



OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE
EU MONITORING AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM
EDUCATION SUPPORT PROGRAM
ROMA PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma

Volume 2

CROATIA
MACEDONIA
MONTENEGRO
SLOVAKIA

Monitoring Reports

2007

Published by

OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE

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

400 West 59th Street
New York, NY 10019
USA

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Október 6. u. 12.
H-1051 Budapest
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Website
<www.eumap.org>

ISBN: 978-1-891385-66-7

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data.
A CIP catalog record for this book is available upon request.

Copies of the book can be ordered from the EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program
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Printed in Budapest, Hungary, 2007
Design & Layout by Q.E.D. Publishing

Foreword

There are about ten million Roma in Europe, living in virtually every country on the continent. There is no single type of Roma but a rich variety of cultures, traditions and other characteristics. They speak different languages and practice a number of religions.

Because of anti-Ziganism, many Roma have sadly been afraid to display their Roma identity openly. This is one reason why the number of Roma in national censuses is usually much lower than the real figure. We must break all stereotypes which seek to reduce Roma identities and voices. The time has come to recognise the contribution Roma have already made to European societies.

This is the aim of the ongoing Council of Europe campaign *Dosta!* (Enough! in Romani) currently underway in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The next step is to extend the campaign to all European countries. Every European state should join in stating loud and clear that they have had enough of prejudice against Roma. There must be an end to the discrimination of Roma – in employment, housing, health care and education.

During my missions to European countries I see the sad consequences of anti-Ziganism and have come to believe that *schooling* is the main instrument for putting an end to the negative spirals. There is of course a need for awareness-raising among the majority population, not least the young ones, but as important are further efforts to provide quality education to the next generation of Roma. I see this as absolutely necessary in order to break the vicious circle.

Many Roma children remain outside national education systems altogether, there is a high drop-out rate among those who enrol and the achievements in general among Roma pupils are low. One explanation is of course the high level of ill-literacy among parents.

However, segregation of Roma children in the school system also remains a serious problem across Europe. The European Court of Human Rights recently delivered a landmark ruling in the case *D.H. and others v. the Czech Republic*, bringing new focus on the over-representation of Roma in special schools or classes for children with intellectual disabilities.

This problem has been documented in several countries. I visited myself some years ago schools in the Czech Republic where Roma children were placed almost automatically in special classes for pupils with learning problems even when it was recognized that the child was obviously capable – though had little study encouragement from home.

This underlines also the importance of *early education* possibilities for the Roma children so that they could avoid the immediate disadvantage of too little background when starting the primary education. I have seen with the interest that the OSCE Contact Point for Roma and Sinti issues has suggested programmes for such pre-schooling.

As Commissioner for Human Rights in the Council of Europe I also welcome the research presented by the EUMAP monitoring project on Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma. I consider this as an important contribution to improving our understanding of the issues facing Roma in education and therefore a good basis for the political decisions needed. I find it particularly important that Roma representatives themselves have participated in conducting the research for each country report, to help ensure that Roma communities' perspectives are represented.

The country reports include specific and detailed recommendations, which should help to initiate further discussion at the national and local levels. They also highlight good practices that have been developed and could serve as models elsewhere.

Thomas Hammarberg

Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe

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Acknowledgements

The EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program of the Open Society Institute would like to acknowledge the primary role of the following individuals in researching and drafting these monitoring reports. Final responsibility for the content of the reports rests with the Program.

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Preface

The EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program (EUMAP) of the Open Society Institute (OSI) monitors human rights and rule of law issues throughout Europe, jointly with local NGOs and civil society organisations. EUMAP reports emphasise the importance of civil society monitoring and encourage a direct dialogue between governmental and nongovernmental actors on issues related to human rights and the rule of law. The reports are elaborated by independent experts from the countries being monitored.

This series of EUMAP reports on “Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma” builds on previous EUMAP reports on Minority Protection, which addressed the situation of Roma in Europe. It has been prepared in collaboration with OSI’s Education Support Program (ESP) and Roma Participation Program (RPP). In each country, the reporting teams also benefited from the support and experience of Roma NGOs, which were involved in gathering and processing data for the field research.

The Roma, with an estimated population of between 8 and 12 million spread across the whole continent, are one of Europe’s largest and most vulnerable minorities. Throughout Europe, Roma remain excluded from many aspects of society, denied their rights and entrenched in poverty. The particular problems faced by Roma in accessing quality educational opportunities have been widely recognised.

The “Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015” is an unprecedented international effort to combat discrimination and to close the gap in welfare and living conditions between the Roma and the non-Roma, in order to break the cycle of poverty and exclusion. The initiative is supported by the OSI and the World Bank, and endorsed by nine Central and Eastern European countries. The declared objective is to accelerate progress in improving the social inclusion and economic status of Roma.

The Decade focuses on four main areas: education, housing, employment and health care. The EUMAP reports on “Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma” aim to support the goals of the Decade in the key area of education, and to establish a framework for regular monitoring throughout the Decade. The reports also aim to provide an assessment of the state of implementation of Government education policies for Roma, to promote consultation with Roma communities on education issues, and to provide data on key education indicators, as well as presenting case studies on selected communities. The case studies were intended to supplement and corroborate data gathered from other sources. They provide relevant local examples, which is particularly important given that information on the educational status of Roma can be incomplete at the national level. The case studies also provide a baseline survey for follow up monitoring, in order to document changes in educational outcomes at the local level, over the course of the Decade.

The first volume of reports covers four countries: *Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Serbia*. This volume includes reports on four additional countries participating in the

Decade – *Croatia, the Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Slovakia* (the report on the *Czech Republic* is expected to follow in 2008) – plus an overview report resuming the main findings across all the countries. All country reports will be translated to the relevant national language and published as a separate report.

The monitoring on “Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma” was based on a detailed methodology, intended to ensure a comparative approach across the countries monitored, while the case studies were conducted according to a common template (both available at www.eumap.org). Each of the country reports included in this volume was reviewed at a national roundtable meeting. These meetings were organised in order to invite comments on the draft from Government officials, civil society organisations, parents, and international organisations. The final reports reproduced in this volume underwent significant revision based on the comments and critique received during this process. EUMAP assumes full responsibility for its final content.

For each country report there are detailed recommendations aimed at improving the access to quality education for Roma. These are directed at the national level, to the national governments, ministries and national education agencies, and will form the basis for OSI advocacy activities. Recommendations at the international level, including to the European Union (EU) and to international organisations, across all the countries covered by the monitoring, will be included in the overview report.

There are seven main parts to each of the country reports. Section 1 includes the executive summary and recommendations. Section 2 looks at available data on school enrolment and retention of Roma students, in comparison with general trends. Section 3 reviews governmental policies and programmes on Roma, as well as general educational policies impacting Roma education, and looks at their state of implementation, in particular with respect to the “Decade of Roma Inclusion”. Section 4 addresses the main constraints preventing Roma from fully accessing education; it also looks at the impact of segregation – whether in schools serving exclusively Roma neighbourhoods or villages, in separate classes within mainstream schools, or in special schools for people with intellectual disabilities – on access to education. Section 5 looks at the quality of education that Roma receive.

In Annex 1, the section on administrative structures briefly details the organisation and operation of the school system in each country. This will be most relevant for international readers who are less familiar with the specific education structures of the country concerned. Finally, in Annex 2 there are additional details from the case studies. Information from the case studies are, however, also integrated throughout the body of the report.

About EUMAP

This report on “Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma” builds on previous EUMAP reports on Minority Protection. In 2001 and 2002, EUMAP released two

series of reports looking at the situation of Roma and Russian speakers in Central and Eastern European countries. In 2002 and 2005, EUMAP published reports on the situation of Roma and Muslims in selected Western European countries. In 2007, EUMAP will be initiating a new monitoring project that will look at the situation of Muslims in eleven cities in Western Europe.

In addition to its reports on Minority Protection, EUMAP has released monitoring reports focusing on the Rights of People with Intellectual Disabilities, the Regulation and Independence of the Broadcast Media, Judicial Independence and Capacity, Corruption and Anti-corruption Policy, and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. EUMAP is currently initiating a follow-up monitoring of the Regulation and Independence of the Broadcast Media, which will have a special focus on digitalisation. All published EUMAP reports are available online, both in English and translated to the national languages (www.eumap.org).

About ESP

The OSI's Education Support Program (ESP) and its network partners support education reform in countries in transition, combining demonstration of best practice and policy advocacy to strengthen open society values, and promote justice in education, in three interconnected areas:

- Combating social exclusion: equal access to quality education for low income families; desegregation of children from minority groups; inclusion and adequate care for children with special needs.
- Openness and accountability in education systems and education reforms: equitable and efficient state expenditures on education; anticorruption and transparency; accountable governance and management.
- Open society values in education: social justice and social action; diversity and pluralism; critical and creative thinking.

Support is focused in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Europe, the Middle East, Russia, South Asia and Southern Africa. ESP has offices in Budapest, London, and New York and previously had an office in Ljubljana, Slovenia, where it was known as Open Society Education Programs-South East Europe (OSEP-SEE). The Budapest office now oversees work in South Eastern Europe as well. Past work of OSEP-SEE can be accessed at www.osepsee.net.

About RPP

The OSI's Roma Participation Program (RPP) is committed to further the integration of Roma in society, and empower Roma to challenge the direct and indirect racial discrimination that continues to hinder such integration. RPP views integration not as a flattening process of assimilation, but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural

diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance. This commitment finds expression in RPP's four core objectives:

- Providing institutional support and training to Roma NGOs capable of effective advocacy; linking these NGOs to wider regional and national activities and campaigns, and strengthening networking across borders to impact on policy processes at the national and EU levels.
- Creating training, development, internship and funding opportunities to consolidate the new generation of Roma women and men who will be the future leaders of national and international Roma movements.
- Broadening awareness of the priorities of the “Decade of Roma Inclusion” and creating opportunities for increased Roma participation in the Decade process.
- Promoting Roma women's access to public institutions and participation in decision-making processes, and to build a critical mass of Roma women leaders.

Equal access to quality education for Roma

Overview

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1. OVERVIEW

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Policy monitoring

Monitoring aims to capture a view of policy and practice at a certain moment in time, and the focus on equal access to quality education for Roma has never been sharper than it is at present. The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 (hereafter Decade) in particular, has made education for Roma a high priority in its aim to create a regional framework for improving the situation of Roma.¹

In Europe, education is largely left to the competency of national Governments. In many countries, much of the actual regulation of education is delegated to local or municipal authorities. Yet, as with most other aspects of public policy, international conventions and instruments, and intergovernmental organisations such as the European Union (EU) and Council of Europe (CoE) contribute to the larger framework to which States adhere.

