, and six members of five CCBs were interviewed.

Table 40. Chances of special school graduates finding a job (assessments by schools and teachers)

	Less		Same		Depends on the child/ community		Better		No reply	
	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers
MPS	19%	42%	31%	32%	12%	19%	–	0%	38%	6%
SPS	37%	35%	26%	26%	22%	4%	–	4%	16%	30%
PSES PS	25%	31%	46%	43%	4%	3%	–	9%	25%	14%
PSES SS	18%	32%	43%	52%	–	2%	–	2%	39%	11%
SSS	–	–	100%	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Some survey participants who work in schools said that the employment of their former students has over the past few years been facilitated by specific legal provisions. These legal benefits, however, may be exercised only by persons with the status of persons with disabilities, a status not automatically acquired by classification during enrolment or schooling. The 2005 Labor Law applies to all citizens and does not distinguish between mainstream or special school certificates. Employment of persons with disabilities is regulated by the Law on the Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities,[161] adopted in 2009. Under the Law, employers must employ a specific number of persons with disabilities proportional to their overall number of staff. The Law specifies who shall be deemed a person with a disability, how the status is acquired and how their work capacity is evaluated. Work capacity shall be evaluated by a competent employment service regardless of whether the person has a decision on classification or not. Roma children (and all others who are) unjustifiably classified as "mentally underdeveloped/intellectually challenged persons" and thus deprived of work capacity may seek reclassification to establish that their intellectual functions are fully preserved and equal those of the average person (child). Another option is for a parent or guardian to launch a non-contentious procedure before a competent court to establish work capacity (capacity for legal transactions). The court is thus asked to evaluate the work capacity of the person (i.e. reinstate it to a person who has been deprived).[162]

[161] Law on the Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, 36/09, which replaced the Law on the Labor Training and Employment of Invalids.

[162] Consultation with Nenad Ciric, Center for Independent Living.

Impact of attending special school/class on students' lives

Only a few representatives of institutions and Roma NGOs[163] highlight the positive effects of attending a special school. Some say that it is better to have some school rather than no school, and that students are treated better in special schools. Some are of the opinion that attending special schools has no great impact on the children's status in either the majority or Roma community. Most, however, note the negative impact on society because the discrimination they feel as Roma in the first place is compounded by society's discrimination of those attending special schools/classes.

Respondents' replies regarding questions on the opportunities that children and youth have after completing special schools cover a whole range of opposing responses, both positive and negative. Interestingly, some participants were restrained or responded "Don't know", although their professions and employment are linked to special schools. Table 41 reviews the varying responses on this question by different stakeholders.

Table 41. Impact of special schooling on students' lives (assessments by schools and teachers)

	Positive		Negative		Depends on the community		No impact		No reply	
	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers
MPS	50%	61%	26%	13%	9%	13%	15%	3%	9%	10%
SPS	47%	17%	5%	25%	11%	4%	11%	17%	26%	38%
PSES PS	39%	34%	25%	29%	4%	6%	4%	14%	29%	17%
PSES SS	36%	49%	19%	16%	8%	11%	7%	2%	32%	22%
SSS	–	–	100%	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

* some schools gave two answers, so total percentage is more than 100 percent

Those who believe that attending special school has a positive impact say so because it: aids rehabilitation, acquiring knowledge and skills needed in everyday life; gives a chance of finding a job thanks to affirmative action measures; provides contacts with other children; provides social acceptance and support, since those who attend would not have been able to finish another school. Those who believe that attending special school has a negative impact say so because there is: separation of children from their

[163] In total, six representatives of LSG, 13 from the MoE RDs, 11 from Roma NGOs, and five members of the CCBs were interviewed.

families; difficulty in finding a job; a consequence on forming a family; it breeds discrimination and contempt; and it fosters feelings of shame and lowers self-esteem in the students.

2.11 Special education as family legacy

In the schools surveyed for this research, 48 percent of the MPS, 74 percent of the SPS, and 71 percent of the PSES had two or more children from the same family in attendance. Parents who had gone to a special school often sent their children there as well. Fifty-four percent of parents in focus groups knew other Roma, and 55 percent had brothers/sisters/children in special schools/classes. One mother, who had herself attended the PSES now schooling her three children, thinks her family was preordained to go to that school, because no one humiliates them there.

These high percentages are supported when looking at evidence provided by students, as well. Seventy-one percent of the secondary school students knew other Roma students in special schools and 82 percent had brothers/sisters. Of the former Roma students, 67 percent knew other Roma students who had attended special schools, and 62 percent had brothers/sisters, and one had a son in a special school.

Schools give various interpretations as to why there are a high percentage of multiple family members, and generations, who attend special school:

- some believe that the children were classified as special needs children, and therefore inherently needed to go to special school (27 percent);
- the children are educationally neglected and lack home care and discipline (16 percent);
- stereotypes of Roma;
- they feel accepted in a special school;
- the parents wanted them to go to a special school (16 percent);
- the family is poor (15 percent);
- the curriculum is less demanding;
- special school is easier to finish (seven percent);
- the school is close to a Roma settlement (two percent).

These opinions do not reflect a deeper understanding of why Roma may be attending special schools in such large numbers, such as the unquestioned tracking that systems inadvertently support, and the bias and prejudice which may also contribute to such tracking.

3. MIS/PLACEMENT INTO SPECIAL SCHOOLS/CLASSES AND REINTEGRATION INTO MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS/CLASSES

3.1 Existing and valid regulations and guidelines on the placement of children in special schools

Enrolment in all schools is regulated by the Law on the Basis of the Education System 2004[164] which only mentions the assessment of a child's readiness for school, in the Primary School Law[165] in Chapter VII entitled "Education of Students with Developmental Difficulties", and in the Secondary School Law.[166]

Under the Primary School Law, Article 83, a child with developmental difficulties shall enrol in school on the basis of a decision establishing the degree of developmental difficulty. Children with developmental difficulties shall comprise the following.

1. Children with physical or sensory impairments (children with physical disabilities; blind and visually impaired children; deaf and hard of hearing children).
2. Children with intellectual disabilities (mild, moderate, severe, profound).
3. Children with multiple developmental disabilities (two or more disabilities, autistic children, etc.).

In Article 84, the Law also states that the type and degree of developmental difficulty shall be determined on the basis of a proposal of the medical board.

The Secondary School Law states in Article 39 that:

> Schools for children with developmental difficulties shall enrol a student on the basis of a decision establishing the type and degree of his/her developmental difficulty adopted by the municipal administration in accordance with the law. The request to establish or re-establish the type or degree of developmental difficulty may be submitted by the parent, school or health institution. The decision on the type and degree of developmental difficulty of the student shall specify the type and degree of developmental difficulty and the professional guidance of the student.

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[164] The Law on the Basis of the Education System, 2004.

[165] The 1985 Law on the Education of Children and Youth with Developmental Difficulties ceased to be effective when the Primary School Law (*Official Gazette* 50/92, 53/93, 67/93, 48/94, 66/94, 22/2002, 62/2003 and 64/2003) was adopted.

[166] Secondary School Law, *Official Gazette* 50/92, 53/93, 67/93, 48/94, 24/96, 23/2002, 62/2003 and 64/2003.

The Primary School Law article 87 says that: "The Government shall set the criteria and procedure for classifying the children with developmental difficulties and the Board's *modus operandi*." The Decree on Criteria for Classifying Children with Developmental Disabilities, and the Composition and Working Methods of the Medical Board for the Examination of Children with Developmental Difficulties (which was adopted back in 1994) is still valid notwithstanding all the changes that have been made to education laws in the meantime. A team working on an expert project (presented in greater detail later in the text) drafted a Decree on the Work of the Board for Assessing the Needs and Professional Guidance of Children with Developmental Difficulties and submitted it to the MoE in 2003. No official reaction to the draft, however, ensued. It was only in 2009 that the MoE established a working group that aimed to reform the Child Classification Board (CCB) into the Inter-sectoral Commissions.

CCB interviewees listed five different documents regulating the work of CCBs. Some of them are no longer in force.

3.2 Procedures for placing children into special schools and special classes in mainstream schools

Enrolment in preschool institutions

Children of preschool age may be referred for a medical check-up by a board[167] by the doctor or the preschool institution. The Board may recommend that the child be placed in a developmental group instead of a mainstream one in the kindergarten, or in a preschool group within the special education PSES. Sometimes, preschool institutions (i.e. its psychologists themselves) assess the children (we do not know how) and place them in developmental groups. Children who attend developmental groups are usually sent directly to the CCBs for testing and referred to special primary schools, although there have been instances of such children enrolling in mainstream schools.

Enrolment in primary school

Children between six and a half and seven and a half years old at the beginning of the school year are enrolled in first grade (with the exception of children who are enrolled at a later stage with good justification, while children above eight years of age may be enrolled in a higher grade if they pass knowledge tests). Schools are obliged to enrol children living in their precincts; parents are entitled to choose a school for their child. Municipalities keep registers and notify schools and parents of children old enough to enrol in school, and of enrolled children. The enrolment procedure comprises an assessment of the child's readiness for school, an interview with the parents, and insight

[167] This Board comprises an outpatient health clinic doctor and psychologist, and is not the Board for the Examination of Children with Developmental Difficulties, which children enrolling in first grade are referred to.

into a child's medical results. School annual work programs include an item on enrolment and the work plans of the pedagogues and psychologists.

In order to assess a child's readiness to start primary school, the child is tested by the school psychologist or pedagogue who, according to the Law, applies "standards recommended by the competent center".[168] In practice, they apply instruments prescribed by the Society of Psychologists of Serbia (a competent body). School psychologists may use all approved tests, while pedagogues need to undergo compulsory training in applying and interpreting the Test for Examining First-Graders TIP-1, which is accredited by the Education Improvement Bureau and organized by the Centre for Applied Psychology of the Society of Psychologists of Serbia.[169]

Assessments of the children's readiness are not subject to monitoring or quality control, because neither are mentioned in the *Guidebook on Professional and Pedagogical Supervision* carried out by MoE RD advisers. MoE RD advisers and (municipal) school inspectors analyze the applied procedure (albeit most often with respect to inoculation) only if a parent (or someone else) files an appeal.[170]

Documents on assessments of the children's readiness to enrol in first grade are kept by the schools. Data are confidential, so it is impossible to gain insight into the children's achievements. Schools and municipalities submit data to the MoE RDs on the number of children due to be enrolled, the number of children who applied for enrolment, and the number of children enrolled in mainstream and special schools. The MoE RDs do not receive data on the number of children that mainstream schools referred to the CCB for testing.

Notwithstanding the procedures in place, some children never apply to mainstream schools at all because the Centers for Social Work refer them directly to the outpatient health clinics, which in turn refer them to the CCBs; mainstream schools occasionally establish after enrolment that a child they had expected to enrol has already been enrolled in a special school.[171]

A recommendation to postpone enrolment may be issued only with respect to children who have not turned six and a half by the beginning of the school year. There are, therefore, no legal grounds to make such recommendations with respect to older Roma children.

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[168] The Law on the Basis of the Education System, 2004, Art. 90.

[169] Interview with Aleksander Baucal, PhD., Institute for Psychology, Faculty for Philosophy, Belgrade.

[170] Interview with Ms. Angelina Skarep, MoE RD Adviser, leader of the MoE Team for monitoring the implementation of the (Common) Action Plan for the Improvement of Education of Roma.

[171] Interview with Ms. Angelina Skarep, MoE RD Adviser, leader of the MoE Team for monitoring the implementation of the (Common) Action Plan for the Improvement of Education of Roma.

There is also an option for children diagnosed with intellectual disabilities to be enrolled in mainstream school. According to the amendment to the law on education: "[t]he school may during the enrolment test procedure refer the child to a local self-government board which shall recommend an education programme in accordance with a separate law".[172] The referral is proposed by the school psychologist/pedagogue and the decision is issued to the parent of the child by the school principal. Thus, Article 90 allows for enrolling children with developmental difficulties into a mainstream school, where they follow the proposed individualized program. This provision, however, is rarely applied. Readiness assessments are often used only to compose classes to ensure that no class differs from the other with respect to a number of criteria.

Enrolment in secondary school

Primary school graduates enrol in general secondary schools on the basis of their scores in entrance exams, primary school grade averages, and in vocational secondary schools on the basis of their primary school grade averages. A special primary school student may in theory enrol in a mainstream secondary school if s/he passes the differential exams in subjects s/he did not have in special school. However, this is virtually impossible for students who had gone to primary schools for children with intellectual disabilities, given the great discrepancies in the curricula (the number of subjects and their content). In practice, they either enter a secondary special school or leave school. PSES students usually attend the same institution as kindergarten.

Visible, albeit insufficient, efforts have been invested in the past few years to increase the enrolment of Roma children in mainstream secondary schools. These efforts include changing the mainstream school enrolment procedure.[173]

3.3 Components of assessing children's readiness for school: diagnostic tools, CCBs, and parents' rights

Assessing readiness for school is often referred to as "testing the children." This common usage in speech indicates that testing is what it usually boils down to in practice. There are no precise data on which tools are used and to what extent. The

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[172] The Law on the Basis of the Education System, 2004, Art. 90.

[173] Enrolment in four-year secondary schools has in the past few years been conducted on the basis of the sum of points a student has upon completion of primary school (average grades) and points s/he scored in qualification exams (Mathematics and Serbian Language) taken upon completion of primary school. Students who wish to attend three-year vocational secondary schools are enrolled only on the basis of their primary school average grades. Students applying for secondary schools for gifted children have to pass specific qualification exams. The 2009 Law on the Basis of the Education System replaces qualification exams with graduation exams at the end of 8th grade.

tools used most often comprise the Test for Examining First-Graders TIP-1,[174] which was designed for enrolment testing, The New Belgrade Revision of the Binet-Simon Scale,[175] and, to a lesser extent, REVISK – the Revised Scale for Measuring the Intelligence of Children,[176] or another tool.

More and more often, experts have warned of the negative effects of applying specific tools, above all, the inadequate interpretations of the findings obtained by them. Such interpretations on occasion lead to unjustified referral to the CCB, and subsequently to special schools. This report provides an overview of research which focuses on the validity and effectiveness of using intelligence tests to assess a child's readiness for school:

[174] Test for Examining First-Graders TIP-1 was designed to assess the children's readiness for school and measures levels of information, immediate memory, observation, verbal skills and logical operations.

[175] The New Belgrade Revision of the Binet-Simon Scale of 1985 was adapted. The standardized intelligence test aims to test the intelligence of children between four and 14 years of age. It can alternatively be used to assess general intelligence ability as a composite of different, predominantly verbal, but also numerical, practical and perceptive abilities taken from the Assessment Scale. According to Wikipedia (http://sr.wikipedia.org/), the "Binet-Simon Scale is the first and best known individual intelligence test designed by French psychologist Binet and physician Simon in 1905. The Binet-Simon Scale marked the onset of the systemic measurement of intelligence and the whole movement of mental testing. The test determines whether a child's intelligence is above or below average or average, his/her mental age *vis-à-vis* his/her calendar age. Two revisions of the Binet-Simon Scale were conducted in Serbia – the first was the Belgrade Revision in 1937 and the second the New Belgrade Revision in 1976." According to another source, *Assessment of School Readiness – How to Approach the Problems of Assessing School Readiness and of the Adjustment of Marginalised Children to School*, Snežana Tovilović and Aleksandar Baucal, Centre for Applied Psychology, Society of Psychologists of Serbia, 2007, Binet was of the view that the results a child achieves in the testing prior to starting school merely indicate his/her achievements at that moment, but conclusions cannot be drawn about his/her former or future development on the basis of the test.

[176] REVISK (the Revised Scale for Measuring the Intelligence of Children) is an adjusted and nationally standardized battery of Wechsler Intelligence Tests designed to test the intelligence of children from five to 15 years of age. It was created by the standardization of the 1997 WISC-R test and is used for the individual testing of children to assess the degree of their developmental difficulty and the quality of their cognitive functioning. The test comprises 11 verbal and non-verbal subtests: Information, Picture Completion, Arithmetic, Object Assembly, Comprehension, Block Design, Vocabulary, Matrix Reasoning, Similarities, Picture Arrangement and Digit Span. The test satisfies all psychometric criteria, is standardized for Serbia's population and adjusted to its culture (excerpt from Assessment Scale).