With so many levels of influence on educational processes, monitoring becomes essential, to trace the impact of decisions made in Brussels, in national capitals and regional centres on individual communities, schools, and families. Moreover, issues of access to, and quality of education are inextricably linked with many other aspects of social policy, and cannot be analysed or addressed outside this wider context. Education policies for Roma in particular, intertwine with minority protection policies more generally.

This overview draws together the findings from the EU Monitoring and Advocacy Programme (EUMAP) monitoring in each of the countries participating in the Decade. These reports consolidate available data on education for Roma, and supplement this information with in-depth studies of selected case study locations in each country. Through the assessment of policy, the evaluation of existing research, and interviews with stakeholders at all levels, the reports contribute to the substantive foundation for further debate.

1.1.2 EUMAP and minority protection

In 2001, EUMAP undertook its first project monitoring the situation of Roma in eight countries, as part of a larger monitoring initiative examining minority protection in ten

¹ The “Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015”, an initiative supported by the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the World Bank, is an international effort to combat discrimination and ensure that Roma have equal access to education, housing, employment and health care. Launched in February 2005 and endorsed by nine Central and Eastern European countries, the Decade is also supported by the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Program. For further details, see the Decade website (<http://www.romadecade.org>) (accessed 18 November 2007).

Central and Eastern European countries. These reports took stock of the existing laws and policies in the sphere of minority protection, measuring them against the most broadly accepted standards in education; employment; health care; housing; criminal justice; protection from racially-motivated violence; language, media, and public participation.

These first reports established EUMAP's comprehensive approach to minority protection, which comprises both measures to prevent discrimination – different treatment on unjustifiable grounds – and measures to allow individuals and groups to preserve their identity and avoid assimilation into the majority. In taking account of these two dimensions of minority protection, EUMAP followed the approach employed by the European Commission in its regular reports on the countries then seeking to join the European Union.

The monitoring revealed a bleak situation for Roma in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. However, the impact of the accession process was clear: largely in response to pressure from the Commission, State Governments had adopted programmes aiming to improve the situation of Roma, and in many cases had allocated accession funding towards this end.

EUMAP continued to focus on the situation of Roma in 2002, with the release of a second round of minority protection reports. Following up on findings from the previous monitoring, the 2002 reports specifically assessed Government minority protection programmes, evaluating their content and implementation across the same areas surveyed in 2001. While these programmes set ambitious goals, the monitoring found problems with many Government strategies in terms of both content and implementation. A second set of minority protection reports in 2002 examined the situation in the five largest EU Member States, focusing on Roma in Germany and Spain. The monitoring in these Western European countries indicated that, particularly in the case of Roma, no Government can boast of successful minority integration; obstacles remain at all levels, in all countries.

1.1.3 A focus on Roma

While the concept of minority protection applies to minority groups of any size and status, the obstacles to integration are most serious for marginalised groups such as Roma. EUMAP's past monitoring of minority protection has clearly indicated that even with substantial financial and political investment, a vast gap between Roma and majority populations remains.

Roma, with a population of up to ten million dispersed across the continent, are Europe's largest minority.² The majority of the Roma population live in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) that are already members of the EU, and in the countries of South-Eastern Europe (SEE).

Roma are also one of Europe's most vulnerable groups. Research has shown that in essentially every aspect of life, Roma are worse off than average: Roma have higher rates of infant mortality, lower life expectancy, lower per-capita income, and higher unemployment, all major indicators of social exclusion.³ The disadvantaged situation of Roma communities has been widely recognised at the international and national levels, and a remarkably wide range of initiatives has been developed to address and improve this situation, yet positive change has been slow to manifest itself. A lack of reliable, comprehensive, and comparable data across the region, and even within countries, is a serious obstacle to tracking progress, as no baseline has been established in most areas. The limited data that are available, however, point to a particularly urgent need to improve both access to, and quality of, education for Roma, and indeed, make this a priority area for policy-makers at all levels.

With the agreement of nine countries to participate in the Decade in 2003, new opportunities for Governments to cooperate and collaborate towards addressing the problems facing Roma communities at a regional level were created. The importance of independent monitoring for this promising new initiative is paramount, to ensure that the commitments made at the international level ultimately make a difference for communities and individuals.

1.1.4 Monitoring education in depth

The Roma population in Europe is disproportionately young, due to both a relatively high birth rate and a short life expectancy. More significantly, Roma children make up an increasingly large percentage of the school-age population in many countries, and accordingly, of Europe's future labour force. A failure to address inequalities in education at this time is likely to have long-term implications not only for Roma, but for Europe as a whole.

While data on Roma are scarce overall, the absence of reliable statistics on Roma participation and performance in education is a particular weakness. No set of education indicators that countries should track has been widely recognised and accepted, so both the quantity and the quality of data that are available vary

² European Commission, *The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged Europe*, Brussels: Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs, 2004, p. 6, available at http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/pdf/pubst/roma04_en.pdf (accessed 28 October 2007) (hereafter, EC, *Situation of Roma in an Enlarged Europe*).

³ For indicative data, see the UNDP website at <http://roma.undp.sk/> (accessed 18 November 2007) and <http://vulnerability.undp.sk/> (accessed 25 October 2007).

dramatically from country to country. A comprehensive survey in all nine countries is beyond the scope of this monitoring project, and indeed, is clearly a matter for States to take on themselves. However, indicative research from the case study locations in each country points to trends and practices that can be a window into the current education situation.

The case studies also take into account the highly local nature of education policymaking in many countries. The process of decentralisation is ongoing across CEE and SEE, and education is frequently placed under the competency of local authorities to the greatest extent possible. At the same time, most policies targeting Roma are formulated at the national level. As devolution continues, it is critical to assess the extent to which local governments are following through on commitments made to Roma education at the national and international levels.

A diverse group of actors have been involved in education policy-making, at all levels. Governments, intergovernmental agencies, NGOs and donor organisations have all been active in supporting projects to improve education for Roma. However, few assessments of the financial and other resources dedicated to this issue have been conducted. The reports' application of EUMAP's consistent monitoring methodology across the Decade countries reveals a number of common themes, as well as highlighting good practices that could be transferred.

The Open Society Institute (OSI) has been engaged in the region for many years, and has supported local organisations' initiatives for education, as well as carrying out activities through its own programmes including the Education Support Program and the Roma Participation Program. OSI's expertise in this area covers both access to, and quality of, education dimensions, and its longstanding involvement with Roma groups has provided a solid basis for the present monitoring.

1.1.5 An historic opportunity

The Decade of Roma Inclusion has brought together not only State Governments, but also donor organisations, and NGOs to establish a coordinated approach to improving the situation of Roma in Europe. The participating countries⁴ have prepared action plans in four areas, one of which is education; the Roma Education Fund (REF) has also been set up to effectively channel resources towards projects promoting equal access to quality education for Roma in the Decade countries.⁵

The start of the Decade in 2005 marks the beginning of an important new phase in international attention to the situation of Roma, but one closely tied to earlier

⁴ Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Slovakia and Serbia.

⁵ See the website of the Roma Education Fund, available at <http://romaeducationfund.org> (accessed 25 October 2007).

initiatives. In particular, the EU enlargement process has been a catalyst in motivating Governments to adopt and implement policies addressing the problems facing Roma communities. However, with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in January 2007, the timeline for any further enlargement is unclear, although negotiations with Croatia and Turkey are ongoing. The impetus for change that the accession process provided must now largely be maintained by the Decade framework, as the internal mechanisms for promoting Roma rights in education within the EU are more limited.

EUMAP's monitoring therefore comes at a critical transition point as the Decade gathers momentum. The information and analysis presented in this overview and in the country reports provides a snapshot of the current situation; moreover, the recommendations aim to offer constructive input to the continuing development of educational policy in the framework of the Decade and beyond.

1.2 Methodological aspects of the monitoring

1.2.1 Monitoring objectives and approach

The monitoring project *Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma* has four main objectives, which served to guide the design of the methodology:

- to assess the implementation of Government policies on education for Roma (with a special focus on desegregation);
- to provide data on key education indicators;
- to establish the framework for regular monitoring throughout the Decade;
- to promote consultation with Roma communities on education issues.

The main methodological components of the monitoring are a comprehensive literature review, and the field research which includes three case studies for each country.⁶

This twofold methodological approach is justified by the complexity of the topic and also by pragmatic difficulties dealing with the availability of data. While in some countries covered by the monitoring a considerable amount of information has been gathered with regard to the Roma population and specifically to their access to education, in other countries specific information relating to education for Roma is practically unavailable. Even in countries where data are collected, this information is highly fragmented and is so uneven as to be unusable by policy makers.⁷ In particular, information about the quality of education that Roma pupils receive once they are in

⁶ The complete methodology for this series of monitoring reports is available online at http://www.eumap.org/topics/minority/reports/roma_education/ (accessed 16 November 2007).

⁷ An important exception is the country reports prepared for the Roma Education Fund.

the school system is scarce, which prompted the design of field research as a method of gathering more substantive detail in this area.

The monitoring methodology was prepared so as to give the most consistent approach to gathering data across countries, and to reflect both the common issues and the diversity of the situation in each country monitored. Detailed templates for the literature review and for the case studies, including requests for specific information, questions, statistics, legislation, policies and programmes, as well as the opinions of the main stakeholders were set out in discrete methodology instruments to guide the process of data collection. While the desk review focuses on data at the national level, the case studies are designed to supplement the anticipated gaps in available information. Moreover, the case studies aim to reveal the status of implementation of Government policies for Roma, as such information is generally missing at an aggregate level.

The case studies are focused on two units of analysis: the Roma community and school units with a high percentage of Roma. The Roma community is defined as a community that is predominantly Roma, and should also reflect the following:

- There are clear delimited borders, and the area is perceived and named as a Roma community by the inhabitants themselves, by their non-Roma neighbours and by local authorities;
- A majority of the inhabitants are native Romanes speakers (with the exception of Hungary where the percentage of Romanes-speakers is significantly low).

The selection of Roma communities follows the geographical distribution of the Roma population in each specific country as revealed by available demographic data. The three case studies were planned to cover the main regions of the country where Roma populations are highest. Other factors considered in the selection process are whether previous research or monitoring had been done in the community, which the current monitoring can reassess. In particular, locations where a Government evaluation has indicated a community as a positive example of good practice were prioritised.