- justifiability of using the TIP-1 test outside areas for which it was standardized;[177]
- factors of success at intellectual ability tests prior to school enrolment;[178]
- cognitive functioning of educationally neglected children of preschool age.[179]

This testing problem was also dealt with by experts working on the project Psychological Problems in the Context of Societal Changes and Psychological Features

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[177] Simić & Milka, 1998. Summary: the Test for Examining First-Graders TIP-1 has been used by primary school psychologists and pedagogues across Serbia for over a decade. Most city schools admit children from the nearby suburbs and villages and many schools have separate classes in villages. The use of this test has thus been expanded to areas for which it has not been standardized. Simultaneously, the users of the test do not have comprehensive and systematically processed data on how to test "behaviors" in these communities. Analysis 611 of the protocol of children enrolled in first grade and examined by this test in the 1991–1995 period shows that the performances of children in communities defined as small cities deviate from the test norms for the suburb sample. This brings into question the effectiveness of applying this test in the said communities and indicates the need to design new norms.

[178] Lidija Vučić, *et al.*, 1994. Summary: the correlation between success at intelligence tests of children enrolling in school and their personal family and socio-economic features was examined. Results of the intelligence tests used the most often, notably the First Belgrade Revision of the Binet-Simon Scale, the Test for Examining First-Graders, Raven's Colour Progressive Matrices, and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children were examined. The sample comprised 599 children tested on enrolment. The mother's education proved to be the most correlated with success on all tests. The education of the father and material and living conditions also affected the test results, while specific variables correlated with success at only specific intelligence tests. Variables correlated most often with success at intelligence tests involve the cultural-educational levels of the family, an important factor of the development of intellectual abilities.

[179] Biro Mikloš, Novović Zdenka, and Tovilović Snežana, 2006. Summary: the research covered 96 Roma first-graders who were seven and a half years old on average, and 78 preschool children (six years and one month old on average), 37 of whom were Roma and 41 of whom were not Roma. Cognitive functioning was tested by a battery of five tests based on (adjusted) Wechsler Scales, and a language competence test. The results showed that Roma children substantially lag behind the control group and norms. Analysis of the covariance indicated the significant impact of the father's education on the test results, but the difference between the groups remained substantial even when this variable was kept under control. Item analysis, however, showed that a number of items were extremely "unfair" to Roma children and their elimination led to the annulment of the difference between the groups in covariance analyses in a number of tests. Authors interpret this as proof of the need and possibility to adjust the tests to the testing of educationally neglected children. The fact that the greatest differences were observed in tests full of visual-motoric coordination and memory factors is explained by the absence of experience in toy manipulation among Roma children, and probably by the attention deficit arising from the absence of a stimulating environment.

of a Society in Transition, funded by the Ministry of Science and Environment. They designed a School Readiness Test,[180] and wrote the publication *Assessment of School Readiness – How to Approach the Problems of Assessing School Readiness and of the Adjustment of Marginalised Children to School.*[181]

Currently, the School Readiness Test is available to school psychologists, and is to be used as an additional, supplementary tool to help them review more objectively and comprehensively a child's potential for development in the context of his/her socio-economic and cultural background. This tool is to assist them in assessing Roma and other minority children.[182]

The *Assessment of School Readiness – How to Approach the Problems of Assessing School Readiness and of the Adjustment of Marginalised Children to School* is a precious publication because it comprehensively, professionally, and clearly treats the issues of how environment and heredity affect the development of intelligence, on how school readiness ought to be assessed, and how to best test children from Roma communities (and other marginalized groups).

Here we present some of the many important issues its authors raise.

- Application of tests should be restricted, especially at the preschool level, due to the specific features and individual rates of development of children, the inadequate testing process in the context of their lives and the tests' low validity.
- The applied tools were standardized a long time ago; TIP 1 was designed for testing children older than the current first-graders (children used to start school a year later).
- The predicative value of this type of test stands at 0.6, which means that the decisions reached on the basis of them are wrong in 60 percent of the cases. Sixty percent of the children referred to special schools on the basis of these tests should not have been referred to them in the first place.
- The difference between readiness to learn and readiness for school is reflected in the fact that the former concept defines the child's readiness to learn, whilst the latter assesses whether the child will be able to learn in a *typical* school environment. In effect, children assessed not to be ready for school on the basis of rapid and superficial reviews are prevented from accessing them. Information arrived at during the readiness assessments should help the school adjust to the potentials and needs of its students. As the authors stated, a "Copernican

[180] Novović, *et al.*, 2007.

[181] Snežana Tovilović & Aleksandar Baucal, 2007.

[182] Interview with Aleksandar Baucal, PhD, Institute for Psychology, Faculty for Philosophy, Belgrade. It is important to note, however, that under the new school law, there will be no testing of children at the beginning of the school year at all.

Revolution" must be made: we must not ask ourselves whether a child is ready for school, but to what extent the school is ready for the child.

- At present, psychologists/pedagogues assess a child's intellectual abilities and social and emotional readiness on the basis of a short interview, and without any insight into his/her background.

The authors gave a number of proposals on how to improve the assessment of readiness for school. A number of preparations have to be made, including a visit to the neighborhood the child lives in, getting to know the child and the family, and giving them a chance to visit the school. The experts should establish contact with the child, create an atmosphere in which the child will feel relaxed, and provide interpretation if necessary. They think that the assessment should first be conducted in the standardized way, and then reviewed in the life-context of the child, and his/her overall behavior in his/her community.

Boards for the examination of children with developmental difficulties (CCB)[183]

The classification of children is conducted before they enrol in primary school, or later. A parent, whose child has been referred for examination, submits a request to the CCB. A decision is issued establishing the type and degree of developmental difficulty, the health and ability of the child to acquire primary education, and the type of school the child is to enrol in. The decision is issued by the municipal/city administration on the basis of an opinion rendered by the CCB. Its members (a specialist doctor, a psychologist, a pedagogue, a special pedagogue, and a social worker) are appointed by the municipal/city administration on the proposal of the health institution in the territory in which the school is situated. Two or more municipalities may establish a joint CCB.[184]

It remains unclear which diagnostic tools are used by the CCB's psychologists.[185] They have the option of choosing a tool they deem the most suitable and applicable after the primary school assessment, given that the children may not be asked to do the same test for at least six months.

CCB interviewees said that they used tools to assess the children's psycho-motor skills, memory, knowledge, observation skills, intelligence, and speech; one of them thought the TIP 1 test to be inadequate for Roma children.

According to CCB interviewees' replies to the question about who refers children to the CCBs, they replied as follows: doctors (40 percent); preschool institutions (20

[183] They are called in some documents *Commissions for Categorization of Children with Developmental Disabilities.*

[184] Primary School Law, Chapter VII

[185] The tools mentioned above are recommended for school psychologist and pedagogues, and not for the CCB. It is possible, however, that they use the same ones.

percent); primary schools (80 percent); Center for Social Work (60 percent); and parents (80 percent). Children referred to CCBs are 6–10 years old.

The CCB's opinion is necessary if the parents wish to exercise social, health, and education rights. Given that a child classified as having a developmental difficulty by the CCB cannot attend a mainstream school (except in the rare cases when the school is willing to admit him/her), a parent who wants his/her child to attend a mainstream school is advised not to even apply for testing before the CCB. Some children have thus realized the right to attend mainstream schools, but not the right to the professional assistance that they need. In some towns, civil society organizations provide support to such children and their families.

The chief initiative related to reforming the classification system (before 2009) took place within the project Protecting the rights of disabled children – Improving the Work of the CCBs for the Examination of Children with Developmental Difficulties,[186] which was not supported by the MoE.[187] The plan was to evaluate the current classification system from the viewpoint of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to propose measures to reform the system (i.e. draft a new decree on the work of the CCBs, establish reformed pilot CCBs, and evaluate the effects of the new measures).

Some findings of this work include the following. In the 1997–2001 period, 11,499 (83 percent) of children were referred to the CCB for the first time, and 2,302 (17 percent) for the second time. Of them, 10,003 (72.4 percent) were classified as children with developmental difficulties and referred to special schools. Fourteen percent of the CCBs did not operate in accordance with the 1986 Decree and abided by the old enactments. All members of the CCB individually examine each child and submit written reports about their work in 98.6 percent of the cases. In 43.1 percent of cases, the CCBs stated that the assessment process had been completed after seeing the child once ("on the same day"); in 25 percent after seeing the child twice; and in 6.9 percent after seeing the child three times. A total of 25 percent of CCBs needed to see the child more than three times before they rendered their opinions. The greatest number of children (38.4 percent) had been referred to CCBs between seven and nine years of age (that is at the time when they have to start school); and subsequently when they were between 10 and 12 years of age (24.6 percent), when their inadequacy in school becomes obvious. The data about the follow-up of classified children, in any

[186] Protecting the Rights of Disabled Children, 2002.

[187] The project "Protecting the rights of disabled children – Promotion of the work of Commissions for Categorization of Children with Developmental Disabilities" was initiated by the project team from the Institute for Mental Health, Belgrade. The Ministry for Social Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, in partnership with UNICEF, accepted this initiative and supported the project's implementation within the humanitarian organization Handicap International.

form, were submitted by 66 percent of the CCBs, while 34 percent stated that they had not undertaken any follow-up.[188]

The CCBs have played a very important role in selecting the type of care and education for these children. However, their work has been influenced by the medical model of thought, and they have attached primary importance to establishing the type and degree of the child's disability, and, based on these findings, made their decisions about the child's "destiny" concerning education, placement in an institution, right to social benefits, etc.

The draft Decree on the Work of the Board for Assessing the Needs and Professional Guidance of Children with Developmental Difficulties, proposed to the MoE in 2003, recommended the following ways to improve the work of the CCBs:

- definition of a child with a developmental difficulty;
- assessment of the child's needs and ensuring that s/he can exercise his/her rights instead of merely classifying him/her;
- the CCB assessments and meetings with the child should be a continual process, not a one-off event, with the CCBs monitoring the child and the family;
- the CCBs would have to intervene at an early stage, place the child in the institution closest to home (the child should not be separated from the family and the family should be provided with support)
- inter-agency approach to assessment and provision of services.

The work of the CCB has been under a lot of criticism from parents, experts, and civil society organizations. They are mostly criticized for the obsolete terminology, unclear procedures which some do not even abide by, lack of sensitivity for children from other ethnic groups, and occasionally for not being conscientious enough. Many children have been examined by only one CCB member, although the Decree specifies that each child must be independently examined by each CCB member (and, if necessary,

[188] Other findings: a total of 76 CCBs operated in the given period, 20 of them in Belgrade. A total of 86.1 percent were established by the municipal departments (Departments for Social Activities), 4.2 percent by the provincial committees, and 9.7 percent of second-instance Boards were set up by the Ministry and Government of the Republic of Serbia. The CCB had jurisdiction over children living in 1–11 municipalities. Fifty-seven percent of the CCB examined children suffering from all types of difficulties, 66.7 percent of the CCB received a small fee per examined child. Type and degree of difficulty, expressed in percentage of total number of classified children/youths: 78 percent of the decisions found the children to be suffering from intellectual disabilities (57.4 percent mild, 12.8 percent moderate, 4.5 percent severe, and 3.4 percent profound); 2.5 percent were found to be suffering from visual, and 3.1 percent from hearing impairments. The CCB established that 3.5 percent had physical disabilities, and that 12.9 percent were suffering from multiple disabilities.

by other experts), and that the CCB subsequently meet and render a joint opinion. Roma children and parents encounter difficulties if they do not speak the language used by the CCB, and no interpretation is provided. The examinations sometimes take only a short while, with the CCB members merely reviewing the medical documentation and failing to apply the adequate tools.[189]

The weaknesses in the work of the CCBs is in regards to: retroactive and one-off actions; assessments based on deficit; absence or passive involvement of the child and family in decision-making; lack of, or sporadic monitoring of effects of the proposed measures; and poor records on classified children.[190]

Good practice in the work of the CCBs is reflected in the fact that some of them are part of the outpatient health clinic Development Counseling Centers, that their members undergo additional training, and that the members of the CCBs work in various agencies and cooperate with the local self-government.[191]

According to CCB interviewees, Roma children are diagnosed as follows: slight mental retardation (20 percent); same as other children (40 percent); educational neglect of Roma children is more frequent than among other children (40 percent).

Forty percent of the CCB interviewees said that parents translated for their children who were not fluent in Serbian; 20 percent said that CCBs used non-verbal tests in such cases. A total of 20 percent stated that all children knew the language. Eighty percent of the CCB interviewees stated that parents understood the assessment procedure, and 100 percent stated that cooperation with Roma parents was good.

CCB members' views of changes in the number of children referred to CCBs in the past three years are as follows: the total number of children is the same (20 percent); greater (40 percent); smaller (40 percent); the number of Roma children is the same (40 percent); greater (20 percent); or smaller (40 percent). The number of children referred by CCBs to special schools is the same (40 percent); smaller (20 percent); greater (20 percent); no reply (20 percent). The number of Roma children referred to special schools is the same (40 percent); smaller (40 percent); no reply (20 percent).

Eighty-two percent of Roma NGO interviewees stated that Roma parents did not understand the whole assessment procedure. More than half of the Roma NGOs know the procedure and parents' rights, but the parents are not informed. Seventy-three percent of Roma NGO interviewees said that Roma children did not know Serbian during the primary school enrolment testing, and 64 percent stated that children did not get any help with the language. There are some positive examples: members from the Roma community are included in the work of two CCBs.

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[189] Interview with Professor Nenad Glumbić, FASPER.

[190] Protecting the Rights of Disabled Children, 2002.

[191] *Ibid.*

Civil society and MoE activities before, and especially during the Decade of Roma Inclusion, have led to a change in attitude among some experts and schools, to a better understanding of the problem, and to greater readiness to adjust and change the practice of assessment to address the needs of the Roma community. This process has been supplemented by initiatives promoting child rights and inclusive education for all children. More and more experts have been undergoing additional training, and have started focusing on Roma education; professional societies dealing with these issues are also being established.

Concrete changes include the MoE recommendation that schools enrol children, even if they do not possess all the necessary documents. The parents must submit the missing documents later. (Registration of residence is the document Roma parents, notably those living in unhygienic settlements or Kosovo IDPs, usually have the greatest trouble obtaining.) The enrolment testing of children, who are not fluent in the language used during the testing, is attended by parents, or other persons who act as interpreters. A new tool for assessing readiness for school has been designed. MoE RDs have appointed counselors focusing on Roma education. Roma assistants in schools (as well as Roma coordinators and health coordinators in municipal administrations) provide support to the parents and help effect positive changes in schools. Some community projects or institutional initiatives have led to better inter-agency cooperation, to joint activities, and to the monitoring of the children's progress.

Parents' rights and enrolment of children in mainstream schools notwithstanding the CCB's decision

A child's parent or guardian shall have the right of appeal with a competent municipal or city authority of the part of the CCB decision assessing the child's health abilities. The competent municipal or city authority shall decide on the appeal on the basis of an opinion of a separate second-instance CCB established jointly by two or more municipalities when necessary (these are not standing CCBs). The parent is obliged to enrol the child in the school specified in the final decision on classification.[192]

Legal regulations on the rights of the children and parents are not entirely clear, and are subject to various interpretations. In practice, if the parent insists that his/her child be enrolled in a mainstream school and finds a school willing to admit the child, the child need not enrol in a special school. Problems may arise, however, if a child is enrolled in a mainstream school under pressure, because the school may decide to *prove* that the child cannot attend it. There have been cases of such children later transferring to special schools.

Data obtained in interviews during this research show that: 17 percent of local administration, 23 percent of MoE RDs, and 40 percent of CCB interviewees knew of children who had enrolled in mainstream schools, notwithstanding CCB decisions.

[192] Primary School Law, Chapter VII.

Their enrolment in mainstream schools was supported by Roma NGOs and the Roma Strategy Secretariat.

The researchers of this report tried to establish whether any parents had themselves asked that their children be enrolled in special schools during our interviews with CCB, MoE RD, and the local administration staff. When asked whether a large number of parents requested their children be enrolled in a special school, 17 percent of local administration, eight percent of MoE RD, and 60 percent of CCB interviewees agreed that they did. On the other hand, 54 percent of MoE RD, and 40 percent of CCB interviewees think that this is rarely the case. When asked why parents want their children enrolled in special schools, 17 percent of local administration, eight percent of MoE RD, and 80 percent of the CCB interviewees listed the benefits of attending special school as the reason. A further 50 percent of the local administration, eight percent of MoE RDs, and 80 percent of the CCB interviewees say that the parents want their children to go to special schools because these are easier to finish.

Contrary to this information, only a few FG parents said that they themselves had asked that their children be enrolled in special schools, either because their older children had had a bad experience in mainstream schools, or because their older children were already attending a special school. Notably, *none* of the parents mentioned benefits as the reason, although this argument is often quoted to explain the large share of Roma children in special schools, even by teaching staff. Several students in the FG also said they had wanted to go to special school to which their friends in the settlement, or older siblings went. One boy described how the older children in the settlement instructed him how to *trick* the school psychologist into referring him to the CCB. Children and parents rarely ask that the child be immediately enrolled in a special school. Rather, they ask for transfer to a special school because the child is not doing well in mainstream school, or is being discriminated against there. In most cases, the mainstream schools advise the parents to transfer the child to a special school.

3.4 Mis/Placement into special schools/classes

Who opted for a special school and why?

Parents and students in focus groups were asked who had decided that the students should go to a special school or to a special class in a mainstream school: the students or parents themselves, or had they been advised to enrol in such a school or class by the CCB or by the mainstream school? Table 42 shows that 41 percent of the students stated that family members,[193] foster parents, or they themselves had opted for such a school or class. A further 40 percent said that someone in the mainstream school, the CCB, or a social worker had recommended that they enrol in a special school/class. Thirteen percent of the parents said they had wanted their child to go to a special

[193] Children listed all family members, not only mothers or fathers, but grandparents, siblings, etc.

school/class, while as many as 54 percent stated that they had been advised to enrol them there by the mainstream school or CCB.

Various reasons were quoted for opting for special school/class: students mostly said their siblings or parents had attended the special school (eight); that they had poor grades in mainstream school (seven); that special school was closest to home (four); that it was free of charge (two); that they had been beaten up and harassed by other students in mainstream school (three), or by the teacher (one). One student said that the teacher in mainstream school did not want to teach him; another student said he had been transferred because he kept getting into fights in mainstream school. One other student said he had enrolled in a special school/class because he was too old when he enrolled in school. Another said he was enrolled in a special school/class when he moved from Germany, while two students wanted to go to special school because they needed to study less there. A total of four students said they had wanted to enrol in/transfer to special school. Reasons quoted by parents for opting for special school/class are similar to the ones listed by the children.

Table 42. Who initiated attendance at a special school or special class? (data obtained from parents and students)

	Parents		CCB/ Social worker		Teacher/School psychologist		Don't know/ No response	
	Students	Parents	Students	Parents	Students	Parents	Students	Parents
FG in MPS	34%	37%	18%	33%	18%	17%	29%	13%
FG in SPS	32%	5%	20%	67%	28%	29%	20%	–
FG in PSES PS	49%	14%	11%	45%	26%	41%	13%	–

Transfer from mainstream school to special school/class

In 60 percent (29) of special schools there are students who have transferred from mainstream schools; and in 54 percent (26) of special schools, there are Roma students who have transferred from mainstream schools.

In 12 SPS (63 percent) there are students who have transferred; in 10 of those (53 percent), there are Roma students. In 16 PSES at the primary level (57 percent), there are students; and in 15 of those (54 percent), there are Roma students that came from mainstream schools.

At the secondary level, in 14 percent (four) of PSES, there are students; in 11 percent (three) there are Roma students. In SSS, there are both Roma and other students who have transferred from mainstream schools.

In 52 percent (11) of MPS in special classes, there are students who have transferred from mainstream classes (the sample is 21 MPS); in 48 percent (10) of MPS in special classes, there are Roma students who have transferred from mainstream classes.

Table 43 encapsulates these details.

Table 43. Enrolment in special school: directly or transferred from a mainstream school (data obtained from schools)

	% of schools with students who transferred from mainstream schools		Number of schools in which all students were directly enrolled		% of schools for which no data were available	
	Students	Roma Students	Students	Roma Students	Students	Roma Students
MPS (21)	52%	48%	14%	14%	38%	38%
SPS (19)	63%	53%	11%	16%	26%	32%
PSES PS (28)	57%	54%	7%	11%	36%	36%
PSES SS (28)	14%	11%	43%	46%	43%	43%
SSS (1)	100%	100%	–	–	–	–

The first column in Table 43, "% of schools with students who transferred from mainstream schools", shows that a large number of special schools and special classes in mainstream schools are educating students who had not directly enrolled in them, but had initially gone to mainstream schools or classes. Special primary schools had the greatest number, and PSES secondary schools the fewest number of students who had transferred from mainstream schools or classes. Such large percentages, especially in primary school, indicate that the whole assessment procedure for entering primary schools probably plays the same role in enrolling children to special schools as the mainstream education system, which is not designed to include children who may "differ" from the average.

The second column, "Number of schools in which all students were directly enrolled" gives the percentage of schools that had only students who had directly enrolled in them (i.e. which did not have students who had transferred from a mainstream school or class). Some schools just left this question without an answer, so it is not clear whether this means they do not have transferred students, or do not want to answer.

Therefore, in this column we only present a clear answer. There are only eight percent of special schools, and 14 percent of MPS with special classes without such transferees.

The percentage of Roma students who had transferred from mainstream to special schools ranges 1–100 percent, while the percentage of other students ranges 1–99 percent depending on the school. This demonstrates what differences there are between schools, and that there is no "norm". The percentage of subsequently enrolled students – all students, not just Roma students – exceeds 50 percent in 14 special schools.

Of all the FG students, including both primary and secondary students, 65 percent said they had transferred from mainstream to special classes/schools[194] during primary education, which is also quite a high percentage. Students were transferred from mainstream to special school mainly because of poor achievements, class repetition, and aggressive behavior as a reaction to discrimination. We can assume, and some children confirmed, how bad they felt during schooling in mainstream school.

Eighty-five percent of the Roma special secondary school graduates (FRS) who had participated in focus groups said they had transferred from mainstream schools to special schools. Fifty-five percent of parents in focus groups said that their children had transferred from mainstream to special classes/schools.[195]

Local administration, MoE RD, and CCB participants in the research said that they did not have data on how many students had transferred from mainstream to special classes/schools, but that it was possible, and that they had heard of such cases. When interviewed regarding the reasons for transferring from mainstream to special schools, a high percentage (83 percent) of local self-governments said that it was due to poor performance and irregular attendance, whereas opinions seem to be split (17–38 percent) between local self-governments, MoE RDs, and CCBs regarding other reasons (including parents asking that children be transferred, or they were simply transferred by the school). The fewest, only eight percent of MoE RDs, said that it may be due to discrimination in mainstream schools. Thirty-five percent of former Roma students themselves say that they transferred due to a proposal by the mainstream school they had attended, whereas 20 percent thought it was due to discrimination, and 15 percent because mainstream school was too difficult.

Given the lack of reliable information, it is difficult to estimate how many special school students altogether, and how many Roma students in particular, would have been able to attend mainstream school with additional assistance.

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[194] Transferred from mainstream schools: 39 percent in MPS; 64 percent in SPS; 68 percent in PSES PS; and 59 percent in PSES SS. Directly enrolled in special school: 37 percent in MPS; 28 percent in SPS; 28 percent in PSES PS; and 24 percent in PSES SS. Don't remember/no response: 24 percent in MPS; eight percent in SPS; four percent in PSES PS; and 16 percent in PSES SS.

[195] 63 percent in MPS, 62 percent in SPS, 61 percent in PSES PS, and 36 percent in PSES SS.

The below section presents research by FASPER professors, and the findings obtained in the project conducted by the Minority Rights Centre, which included a retesting of a sample of children in special schools. These findings corroborate that a number of students attend special schools without justification.

Specific developmental features of Roma students attending schools for students with intellectual disabilities[196]

Given that the share of Roma in schools for students with intellectual disabilities is several times higher than the proportion of Roma in the general population, Professor Glumbić and associates tested the developmental abilities of students from two Belgrade schools for students with intellectual disabilities. A comparison of Roma students and Serb students shows that moderate mental retardation was diagnosed only in the case of six Serb students (11 percent of all Serb students); mild mental retardation was diagnosed in 56 (75 percent) of Roma and 43 (75 percent) of Serb students. A total of 19 (25 percent) of Roma and eight (14 percent) of Serb students were diagnosed as having borderline intelligence.

Within the project Protection of Roma Children from Discrimination,[197] a psychologist with experience in the education of Roma children tested five 1st–3rd graders in the jurisdiction of four MoE RDs, who had been reclassified as special needs children (i.e. with respect to whom the appeals CCBs confirmed the initial CCB decisions).

> One group of students (four) was tested after Roma coordinators in Roma settlements, and their special school teachers opined that these children did not belong in special classes/schools. Detailed examinations by the application of the same tool, and after preparations for testing, showed that the results of two students fell in the category of average intellectual abilities, that the results of one student fell in the category of borderline intellectual abilities, and that the results of the fourth student fell in the category of mild intellectual disability. The special schools confirmed the results on the basis

[196] Nenad Glumbić, 2005.

[197] The project was conducted in 2006–2008 by the Minority Rights Centre in cooperation with the MoE, and with the support of the Roma Education Fund. Twenty-two republican and 10 municipal school inspectors were trained to recognize discrimination and react adequately to it. NGO trained monitors, monitored, and reported on discrimination in educational institutions. A lawyer and other experts provided the parents with assistance. Instructions for institutions on how to identify, monitor and act in instances of discrimination were formulated, and an information booklet on human rights and the protection of human rights was designed for children, youths and their parents.

of their supervision of the students' achievements, and stated that they frequently gave them additional tasks to fulfill.[198]

3.5 Reassessment and reintegration of children into mainstream schools

An initiative to retest a child may be launched during schooling, at the request of the parent, school, or health institution.[199] A child may be referred for re-examination if at least six months have elapsed since the previous testing. The testing is conducted by the second-instance CCB. The child's parents need not agree to re-testing if they conclude that the school or health institution is launching an initiative to take a decision which will be less auspicious for the child.

There are no comprehensive data (merely documents of individual CCBs), therefore it is impossible to establish how many children have been referred for re-testing, and how many have again been classified as special needs children. Those who have been classified as such continue their education within the special education system. There are no data on the children who were found not to be special needs children during the testing before the second-instance CCB.

This research sought to learn more about who requested or initiated re-testing for students of special schools. In most cases, the re-testing was initiated by the special schools (i.e. their psychologists/pedagogues and teachers), and to a lesser extent by the parents, foster parents, or students. Five schools said that the school and the parents, or the CCBs and the parents cooperated on the initiative.

[198] Interview with Angelina Skarep, MoE RD Valjevo adviser, leader of the MoE Team for monitoring the implementation of the (Common) Action Plan for the Improvement of Education of Roma.

[199] Primary School Law, 2003, Art. 86.

Table 44. Who requested re-testing? (data obtained from schools)

	Special school	Parents/ Children	Main stream school	CCB	In cooperation with the parents		
					Mainstream school	CCB	Special school
MPS (21)	–	2*	–	1	–	–	–
SPS (19)	4	2	1	–	–	–	1
PSES PS (28)	3	2	1	–	1	1	–
PSES SS (28)	2	1	–	–	1	1	–
Total	9	7	2	1	2	2	1

* Number of schools that gave an answer for each category.

In the table below (of the schools surveyed in this research) the "No transfers" column shows the percentage of schools which clearly indicated that there had been no transfers. The percentages of schools that had students transfer to mainstream schools are given in two sub-columns – schools that gave data on all students, and schools that gave data on Roma students. The "No reply" column also includes schools, with respect to which it remained unclear whether their failure to reply indicated that there had been transfers to mainstream schools or not.

Table 45. Transfer of students from special to mainstream schools (data obtained from schools)

	Number of transfers	There were transfers		No reply	
		Total percentage of students	Roma students	Total percentage of students	Roma students
MPS (21)	52%	10%	10%	38%	38%
SPS (19)	37%	42%	16%	21%	47%
PSES PS (28)	39%	32%	14%	29%	46%
PSES SS (28)	32%	18%	11%	50%	57%
SSS (1)	100%	–	–	–	–

A total of 80 students overall have transferred from 21 special schools to mainstream schools in the last three years. One school said that two students had subsequently transferred back. Two students of one special school enrolled in mainstream secondary schools. A total of 31 Roma students transferred from 10 special to mainstream schools. Four Roma students were transferred from special classes to mainstream classes in three MPS.

The number of overall transferred students varies from school to school: from one to 15. In most cases, one or two students from each school transferred to mainstream schools. Three schools had four or five students, and one PSES had 15 transfer to mainstream schools. As for special schools with Roma students, most had only one Roma student transfer to a mainstream school. Three Roma students transferred from one special school to a mainstream school, and 10 Roma students transferred from another school to mainstream schools.

Responses by the representatives of LAs, MoE RDs, and CCBs to the question of whether the law allows for the transfer of a student from a special to a mainstream school indicate that they have different views on the issue: 83 percent of LA representatives, 62 percent of MoE RD representatives, and 80 percent of CCB representatives state that it is legally possible. This can probably be ascribed to the fact that no education law mentions or rules out this possibility. Experience of some participants in the research shows that such transfers are possible: 33 percent of representatives of local self-governments, 38 percent of MoE RD representatives, and 80 percent of CCB representatives have such experience.

Seventy-three percent of Roma NGO interviewees are familiar with the procedure, but only 18 percent have heard about, or participated in such transfers.

This research does not contain data on the transfer process, on the positive or possible negative consequences on children. It is a delicate process, especially for children who had already been in mainstream school before being transferred to special school. Some parents in focus groups whose children have been transferred from mainstream to special school are against new transfer to a mainstream school because of the socio-emotional effects that such a transfer can have on their children: their children suffered in mainstream school, but are now happy in special ones. Some experts and Roma representatives are also worried about possible transfers; some are against it.[200] It is not because they see special education as good, but because they are aware of discrimination and other weaknesses of mainstream education, which is not prepared for inclusive education.

[200] Interview with Ljuan Koka, Chief of Secretariat for Roma National Strategy at the Ministry of Minority and Human Rights

4. STUDENT PERFORMANCE

4.1 Academic achievements

The data on academic achievements for the 2007–2008 school year presented below give the percentages of Roma and other students who completed the year with "Excellent", "Very Good", "Good", "Sufficient" or "Insufficient" (Fail) average grades. The percentages show the total numbers of Roma and other students for which the schools provided data on academic achievements. These numbers do not always add up to the overall number of the school students.

Data were provided for a total of 2,380 students: 1,172 Roma (71 percent) and 1,206 (22 percent) of other students attending 30 special schools; and 193 students in 10 mainstream schools with special classes, of which 102 (53 percent) were Roma students and 91 (47 percent) others.

The "Insufficient" category signifies that the student had failed in one or more subjects. Such students move on to the next grade until 4th grade, while 5th graders and older students who failed in up to two subjects have to take annual exams in those subjects before the new school year. Students who have failed in more than two subjects are re-enrolled in the same grade (although some mainstream and special schools let them enrol in the following grade). The last table column gives percentages of students who were not graded in a specific subject because of irregular attendance.