The school unit was chosen to represent the educational setting most characteristic for the Roma community selected.⁸ At least one of the three selected schools should be selected from a Ministry of Education programme or from official documents implementing a national educational programme targeting Roma (according to Ministry of Education representatives or from official documents).

⁸ Based on existing research data, three possible patterns of segregation were identified for the methodology: segregation through placement in special schools for pupils with intellectual disabilities; separate schools with a majority of Roma pupils (informally called Roma schools); school classes with a majority of Roma pupils situated in mainstream schools (remedial classes or simply majority-Roma classes).

A guiding principle in the case study research was the triangulation of methods and sources of data. Information obtained by interviews is compared with document analysis and direct observation from the field. Data obtained from different key informants are also assessed against these sources. For example, enrolment and drop-out data obtained from school records and school inspectorates are compared with estimates provided by Roma community insiders such as Roma elected in local councils, Roma NGO or informal leaders. Such comparison of data aims to reveal potential inconsistencies and inaccuracies of official education monitoring systems. Beyond compiling and comparing data from multiple sources, a case study by its qualitative nature explores differences in the attitudes, views, opinions, and values of targeted actors.

1.2.2 Limitations of the research

Although a lack of data is one of the most serious barriers and challenges to policy making on education for Roma in all countries participating in the Decade, this limited project could not expect to fill such a significant gap. All efforts were made to use the most up-to-date material in the literature review, although limits of time and length necessarily affect the extent to which documents were referenced.

The collection of data at the local level via the case study research also met with certain challenges. Some interlocutors were resistant to give information for fear of the consequences within their community; in other cases, government workers were not forthcoming with documents and information. Given the uneven implementation of educational policies at the local level, the restriction of case study research to three locations may also fail to provide a representative perspective, although the researchers have made every effort to elaborate an informed and balanced view.

Time was also a limiting factor in these reports. Research began in most countries in November 2005; four countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Serbia) completed the work in early 2007, and a first volume of reports was published in April of that year. Four additional reports (Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Slovakia) are published concurrently with this Overview. As no preliminary results are available from research in the Czech Republic at the time of writing, it is not included in this Overview.

1.3 International initiatives for the education of Roma

There has been a progression of increasing activity in the field of education for Roma over the last decade. Starting in the early 1990s with the transition from Socialism to democratic rule, the situation of Roma in Central and South-Eastern Europe became an issue on the international agenda. All countries in the region are parties to the major conventions prohibiting discrimination, and these broad charters have been

supplemented by more specific European instruments addressing the problems facing Roma communities.⁹ Alongside legal and political developments, significant funding from international sources has been channelled towards improving the access to, and quality of, education for Roma. The Decade of Roma Inclusion: 2005–2015, with the Roma Education Fund, is both the most recent, and the most ambitious initiative to focus national governmental action in a multi-State approach to the marginalisation of the Roma.

1.3.1 Educational focus within the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the Roma Education Fund

The nine Governments participating in the *Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015* agreed in 2003 to endorse the Decade concept as a framework for Governments to set their own goals for Roma integration.¹⁰ The objective of the Decade is to accelerate progress in improving the economic status and social inclusion of the Roma population by creating an action framework consisting of three activities:

- Setting clear, quantitative national targets including the establishment of the necessary information base to measure progress towards these targets;
- Developing and implementing national action plans;
- Regular monitoring of progress against agreed targets.¹¹

Planning for the Decade as a whole is headed by an International Steering Committee (ISC), which includes representatives of the participating Governments, Roma NGOs, donor organisations and other international organisations. The rotating Decade presidency is held by each country for one year, and a Permanent Secretariat for the Decade is being established in Hungary to further support the Presidency. While the extent to which the nine countries have agreed to act together and align their interests for the Decade is unprecedented, the terms of reference almost exclusively outline actions that each Government should take independently.¹²

⁹ For a list of these conventions and other related international instruments, see the EUMAP website at

http://www.eumap.org/topics/minority/reports/roma_education/standards/standards_add (accessed 18 November 2007).

¹⁰ See Open Society Institute, Press Release “Prime Ministers endorse Decade of Roma Inclusion, called for by George Soros”, 1 July 2003, available at http://www.soros.org/initiatives/roma/news/decade_20030708/roma_decade%203.pdf (accessed 9 July 2007).

¹¹ 2005–2015 The Decade of Roma Inclusion: Concept Note available at <http://inweb18.worldbank.org/ECA/ECSHD.nsf/> (accessed 18 November 2007).

¹² See the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 Terms of Reference, available at <http://www.romadecade.org/portal/downloads/Decade%20Documents/Roma%20Decade%20TOR.pdf> (accessed 23 September 2007) (hereafter, Decade Terms of Reference).

Education is one of four policy areas identified for improvement, along with employment, housing and health, and was the only sector to which funding was attached. To this end, the Roma Education Fund was established,¹³ and countries also developed action plans in the area of education.¹⁴ The Roma Education Fund's objective is to facilitate good Roma education policy within the Decade to implement pilot projects, support independent evaluation of educational outcomes, and draw wider policy lessons from the pilot projects for national education policies. The Fund supports innovative projects, while at the same time aiming to respect existing Roma educational projects that have already been developed in the region.¹⁵ Many components of the countries' action plans have been funded by the Roma Education Fund.

There are no terms of reference for a Decade-wide monitoring mechanism, although the monitoring of progress in all sectors was identified in the original Decade concept paper as essential.¹⁶ Each country is expected, however, to develop its own internal monitoring.¹⁷ In response to the lack of overall monitoring, the Open Society Institute and the World Bank have since supported the creation of the DecadeWatch initiative, which in June 2007 released a first set of reports assessing Government action taken to implement Decade objectives.¹⁸ Roma activists and civil society organisations in each country conducted and compiled the research for these assessments; regular updates are expected to follow throughout the Decade.

These reports rank the participating countries on the basis of several indicators, which "reveals that, overall, progress on Decade implementation falls between the scores of 1 and 2 [out of 4] – suggesting that sporadic measures and some initial steps dominate, but they do not yet amount to systematic programmes or integrated policies."¹⁹ On

¹³ In December, 2004, an international donors' conference was held in Paris, which marked the establishment of the Fund.

¹⁴ Action Plans are available on the Decade website at <http://www.romadecade.org/> (accessed 18 November 2007).

¹⁵ Roma Education Fund: Concept Note, World Bank, 2003, available at <http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ECA/ECSHD.nsf/ExtECADocByUnid/F10A65759DD87D1AC1256D6A004AB66F?Opendocument> (accessed 28 October 2007).

¹⁶ The concept note states that "once indicators are agreed and targets established, it will be important to carry out surveys to establish a baseline in each of the participating countries prior to the launch of the *Decade*. Indicators would be kept to a small number where there is most consensus about their relevance to individual country circumstances." Roma in an Expanding Europe Challenges for the Future: A Summary of Policy Discussions and Conference Proceedings, "Decade of Roma Inclusion: Concept Note Endorsed at the Conference", The World Bank, 2004, p. 100.

¹⁷ Decade Terms of Reference, Section III.A(e) and (i).

¹⁸ The DecadeWatch reports are available at [http://demo.itent.hu/roma/portal/downloads/DecadeWatch/DecadeWatch%20-%20Complete%20\(English;%20Final\).pdf](http://demo.itent.hu/roma/portal/downloads/DecadeWatch/DecadeWatch%20-%20Complete%20(English;%20Final).pdf) (accessed 23 September 2007) (hereafter, DecadeWatch Report 2007).

¹⁹ DecadeWatch Report 2007, p. 23.

education, the DecadeWatch report observes that participating Governments have made more progress in this sphere than in the other three priority areas, particularly with the support of the Roma Education Fund.²⁰ However, a lack of data in all areas hinders an accurate assessment of current implementation, as well as raising questions about tracking progress.

1.3.2 The European Union

All nine Decade countries have either joined the European Union or expressed an interest to do so.²¹ Despite an overarching framework for policy influence, every EU Member State retains full responsibility for the content of teaching and the educational system. However, the accession process has given the EU additional leverage over candidate State Governments, to encourage the improvement of areas such as the protection of minorities and education, which otherwise remain areas of national competency.²²

It is clear that the accession process has been a major force influencing Government policy for Roma,²³ both through political instruments including the Regular Reports and Accession Partnerships,²⁴ and through funding support mainly channelled through the Phare programmes.²⁵

Roma are not mentioned specifically as a target group in the EU's specific internal policy instruments, because the EU states that Roma are part of its overall social inclusion and anti-discrimination agenda. As part of these policies the European Commission is also very careful to avoid any positive discrimination in favour of

²⁰ DecadeWatch Report 2007, p. 26.

²¹ Of the Decade countries, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia are EU Member States. Croatia and Macedonia are officially candidate countries for EU membership; Montenegro, and Serbia are considered potential candidate countries.

²² The Copenhagen Criteria set out the basic principles that the European Commission uses to assess whether a state is prepared for membership; in terms of setting indicators and benchmarks for Roma education, the EU has to a large degree relied on the larger objectives of the Copenhagen criteria within the context of enlargement and later on the anti-discrimination norms and social inclusion policies. The Copenhagen Criteria are set out in the Conclusions of the Copenhagen Presidency, p. 13, available at http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/72921.pdf (accessed 22 September 2007).

²³ For more analysis, see EUMAP, *Monitoring the EU Accession Process: Minority Protection 2002*, Budapest: Open Society Institute 2002, pp. 4–18, available at http://www.eumap.org/reports/2002/minority/international/sections/overview/2002_m_05_overview.pdf (accessed 22 September 2007).

²⁴ For archives of these documents by country, see the European Commission website at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/enlargement_process/past_enlargements/eu10/index_en.htm (accessed 22 September 2007).

²⁵ For a description of Phare, see <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/e50004.htm> (accessed 22 September 2007).

Roma, since it does not single out any discriminated group.²⁶ The area of education generally, however, is influenced by the EU's anti-discrimination and social inclusion agenda.²⁷

While education is not an area of direct EU competency, it is a rapidly changing arena in which the European Union provides a forum for the exchange of ideas. In accordance with Articles 149 and 150 of the Rome Treaty, the Community's role is to contribute to the development of quality education.²⁸ The European Parliament identified the need to take measures to overcome the segregation of Roma in its resolution of 28 April 2005 on the situation of the Roma in the European Union.²⁹

Financial support

Educational projects for Roma have been funded within the following framework of EU financial instruments:

- Phare National Programmes
- The Socrates Programme
- The Youth Programme
- The Lien Programme

Some Phare funded Roma educational projects have also been included within national Government education strategies.³⁰ A significant increase in funding Roma educational projects came after 1998, when the designs of Phare national programmes were structured to follow the Priorities defined in the Accession Partnerships,³¹ the gaps

²⁶ EU instruments for the support for the Roma Decade, OSI Brussels: Internal Briefing Note, 2004, Unpublished, p. 1.

²⁷ EU policies and programmes in the area of education related to Roma issues, OSI – Brussels, May 2004.

²⁸ Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on the European Union and of the Treaty Establishing the European Community, Official Journal of the European Union, 29.12.2006, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/ce321/ce32120061229en00010331.pdf> (accessed 23 September 2007).

²⁹ European Parliament Resolution on the situation of Roma in the European Union, P6_TA (2005)0151, Official Journal of the European Union, 23.2.2006, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/ce045/ce04520060223en01290133.pdf> (accessed 23 September 2007).

³⁰ For example see Czech Ministry of Education <http://www.msmt.cz>; Slovak Ministry of Education <http://www.government.gov.sk/romovia/> (accessed 18 November 2007).

³¹ Accession Partnerships were roadmaps for the ten candidate countries to help prepare these countries to fully meet the membership criteria.

identified in Opinions³² and in the Regular Reports.³³ Further integration of Roma was identified as a medium-term political priority in several of the 1998 Accession Partnerships.³⁴

EU support has frequently been among the most substantial and consistent sources of funding for projects integrating Roma during the accession period; for example, in Romania, the Phare-funded “Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups, with a Special Focus on Roma” programme has been implemented since 2003 in counties across the country, supporting the expansion of various pilot projects.

Financial support within the EU itself in the form of structural funding is potentially much greater than accession funds, but Member States have greater autonomy in setting the priorities and allocating this funding. For the period 2004–2006, €22 billion was available for structural instruments in the new Member States alone. In order to access these funds, the EU funding must be matched by national co-funding. A recent document from the European Commission points out the following:

Structural Funds (SF) interventions should support [...] identifying objectives and priorities for action to address Roma issues. They should bridge existing social gaps, and advance the overall integration of Roma. The programmes for countries where the Roma issue is most pressing must reflect the importance attached to this problem by both the European Commission and the partner Member State.³⁵

However, the extent to which the structural funds in the field of increasing Roma inclusion will be used will depend on the activity of States themselves. Some States have shown a rather relaxed approach in building strategies and policy proposal for utilisation of structural funds. However, civil society groups have been successful in

³² As part of the Agenda 2000, which was the EU vision on the future main areas of Community policy, Opinions on the application for membership of the Union for each of ten candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe were adopted. The aim of these was to spell out how each candidate country was fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria, including the protection of minorities and where relevant, of the Roma.

³³ The European Council meeting in Luxemburg in 1997 invited the Commission to draw up regular reports on the progress made towards accession by each of the candidate countries on the progress made towards accession by each of the candidate countries, in the light of the Copenhagen criteria. The reports therefore follow the same objective criteria for evaluation as those that were applied in the Opinions the previous year.

³⁴ EU Support for Roma Communities in Central and Eastern Europe, Enlargement Briefing, December 1999, p. 4; European Commission, *European Union Support for Roma Communities in Central and Eastern Europe*, Brussels: Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs, 2003, pp. 4–5, available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/brochure_roma_oct2003_en.pdf (accessed 16 November 2007).

³⁵ Aide-memoire for desk officers *Roma and structural funds programming 2007–2013*, available at http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/docs/roma_en.pdf (accessed 21 September 2007).

lobbying for the inclusion of components relevant to Roma education in some countries' plans for structural funds.³⁶ The EU should continue to encourage and support this type of collaboration with NGOs in Member States, to ensure that funding is best targeted to benefit Roma communities.

Although a number of European Social Fund (ESF) projects and the Community Action Programme in the field of education and vocational training (Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes) have addressed Roma issues, these have been, by their demand-driven nature, largely *ad hoc* initiatives.³⁷ The Decade of Roma Inclusion could potentially provide a framework for a more concerted approach towards EU funding projects for Roma, but the EU itself must adopt a coherent policy on the issue.

Legal instruments

The EU has adopted two important anti-discrimination Directives, which members are required to transpose into national law, and which form part of the *acquis* for candidate countries. These Directives, Directive 2000/43/EC (“Race Directive”) of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, and Directive 2000/78/EC (“Employment Directive”) of 17 November 2000 establishing a framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, require States to create an impartial body to hear complaints of discrimination. In June 2007, the Commission announced it would take steps against a number of Member States for failing to adequately implement these Directives.³⁸

Relatively few cases related to discrimination in education have been brought to the national bodies established under this act, and very few complaints involving access to education for Roma have been reported in the countries that EUMAP monitored. Nevertheless, this framework marks a significant point in the EU’s own stance on preventing and addressing discrimination, and puts additional authority behind national Governments’ efforts to combat this serious problem.

There have been two more recent developments within the European Union that have a bearing on work to secure equality for Roma:

- The European Commission’s Framework Strategy on Non-discrimination and Equal Opportunities for all, September 2005;

³⁶ Plamen Girginov, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgaria, “Human Resources Development Operational Programme in Support of Roma Inclusion”, presentation delivered at the REF conference on “How to Make EU-Funds Available for Roma Education. Sharing experiences from Roma Decade countries”, Budapest, 31 October 2007, on file with EUMAP.

³⁷ EC, *Situation of Roma in an Enlarged Europe*.

³⁸ See ENAR Press Release, 28 June 2007, available at <http://www.enar-eu.org/en/press/2007-06-28.pdf> (accessed 17 October 2007).

- The establishment of the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency.³⁹

To evaluate the effectiveness of Roma specific policies and projects, and to gain more data on Roma, the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs: Anti-Discrimination, Fundamental Social Rights and Civil Society Unit commissioned a study on "The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged EU: Fundamental Rights and Anti-Discrimination", which gives a critical analysis of existing EU policies, concluding that there is currently little analysis of, or data collection by means of which to assess the impact of education policies on ethnic minority groups, and specifically on Roma, resulting in continued segregation in education.⁴⁰ This gap is a threat to the realisation of the goals derived from the Lisbon agenda.⁴¹

Resolution 89/C 153/02 "On School Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Children",⁴² which was adopted by the Council of Ministers of Education in 1989, was drafted with reference to the circumstances of the nomadic Roma/Gypsy and Traveller population of the Member States of the European Union at that time, and should be reconsidered in consideration of the newly enlarged European Union.

Through its unmatched political and financial influence, the EU has a pivotal role in the continued progress towards equal access to quality education for Roma, even as education remains in the purview of the Member States. By fully engaging with the Decade institutions and framing its own actions to promote education for Roma in line with Decade goals and action plans, the EU can help to ensure that national Governments make good on their commitments in this area.

1.3.3 United Nations and related agencies

Four agencies within the UN family have undertaken activities addressing the situation of Roma: UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank.⁴³ Roma are mentioned specifically by the UNDP and the World Bank, and projects have been developed specifically for Roma education, while UNESCO and UNICEF take a broader, child and gender-centred approach.⁴⁴ While the UN has established the basic human rights

³⁹ Taken from Lana Hollo and Sheila Quinn, *Equality for Roma in Europe: A Roadmap for Action*, OSI, January 2006, available at http://www.justiceinitiative.org/db/resource2/fs/?file_id=18173 (accessed 16 November 2007). The former European Union Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) has been transformed into the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA).

⁴⁰ EC, *Situation of Roma in an Enlarged Europe*.

⁴¹ EC, *Situation of Roma in an Enlarged Europe*, p. 23.

⁴² Available at [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:41989X0621\(01\):EN:NOT](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:41989X0621(01):EN:NOT).

⁴³ For more information on the UN family of organisations see <http://www.un.org/aboutun/basicfacts/unorg.htm> (accessed 18 November 2007).

⁴⁴ UNICEF also has country and region-specific activities which include education in many countries, see <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ceecis.html> (accessed 18 November 2007).

and development framework, apart from the World Bank, which is a founder and supporter of the Decade, UN agencies have been active primarily in collecting data on the situation of Roma.

Of particular relevance, the UNDP's "Avoiding the Dependency Trap" along with its follow-up report "Faces of Poverty, Faces of Hope",⁴⁵ is a comprehensive study on the situation of Roma in the region based on comparable socioeconomic data from a cross-country survey among 5,034 respondent representative of the Roma population, and contains useful data on education.⁴⁶

The UNDP had identified the need to gain further adequate data in preparation for the Decade,⁴⁷ and formed a data expert group, having two main objectives: to identify existing gaps in the area of ethnically-sensitive data collection (methodological, political, legislative), and to suggest possible ways to improve the existing status, including specific steps at the national level.

1.3.4 The Council of Europe

All nine Decade countries are members of the Council of Europe (CoE), and are signatories to its main legal instruments, including the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM). Not all of the CoE's instruments, however, have been signed or ratified by all countries.

A number of issues relating to minorities in education have been litigated at the European Court of Human Rights on a number of occasions, and in 2005, the Court heard arguments in *D.H. and others v. the Czech Republic*, a case brought by 18 Roma children who had been placed in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities in the city of Ostrava.⁴⁸ In November 2007, in an historic judgment, the Court's Grand Chamber issued a decision finding a violation of Article 14 of the ECHR, noting that the procedures used to assess Roma children for placement in such schools did not sufficiently take into account their specific circumstances, and that the

⁴⁵ These data are searchable and available at <http://vulnerability.undp.sk/> (accessed 18 October 2007).

⁴⁶ UNDP, *Avoiding the Dependency Trap*, Bratislava: UNDP, available online at <http://roma.undp.sk/> (accessed 18 October 2007).

⁴⁷ Milcher, Susanne, *Data Needs for Monitoring: UNDP's Contribution to the Decade Implementation*, Bratislava: UNDP Regional Office, 26 February, 2004.

⁴⁸ *D.H. and Others v the Czech Republic*, application no. 57325/00, Judgment of 7 February 2006, available at <http://cmiskp.echr.coe.int/tkp197/view.asp?action=html&documentId=792053&portal=hbk&source=externalbydocnumber&table=F69A27FD8FB86142BF01C1166DEA398649> (accessed 23 September 2007).

Roma parents were not able to give adequately informed consent to the placements.⁵⁰ The Grand Chamber noted that “As a result of their turbulent history and constant uprooting the Roma had become a specific type of disadvantaged and vulnerable minority. They therefore required special protection, including in the sphere of education.” This decision marks an important landmark in desegregation litigation, and indeed in the recognition of the scope and extent of the segregation problem in Europe.