Primary school students who did not regularly attend the lower grades are either enrolled in the following grade, or have to take annual exams in the subjects; as of 5th grade, all students who had not been graded have to take annual exams in the subjects they had not been graded in. Unfortunately, no data were available on whether those students who had failed in subjects (or had been ungraded) passed the exams.

Table 46. Students' academic achievements (data provided by schools)

	Excellent		Very good		Good		Sufficient		Insufficient		Ungraded	
	RS	OS	RS	OS	RS	OS	RS	OS	RS	OS	RS	OS
Data provided by schools that gave numerical data for both Roma and other students												
MPS	25%	18%	37%	40%	27%	32%	7%	8%	3%	3%	–	–
SPS	23%	31%	29%	33%	25%	26%	8%	6%	6%	4%	9%	–
PSES PS	34%	29%	34%	36%	23%	24%	5%	7%	3%	3%	0.2%	–
PSES SS	33%	29%	41%	41%	23%	25%	1%	4%	2%	2%	–	–
Data for 3 PSES PS that only provided data on Roma students												
PSES PS	45%	–	32%	–	14%	–	–	–	9%	–	–	–

RS = Roma Students
OS = Other Students

Data provided by the students (165 of them) who took part in the focus groups show that their success depends on the type of school they attend. Between 68–88 percent of them had an "Excellent" or "Very Good" grade average, with PSES SS students scoring the best grade averages.

Table 47. Students' academic achievements (data obtained from students in focus groups)

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Sufficient	Insufficient	No reply
MPS	29%	39%	24%	–	3%	2%
SPS	32%	56%	12%	–	–	–
PSES PS	47%	19%	28%	2%	–	4%
PSES SS	59%	29%	10%	–	2%	–

Over 50 percent of schools and all teachers in the sample compared the academic performance of their Roma students and other students. Around 40–50 percent of schools and 40–60 percent of teachers believe that the performance of Roma and other students is the same. The greatest differences in assessments were observed in PSES SS: 14 percent of schools and 50 percent of teachers stated that Roma students' achievements were better than those of non-Roma students.

Table 48. Schools' assessments of Roma students' academic achievements *vis-à-vis* those of other students

	Poorer	Same	Better	No reply
MPS (21)	10%	38%	10%	42%
SPS (19)	5%	53%	5%	37%
PSES PS (28)	7%	54%	14%	25%
PSES SS (28)	4%	39%	11%	46%
SSS (1)	–	–	–	100%

Table 49. Teachers' assessments of Roma students' academic achievements *vis-à-vis* those of other students

	Poorer	Same	Better	No reply
MPS (31)*	26%	55%	16%	3%
SPS (23)	30%	39%	9%	22%
PSES PS (44)	9%	41%	50%	–
PSES SS (45)	13%	62%	25%	–

* Number of teachers in the sample

One question we tried to answer was whether Roma students do better, worse or the same as their peers in school, and why. The research inquired into the reasons that schools and teachers have to corroborate their assessments of Roma students' achievements *vis-à-vis* those of their peers. The results are presented in Table 50.

Table 50. Students' and teachers' opinions on student achievement

	Schools	Teachers
Academic achievements of Roma students are *better* because:		
They have greater intellectual potential, do not have intellectual difficulties, they merely lack home discipline. They come from mainstream schools and know more.	5 (7%)	37 (26%)
They follow and master the abridged school curriculum with success. Their performance improves as they learn the language.	3 (4%)	1 (1%)
They socialize faster if they attend class regularly, they are socially more mature, and adjust faster.	3 (4%)	–
The assessment applies to children whose families care about their schooling.	–	2 (1%)
Academic achievements of Roma students are the *same* because:		
The students' abilities are similar to those of other students, their achievements correlate with their abilities if they regularly attend class.	8 (12%)	17 (12%)
The environment and teaching methods are adequate, the pedagogical work of teachers and boarding home parents is good, the small number of students in class allows for an individualized approach to each of them. Teachers treat all students fairly and equally.	5 (7%)	10 (7%)
They attend school regularly, try hard. They master the curriculum adequately.	–	9 (6%)
Academic achievements are generally the same; Roma children are more interested in extracurricular activities, but their parents are less interested in their schooling. The students' performance depends on their parents' concern for their schooling and perhaps on social opportunities. They are interested in an occupation they are trained for in secondary school; they could achieve more.	1 (1%)	4 (3%)
Most students come from families at a low social and educational level.	–	2 (1%)
Academic achievements of Roma students are *poorer* because:		
They have no working habits, they do not attend school regularly. They do not study, do not do their homework. They are not supervised by their parents. They are not interested. They do not have an adequate attitude towards work and the teachers. Their parents are not as keen on cooperating with the school.	8 (12%)	22 (15%)
The families are socially and the children educationally and socially neglected. They lack home discipline. Their uneducated parents cannot help them study. They live in poor social and economic circumstances and have no textbooks or school supplies. They do not know the language.	2 (3%)	17 (12%)

Teachers were more willing to give their opinion on the reasons why Roma students' achievements were better, the same, or poorer than those of their peers. Only a few failed to reply to this question. On the other hand, only a small number of school principals and pedagogues/psychologists answered this question. Answers of school representatives who responded to the question were very similar to those of the teachers, and most of their assessments in all three categories coincided with those of the teachers.

Twenty-six percent of all teachers in the sample believe that Roma students' academic achievements are better than those of their peers because they do not suffer from any intellectual disabilities. They merely lack home discipline, but they have greater intellectual potential. This view is shared by five schools (seven percent).

Twelve percent of teachers and eight schools (12 percent) believe that Roma students' performance equals that of their peers because they have the same potential. The teachers' treatment of students, teachers' adequacy, quality of the teaching process, and the working environment are mentioned only in explanations given by those who think that the achievements of Roma and other students are the same.

Fifteen percent of the teachers and eight schools (12 percent) think that Roma students achieve less because they are not motivated for education, have no working habits, and do not study enough.

The following are quoted as reasons why Roma students flunk grades:

- **SPS** – irregular attendance (32 percent) and failure to show up at the annual exam (five percent);
- **PSES PS** – irregular attendance (25 percent) and failure to master the curriculum (seven percent);
- **MPS** – irregular attendance (14 percent), failure to master the curriculum (14 percent), parents' poor cooperation with the school, poverty, lack of interest, and poor academic achievement;
- **PSES SS** – irregular attendance (14 percent) and difficult curriculum (10 percent).

FRS who took part in the focus group had been good students: 60 percent had an "Excellent" average, 25 percent a "Very good" average, and 15 percent a "Good" average.

4.2 Dropouts

Drop-out rates in mainstream education are high among Roma children: 73 percent in primary and 38 percent in secondary education.[201]

In this research, we wanted to explore whether or not drop-out rates are the same in special education. In total, 55 percent of all schools in the sample[202] responded to the question of when Roma students dropped out of school. Some replies were phrased in such a way that it remained unclear whether no students had dropped out of school, or whether the schools did not wish to reply to the question. This is why the "No dropouts" column only includes clear answers, while the unclear/ambiguous answers were classified under the "No reply" column.

Table 51. In which grade do the largest number of Roma students drop out of special school? (data provided by schools)

	No dropouts	No reply	PS			SS			
			All grades	Lower grades	Higher grades	Zero grade	1st grade	2nd, 3rd, 4th grades	All grades
MPS (21)	–	57%	–	10%	33%	–	–	–	–
SPS (19)	5%	48%	–	–	48%	–	–	–	–
PSES PS (28)	4%	57%	–	–	39%	–	–	–	–
PSES SS (28)	4%	50%	–	–	–	18%	14%	7%	7%
SSS (1)	–	57%	–	–	–	–	100%	–	–

[201] Deputy Prime Minister, presentation at the Decade Steering Committee meeting, June 2008.

[202] Nine MPS, 11 SPS, 17 PSES PS, 15 PSES SS, and one SSS.

Table 52. In which grade do the largest number of Roma students drop out of special school? (data provided by teachers)

	No dropouts	No reply	PS			SS			
			All grades	Lower grades	Higher grades	Zero grade	1st grade	2nd, 3rd, 4th grades	All grades
MPS	6%	39%	–	6%	48%	–	–	–	–
SPS	–	13%	–	–	87%	–	–	–	–
PSES PS	–	2%	2%	–	89%	–	–	–	–
PSES SS	–	9%	–	–	–	24%	29%	20%	20%

*The percentage denotes the proportion of teachers who provided replies in the given column *vis-à-vis* the total number of teachers in that type of school.

The information obtained from both teachers and schools leads to the conclusion that at the primary level, Roma students mostly drop out in the higher (5th–8th) grades, usually at the very end, in 7th or 8th grade. This trend is equally prominent in special classes in mainstream schools. At the secondary level in special schools, Roma students mostly drop out at the very beginning, during their first year or during the one-year work education (the so-called zero grade, introduced between primary and secondary school in some PSES, although it remains unclear on what grounds and what curriculum it follows). Although it was intended to serve as a period during which the students would recap the curriculum they learned in primary school and choose an occupation they would train for in secondary school, 18 percent of schools and 24 percent of teachers say that the greatest number of students drop out of school precisely during that grade.

This research also sought to understand how the drop-out rate of Roma students in special education compares to that of their peers. Schools and teachers that participated in the research assess that more Roma than other students drop out of school. This view is shared by 42–48 percent of schools and 71–89 percent of teachers.

Table 53. Roma student dropouts, compared with their peers (data from schools)

	To a lesser extent		Same		To a greater extent		No reply	
	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers
MPS (21)	5%	3%	14%	19%	48%	71%	33%	6%
SPS (19)	5%	–	16%	9%	42%	74%	37%	17%
PSES PS (28)	–	–	29%	7%	43%	89%	29%	5%
PSES SS (28)	–	2%	32%	20%	39%	78%	29%	–
SSS (1)	–	–	–	–	100%	–	–	–

Schools and teachers give similar assessments regarding the reasons why Roma students drop out of school and most classify the reasons under the following three categories: early marriage; lack of motivation to continue their education; and the need to find a job. Their replies only differ in their order of priority. As many as 35 percent of the 69 schools, and 49 percent of the 143 teachers in the sample quoted starting a family as the most frequent reason for dropping out of school, especially among girls. Work is the reason which they see as the main reason why male students drop out of school: they have to start working either to help out their mothers and fathers, or to support their own wives and children.

Table 54. School assessments of why Roma students drop out of school

	MPS	SPS	PSES PS	PSES SS	SSS	Total	Total
To get married, start a family	2*	8	11	10	–	31**	35%***
They do not want to go to school, they are not ambitious, they do not understand the importance of education (neither the children nor the parents)	2	2	9	8	–	21	24%
Children and youth have to work	4	3	6	3	1	17	19%
They move town because of their jobs and/or go abroad	2	2	2	3	–	9	10%
Poverty	1	1	3	1	–	6	7%
They have family problems (divorce, etc.)	1	–	–	–	–	1	1%
To help with the housework and baby-sit their younger brothers and sisters	–	1	–	–	–	1	1%
They do not want to commute to secondary school	–	–	1	–	–	1	1%
They do not go on to secondary school because of an illness	–	–	–	1	–	1	1%
Total	12	17	31	26	1	88	100%

* Number of schools that provided replies in each category (some schools gave more than one reply)
** Number of replies in the given category
*** Percentage of replies *vis-à-vis* the total number of all replies

Table 55. Teachers' assessments of why Roma students drop out of school

	SPS	PSES PS	PSES SS	SSS	Total	Total
To get married, start a family	8*	21	35	31	95**	49%***
Children and youths have to work	6	2	11	8	27	14%
They do not want to go to school, they are not ambitious, they do not understand the importance of education, their parents forbid them	3	–	8	5	16	8%
Their parents do not look after them, forbid them to go to school	5	–	1	6	12	6%
They move town because of their jobs and/or go abroad	–	4	5	1	10	5%
To help with the housework and baby-sit their younger brothers and sisters	–	6	–	–	6	3%
Families do not cooperate with the schools	2	–	3	–	5	3%
They beg and become vagrants	–	2	3	–	5	3%
It is related to the way they live and their culture	–	1	2	2	5	3%
They want to become independent	3	–	–	1	4	2%
They are too old for mainstream school once they turn 15	–	2	2	–	4	2%
Schooling takes a long time, they cannot find a job afterwards	–	–	1	1	2	1%
They are poor	–	–	–	1	1	1%
Total	27	38	71	56	192	100%

* Number of teachers who provided replies in each category (some gave more than one reply)
** Number of replies in the given category
*** Percentage of replies *vis-à-vis the* total number of all replies

It was also important to understand whether students have to work while they are attending school. This may have an impact on their leaving school. Nineteen percent of schools and 14 percent of teachers think work is the reason why Roma children and youth drop out of school. We asked the children, parents, and former students how many of them had been working while they attended school. Their replies led to the conclusion that many Roma children (as many as 30–40 percent of the high school students) have to work while they are still in school. Given that we asked this question

to students attending school as well as former students, we can only assume that there is an even greater number of Roma youth who work, and had for that reason dropped out of school.

Sixteen percent of MPS, 32 percent of SPS, 15 percent of PSES PS, and 39 percent of PSES SS students who took part in the focus groups said they had to work while they went to school because their families were poor. The boys usually help their fathers do manual jobs (felling trees, digging, moving old furniture from people's homes, building things, painting homes), wash windshields on the streets, collect secondary raw material, play an instrument, pick fruit, or help the elderly. One young man gives dance lessons. Twelve percent of the parents of MPS students, five percent of the parents of SPS students, three percent of the parents of PSES PS, and 31 percent of the parents of PSES SS students stated that their children worked while they went to school. Twenty-four percent of the FRS who took part in the focus group had needed to work while they were in school.

4.3 Grade repetition and school failure

This research sought to find out whether Roma students repeat a grade more or less frequently than their peers. The following table presents schools' and teachers' views on whether Roma students fail a grade more or less frequently than their peers. The "No repetition" column includes replies by teachers and schools who gave clear answers, while ambiguous replies are listed under "No reply". Percentages for schools are given *vis-à-vis* the total number of mainstream schools in the sample and the total number of special schools in Serbia, while the percentages for teachers are given *vis-à-vis* the total number of teachers who took part in the research.

Over one-half of the mainstream schools with special classes, 40–50 percent of special schools, and the only special secondary school state that the rate of grade repetition of Roma and other students is more or less the same. This view is shared by as many as 60–80 percent of the teachers. Around one-third of the special primary schools and their teachers think that more Roma students than their peers fail a grade.

Table 56. Grade repetition rates of Roma students *vis-à-vis* their peers

	Fewer		Same		More		No repetition		No reply	
	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers
MPS	10%	10%	52%	58%	5%	6%	19%	10%	14%	16%
SPS	5%	–	37%	57%	26%	26%	5%	4%	26%	3%
PSES PS	7%	20%	46%	59%	18%	16%	7%	–	21%	5%
PSES SS	7%	11%	39%	84%	4%	24%	14%	–	36%	4%
SSS	–	–	100%	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

According to schools, the highest rate of grade repetition is registered in the 5th–8th grades in special primary schools, and in the 7th and 8th grades in PSES PS. Teachers' replies are more diverse. Teachers working in the same school usually gave similar replies.

Table 57. In which grade do Roma students fail the most?

	No repetition		No reply		PS						SS					
					No rule		Lower grades		Higher grades		All		Zero grade		1st grade	
	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers	Schools	Teachers
MPS	19%	10%	48%	64%	10%	–	–	10%	24%	16%	–	–	–	–	–	–
SPS	21%	9%	42%	17%	–	26%	–	9%	37%	39%	–	–	–	–	–	–
PSES PS	14%	–	50%	–	11%	–	4%	–	18%	–	–	–	–	–	4%	–
PSES SS	7%	2%	82%	24%	–	18%	–	2%	–	24%	11%	7%	–	16%		7%
SSS/1	–	–	100%	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Schools mention that Roma students flunk grades because of irregular attendance (14 percent of MPS, 32 percent of SPS, 25 percent of PSES PS, 11 percent of PSES SS); failure to show up for the annual exam (five percent of SPS); failure to master the curriculum (seven percent of PSES, 14 percent of MPS); parents' poor cooperation with the school; poverty; lack of interest; poor academic achievement (11 percent MPS); and because of difficult curriculum (seven percent of PSES SS).