The Council of Europe is also a source of “soft law”, and has a long tradition of setting educational objectives in the field of Roma education.⁵¹

1.3.5 OSCE

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has developed a number of mechanisms related to minority rights, as well as to the situation of Roma specifically. These are political and diplomatic tools, rather than legal norms. In 1994, a Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues was established the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). 1999 saw the appointment of an ODIHR adviser on Roma and Sinti issues who co-operates closely with the Council of Europe.

The Hague Recommendations from October 1996 on the Education Rights of National Minorities of the Office of the High Commissioner on Minorities (HCNM) of the OSCE sets general principles for educational policy in what concerns national minorities.⁵² These sets of recommendations provide States with guidance in formulating policies for minorities within their jurisdiction.

In July 2002, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly adopted a Resolution on education of Roma, which outlines education policy recommendations to OSCE Member States.⁵³ A recently adopted OSCE Action Plan (November 27, 2003) includes a section on

⁵⁰ See the press release issued by the Registrar of the European Court of Human Rights, 13 November 2007, available at <http://cmiskp.echr.coe.int/tkp197/view.asp?item=2&portal=hbkm&action=html&highlight=57325/00&sessionid=3358724&skin=hudoc-pr-fr> (accessed 16 November 2007).

⁵¹ The Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of Education meeting with the Council “On School Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Children,” of May 22, 1989; 89/C 153/02; Recommendation 563(1969) of the Parliamentary Assembly; Resolutions 125(1981), 16(1995) and 249(1993) and Recommendation 11(1995) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe on the Situation of Roma/ Gypsies in Europe.

⁵² The Hague Recommendations regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities, available at http://www.osce.org/documents/hcnm/1996/10/2700_en.pdf (accessed 18 November 2007).

⁵³ Berlin Declaration of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Resolutions Adopted During the 11th Annual Session, Berlin, 10th July, 2002, pp. 30–31, available at <http://www.oscepa.org/admin/getbinary.asp?FileID=104> (accessed 28 October 2007).

education which gives recommendations for Member States and the HCNM.⁵⁴ Without a strong enforcement mechanism, however, the OSCE Action Plan depends upon the good will of participating countries to move forward.

1.3.6 Non-governmental organisations

It would be nearly impossible to accurately account for the extent of activity and projects that are implemented by NGOs in education for Roma within the countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Furthermore, those NGOs, both international and national, have been granted funds by an almost equal number and variety of funding agents and donors to carry out this work. Some of those NGOs have focused on implementing educational projects, whereas others have focused rather on monitoring and ensuring human rights with regard to education.

With the creation of the Roma Education Fund in 2005, many donors have allocated their money for this issue to be handled directly by the Roma Education Fund, thus limiting the variety of projects that are actually funded at the national and international levels; money that is earmarked to be granted by the REF is channelled only to those types of projects that fall into the Fund's criteria for project selection. Although the establishment of a dedicated grantmaking and research institution certainly marks a step forward in this sphere, civil society organisations must nevertheless take on a monitoring role to ensure that no decline in the diversity and scope of initiatives results from this consolidation of resources.

Prior to the creation of the REF, a handful of international NGO actors were particularly active in the support of changing education for Roma. The Open Society Institute, primarily through its Education Support Program's Roma Education Initiative and Roma Participation Program, has funded a wide range of initiatives, including those aimed at improving the quality of education, and those increasing access, particularly through desegregation.⁵⁵

Other international NGOs that have maintained an independent position from the REF, and support projects outside that framework are, for example, the Peztaozzi Children's Foundation, and Save the Children UK, to name a few.

⁵⁴ Available on the OSCE-ODIHR website at http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2003/11/1562_en.pdf (accessed 18 October 2007).

⁵⁵ See the OSI website for more details, at <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/roma> (accessed 18 October 2007).

1.4 Quality education – definition and measurement

1.4.1 Introduction

Issues of diversity and equity are central themes in education in many countries.

The serious consequences of not ensuring that all sections of a population participate fully in society are now recognised: it results in a threat to social cohesion, and may result in high social costs for Governments.⁵⁶ According to some, restricted access to education should be viewed as an indicator of deteriorating relations between groups, and as such, should be viewed as a warning signal to the international community to initiate what the World Bank calls a “watching brief” so that it might anticipate and respond to further deteriorations.⁵⁷

At the same time, it is becoming increasingly recognised that access to *quality* education, and is one of the most important vehicles by which the integration of minorities into mainstream society can be promoted. Improvements in the quality of schools, and schooling, offer exceptional rewards to society, as opposed to investments made only in the quantity of schooling.⁵⁸ UNESCO’s Education for All 2005 Report (hereafter, EFA 2005 Report) reinforces this message by saying that “the achievement of universal participation in education will be fundamentally dependent upon the quality of education available.”⁵⁹

Governments may be tempted to compartmentalise the improvement of education for Roma as a separate issue, and to “segregate” it and its policies from overall attempts at improving education. However, the provision of *high quality education for all* should be a primary concern for education policy makers in the countries involved in this monitoring project, and improvements in education for disadvantaged minorities – such as the Roma – should be an integral part of such overall strategies. At the same time, it should be kept in mind that a focus on providing high-quality education for all should not be used as an excuse to implement a programme for all and expect the same impact for all. Roma children’s highly disadvantaged position requires programmes and

⁵⁶ B. Wolfe, and S. Zunekas, *Non-Market Outcomes of Schooling*, Madison Wisconsin: Institute for Research on Poverty, May, 1997; Bush, K.D. and D. Saltarelli, (eds.), *The two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict*, Florence: UNICEF, Innocenti Insights, 2000.

⁵⁷ K. D. Bush, and D. Saltarelli, (eds.) *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Peacebuilding Education for Children*, Florence: Unicef, Innocenti Insights, 2000, p. 9 (hereafter Bush and Saltarelli, *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict*).

⁵⁸ E. Hanushek, *Economic Outcomes and School Quality*, Paris: I.I.E.P, UNESCO, 2005 (hereafter, Hanushek, “Economic Outcomes”).

⁵⁹ UNESCO, *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2005*, Paris: UNESCO, 2006, p. 28. This argument is also corroborated in this report where it states, “the number of years of school is a practically useful but conceptually dubious proxy for the processes that take place there and the outcomes that result. In that sense, it could be judged unfortunate that the quantitative aspects of education have become the main focus of attention in recent years for policy makers (and many quantitatively inclined social scientists) p. 29.

activities to be targeted to their particular situation. When dealing with minorities who have historically experienced discrimination, moreover, education programmes must also address discrimination in order to have a positive impact.

Overall high-quality education can help to compensate for social disadvantage, enhance learning experiences, help to fulfil children's potential, and ultimately prepare them to actively integrate into society. Low-quality education, on the other hand, influences the high drop-out rate among Roma pupils, which is partially caused by the inefficiency of school systems to equip these children with basic abilities. According to research, students tend to stay in high-quality schools and drop out of low quality schools.⁶⁰ The underrepresentation of Roma in higher levels of education (upper secondary and tertiary education) is also partially a consequence of low quality education that children receive in the pre-school and primary school. The topic of Roma pupils' achievement in education is grossly under-researched, and the little research that does exist demonstrates high levels of illiteracy in advanced grades of school, also a result of low-quality education.

Until the recent launch of the Decade, the main concern of policy-makers had been on Roma *access* to education with an eye to indicators of participation, enrolment rates, retention and school completion. Even academic research in the field of education for Roma had often concentrated primarily on quantitative aspects of Roma participation in education. Nevertheless, it is the quality of education that Roma receive once they are in schools that is essential for school success and academic achievements and for furthering opportunities for Roma to successfully integrate into the labour market and into society. At the same time, desegregation has been a focus of international and national-level advocacy towards improving education for Roma. Yet desegregation does not end once Roma children enter school. Effective desegregation policies and actions need to be coupled with effective instructional practice in order to produce gains in achievement, and to reduce drop-outs. As one independent report focusing on education policy in Montenegro has observed, "If [...] desegregation is not connected with new methods and forms of work (cooperative learning, workshops, introduction of evaluation ... individualized work), on its own it does not give results."⁶¹

Qualitative data, therefore, must also be given equal weight in both research and policy-making to reveal the actual impact of educational programmes for Roma. At the same time, there are clear indicators regarding the relationship between the quality of education and participation in education, demonstrating that quantitative and qualitative approaches to education need not be mutually exclusive. The low enrolment of Roma children in school systems, for example, is partially due to the negative

⁶⁰ E. Hanushek, *Economic Outcomes and School Quality*, Paris: I.I.E.P, UNESCO, 2005, p. 35.

⁶¹ M. Oljaca; M. Vujačić; B. Vulikić, "Roma Education Initiative Montenegro: Integration of Roma Children and Youth into the System of Education, Evaluation Report", 2005.

expectations that Roma parents have with regard to the ability and willingness of educational systems to provide their children with quality education.

1.4.2 Dimensions and components of quality education

Notwithstanding a growing consensus regarding how essential it is to provide access to quality education, there is much less agreement regarding how to *define* quality education.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child expresses strong, detailed commitments about the aims of education. These commitments, in turn, have implications for the content and quality of education, and identify the educational development of the individual as a central aim.⁶²

UNESCO's conceptualisation of quality education highlights four pillars on which quality education should stand: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be.⁶³ UNESCO also recognises at least two components essential to defining quality education: achievement in cognitive development and encouraging learners' creative and emotional development in supporting objectives of peace, citizenship and security, in promoting equality and in passing global and local cultural values down to future generations.

The Dakar Framework for Action under the Education for All initiative declared that access to quality education was the right of every child. It affirmed that quality is "at the heart of education", and is a fundamental determinant of enrolment, retention and achievement. Its expanded definition of quality sets out the desirable characteristics of learners (healthy, motivated students).⁶⁴

These definitions are useful to begin to understand how important actors in the field of education understand quality. However, these examples focus primarily on how the child should evolve as a result of education, rather than actually define what quality education should be or consist of. Although there are different approaches to defining quality education, all definitions contain – at least – three elements as a basic framework for its understanding: educational inputs, the educational process, and educational outputs.

This report begins to outline an operational definition of quality education for OSI by exploring indicators within those three framework areas. These indicators provide the framework to EUMAP's approach to monitoring; moreover, in beginning to explore

⁶² EFA *Global Monitoring Report 2005*, p. 30.

⁶³ Delors *et al.*, 1996, *The Treasure Within, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by another French statesman, Jacques Delors*.

⁶⁴ EFA *Global Monitoring Report 2005*, p. 3.

what elements within these three dimensions constitute quality education, a beginning of a definition may take shape.