Schools that have no dropouts state that they are applying an adequate curriculum, that they understand the children's family situation; some state that they occasionally let the student pass to a higher grade notwithstanding that s/he failed.

To sum up, the academic achievements and grade repetition of Roma students are the same as those of their school peers, and the drop-out rates are higher among Roma students. Dropping out and grade repetition are most frequent in upper primary school grades, at the beginning of secondary school, and between primary and secondary PSES. Schools and teachers mostly ascribe the higher drop-out rate to early marriage, employment and lack of motivation for education; they ascribe grade repetition to irregular attendance.

All the listed reasons for leaving school are related solely to the children and their families, their living conditions, and way of life. Difficult curricula are another reason why Roma students fail grades.

5. COSTS

5.1 Funding of special schools and special classes in mainstream schools

Funding of educational institutions is regulated by the 2004 Law on the Basis of the Education System, under which special schools and special classes in mainstream schools are funded in the same manner as mainstream schools and classes. Under the present system, costs of mainstream and special education are not broken down into separate columns, nor are the costs of schooling presented per student.

The funds for primary and secondary schools founded by the Republic, an autonomous province or local self-government are provided for in the national, autonomous province, and local self-government budgets. Institutions may accrue their own revenues from donations, parental contributions, etc. in accordance with the law and the criteria and standards set by the Minister of Education.

Funds in the national budget are allocated for:

- the preparatory preschool program;
- the preschool program for children with developmental problems and hospitalized children;
- salaries and raises for primary and secondary school staff;
- social security contributions paid by the employer;
- salary fund taxes, redundancy packages and compassionate grants;[203]
- developmental programs, and projects of institutions in accordance with the criteria set by the Minister.[204]

The local self-government[205] allocates funds in their budget to cover 80 percent of the average cost of preschool education per child,[206] and staff salaries. They set aside funds for the training of preschool, primary, and secondary school staff, the construction and capital maintenance and design plans of school facilities, the equipment and other running costs, and funds for the protection and safety of children and students. Salaries in primary and secondary schools across Serbia are the same, given that they are paid from the national budget. Poorer cities and municipalities, however, do not have enough funds to maintain the school grounds, purchase didactic or other teaching aids,

[203] The term "compassionate grant" is translated directly, but no further explanation of what it is, or used for, is given.

[204] Law on the Basis of the Education System, 2004, Art. 142.

[205] Law on the Basis of the Education System, 2004, Art. 143.

[206] The remaining 20 percent are covered by the parents, whose monthly fee is set depending on their incomes.

or pay higher salaries to kindergarten teachers. A large number of schools were renovated over the past few years thanks to donations.

The 2009 Law on the Basis of the Education System introduces an entirely new system of funding per student. This Law (Art. 155) states that:

> The funds for school activities shall be set on the basis of the economic price of implementing the education programme per child and student. The economic price shall comprise all running costs per child and student from all sources of funding in accordance with budget system regulations. The conditions and criteria for establishing the economic price of education per child and student in a given area, in specific groups, by level and type of education, the necessary number of staff, time and procedure of introduction shall be laid down in detail by the Minister.

The MoE shall, over the following year, prepare the analysis for the capitation formula and work out the coefficients (i.e. the differences in costs of schooling for students in need of various forms of support during schooling).

Serbia allocated 3.5 percent of the state budget for education in 2006, so that "scarce financing of education remains one of the main impediments to development of the sector."[207] The state planned to allocate 3.5 percent of the budget for education in 2007, 3.6 percent in 2008, and 3.9 percent in 2009.

5.2 Benefits for students and families for attending special education, and consequent costs

Education in special classes is more expensive than education in mainstream classes. Schooling in special schools is the most expensive. Under the present system, however, costs of mainstream and special education are not broken down into separate columns. Nor is the cost of schooling presented per student. This is why the costs of education can now be compared merely indirectly, by adding up all the items. For instance, one can compare the salaries of teachers in mainstream classes overseeing 24–30 students with teachers in special classes who work with 6–10 students and earn salaries which are up to 15 percent higher.[208] Moreover, the duration of classes in schools and classes for children with intellectual disabilities is shorter, as are the teachers' working hours. Another source states a different percentage for teachers in special schools' salaries. It states:

> Salaries of special school teachers are 8 percent higher than those of teachers in mainstream schools. The funding of special and mainstream school is identical, although special schools are obviously in need of greater financial

[207] Government of Serbia, 2007.

[208] Interview with MoE state secretary Tinde Kovač, and adviser Danijela Vuković.

> aid needed to fund the technical and didactic equipment and the salaries of teaching assistants.[209]

In the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school years, the average number of students per class in special schools or MPS special classes stood at six (five) in MPS, five (five) in SPS, seven (seven) in PSES PS, and eight (eight) in SSS. Some special classes in mainstream schools or special schools have only one or two students per class, so that their teachers' salaries raise the costs of their education several times over. Apart from these expenditures, which are covered by the MoE, one should also take into account the costs sustained by the city/municipality for the accommodation and transport of special school students from other towns and the salaries of boarding home staff.

Research findings show that there are benefits to families sending their children to special schools, and consequently, those benefits cost the administration more. Our research findings have shown that if there is no special school in the town where the child lives, and the child does not attend mainstream school, the costs of his/her compulsory education are sustained by the municipality in which the child is registered as a permanent resident. These costs cover accommodation boarding and food, and transportation to another town, but are reimbursed only for schooling in special schools for students classified as special needs children by the CCB. The funds are paid to the school via the Center for Social Work (one PSES stated that the municipality directly paid the money to the school for primary school students and via the Center for Social Work for secondary school students). Some municipalities with special schools bear the costs of transportation, or provide some other form of support to children. Asked whether all students had the right to these benefits, 11 SPS (58 percent of 19 such schools in Serbia), 17 PSES (61 percent of 28 such schools), and seven MPS (33 percent of 21 such schools in the sample) replied affirmatively. Seven MPS (33 percent) stated that only students from impoverished families were entitled to these benefits; the rest of the schools failed to reply to this part of the questionnaire.

Boarding is provided to students of 15 special schools. In 11 special schools, boarding homes are within schools. Students of two schools are undergoing hospital treatment, students of two other schools live in juvenile homes. Mainstream primary schools with special classes do not provide boarding. Schools with boarding homes said that the students did not bear the costs of accommodation; only one school said that the price of boarding depended on the families' financial status. The share of students in boarding homes varies from school to school.

The table below presents data obtained from schools (76 percent of MPS in the sample and 81 percent of all special schools) on other benefits their students enjoy. The number of schools that replied to this question is given in brackets in the first column. Some schools obtain clothing and footwear for the students, thanks to humanitarian aid. Some examples are: one school said the students were given snacks during day care;

[209] Education Improvement Bureau, 2007.

another said it gave its students Christmas presents; and the third school said its secondary school students were given material for work.

Table 58. Material benefits for students attending special schools/classes (data collected from schools)

	NR*	Food	Textbooks	School supplies	Clothes, footwear	Trans portation	Field trips
MPS (16/21)	5	57%	62%	38%	–	5%	10%
SPS (14/19)	5	63%	63%	68%	42%	–	–
PSES PS (24/28)	4	82%	61%	75%	45%	18%	–
PSES SS (20/28)	8	57%	36%	39%	34%	18%	–
SSS (1/1)	–	100%	–	–	–	–	–

*Number of schools that did not respond

Children and parents gave different replies about the benefits students enjoyed in school, and it was impossible to ascertain which data were more credible. Neither the students nor the parents mentioned boarding as a form of material benefit provided by the school.

Table 59. Material benefits for students (data collected from parents and students)

	Food		Textbooks		School supplies		Clothes, footwear		Transportation		Field trips	
	Schools	Parents	Schools	Parents	Schools	Parents	Schools	Parents	Schools	Parents	Schools	Parents
MPS	84%	59%	37%	41%	79%	54%	3%	7%	8%	17%	16%	–
SPS	100%	100%	44%	29%	48%	76%	8%	33%	24%	43%	–	–
PSES PS	32%	89%	34%	64%	32%	83%	–	11%	21%	44%	17%	–
PSES SS	35%	58%	12%	39%	47%	42%	–	–	31%	42%	19%	–

Of the former PSES (FRS) students who took part in the focus group, 70 percent said they had been provided with free food; 65 percent said that they had been given free school supplies; 10 percent said they had got free textbooks; and 15 percent said they had been provided with free transportation to and from school.

Children with developmental difficulties receive other benefits from the state which children without such difficulties do not receive. This also adds an additional financial burden to the state.[210] In Serbia, *all* children have access to health insurance via their parents up to the age of 26. Their health insurance may be extended beyond that age by a decision of the CCB, or another medical board pursuant to the 2005 Health Insurance Law.

Pursuant to the 2005 Law on Social Protection and Social Security of Citizens, children who suffer from disabilities and their families have rights within the social protection system. Children and youth with developmental difficulties, and adults with disabilities who can train to perform specific jobs have the right to Job Qualification Aid, which comprises the right to education and the right to training, financial aid, coverage of accommodation and transportation costs, etc. To exercise this right, a person must obtain a decision from the CCB.

Such persons also have the right to a Caregiver's Allowance, which may be exercised by a person in need of another person's aid and care to satisfy his/her fundamental needs; a decision recommending such aid and care must be obtained from the CCB. The Law also provides the following rights: accommodation in a social protection institution;

[210] Section 2.1 quotes the relevant laws and Beker & Janjić, 2009.

accommodation in another family; equipping the beneficiary for accommodation in a social protection institution or another family; one-off aid; social work services; increased caregiver's allowance; and home assistance.

The right to family material support, caregiver's allowance, job qualification aid, accommodation in a social protection institution or another family, and social services are rights of general interest and are provided by the Republic of Serbia. Other rights guaranteed by this Law are provided by the cities and municipalities, which may also grant other rights.

According to rights regulated by the 2005 Law on Financial Support to Families with Children, child allowance is granted for the first four children to a parent/foster parent/guardian with a low income, who directly cares for the child(ren). Child allowance is granted to a child until s/he turns 19 if s/he is a full-time student. It may be extended by a CCB decision classifying the child as a special needs child. Reimbursement of preschool fees of children with developmental difficulties may also be approved only if the CCB has issued a decision thereto. Parents receive one-off parental allowances for their second, third, and fourth children.

The research findings regarding families receiving social support in the form of financial aid varied greatly. Thirty-eight percent of MPS, 37 percent of SPS, 54 percent of PSES PS, and 39 percent of PSES SS said that families did receive this support; 24 percent of MPS, four percent of PSES PS, and 14 percent of PSES SS said that they did not, while the other schools failed to reply to the question.[211] According to data we gathered, families do receive various forms of aid such as Family Financial Support, child allowance for the third child, one-off aid from the local self-government unit, as well as occasional aid from Roma NGOs and the Red Cross.

According to the obtained data, only three percent of special secondary school students have scholarships, while eight percent of students in special primary school classes stated that they did receive aid (but failed to specify what kind). Twenty-nine percent of the FRS who took part in the focus group said that they had been granted a scholarship while they went to school; 55 percent stated that their families had received child allowance; and 20 percent said that their families received Family Material Support.

Fifty-one percent of Roma students in focus groups who currently attend school said they received Child Allowance, and 23 percent said that their families received Family Material Support. A total of 57 percent of the parents in the focus group said they received Child Allowance, and 47 percent that the family received Family Material Support.

One MPS and two PSES PS students live in an orphanage. One MPS, one PSES SS and two PSES PS students live in foster families that receive a reimbursement for caring for them. Two children stated their families received a caregiver's allowance after the CCB declared them a special needs child.

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[211] No data for 38 percent of MPS, 63 percent of SPS, 43 percent of PSES PS, or 46 percent of PSES SS.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents conclusions drawn from the research findings and the experience that the researchers gained during data collection. The research focused on Roma students in the special education system, but also looked at special education and the education of Roma more broadly; thus, the conclusions regard various aspects of the educational system and process.

6.1 Discrimination against Roma and anti-discriminatory action

Discrimination against Roma continues despite anti-discriminatory action. Discrimination, however, has fortunately finally been recognized as such by the MoE. It remains unclear to what extent some schools, MoE RD counselors, and school inspectors recognize this problem.

One boy who participated in the research explained the difference between mainstream and special schools in the following way: "[i]f you go to a mainstream school, they don't call you mental; they call you Gypsy".

One can infer from this comment that Roma children feel trapped both within the mainstream system, and within the special education system. Either way, they feel discriminated against and lose out.

Thus, (non)discrimination is undoubtedly an issue all stakeholders (MoE RDs, the MoE, the Human and Minority Rights Ministry, local administrations, and NGOs) need to address, particularly in mainstream schools.

The state has taken action to combat discrimination. There is now a Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination (2009) regulating the prohibition of discrimination in general, forms and instances of discrimination, and procedures for protection from discrimination.

In the National Strategy for the Improvement of the Status of Roma Action Plan for education, the fourth goal is respect of diversity and development of multicultural values. A different set of activities are planned there, such as:

- the promotion of inclusion and multicultural values in educational institutions and society;
- introducing elements of Roma culture, language and tradition into subjects, school plans, and teacher in-service education;
- the implementation of training programs and programs for working with children aimed at overcoming prejudice and supporting cooperation based on mutual respect;
- the desegregation of schools that are already segregated, and the prevention of segregation in other schools;

- anti-discrimination activities at the school policy level and in the classroom; publications for schools, parents, and students; the monitoring of discrimination in schools, and taking action when it is found.

The Law on the Basis of the Education System from 2009 strongly prohibits the discrimination, abuse, and neglect of children in educational institutions.

The MoE has also launched a series of activities as a draft in the *Rulebook on identifying and suppressing discrimination in schools*. These manuals, with indicators of discrimination, and manuals for parents have been distributed to schools. The *Special protocol on safeguarding children from violence, abuse and neglect in educational institutions* is published, and binds schools to apply the established procedures in their everyday work to address violence in schools. The MoE has issued official instructions to all primary and secondary schools to draft programs on Safeguarding Children from Violence, and to set up school teams to protect children from violence.

6.2 Regulation/Legislation

Regulation and legislation is incomplete and inadequate. This research shows that regulations on education in general, and on special education in particular, are unclear and incomplete, that many by-laws are outdated, and that a number of them are yet to be passed. The existing legislation is interpreted quite freely and its application depends on the will of the schools or individuals. It remains unclear whether those in breach of the existing laws and by-laws suffer any consequences.

There are further issues and problems beyond inadequate legislation: schools are not sufficiently informed about the legislative changes and strategic documents and initiatives for advancing the education of Roma; the cooperation and coordination of activities amongst educational, health, and social institutions at the local level are insufficient; some local governments do not go beyond their obligations to fund current expenses, maintain the facilities, and monitor whether schools are operating lawfully

6.3 Types of special schools and special classes at the primary and secondary education levels

Though special education in Serbia consists of various types of schools for the disabled, the predominant special school, and special class, is for children with intellectual disabilities.

As opposed to special schools for students with hearing impairments, visual impairments, physical disabilities, or intellectual disabilities (some of which provide schooling for children with multiple disabilities), the work of schools for students with

emotional and behavioral difficulties is not regulated. Students are enrolled in these under a different procedure than for all the other types of special schools.[212]

Special classes in mainstream primary schools mostly educate children with intellectual disabilities.[213] Some PSES reported that they operated special classes in mainstream secondary schools.

Special classes mostly comprise classes for students of the same age, and who have the same disability. However, there are also *combined* classes for students who have different disabilities, and there are also multi-grade classes:[214] 14 percent at the primary, and one percent at the secondary school levels. This research has revealed that multi-grade special classes predominate in mainstream primary schools, accounting for around 60 percent of special classes.

Seven PSES and the SSS have the so-called zero grade (also called one-year work education or 9th grade). In the 2008–2009 school year, 17 percent of Roma secondary students are in zero grades, while others are 13 percent.

6.4 The network of special schools, and mainstream schools with special classes

Inconsistent terminology and usage create confusion and impede planning. There is confusion about the use of the term *special school* in Serbia. Some sources use it to denote schools for children with developmental difficulties, and schools for children with emotional and behavioral problems. Other sources use it to also denote schools for gifted children (Ballet, Music, Language, Mathematics schools). Thus, confusion exists with respect to the exact number of special schools, given the varying interpretations of the definition. Different data quoted by various sources and the MoE attest to this.

This research established that there are 48 special schools in Serbia, and used as a definition only those schools for children with developmental difficulties (including two schools for children with emotional and behavioral problems). This was not an

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[212] Of the 48 special schools, seven were for students with hearing impairments, two with visual impairments, two with physical disabilities, 35 with intellectual disabilities (some have students with multiple disabilities), and two with emotional and behavioral problems These latter two schools differ a lot from those for students with developmental difficulties because they educate children who have behavioral problems, or problems with the law, and who have been referred to juvenile reformatories (which are in the jurisdiction of the Labor and Social Policy Ministry).

[213] Of the 21 schools in the sample, 19 (98 percent) have special classes for children with intellectual disabilities and two (two percent) for children with hearing impairments.

[214] Combining two or three grades in the lower or upper forms, although there are classes attended by students of all grades.

easy task, given the numerous incomplete and discrepant data. There are 19 primary schools (SPS), 28 primary and secondary education schools (PSES), and one secondary school (SSS) of this nature in Serbia.

The research was not mandated with defining, or establishing definitely the network of mainstream schools which contain special classes.[215]

6.5 Number of classes and students in special schools and in special classes in mainstream primary schools

The research found Roma are overrepresented at all levels of the education system. There are complex causes behind this discrepancy, ranging from economic to cultural to structural.

This research confirms that Roma are indeed *overrepresented* in special schools in Serbia.[216] In the 2008–2009 academic year, Roma accounted for 36 percent of the students in special primary schools,[217] and for 23 percent of the students in special secondary schools.[218] The percentage of Roma students varies from 0 to 91 percent, which indicates major differences amongst the schools.

Special classes in mainstream schools have high shares of Roma students as well. In the 2008–2009 academic year, Roma students on average accounted for 38 percent of the students in special classes.[219] They make up between 0 and 100 per cent of the students in each of these schools.

The majority of students are enrolled in schools for students with intellectual disabilities. This research estimates that they accounted for 87 percent of the students of all special schools in the 2008–2009 academic year,[220] and 94 percent of all Roma students in special schools are in such schools; Roma account for 40 percent at the primary level, and 24 percent at the secondary level in such schools.

According to data collected during this research, in 88 percent of special schools in the 2008–2009 school year, the total number of students stood at 5,579, out of which

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[215] The sample included one school in each district.

[216] Earlier research also indicated an extremely high representation of Roma students in special education, but this was confirmed for the first time in the sample of 85 percent (41 out of 48) special schools in Serbia for the 2008–2009 academic year.

[217] Data for 85 percent (40 of 47) of special schools providing primary education.

[218] Data for 90 percent (26 of 29) of special schools providing secondary education.

[219] Data for 95 percent of mainstream schools in the sample.

[220] 86 percent of all special school students in schools for intellectual disabilities in the 2007–2008 school year.

1,775 (32 percent) were Roma. Compared with the 2007–2008 school year,[221] there are one percent fewer students in all, and five percent more Roma students in such schools. The number of Roma students increased from 30 to 32 percent.

Data on the number of Roma students provided by Roma NGOs or other representatives of the Roma community are nearly identical with school data, which may indicate the level of involvement of the civil sector, and that they know the children. One should not, however, rule out the possibility that some had merely copy-pasted the data they obtained from schools.

In regards to gender, at both the primary and secondary levels, there are a larger percentage of Roma boys attending special schools than Roma girls. The discrepancy is bigger at the secondary level. In the 2007–2008 academic year, 43 percent of Roma students at the primary, and 30 percent at the secondary level were girls; in the 2008–2009 school year, at the primary level 38 percent, and only 28 percent at the secondary level were girls.[222]

In special classes in mainstream schools there were a larger percentage of Roma girls in the 2007–2008 academic year, while for the 2008-2009 academic year the percentage of boys was higher, but for 19 percent of students there was no data on gender.

There is a link between low preschool attendance and attendance to a special school or class. Preschool programs were attended by only 28 percent of the students of special schools/classes in the sample.[223]

Contrary to common belief, Roma students are motivated for schooling. Ninety-four percent of the primary students involved in focus groups want to finish school, out of which 88 percent want to finish secondary school; 100 percent of secondary students want to finish school. Parents are equally motivated.

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[221] According to data collected in this research, out of 83 percent of special schools in the 2007–2008 academic year, the total number of students stood at 5,639. Of these, 1,683 (30 percent) were Roma.

[222] At the primary level, in the 2007–2008 academic year, 57 percent of all Roma students were boys; in the 2008–2009 school year, 50 percent were boys (for 12 percent, there are no data). At the secondary level, in the 2007–2008 academic year, 59 percent of Roma students were boys (for 11 percent, there are no data). In the 2008–2009 school year, 52 percent of Roma students were boys (for 20 percent, there are no data).

[223] Of those who attended preschool, some attended mainstream preschool institutions, some attended the PPP within the PSES, and some attended Roma organizations. School students covered by the research had enrolled in primary school before the introduction of the compulsory PPP; data from relevant sources, however, indicate that the participation of Roma children in PPP is low.

6.6 Pedagogy and curricular content of special education

The quality of education in special schools, and in special classes, is worse than in mainstream schools. Numerous experts and students themselves have deemed the curricula of special schools as inadequate and excessively abridged, especially curricula for students with intellectual disabilities.[224] Curricula of special schools for children with intellectual disabilities are much shorter than the mainstream curricula. This results in students of special primary schools being tracked to, and entering special secondary schools; special secondary schools do not prepare students for work in the 21st century.

Students of special schools and classes do study fewer subjects than mainstream curricula, and students say they would like to take subjects such as History, Chemistry, Physics, a foreign language, and IT training.

Some schools partly make up for this by offering elective subjects and extracurricular activities.[225] Roma and other students display the same interest for elective subjects and participation in extracurricular activities. Only three special schools said they offered the elective subject Roma Language and Elements of National Culture.

Most special secondary schools offer training in only a few occupations which are not competitive, and experts in the analyzed documents assess the pedagogical work as outdated. Schools also lack contemporary tools, computer programs, etc.

6.7 Teaching staff: pre-service education/qualifications/licensing

The professional development of teaching staff is extremely uneven. This research established major discrepancies among teachers of special education with respect to professional in-service training, both in terms of the number of seminars they underwent (between one and eight), and training content. While some are trained only in specific fields of special pedagogy, others opted for training to improve their teaching skills, communication skills, in overcoming prejudice, in inclusive education, etc. The schools' tendency to refer their teachers to undergo the same forms of training indicates the schools' influence on the professional development of their staff.

6.8 Quality assurance

Quality assurance systems should be in place. This research, however, did not establish any specificities regarding special school/class quality assurance and monitoring.

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[224] The research was not mandated to focus on the curricula in detail, but to collect opinions on them.

[225] Opinions are divided about whether special schools should offer elective subjects and extracurricular activities, as mainstream schools do.

Some MoE RD counselors are of the opinion that the MoE RDs do not have the capacity to extend all the needed aid to schools. Local administration representatives mostly distance themselves from the issue because it is not in their jurisdiction.

The new Law on the Basis of the Education System envisages the establishment of school inclusive teams that will provide support to children with developmental difficulties, children from minority communities, and gifted children. In cooperation with parents and outside experts, these teams will design individual education plans.

6.9 School environment

School facilities are not uniformly well maintained. According to research participants, there are big discrepancies in the *conditions* in which children are schooled: some schools have been renovated and are well-equipped, while others are in poor condition.

Roma students and their parents are satisfied with special schools, they feel good there and have friends; most teachers and other staff treat them with respect and extend support to them. Students who transferred from mainstream schools had been subjected to discrimination and physical abuse by their peers, and even by their teachers, in mainstream schools. At the same time, although most students are satisfied, they are still denigrated, picked on, and insulted by their peers and adults because they go to special school.

Students in higher grades are more aware of the consequences of special education: that they have fewer chances of continuing schooling, fewer occupations to choose from, and fewer prospects of employment.

Cooperation with families also impacts on the schools' environment. More than 70 percent of the special schools and 90 percent of teachers deemed their cooperation with families of Roma students to be the same or poorer than their cooperation with families of other students. Most schools engage in standard forms of cooperation with families, such as PTA meetings, one-on-one talks, lectures, and counseling. Family visits are mentioned by one-third of schools and teachers. Participation of Roma parents on a parents' council is mentioned by 15 percent of schools and teachers. Workshops for parents, get-togethers, and parent corners were mentioned only by four schools.

6.10 Students' qualifications, certificates, and employability

Special schools do not prepare students for further education or employment

Though there are no formal differences between mainstream and special school certificates, most experts agree that finishing special schools or classes does not allow students to pursue their education in the mainstream system; though formally this is possible, students simply do not have the knowledge and skills necessary to compete at that level.

Young people who finish primary school, whether special or mainstream, and who do not continue their education realistically, only have the possibility of finding physical labor work, such as in public utility companies, or in similar unqualified jobs. Special secondary schools provide professional qualifications in crafts and qualifications in outdated occupations for which there is no demand on the labor market. Further, graduates of special secondary schools are often the victims of discrimination.

According to this research, of the Roma students who had graduated from the secondary level in PSES, 71 percent have never held a job. Seventy-six percent were unemployed at the time of the research, and 24 percent were employed: 10 percent part time, and 14 percent full time.

For those that were at that point unemployed, they provided for themselves and their families through physical labor (carrying wood, furniture, etc.), collecting raw materials for cash, working in construction, or painting houses. Others simply did nothing.

Attending special education has a large impact on students' lives. Many schools see schooling in special schools as positive (36–50 percent depending on the type of school); fewer see it as negative (5–26 percent), while others think that any impact depends on the community, or that there is no impact. Only a few representatives, however, of institutions and Roma NGOs highlight the positive effects of attending a special school.

Those who see a positive impact think that is better to have some school rather than none, and that students are treated better in special schools. Most, however, note the negative impact in the broader community because the discrimination they feel as Roma in the first place is compounded by society's discrimination of those attending special schools/classes.

Assessments of the impact of attending special school vary from positive to negative among all the participants in the research. The positive impact is mostly reflected in their belief that special schools are the only way Roma can finish school, and thus have a greater prospect of finding a job. The negative impact is reflected in the lower status that special school students have both in the Roma and broader communities, the fewer prospects of employment among special school graduates, and the lower level of education than the one acquired in mainstream schools.

6.11 Special education as family legacy

There is a trend whereby members of the same family often attend special education for generations. Forty-eight percent of the MPS, 74 percent of the SPS, and 71 percent of the PSES had two or more children from the same family in attendance. Sixty-four percent of Roma students who took part in the focus groups had sisters or brothers in special schools and classes.

Schools give various interpretations for this phenomenon. They claim that: children were classified as special needs children due to genetics (27 percent); children are educationally neglected and lack home care and discipline (16 percent); there are stereotypes of Roma that they feel are accepted in a special school, or the parents wanted them to go to a special school (16 percent); the family is poor (15 percent), the curriculum is less demanding, and special school is easier to finish (seven percent); the school is close to the Roma settlement (two percent).

6.12 Mis/Placement in special schools/classes and reintegration into mainstream schools/classes

Mis/Placement in special schools/classes

A large majority of Roma students do not begin their education in special schools, but are transferred from the mainstream education system sometime in their educational career. This research highlighted two parallel processes that result in the overrepresentation of Roma students in the special education system. One is the transfer from mainstream schools to special schools, and the other is the inadequate procedure for assessing children's readiness for school at the beginning of their educational career, before first grade.

Over 50 percent of the special schools and mainstream schools with special classes have students who had not been enrolled in them directly, but had been transferred from mainstream schools/classes. Some such schools and classes have no students who had directly enrolled in them but only students who had been transferred.[226] Several generations of some Roma families attended a special school or class.

The percentage of Roma students who had transferred from mainstream to special schools ranges from 1 to 100 percent depending on the school.[227]

The procedure for assessing children's readiness for school has in many cases been reduced to testing children with inadequate instruments, and without understanding the context in which they live. The 2009 Law on the Basis of the Education System abolishes the assessment of school readiness before enrolment into primary school; and all children, bar those with extremely grave or multiple developmental difficulties, shall

[226] Students transferred from mainstream to special schools/classes in 53 percent of special primary schools, 54 percent of PSES at the primary level, in 11 percent of PSES at the secondary level, in SSS, and in 48 percent of mainstream schools covered by the research. The most frequent reasons for their transfer included: poor grades due to irregular attendance and difficult curricula; in reaction to teasing and abuse from peers who label them as problematic children; treatment by teachers and other school staff; starting a family, in which case they have to leave mainstream schools and transfer to special schools which allow them to continue schooling.

[227] The percentage of other students ranges from 1–99 percent.

be enrolled in mainstream schools, and their development and progress will be continuously monitored.

This research also partly focused on the work of the CCB, with which there is a lot of vagueness and controversy. These CCB will be abolished in December 2009. An expert team established by the MoE is drafting new rules of procedure for the reformed Intersectoral Commission.

Although it is frequently highlighted that Roma themselves ask that their children be enrolled in special schools because of the material benefits, the participants in the research did not list material benefits more often than other reasons, notably: the mainstream school curriculum is much harder, they wanted to protect their children from abuse in mainstream schools, etc.

Reintegration of special school/class students into mainstream schools/classes

The number of Roma students who have been transferred from special to mainstream school is extremely small considering the number of Roma students that are in the special education system. Only a total of 31 Roma students were transferred from 10 special to mainstream schools in the last three years. Four Roma students were transferred from special classes to mainstream classes in three MPS.

The reintegration of children from special schools into mainstream schools is one of the measures envisaged by the Action Plan for the Improvement of the Education of Roma. Further, the 2009 Law on the Basis of the Education System does not recognize special classes in mainstream schools, which means that such classes may no longer be established.

6.13 Student performance

Roma students and parents are very motivated to learn, and to participate in education. This research definitely does not substantiate the belief that Roma are not interested in education. On the contrary, both the children and the parents seemed very highly motivated for their children to complete secondary and even higher education, clearly linking the acquired knowledge to employment opportunities.

Schools have diverse opinions on Roma student's achievement compared to other students. Half of them think that performance is the same (similar student potential, equal treatment, adequate teaching). Five percent see performance as better (greater intellectual potential), and 10 percent believe that they achieve less (because they are not motivated, or have no working habits).

The grade repetition of Roma students in special schools and classes is the same as those of their school peers, but the drop-out rates are higher among Roma students. Dropping out and grade repetition are most frequent in upper primary school grades, at the transition between primary and secondary education, and at the beginning of secondary school. Schools and teachers mostly ascribe the higher drop-out rate to early

marriage, employment, and a lack of motivation for education, whereas grade repetition is attributed to irregular attendance. Depending on the school, 15–40 percent of students had to work while they went to school. Teachers see work as one of the three main reasons for dropping out of school.

Catch-up classes are, for the first time, defined as a form of educational work in the 2009 Law. Also in the Law is that schools will, from now on, have the obligation to teach children from minority communities the language they are schooled in, if they do not already speak it. There are plans to extend the number of schools with classes offering adult education in accordance with the new, reformed curriculum.

6.14 Costs and benefits

Costs

Special schools and classes are funded in the same manner that mainstream schools and classes are funded. There are factors, however, which make it more expensive to have special education, such as higher salaries for school/class staff, a smaller student/teacher ratio, and many benefits that special school and class students receive.