One issue that supersedes the three pillars, and that cannot be identified alone based on these indicators for quality education, however, is segregated education. As research shows, however, there is a high probability that segregated educational settings have a lower quality of education in one or in all of the three dimensions of quality education analysed here. In most cases, school infrastructure, qualifications of teachers and school achievements are lower in segregated schools with a majority of Roma students. In the case of segregated Roma classes in mainstream schools, even though school infrastructure and teacher qualifications are or may be of sufficient or even high quality, it is most often the reduced curriculum (along with, often, low expectations) which impedes the personal development of Roma children and their school achievement. In the case of segregation of Roma children in special schools or classes, even if the qualifications of teachers and level of financing are higher there, the negative expectations of the teachers, the reduced form of curriculum and the stigma affecting Roma children are factors impeding their enjoyment of a quality education and good school results. The quantitative indicator of numbers and percentages of students, who are currently being educated in one of the various kinds of segregated education, whether in geographically isolated ghetto schools, special schools or segregated classes, is important to monitor, and for understanding how education systems change over time with regard to this practice.

1.4.3 Indicators for quality education

Systemic Educational Input

Inputs into the educational system include the learners themselves, teachers' and school administrators' qualifications, attitudes of teachers, the school and broader educational community, curriculum and educational content, school infrastructure, learning materials and facilities, and the level of financing and mechanisms for school inspections.

Learners themselves

UNICEF describes quality learners as, "healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities."⁶⁵ Roma children, frequently living in poverty, may not be such an ideal position, however.

⁶⁵ UNICEF, "Defining Quality in Education", paper presented by UNICEF at the meeting of The International Working Group on Education Florence, Italy, June 2000, p. 4, available at <http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/files/QualityEducation.PDF> (accessed 16 November 2007) (hereafter UNICEF, "Defining Quality in Education").

Teachers' qualification and attitudes

Teachers' qualifications and attitudes are one of the most important determinants of the quality of teaching. As stated in UNICEF, "The highest quality teachers, those most capable of helping their students learn, have deep mastery of both their subject matter and pedagogy",⁶⁶ and a quality teacher can have a huge impact on student performance.⁶⁷ The quality of the teacher is very much dependent on the quality of pre-service training and on the curricula used in the preparation of the teachers at this level, although the formal qualifications obtained by teachers are not entirely enough to define what a good teacher is; this may especially be the case in countries with education systems in transition, where traditional models of teaching are still *de rigueur*. Ideally, teachers should have obtained a four-year degree at an acknowledged higher educational institution, be it a pedagogical teachers' college, or a pedagogical department within a university. That institution itself should have changed its focus from a more theoretical, to a more practical approach, and versed its students in more modern pedagogical notions that are proven to benefit minority students (see below on teacher practice).

Teachers' expectations and attitudes have proven to be of considerable importance for student performance and for their school trajectory. Hundreds of experimental studies in the field of the sociology of education have proven that negative teachers' expectations manifest in poor school performance. On the other hand, pupils invested with positive expectations improve their academic performance.⁶⁸ Research conducted for OSI that supports this thesis shows a correlation between teacher attitudes toward Roma and student achievement based on the fact that teachers who had more positive attitudes towards Roma stressed academics in their teaching.⁶⁹ Furthermore, evidence also indicates that educator attitudes impact not only on children's learning outcomes, but also on issues that need to be addressed to promote desegregation.⁷⁰ An added danger to bad attitudes and low expectations, which are often implied and not openly discernable, is the process of labelling pupils according to superficial impressions,

⁶⁶ UNICEF, "Defining Quality in Education", p. 13.

⁶⁷ See Hanushek, *Economic Outcomes and School Quality*.

⁶⁸ The first experimental study on teachers' biased expectations was conducted by Rosenthal and Jacobson in 1968. Their study conclusively proved the effect of teachers' biased expectations on pupils' academic performance. This effect was called the Pygmalion effect. See R. Rosenthal and R. Jacobson, *Pygmalion in the classroom: Teacher Expectation and Pupils' Intellectual Development*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968.

⁶⁹ Proactive Information Services, *Step by Step Roma Special Schools Initiative: Evaluation Report Year 3, 2003*, p. 15, available at http://www.osi.hu/esp/rei/Documents/Final_Evaluation_Report_Adobe_February_2003.pdf (accessed 18 November 2007).

⁷⁰ See Proactive Information Services, *REI Final Report*, Budapest: Education Support Program, 2006. Available at: <http://www.osi.hu/esp/rei> (accessed 28 October 2007) (hereafter, *REI Final Report*).

which are frequently based on first impressions. The process of labelling that takes place in schools not only affects school performance but also has a negative impact on the child's psychological development, seriously posing a threat to the adult's healthy future.⁷¹ OSI practice and research have confirmed that quality education consists of high academic expectations for all children.⁷²

Finally, the level of teaching staff turnover is another measure of teaching quality, especially regarding the primary school years where the school achievements of pupils are dependent on continuity with the same instructor, as there is a direct correlation between emotional consistency and achievement at this level.

Curriculum

A good curriculum (the content of education) is a prerequisite to quality education. The curriculum should not only be the means of transmitting knowledge but should also act as the vehicle for developing skills and instilling social values. At best, a good curriculum can be an agent for social cohesion and peace, and at its worse, an instigator that may lead to war.⁷³ A quality curriculum should be relevant and maintain balance between pupils' individual needs for self realisation and at the same time instil the average set of knowledge and abilities for a particular society at a certain moment in time.

At the level of primary education the curriculum should develop the basic skills of literacy and mathematics at an appropriate age. Postponing the acquisition of literacy, for example, may considerably hinder a pupil's further educational progress, as reading and writing skills are instrumental to the entire learning process. In secondary education, the role of the curriculum is foremost in preparing pupils for higher education, but also in providing them with marketable skills. The most common abilities for qualifying for a job in the current labour market (abilities which tend to become the social norm) are computer literacy and knowledge of English as an international language.

In order to serve today's diverse societies, curricula should support an educational process whereby students can accept – and at the least accommodate and perhaps even embrace – differences between and within groups. Thus, curriculum relevance should also be defined as being in accordance with local/community knowledge, and at the same time, with global knowledge; parents and pupils may consider a curriculum to be relevant if they recognise themselves and their culture in the schools' educational content. The relevance of curricula is of particular importance to children of minority groups and especially for Roma children, as historically, they have not been included in

⁷¹ See for example A. V. Cicourel and J. I. Kitsuse, "*The social organization of the high school and deviant adolescent careers*", *School and Society: A sociological reader*, London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul in association with Open University Press, 1971, pp. 114–121.

⁷² See *REI Final Report*, p. 6.

⁷³ See Bush and Saltarelli, *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict*.

or reflected at all in curricula.⁷⁴ The decentralisation of school curricula is one means whereby curriculum may gain relevance and flexibility to the local community. Another is to have diversity and reflection of multiculturalism as specific criteria for textbook creation.

Two main aspects of curricula are of particular importance for Roma, the first being the availability of a bilingual curriculum. Access to bilingual curriculum is especially important for the first years of schooling, pre-school and early primary grades, since in those years basic skills and abilities are more easily developed in the child's mother tongue; moreover, research shows that linguistic competence in the native language is of high importance for general language development of children and that good proficiency in a native language is a solid basis for achieving competence in a second language.⁷⁵ Where schools and educational systems are ethnocentric and do not develop bilingual curricula for pre-school and primary education, the efficiency of pedagogy is compromised and becomes counterproductive. Bilingual policy may be very costly for struggling education systems to afford, and in the case of Romanes, when there are often a variety of dialects spoken and an official language is contested, official bilingual policy, and producing related materials, may be financially challenging for Ministries of Education. At the same time, however, there are proven methods and techniques for working in bilingual environments and in enhancing learning via fostering and nurturing the mother tongue that can and should be used in classrooms even in the absence of official bilingual policies.

The second important aspect of curriculum relevancy for Roma minority children is related to provisions for studying Roma language and culture inside school, and to the existence of Roma history and culture within the national curriculum. Inclusion of Roma identity and its discussion within national curriculum enhances acceptance of diversity and recognises minorities on equal terms with their majority counterparts. Diversity in curricula fosters multiculturalism. In today's vastly expanding and global world, exposure to such is of added value for the children's future.

Infrastructure, facilities, and learning materials

School infrastructure plays an important role in quality education. It is difficult to imagine an educational system as being able to produce good outputs in the absence of an adequate infrastructure. The basic elements of an adequate school infrastructure

⁷⁴ According to international human rights law, curriculum content should reflect minority cultures. See UNESCO International Bureau of Education, "Capacity Building for Curriculum Development" available at: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org> (accessed 16 November 2007).

⁷⁵ Current research has documented the advantages of additive bilingual programmes (Berman, Minicucci, McLaughlin, Nelson, and Woodworth, 1995; Lucas and Katz, 1994; Pease-Alvarez, Garcia and Espinosa, 1991; Thomas and Collier 1997; Thomas and Collier, 2002). Thomas and Collier (1997, 2002) in their studies of school effectiveness for language minority students documented that support of the first language explains the most variance in student achievement and is the most powerful influence on those students' long term academic success.

include the overall physical quality of the school buildings, average space available per-pupil (regulated by national standards in some cases), running water, indoor toilets, and adequate heating systems, to name a few.

On the next level, the quality of laboratories for various subjects and the materials that equip those laboratories are important, including pupils' ability to access such infrastructure. For example, if a school has a well-equipped computer lab, but students are not allowed to use it, there is no benefit to the learner. A school library equipped with necessary textbooks and recommended readings is also a condition for educational success, especially for schools that are situated in poor areas where it is likely that such items cannot be provided at home.

Finally, the existence of, and access to, learning materials – from basic paper, notebooks, pencils and crayons to textbooks – is an important aspect of quality education.

Financing

The level of financing will most likely be reflected in the state of the school's infrastructure. When assessing the quality of education, it is important to look at the distribution of financing between the national and local levels and to try and highlight potential inequities between school units within the system. If systems are designed so that most financial contributions to school budgets come from the local level, this may disadvantage schools situated in poor communities. Because good quality education should meet the needs of minority children, monitoring quality education, in addition to assessing formulas for financing schools at the local level, should also look at and compare the per-pupil spending for the Roma minority as compared to per-pupil spending for minority education in general as well as for the per-pupils spending for the closest (in number) minority to the Roma.