This research, however, did not confirm that all children in the special education system automatically gain benefits or get free books, school supplies, food, accommodation in boarding homes, etc.

The new 2009 Law on the Basis of the Education System introduces funding per student instead of per class; this funding system will be elaborated and piloted by 2014. Extra money for students that need additional support will be funded to mainstream schools. Further analysis, once these new regulations are in practice, will determine the impact on Roma students' schooling in special education.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are focused on mainstream education and the prevention of misplacing students into special schools. Recommendations for the existing special education system are dealt with separately in their own section. All recommendations have been formulated in light of the changes introduced by the 2009 Law on the Basis of the Education System. We hope that they will contribute to the quality of implementing the Ministry of Education's ongoing and planned activities which are aimed at ensuring the application of the Law and the development of inclusive education.

We also take the opportunity to advise on other activities and regulations that need to be developed.

Recommendations are directed to those which state institutions are charged with education and advancing the status of the Roma community, notably: the Ministry of Education; the MoE Regional Departments; the Education Improvement Bureau; the Bureau for the Assessment of Quality of Education; preschool institutions and schools; the Ministries for Human and Minority Rights, Labor and Social Policy, Health, State Administration; and local self-government and professional associations. The recommendations also target NGOs and international institutions and donors focusing on improving the education of Roma.

7.1 Recommendations regarding discrimination against Roma in education

The Decade Action Plan should be monitored for implementation of anti-discrimination policy. The MoE Working Group for the Improvement of Education for Roma should check the status of different activities planned in the Action Plan for improving the education of Roma regarding anti-discrimination policy and practice, and initiate further action.

Anti-discrimination policy should be included as part of the School Development Plan and School Plan. MoE RD counselors and school inspectors should pay attention to school anti-discrimination policy and practice. They should be empowered for action in this field.

Anti-discrimination should be a topic for school board and parent council work (meetings). Parents and representatives of local self-government on school boards should be more active in monitoring and giving ideas for prevention activities.

The MOE should highly recommend and endorse pre-service and in-service- training in anti-prejudice programs. Such programs should be included in teachers' professional training and become compulsory in the training of MoE RD counselors and school inspectors in order to ensure that they are able to recognize prejudice, and to act upon it, when they come across it.

Civil society organizations need to be involved in monitoring discrimination, its prevention and must react to instances of discrimination. Civil society organizations should learn to whom, or to what agency, they can turn when encountering discrimination.

MoE RDs, school inspectors, local self-government, NGOs, and parents should pay particular attention to mainstream schools that plan to integrate, or already have integrated, Roma students from special schools and classes. These students are doubly discriminated against, as Roma and as special school students, so there is a high chance that they may be violated by peers and school staff. Those schools should be trained and monitored regularly.

Good practice from projects should be implemented in more schools. The MoE and MoE RDs are mostly informed about project activities. Nevertheless, more examples could be found in the field.

7.2 Recommendations regarding regulations and legislation

The consequences for failure to respect regulations must be precisely defined and enforced.

The Laws on preschool, primary school, and secondary school education, which shall be harmonized with the new Law on the Basis of the Education System 2009, must elaborate in greater detail the provisions introducing inclusive education and define reformed special education. Subsidiary legislation, too, must precisely clarify the novel provisions and minimize room for manipulation.

The relationship between mainstream and special education must be defined clearly. MoE RDs, schools, and school inspectors must be obliged to know and respect this. It is needed to prevent transfer from mainstream to special schools, but also make it possible to integrate students from special schools to mainstream schools. The roles and obligations of different authorities and stakeholders should also be clearly defined and made publicly available.

Different bodies should better cooperate and coordinate.

- Apart from the MoE, other relevant ministries, professional associations, eminent experts, and reputable NGOs in specific fields need to be involved in the drafting of laws and by-laws.
- Durable functional mechanisms for cooperation and coordination of activities among education, health and social institutions, and with local governments, need to be developed at the local level.
- MoE RDs need to re-assume their role as hubs, bringing together the relevant institutions and, apart from monitoring and improving the quality of education, they also need to play the role of regional resource centers.

7.3 Recommendations regarding the prevention of mis/placement in special schools, adult classes, and dropouts

MoE RDs and local self-governments should better understand and analyze the schools in their jurisdiction. MoE RDs and local self-governments should analyze the mainstream schools within their jurisdictions that used to send students to the Intersectoral Commission and transfer students to special schools, and to special schools that have educated generations of Roma families, in order to establish whether the schools have a negative attitude towards the schooling of Roma, and to plan additional work with such schools.

Provide data to schools and teachers by June. Schools and teachers ought to have data on children who have enrolled by June, to provide them with enough time until September to supplement the school curricula, work plans, teaching plans, and individual operational plans with activities responding to the specific needs of their students.

Ensure that Roma children attend the obligatory Preschool Program, and encourage and support the Roma community to attend preschool. Schools need to adjust the manner in which they are organized to suit the needs of children in the Roma communities. Roma NGOs need to encourage parents to enrol their children in preschool and school, and to help ensure their regular attendance. The MoE RDs and school inspectors should conduct greater oversight of the Preparatory Preschool Program's implementation and the certificates that are issued to the children. Local self-governments should provide material support (funds for snacks, transport, and school supplies) for attendance at preschool.

Ensure that all stakeholders are more proactive to ensure the enrolment of Roma pupils in mainstream school. Mainstream schools should be proactive and go out to find students. In addition to this, parents need to be informed and supported to enrol their children in mainstream education (by schools, local self-governments, Roma NGOs, Centers for Social Work).

The National Council of the Roma National Minority should pay more attention to the issue of education and support cooperation between the Roma community and educational institutions, especially in municipalities/cities where there are no Roma NGOs or coordinators in local government.

Measures need to be taken to prevent adult education classes from becoming classes for Roma students after the abolition of special classes. The work of adult education classes in mainstream primary schools needs to be carefully regulated. Future time limits should be set to ensure that only those Roma students who have become too old to enrol in mainstream schools are taught literacy and are educated. Adult education classes should be organized only until a future date, in order to have enough time to include all Roma who have become too old for regular schooling to complete their

education. Once this generation has completed their education, then the classes should be closed.

Dropouts should be prevented and more carefully monitored. There is a fear that closing special schools and special classes in mainstream schools could provoke more dropouts, as mainstream schools that are not interested in really supporting Roma students may contribute to just that. School bodies, MoE RD, school inspectors, local self-governments, and the civil sector should be more active.

Design new assessment procedures collaboratively. Procedures, instruments for assessing and identifying risks, and monitoring a child's development and progress after enrolling in mainstream primary school must be carefully designed together by the MoE, professional associations of psychologists, pedagogues and special pedagogues, teachers, kindergarten teachers, and the NGO sector. With the new 2009 Law, there is no assessment or testing before enrolment in the first grade. Students are assessed later.

Holistically assess children for education. Apart from the child's state of health and assessment of his/her intellectual, emotional, and social development, the assessment of risks a child faces with respect to successful schooling needs also to include his/her native language (if different from the language used in school), economic circumstances s/he is living in, family status and problems, conditions in which s/he will study, cultural environment, the status of the community the child belongs to, etc.

Incorporate new expertise when assessing Roma children and children from marginalized groups. The publication, *The Assessment of School Readiness – How to Approach the Problems of Assessing School Readiness and of the Adjustment of Marginalised Children to School,* should be used as a tool when children from Roma communities, and other marginalized groups, are assessed.

Train school psychologists and pedagogues in up-to-date and appropriate methodology. These experts must be provided with adequate training to avoid the assessment of readiness from boiling down to testing and drawing groundless conclusions. The MoE should cooperate with the Society of Psychologists of Serbia and the Education Improvement Bureau to this end.

Attach funds and support to individual Roma students in mainstream education. Use the money that was heretofore given to special schools to support education, and tie it to individual students as they move into mainstream education. This is especially important for those living in poor families and unhygienic settlements. The MoE should create a document that will describe all levels of support, as it does now for students with developmental difficulties.[228] This document can be for Roma students

[228] This is in reference to the Draft regulations detailing how the needs for providing additional educational, health or social support to students with developmental difficulties and disabilities will be assessed and the composition and *modus operandi* of an inter-ministerial commission.

from poor families, or even better, for all students from disadvantage families, with some specifics for children from Roma community (regarding language, culture, etc.).

Schools should provide support to help integrated students succeed in school. This might be financial (i.e. textbooks and school supplies, funds for extracurricular activities), language programs for children not speaking the language spoken in school, or the work of one or more pedagogical assistants.

NGOs should take part in preparing schools for inclusion of Roma students. Apart from their links with Roma families and communities and support to children, NGOs should support students' transition by drawing on their experience gained from projects and cooperation with schools; one positive example should be selected, piloted, and subsequently implemented in the whole education system.

7.4. Recommendations regarding the reintegration of special school/class students into mainstream schools/classes

Reintegrate misplaced Roma students into mainstream education. The reintegration of students into mainstream schools and classes must be carefully designed, planned, and supervised to ensure that it does not traumatize children, many of whom already have negative experiences of mainstream schools. It is important to work in the best interests of each child. Students in lower grades of special education should be transferred to mainstream classes after undergoing specific preparations.[229] A more detailed analysis will be required for integrating children in higher grades.

The MoE needs to develop procedures for the transfer of children from the current system of special schools to mainstream schools. Procedures should be transparent, and students and parents informed and willing to participate. The MoE RDs, all other relevant state and local institutions, and NGOs must be involved in these activities. Pedagogical assistants could provide significant support to the children, families, and schools, and their engagement needs to be factored in.

Regulate the continuation of schooling of current special class students by subsidiary legislation. Such action is important since the 2009 Law on the Basis of the Education System does not recognize special classes in mainstream schools.

Urgent action is needed for those children who will not benefit from reform. For students who are in the last grades of special education at the primary and secondary levels, and who will finish schooling before all by-laws and preparations are finished, urgent action is needed. Schools should be provided support to expand their offers of elective subjects with which children will acquire skills to make them more competitive both in furthering their education and on the labor market.

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[229] See the experience of other countries and of the OSI "Special Schools" project, http://www.osi.hu/esp/rei/research.html

7.5 Recommendations regarding assuring quality in mainstream schools

Regulate the work of the School Inclusive Teams and the design of IEPs. In cooperation with experts, the MoE should draft binding recommendations and guidelines to avoid both a lack of clarity, and constraints, in schools when planning and working in accordance with students' needs. Activities aimed to support inclusion should be integrated into School Development Plans, the School Annual Plans, and be more concrete in teachers' plans.

Train MoE RD counselors to support schools in planning and implementing those activities. High quality training is essential in order to support schools and to be informed about quality inclusive education and the problems arising in the education of Roma students.

Support school boards and parent councils to be more active in monitoring and giving ideas for quality improvement. Training for their members should be created and supported by the local education authorities.

Local governments should become more involved in schools' development. Local governments should influence the development of school policies, monitor the quality of work, and analyze the needs and problems of children, teachers, and parents through the members they appoint to school boards. They should also participate in the design of professional training plans based on the real needs of school staff, and provide financial, material, or human resources (local government and public institution staff) for the training. This would help the schools become inclusive environments in which all children are provided with quality education and development perspectives.

Learn from what special schools did right. Mainstream schools should learn from special schools in order to establish a friendly environment for Roma students. If parents and students were mainly satisfied in special schools, it would be useful to investigate what elements could be implemented in mainstream schools. Moreover, given their extensive experience in work with students from Roma settlements, special school teachers should be involved in supporting mainstream school teachers to work with new students.

Schools need to consider and design better forms of cooperation together with parents, and respect their needs. Schools need to support and educate parents, and encourage them to be more active in all aspects of school life, including planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

Schools should better cooperate and share experience and good practice among themselves. Peer education and school mentoring should be supported as efficient ways of professional development and practice for quality improvement. There are also good examples in different projects that can be used. To this end, the Ministry of Education together with professional associations should create an inclusive school portal to support the reform process.

7.6 Recommendations for special education as it undergoes transition

The MoE should plan a new network of special schools. This should be done in accordance with the needs of children with moderate and severe developmental difficulties, who are yet to enrol in them. Given the problems regarding databases, local self-governments should prepare lists of potential students in need of special education in cooperation with health and social protection institutions.

The MoE should analyze, define, and regulate the work of schools for students with emotional and behavioral difficulties. This should be done in cooperation with the Labor and Social Policy Ministry. These schools warrant special attention because data show that Roma make up the majority of their students.

The MoE, professionals, and researchers need to use the terms for special education defined by the law, or explain what they imply under the term in the event they use them differently. This would greatly help avoid confusion with respect to terminology. Official documents should specify whether they refer to PSES as one or two schools (primary plus secondary). This recommendation also applies to institutions and, occasionally, their buildings (some schools operate in two or more buildings at different locations).

The MoE should prepare subject curricula in reformed special education so that they are adjusted to future students' capabilities and needs (students with severe difficulties). The new curricula should prepare them for further schooling in mainstream or special schools, independent living, and employment. The reform of special education will require the development of brand-new programs (including those for elective subjects and extracurricular activities), in which experts in various fields need to be involved.

Teacher-training institutions should plan initial (pre-service) and continued (in-service) training of special school teachers in light of their future dual role. On the one hand, they need to be professionally trained to work with students suffering from graver health and developmental problems, which prevent them from attending mainstream schools. On the other hand, the training should facilitate their development into service centers for inclusive education, and the provision of support to mainstream schools and families.

Local self-governments that have schools in poor condition in their jurisdiction should devote greater attention to their reconstruction and equipping. Schools should provide a safe environment and provoke children's development by using new teaching tools and IT technology.

APPENDIX A.
How schools collect data on students' ethnicity

Documents often state that educational institutions do not collect data on students' ethnicity. The MoE and EIB, however, have simultaneously been providing data on the schooling of Roma students.

The researchers asked all schools included in this research whether they had information on their students' ethnicity. Most replied that they did, having obtained it from the parents. Fourteen MPS answered that they had data on students' ethnicity (13 received data from parents, and one from other sources). Fifteen SPS have data, all provided by parents. Twenty PSES have data, (18 received data from parents, and two from other sources).

Parents have the option of entering their child's ethnicity when filling in a mandatory 1st grade enrolment form. The percentage of parents who have done so, however, varies from school to school. According to data from 38 schools, the following percentages of parents have given information on their children's ethnicity: less than 20 percent in one school; 21–40 percent in four schools; 41–60 percent in two schools; 61–80 percent in four schools; and 81–100 percent in 27 schools. Some schools stated that they did not ask for the information, but obtained it when the parents provided it of their own free will.

Parents provided the information in writing during enrolment in the 1st grade in four MPS and five PSES, and orally in five MPS and nine PSES. In 12 SPS, they provided it both orally and in writing. Five PSES and three SPS stated that they conducted the survey of parents initiated by the MoE.

Eighteen schools estimated that the number of Roma students present was greater than the number of children declared as Roma by parents; in one school, there were fewer Roma children than declared. One school did not have such information, and stated it could not draw a comparison, while some schools underlined that they did not make estimates but relied on data obtained from parents.

Schools that do make estimates are mostly guided by: the language the children speak (23); their place of residence (21); skin color or physical appearance; first and last names; data obtained from boarding parents; religion; *distinctly recognizable Roma subculture*; way of life; information about their families; their status, etc.

Only one local administration (17 percent) stated that it had data on students' ethnicity, which it obtained from the parents; four LAs (31 percent) stated that they obtained data from schools and parents. All 11 Roma NGOs/coordinators obtained data from the Roma community.

Schools providing data on the ethnicity of students in this research

The table below presents the number of schools that provided the total number of students and the number of Roma students. The percentages in brackets are calculated comparing the responses to the sample of MPS, and for special schools to the overall number of such schools in Serbia.