Inspections

Within national systems of education, school inspectors and systems of school inspection can be considered as a form of self-monitoring and evaluation. In many countries, school inspections are intended to measure schools' conformity to the standards imposed by laws and regulations. Not all inspectorates have a mandate with regard to reporting segregation cases, and the types of measures for imposing sanctions on schools which do not respect standards of quality in education or desegregation policies differ. Furthermore, the role of school inspectors with regard to supporting schools to use new pedagogical methods, an important element in making true change in educational practice in support of diversity, is not clear. Therefore, the impact that school inspections have on the quality of education is highly variable.

Educational processes

The quality of education with regard to educational processes relates to classroom organisation, practices and teaching methods, in-service training of teachers, school management, as well as school culture and atmosphere.

Classroom organisation and methodological practices

Grouping students by perceived ability into separate classrooms, sections, or even buildings altogether is a widespread practice in the region that may produce negative consequences.⁷⁶ Roma children may be particularly affected by this type of classroom organisation, as pupils from poor households and those from minority ethnic groups are more often placed in marginal schools and separate classrooms, are taught with separate curriculum, and learn in an atmosphere that is often overly rigid and focused on discipline. OSI supports the practice of and advocates for integrated and differentiated instruction, whereby all students participate together in the classroom and the teacher effectively and efficiently reaches all students in a heterogeneous environment, thus avoiding the issue of placement of students in separate, special or other classrooms. For the placement of children into the mainstream school classrooms at the beginning of the school year, however, school and classroom placements should take into account a child's socio economic background, mother tongue, and academic skills, and allow for a combination of these to make up each classroom, and ensure a balanced and diverse grouping of children.

An outdated and limited view of teaching as presentation of knowledge no longer fits with the current knowledge of how and what students learn.⁷⁷ Thus, teachers need methods and skills that take new understandings of how children learn into account. In high-quality education, classroom organisation and pedagogy should be child-centred, rather than teacher centred, and to the degree possible, account for differentiated instruction⁷⁸ in order to build upon each individual child's strengths, rather than focusing on their deficits. Teachers should also incorporate knowledge of minority cultures and multicultural education, second language teaching methodology, parental involvement, school improvement, and education for social justice, which are essential for preparing teachers to work with Roma children in a diverse classroom.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ See for example J. Ireson and S. Hallan, *Ability Grouping in Education*, London, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001.

⁷⁷ UNICEF, "Defining Quality in Education", p. 15.

⁷⁸ To differentiate instruction is to recognise students' varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preferences in learning, interests, and to react responsively. Differentiated instruction is a process to approach teaching and learning for students of differing abilities in the same class. The intent of differentiating instruction is to maximise each student's growth and individual success by meeting each student where he or she is, and assisting in the learning process. See T. Hall, "Differentiated Instruction," available at http://www.cast.org/publications/ncac/ncac_diffinstruc.html (accessed 18 November 2007).

⁷⁹ See *REI Final Report*; ESP, "Combating Educational Deprivation of Roma Children: A Policy Discussion Paper", Budapest: Education Support Program, 2003, available at http://www.soros.org/initiatives/esp/articles_publications/publications/depriv_20030407 (accessed 16 November 2007).

In-service and pre-service teacher training

Pre-service and in-service training each are important components in the education of a teacher, helping to ensure a high quality of performance in the classroom for teachers from kindergarten to the university level. Pre-service training is for students in higher education before they enter the teaching profession.

In-service teacher training is a method for improving the quality of teaching either by upgrading teachers' formal qualifications to meet formal standards imposed by educational systems or to provide them with specific skills needed to work on a specific subject or topic, for example, to work with minority children.

Certain fields, especially, such as physics and computer technology, but also new methods in didactics demand a continuous need for learning and improvement. Another important aspect of in-service training is the exchange of experiences between teachers. In order to keep teachers refreshed in their teaching practice, and to contribute to their professional development, having access to high quality in-service training is essential to education systems for their overall effectiveness. Offering training, both pre- and in-service, in the practices that are considered high quality, that are modern and based on research evidence, and that have a track record of effectiveness with minority groups is also essential. The inclusion of concepts of diversity, multiculturalism and how to approach this in teaching, in both forms of teacher education, is of the utmost importance in preparing educational systems to effectively integrate Roma students.

School management

The issue of school management in the context of quality education has also become a key issue as educational systems in the region move from highly centralised systems towards more decentralised forms of community schools. Schools that have historically been under the supervision of authorities and taken on a passive role in implementing education now have new levels of freedom. Lacking experience and practice, and often without support or guidance, schools may falter in these new circumstances. If this newfound situation is taken as an opportunity, however, school management could become more inclusive, more self-aware, and implement school plans and improvements to constantly improve their quality.

In this regard, this report monitors the level of community and parents' involvement in school life by looking at the composition of school governance bodies and the types of decision these managerial structures are empowered to take, and also by looking at the degree to which parents and community are involved in the school. A good-quality education relies on parents' involvement in everyday workings of the school, and too often involvement of parents into school boards accounts only for parental representation at the school level, rather than real parental involvement in the school's life and in the teaching and learning process.

School culture and atmosphere

School culture and atmosphere are constructed by the everyday interactions between the main stakeholders of the school, between pupils themselves, between pupils and teaching staff as well as between school teaching bodies, parents, and communities. All these interactions contribute to the development of organisational norms that are formalised in school internal regulations or that are simply consensually shared by actors. It is obvious that educational processes cannot respond to the imperative of quality education in the absence of good relationships between educational actors. One key aspect of defining good relationships between actors is the existence of mutual trust based on respect and shared common values. For teaching staff this requires an understanding of Roma culture and values and an openness to promote the values embedded in Roma culture within the educational process. A good understanding between Roma and non-Roma pupils is mediated by and dependent on teachers' (and parents') perceptions of Roma culture as well as by the curriculum which can encourage a positive perception of Roma, ignore it, or, even more dangerously, portray Roma identity in a negative manner. Participating in a positive school atmosphere requires, on the part of Roma parents and communities, an understanding of the benefits of education, as well as an understanding of the central role which teachers play in helping students to reap those benefits.

Educational outputs – pupils' achievements

The quality of education should be reflected on pupils' achievement during their school career and can be measured by reviewing outcomes with regard to external standards, by measuring the degree to which students successfully pass from grade to grade in the education system, or drop out, or by reviewing the degree to which beneficiaries are satisfied.⁸⁰

Outcomes measured by external standards

The first approach of measurement is an objective one comparing learners' achievement with prescribed curricular standards. In this regard to evaluate pupils' achievement is to compare their performance with the external standards defined by the curriculum. For example, at the level of primary school the most appropriate measure of achievement is to evaluate the acquisition of basic skills (literacy and mathematical skills) at the age indicated by the curricular standards. When the curriculum is designed for lower standards of achievement, as in the case of special schools for children with intellectual disabilities, wrongly diagnosed pupils are exposed directly to lower curricular standards. A second measure by which pupils' achievement can be externally assessed is given by the results obtained in country-level national examinations/ tests for exit/entry into critical points in the system: primary education to lower secondary and further to upper secondary education.

⁸⁰ School systems in the region are changing towards a model which is more client oriented.

As most countries do not collect data based on ethnicity, and/or do not have developed national systems of assessment in place, it is not possible to accurately monitor Roma students' achievements in comparison with their majority peers. When such data are available, they are based on a small sample from independent testing and research. Unfortunately, the trends demonstrated lower levels of achievements than for their majority peers.

Successful transition from grade to grade

In the absence of reliable data on school achievements and outcomes, the grade repetition rate, which is also an externally defined measure (even if mediated by teachers' variable interpretation), is also an important indicator of school achievement.

Satisfaction of beneficiaries

Quality can be indirectly measured by assessing the satisfaction of beneficiaries (parents and pupils) with regard to school. In this approach the evaluation of school quality is broader as it includes not only satisfaction with pupils' achievements but also clients' satisfaction with teacher qualifications and attitudes, school management, school infrastructure, school culture and atmosphere, as well as future opportunities for children after graduation.

1.5 Findings from the country reports

1.5.1 Data

One of the most challenging barriers to monitoring progress with regard to education for Roma is the lack of disaggregated data by ethnicity. Without disaggregated data based on ethnicity – even if proxies that are not entirely reliable, such as language or socio-economic status, exist – how can Governments differentiate between who is succeeding and who is not, and make appropriate provisions? In order to create effective policies and programmes to improve the education – and consequent social and economic – status of Roma, accurate information is needed in the sphere of education, otherwise their situation may worsen.

There are several causes for this lack which were documented in this monitoring exercise. Several governments, legally, do not allow the collection of personal data when gathering statistics, such as in Hungary (since 1993) Romania, and Slovakia. This may be a misunderstanding or mis-interpretation of the law, however, and human rights groups may even claim that it is a way for governments to justify their inaction. While indeed the protection of privacy in data collection is important – and while this in particular may be pertinent to the Roma who may have concerns that data be used to their disadvantage – European data protection laws do not outright outlaw ethnic data collection outright; rather, they distinguish between the collection of individually

identifiable personal data and that of aggregate data.⁸¹ The Council of Europe notes that statistical results are not personal data because they are not linked to an identifiable person.⁸² Since Governments have the duty to ensure equality, this should be interpreted as also having a duty to collect and use data disaggregated by ethnicity in order to highlight inequality, and to make appropriate policy decisions. The exceptions to claiming the law as a reason for not collecting data are the Southeast European countries: Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, and Macedonia and Montenegro, which do not forbid it, and some may even require it (Macedonia) but other factors inhibit good data. In Serbia, for example, any deficit in disaggregated statistics in education is caused by the somewhat arbitrary interpretation of the provisions of the Law on the Foundations of the Education System as precluding ethnic data collection. In Macedonia, though required, the data is nevertheless still not collected.

Another of the major factors contributing to poor data is due to the social stigma attached to the Roma identity. When census takers ask a person to declare his/her ethnicity, many Roma will not choose that of their own, but that of the majority group, or tick off “undeclared”, thus leaving official statistics hugely deflated. As persons filling in census forms cannot be obliged to reveal information about themselves, since data are collected on the basis of free self-determination, many choose to report otherwise. This has been reported for Bulgaria, Hungary, Serbia, and Croatia. In Hungary, however, where researchers have argued for over a decade on what makes a person Roma – self-identification or perception, weighing in favour of perception – the use of data relating to people’s perceived ethnic origin is not explicitly prohibited. In Serbia and Croatia another factor mentioned for inaccuracy of data is a lack of personal information and/or registration at all, and in Serbia, the seasonal migration of many Roma was also mentioned. In Croatia, illiteracy is a problem and impacts on poor data, whereas interestingly, in Romania, Roma self-identification has increased over the past few years.