Table 60. Number of schools that provided data on student figures

	2007–2008 school year				2008–2009 school year			
	Provided data on total number of students?		Provided data on number of Roma students?		Provided data on total number of students?		Provided data on number of Roma students?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
MPS	14 (67%)	7 (23%)	19 (90%)	2 (10%)	15 (71%)	6 (29%)	20 (95%)	1 (5%)
SPS	15 (79%)	4 (21%)	14 (74%)	5 (26%)	15 (79%)	4 (21%)	14 (74%)	5 (26%)
PSES PS	25 (89%)	3 (11%)	25 (89%)	3 (11%)	25 (89%)	3 (11%)	25 (89%)	3 (11%)
PSES SS	25 (89%)	3 (11%)	25 (89%)	3 (11%)	25 (89%)	3 (11%)	25 (89%)	3 (11%)
SSS	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)

Roma community representatives providing data on the number of Roma students

In agreement with the MoE, data were simultaneously collected from schools and Roma community representatives who were allowed access to school lists of pupils. Twenty-two Roma NGOs, 18 municipal Roma coordinators, one Roma teaching assistant, one representative of the Serbian Roma National Council Regional Office, and one parent of a child attending school took part in the research by filling out a special form.

Roma community representatives were asked to provide data only for the 2008–2009 school year.

Roma community representatives provided data for a total of 54 schools: for 18 MPS (86 percent of the sample), and 36 special schools (75 percent of the total number of special schools in Serbia). Roma community representatives gave their estimates on the

basis of their personal acquaintanceship with the children and/or their own assessments. The table below summarizes the number of schools for which data on student numbers were provided by Roma NGOs/coordinators.

Table 61. Number of schools for which data on student numbers was provided by Roma NGOs/coordinators

	2008–2009 school year	
	Provided data on number of Roma students?	
	Yes	No
MPS	18 (86%)	3 (14%)
SPS	11 (58%)	8 (42%)
PSES PS	24 (86%)	4 (14%)
PSES SS	24 (86%)	4 (14%)
SSS	1 (100%)	–

Data are obtained from both sources for 17 MPS (81 percent of the total number of schools in the sample), nine SPS (47 percent of the total of such schools), 23 PSES PS (82 percent of the total number of such schools in Serbia), and one SSS (100 percent of such schools in Serbia).

APPENDIX B.
Ministry of Education data on schools and classes for students with developmental difficulties

Special schools

Table 62. Data on schools and classes for 2005–2007 from the document: *Statistical Yearbook of Serbia 2007,* Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, MoE

Special primary schools[230]						
	Schools	Classes	Students		Students completed school	Teachers in total
			Total	Girls		
Republic of Serbia						
2005/06	245	1,181	7,707	3,138	943	1,606
2006/07	242	1,155	7,393	2,998	880	1,652
Central Serbia						
2005/06	140	722	4,661	1,875	591	987
2006/07	142	721	4,467	1,796	572	1,009
Vojvodina						
2005/06	105	459	3,046	1,263	352	619
2006/07	100	434	2,926	1,202	308	643

[230] Table made by the MoE Department for Development and International Cooperation.

Special secondary schools[231]						
	Schools	Classes	Students		Students completed school	Teachers in total
			Total	Girls		
Republic of Serbia						
2005/06	41	237	1,465	545	386	627
2006/07	40	249	1,550	564	451	747
Central Serbia						
2005/06	29	166	972	369	315	455
2006/07	29	172	1,015	375	307	523
Vojvodina						
2005/06	12	71	493	176	71	172
2006/07	11	77	535	189	144	224

Table. 63. Data that the Education Improvement Bureau,[232] sent to the MoE for this research (school year 2007–2008)

Special schools in total

Total special schools: 48; SPSE: 29

PS	Number of students	SS	Number of students	Total schools	Total students
47	4,892	30	2,176	48	7,068

[231] Table made by the MoE Department for Development and International Cooperation.

[232] Tables made by the Education Improvement Bureau.

Special schools for students with intellectual difficulties

Total schools: 35; SPSE: 20; SPS: 14; SS: 1

PS	Number of students	SS	Number of students	Total students
35	3,854	21	1,821	5,675

Special schools for students with hearing difficulties

Total schools: 7; SPSE: 6; SPS: 1

PS	Number of students	SS	Number of students	Total students
7	378	6	158	536

Special schools for students with visual impairment

Total schools: 2; SPSE: 1; SPS: 1

PS	Number of students	SS	Number of students	Total students
2	224	1	42	266

Special schools for students with disturbances in their social behavior

Total schools: 2; SPSE: 1; SPS: 1

PS	Number of students	SS	Number of students	Total students
2	99	1	155	254

Special schools for students with physical disabilities

Total schools: 2; SPSE: 1; SPS: 1

PS	Number of students
2	337

Table 64. Analysis of list of special schools, MoE Sector for Statistics (data for 44 schools in total: 26 SPS and 18 SPSE)

Special primary schools (SPS)[233]			
	schools	**classes**	**students**
Republic of Serbia			
2006/07	12	171	765
2007/08	8	95	428
Central Serbia			
2006/07	9	133	502
2007/08	6	76	315
Vojvodina			
2006/07	3	38	263
2007/08	2	19	113

(Special) Schools for primary and secondary education (PSES)[234]			
	schools	**classes**	**students**
Republic of Serbia			
2006/07	12	295	1,676
2007/08	10	223	1,433
Central Serbia			
2006/07	8	160	1,020
2007/08	7	141	923
Vojvodina			
2006/07	4	135	656
2007/08	3	82	510

[233] Analysis and table made by the lead researcher.

[234] Analysis and table made by the lead researcher.

Mainstream schools with special classes

Table 65. Data from the Education Improvement Bureau,[235] sent to the MoE for this research (school year 2007–2008)

Total mainstream primary schools with special classes: 58

PS	Number of classes	Number of students
58	168	1,121

Table 66. Analysis of the list of mainstream primary schools with special classes, MoE Sector for Statistics (data for 130 schools in total: 119 SPS, and 11 SPSE)

Mainstream primary schools with special classes[236]			
	schools	classes	students
Republic of Serbia			
2006/07	95	504	1,478
2007/08	71	348	997
Central Serbia			
2006/07	59	846	308
2007/08	42	191	524
Vojvodina			
2006/07	36	632	196
2007/08	29	157	473

Mainstream secondary schools with special classes[237]			
	schools	classes	students
Republic of Serbia			
2006/07	10	36	174
2007/08	5	31	153
Central Serbia			
2006/07	9	24	5
2007/08	4	22	112
Vojvodina			
2006/07	1	150	31
2007/08	1	9	41

[235] Tables made by the EIB.

[236] Analysis and table made by the lead researcher.

[237] Analysis and table made by the lead researcher.

APPENDIX C.
Detailed number and share of Roma students

Table 67. Number and share of Roma students among the total number of special school students in the 2008–2009 school year (data for 25 schools, obtained from both schools and Roma NGOs/coordinators)

	Number of schools	School for students with intellectual disabilities		Number of schools	School for students with hearing impairments		Number of schools	School for students with visual impairments	
Data sources		School	Roma NGOs		School	Roma NGOs		School	Roma NGOs
Total SPS students	7	574	–	1	15	–	1	116	–
Number of SPS Roma students		274	265		2	0		13	13
% of SPS Roma students		48%	46%		13%	0%		11%	11%
Total PSES PS students	17	1,639	–	5	237	–	1	97	–
Number of PSES PS Roma students		661	658		55	46		7	4
% of PSES PS Roma students		40%	40%		23%	19%		7%	4%
Total PSES SS students		1,126	–		144	–		41	–
Number of PSES SS Roma students		296	213		14	11		4	4
% of PSES SS Roma students		26%	19%		10%	8%		10%	10%
Total SSS students	1	280		–	–	–	–	–	–
Number of SSS Roma students		77	77		–	–		–	–
% of SSS Roma students		28%	28%		–	–		–	–
Total students	25	3,619	–	6	396	–	2	254	
Total Roma students		1,308	1,213		71	57		24	21
Average % of Roma students		36%	34%		18%	14%		9%	8%

APPENDIX D.
List of Roma NGOs and Roma coordinators that participated in the research

Table 68. List of Contacts

Name/position	Roma NGOs	Location of NGO	Location of schools	Number of schools	Contact
Roma NGOs					
Novaković Dragan, president	Loli Luludji – Crveni cvet	Ruski Krstur	Kula	1	025/704-780
Pera Petrović, president	Ckni Jag – Mala vatra	Ruma	Ruma	1	022/431921; 022/432921
Dragica Kalderaš, president	Kulturno prosvetno društvo Roma Sunce-Kham	Vršac	Bela Crkva, Vršac	2	064/3641205
Miroslav Veljković, president	Društvo Rom Braničevski okrug	Požarevac	Požarevac	1	064/3055718; 012/221-426
Boris Adamov, president	Društvo Rom	Dimitrovgrad	Dimitrovgrad	1	063/747378
Dragan Gračanin, president	Romski centar za demokratiju	Valjevo	Valjevo	1	063/531513
Bajrami Fekrija, president	Romski razvojni centar	Aranđelovac	Aranđelovac	1	063/8272168
Miodrag Urošević, president	Pokret Roma Vrnjačke Banje	Vrnjačka Banja	Vrnjačka Banja	1	064/34244472
	Društvo Roma Kursumlije	Kuršumlija	Kuršumlija	1	
Dijana Vujičić, president	Udruženje Roma	Užice	Užice	2	064/2091995; 031/543251
Svetlana Ilić, associate	Ženski romski centar Bibija	Beograd	Beograd	1	011/3245454
Nada Đuričkovic, coordinator	Romski centar za žene i decu Dae	Beograd	Beograd	1	011/2496075

Ljubiša Jovanović, president	Humanitarni centar Rom	Beograd	Beograd	1	011/8720930
Svetozar Vasić, associate	UG Dečji centar Mali Princ	Beograd	Beograd	1	061/1144919
Suzana Čepo, associate	Edukativni centar Roma	Subotica	Subotica	2	024/554697; 063/7244777
Dobrila Nikolić, president	Zvezda vodilja	Zrenjanin	Zrenjanin	1	064/4796380
Dragutin Lazić Musić, president	Ponos	Niš	Niš	2	018/225593; 061/2285249
Bogdan Nikolić, president	Društvo za kulturu i prosvetu Bare Jaga	Mačvanska Mitrovica	Sremska Mitrovica	1	022/213475
Biljana Mitrović, secretary	Udruženje Roma Rakovica	Beograd	Beograd	6	011/5339778
Dejan Bajramović, president	Romani asvi – Romska suza	Vranje	Vranje	1	064/3233217
Nedžip Eminović, president	Unija Roma Nevo Djivdine	Leskovac	Leskovac	1	064/4495154
Nadira Radulović, president	Udruženje romskih žena Jag	Bor	Bor	1	064/1621192
Roma Coordinators[238]					
Miroslav Mitrović		Čačak	Čačak	2	064/3641491
Ivica Misković		Novi Bečej	Novi Bečej	1	063/8656829
Đulijeta Sulić		Smederevo	Smederevo	1	064/8449202
Zorana Pavlović		Kruševac	Kruševac	1	061/1595222
Angela Slavnić		Bečej	Bečej	1	064/4188647
Maja Kamenović		Negotin	Negotin, Zaječar	2	019/410-781

[238] The Roma Coordinators have worked within OSCE and UNHCR projects. Some of them are also employed by local government.

Osman Muhamed		Beograd	Beograd	4	064/0779735
Radovan Asković		Pirot	Pirot	1	064/1792930
Bata Konovalov		Jagodina	Jagodina	2	061/1344293
Safet Šusica		Prokuplje	Prokuplje	1	064/2565984
Zoran Pavlović		Kragujevac	Kragujevac	2	064/4625702
Ljubinka Simić		Knjaževac	Knjaževac	1	061/1121769
Tomo Lakatoš		Kikinda	Kikinda	1	027/788-092
Zoran Kalanjoš		Sombor	Sombor	1	064/1983913
Roma Teaching Assistants					
Lina Jon		Ali Bunar	Pančevo	1	061/1736079
Ružica Mitić		Aleksinac	Aleksinac	1	064/2025995
Others					
Dragan Vasiljković	Roma National Council Regional Office	Šabac	Banja Koviljača, Šabac	2	063/8100064
	Roma Parent recommended by school	Bačka Topola	Bačka Topola	1	

APPENDIX E.
List of all special schools, and mainstream schools with special classes from the sample

Table 69. Mainstream schools with special classes from the sample

		City	Name of school
1	Classes for children with hearing difficulties	Čačak	Filp Filipović
2		Novi Sad	Jovan Popović
3	Classes for children with intellectual difficulties	Aleksandrovac	Sveti Sava
4		Majdanpek	Velimir Markićević
5		Užice	Nada Matić
6		Kuršumlija	Drinka Pavlović
7		Jagodina	Boško Đuričić
8		Ruma	Ivo Lola Ribar
9		Palilula	Zaga Malivuk
10		Banja Koviljača	Vera Blagojević
11		Bačka Topola	Nikola Tesla
12		Bela Crkva	Dositej Obradović
13		Dimitrovgrad	Hristo Botev
14		Aranđelovac	Miloš Obrenović
15		Požarevac	Sveti Sava
16		Vrnjačka Banja	Popinski borci
17		Novi Bečej	Josif Marinković
18		Kula, Ruski Krstur	Petro Kuzmjak
19		Valjevo	Nada Purić
20		Smederevo	Dositej Obradović
21		Knjaževac	Dimitrije Todorović Kaplar

Table 70. Special primary schools from the sample

		City	Name of school
1	**Classes for children with visual impairments**	Beograd	Dragan Kovačević
2	**Classes for children with physical disabilities**	Beograd	Dragan Hercog*[239]
3		Beograd	Miodrag Matić
4	**Classes for children with behavioral difficulties**	Knjaževac	Mladost[240]
5	**Classes for children with hearing difficulties**	Beograd	Radivoj Popović
6		Užice	Miodrag Matić
7	**Classes for children with intellectual difficulties**	Beograd	Miloje Pavlović*
8		Beograd	NH Dušan Dugalić
9		Bačka Palanka	Heroj Pinki
10		Šid	J. Jovanović Zmaj
11		Beograd	Sava Jovanović Sirogojno
12		Negotin	12. septembar
13		Beograd	Ljubomir Aćimović
14		Aleksinac	Škola za vasp i obr dece i omladine sa smetnjama u razvoju Smeh i suza
15		Prokuplje	Sveti Sava
16		Šabac	Sveti Sava
17		Kikinda	6. oktobar
18		Beograd	Boško Buha
19		Beograd	Novi Beograd

[239] Schools marked * refused to participate in the research.

[240] This school was not included in the research sample.

Table 71. Special primary and secondary education schools from the sample

		City	Name of school
1	**Classes for children with behavioral difficulties**	Beograd	Vožd*
2	**Classes for children with visual impairments**	Beograd	Veljko Ramadanović
3	**Classes for children with hearing difficulties**	Subotica	Školski centar za vasp i obr. slušno oštećenih lica
4		Kragujevac	Škola sa domom za učenike oštećenog sluha
5		Niš	Bubanj
6		Beograd	Stefan Dečanski
7		Jagodina	11 maj
8	**Classes for children with intellectual difficulties**	Sremska Mitrovica	Radivoj Popović
9		Beograd	Anton Skala*
10		Novi Sad	Milan Petrović
11		Stara Pazova	Anton Skala
12		Sombor	Vuk Karadžić
13		Zrenjanin	9. maj*
14		Beograd	Sveti Sava
15		Čačak	1 novembar
16		Pančevo	Mara Mandić
17		Bečej	Bratstvo
18		Zaječar	Jelena Majstorović
19		Subotica	Žarko Zrenjanin
20		Kruševac	Veselin Nikolić
21		Vranje	Vule Antić
22		Leskovac	11. oktobar
23		Kragujevac	Vukašin Marković
24		Pirot	Mladost
25		Niš	14. oktobar
26		Vršac	Jelena Varjaški
27		Kraljevo	Ivo Lola Ribar
28		Bor	Vidovdan

Table 72. Special secondary from the sample

		City	Name of school
1	**Classes for children with intellectual difficulties**	Beograd	Srednja zanatska škola

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