The lack of disaggregated data exists on a general level for general statistics, and is transferred to the education sphere. In regards to educational statistics specifically, there are other caveats reported in regards to reliable statistics: unreported/undocumented births such as in Bulgaria; statistics rely on schools to report data, which leads to unreliability as reported in Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia and Romania. In Bulgaria, for example, there are incentives for schools to inflate their enrolment figures, and in Hungary, they may not be consistent across schools; only limited information is collected by the State, and other sources of data must be consulted as reported in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Montenegro. In Hungary, for example, official data

⁸¹ EU Directive on the Protection of Individuals with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data and on the Free Movement of Such Data, 95/46/EC, 24 October.

⁸² CoE, Convention for the Protection of Individuals with Regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (1981) and Recommendation No. R (97) 18 of the Committee of Ministers Concerning the Protection of Personal Data Collected and Processed for Statistical Purposes (1997).

are among the least reliable of sources, and many believe that sociological studies may be more reliable data sources than State-sponsored censuses. In Romania, it is primarily non-governmental data and statistics from research that have been used to try and capture an appropriate picture of the state of affairs.

Another problem reported in regards to data collection is that data-gathering systems, generally, are not efficient, systematic or in place at all, for example, as reported for Montenegro or Macedonia, or are not compatible across ministries, let alone with international data collection systems such as was reported for Bulgaria and Hungary. In the case when systems are being updated, however, such as in Serbia with the creation of an EMIS (Education Management Information System), or in Romania, if implemented properly, these systems could potentially provide the basis for monitoring the improvement of educational achievements of Roma students.

This lack of regular or consistent data collection translates down to the local level, as well, where, for example, in Bulgaria, school inspectorates do not collect data based on ethnicity. School drop-outs, as well as other indicators, therefore, cannot be appropriately tracked.

Local groups are exerting pressure using evidence and support from the European Union (EU), and affirm that data can and must be collected by ethnicity, if this is done responsibly. Such pressure has been reported for Hungary.

According to a 2004 ERRC publication,⁸³ the reasons for the miserable state of Roma-related data include the following:

1. the misperception that personal data protection laws prohibit the gathering of ethnic data;
2. a failure to understand the strategic importance of ethnic monitoring for the fight against discrimination;
3. the fear that ethnic statistics can be misused to harm the respondents;
4. a weakness of political will of Governments drafting programmes for Roma integration, a lack of vision of genuine reform based on quantitative assessment of needs and readiness to allocate adequate resources;
5. the fear in Governments that they may be embarrassed if statistics reveal ugly corners in their societies;
6. the methodological difficulty of the question: who should be counted as “Roma”, those who state their Roma ethnicity or a much larger group defined through external attribution;

⁸³ D. Petrova, “Ethnic Statistics”, Roma Rights: *Quarterly Journal of the European Roma Rights Center*, Number 2, 2004, p. 5.

7. the methodological difficulty of dealing with the refusal of Roma to “admit” their ethnic belonging – a refusal that differs widely across space and sub-ethnic identity.

1.5.2 Governmental policies and programmes

National Roma programmes and national education strategies

All countries included in this monitoring have adopted overall Government programmes for Roma, all of which include sections on education. Sometimes this is an independent strategy, and sometimes it is the one developed within the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

There is much criticism of the national programmes for Roma. In Bulgaria, the *Framework Programme* from 1999 is regarded as outdated, as its section on education has largely been supplanted by a specialised Government programme on education in 2006, which does not specifically target Roma, however. On the other hand, in Romania, the Decade Action Plan was never adopted, because reported, such action plans should take place only when the documents have been elaborated with overarching goals, specific targets, with indicators and monitoring arrangements defined.

At other times criticism is levelled at programmes not addressing issues that are relevant or important, as, for example, in the case of Croatia where the National Programme for Roma indicates that Roma children who have not received adequate preparation for primary school should be placed in special classes or special groups in the first grade of primary school, which appears as an inconsistent endorsement of segregation that is out of step with the rest of the Programme. In Slovakia, there seems to be a lack of recognition, and provisions for ending the overrepresentation of Roma children in special schools, a well documented and well-known problem. This is not recognised in Slovakia’s Roma policy, and is not addressed in detail in the Decade Action Plan.

With regard to national education strategies, real problems that need attention are not considered in education policy documents, such as not addressing the problem of segregation through desegregation measures, such as in Bulgaria where *The National Programme for the Development of School Education and Pre-School Upbringing and Instruction* retreats from earlier commitments made towards desegregation, and does not address many of the specific problems identified in the Government’s own Decade Action Plan in 2005.

Often, those documents do not address Roma specifically, or make reference to children coming from linguistic differences, or other proxies, such as in Hungary, where reforms within the Ministry of Education and Culture are aimed first at the socially disadvantaged, and second at those with special educational needs. In the new Government Programme for a Successful, Modern and Just Hungary, 2006–2010, the Hungarian Government reinforces its commitment to fight segregation in schools, but remains silent about the racial element of segregation. In fact, most of Hungary’s

education policies and programmes do not address Roma specifically at all. At other times, such as the case in Croatia, Roma are only briefly mentioned and only in regards to other framework documents such as the National Programme for Roma and the Decade Action Plan.

There appears to be a real hesitancy on the part of Governments to specifically address and include Roma as a particular target group in their education strategies (or to include education in their overall strategies for Roma). On the one hand, this may be seen as a sign of Governments wanting to mainstream the issues and some may argue that an overall education strategy will necessarily address issues that will improve access to quality education for Roma. On the other hand, those strategies do not include important elements that are necessary for real improvement of education for Roma. A lack of direct targeting of Roma children blurs the focus of a policy approach. Strategies should address the needs of Roma specifically, and a divergence of direct address in various coexisting policies should be resolved through the adoption of a comprehensive policy for Roma education, supported by appropriate legislative and financial measures.

No Implementation

Even when overarching policy documents do address Roma specifically, such as those in Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, and Serbia, another criticism is that policy documents exist with little implementation. For example, in Bulgaria, since the adoption of the Decade Action Plan, the Bulgarian Government has released a number of documents that were supposed to constitute its implementation, but none has been addressed in the sphere of education. An example of lack of implementation in Bulgaria is the fact that the Framework's dedication to eliminate segregation in education has not been implemented, even as NGO-led desegregation initiatives have been expanding at the local level and could serve as useful models for a more comprehensive Government approach. Monitoring in Serbia reports that although policies concerning Roma education are very thorough and have been integrated into general policies, they typically remain on paper. There is an evident gap between declarations and practical implementation of policies. The implementation of educational policies is still taking the form of isolated projects or affirmative action measures, rather than pursued in a comprehensive, systematic manner. Romania awaits the adoption of its Decade Action Plan before its implementation can take place; at the same time, however, Romania has made great strides in implementing policy through its various Phare programmes, many of which have had a specific focus on the Roma minority.

Another point that has been reported for Bulgaria and Macedonia, one that inhibits good implementation of policies is that governmental programmes aiming to improve the education of Roma lack any elaborated mechanism for monitoring and evaluation. This structural weakness of governmental educational policies raises, in turn, serious questions about the efficiency of programmes as well as about their potential for development and replication.

The ongoing process of decentralisation particularly affects the implementation of education policies as local authorities gain greater autonomy, but often without clear responsibilities, and the central Government retains fewer and fewer mechanisms to combat negative trends such as segregation. This trend has been clearly reported in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania. For example, in Romania, school inspectors who have been given a substantial task in the process of desegregation reportedly face difficulties because they do not have the institutional authority to oversee desegregation efforts, and lack a strong legislative or administrative tool to punish segregation, which diminishes their role in fighting against discrimination and segregation. The decentralised administrative structure presents certain obstacles to the comprehensive implementation of desegregation, as well as proving to be problematic for implementing other policies, such as the introduction of Roma teaching assistants (RTAs) into schools, as was described in the country reports for Bulgaria and Romania.

In Serbia, obstacles and hurdles that stand in the way of successful policy implementation are formidable: namely, that the education reform process has not been as swift and comprehensive as anticipated. Instead of being integrated into the overall reform, Roma policies are carried out only partially and on an *ad hoc* basis, and that inclusive education in practice requires serious transformation of the education system, as well as sizeable financial investments, which at this moment the system cannot sustain. The frequent changes of Government have made it more difficult to maintain a consistent approach to these issues.

Other obstacles were also noted that inhibit policy implementation, for example, in regards to the RTA position, as in Serbia, where the existing school practice, such as the perception of RTAs as a form of outside control, or intruders, and that teachers would modify their normal behaviour or resent their presence. Furthermore, since teaching is generally not based on interactive methodology but rather is in the form of lectures, many RTAs had essentially nothing to do in the classroom. Also, since the required profile of an assistant involves at least a secondary school degree, there have been towns where this condition was not met, and no RTAs were hired. The true inclusion of RTAs in the teaching and education process in Serbia will require not only that the legal ground and financing mechanisms are in place for their employment, but that these obstacles are addressed as well.

Montenegro is probably the only country where a Government project, the Roma Education Initiative (REI), which is financed by the Government and REF is implementing their Decade Action Plan education strategy on a large and systematic scale. Nevertheless, lack of implementation of policies is a problem in general and is reported for all Decade countries.

Language, Romanes teaching and RTAs

The recognition of Romanes, the Roma language as an official language, and the governing laws regarding the right to receive instruction in the mother tongue, and to have access to studying one's mother tongue as a subject, vary from country to country.

Romania, Serbia, Croatia and Hungary, Macedonia all provide legislation that entitles the Roma minority to study and receive instruction in their mother tongue.

In Montenegro, Romanes is not an officially recognised language. Existing laws ensuring the rights to national minorities with regard to language in education do not apply to Romanes, as the Roma population in Montenegro does not reach the necessary threshold for the effective implementation of these legal provisions. In other countries such as Slovakia, a Constitutional provision guarantees all members of ethnic minorities (including Roma) the right to education in their mother tongue, although the Education Act does not explicitly mention Roma among the minorities whose members have the right to be educated in their own language. Different minority languages have a different status with regard to education; the categorisation of minority languages means unequal chances of members of various ethnic minorities to be educated in their mother tongue.

In Bulgaria, although legislation guarantees the right to study one's mother tongue (Romanes has been recognised as a mother tongue that can be taught in the municipal basic schools since the adoption of the National Education Act in 1991), one is not guaranteed the right to receive education in it.

Despite the fact that many countries provide for the possibility to study in the mother tongue, implementation, again, is problematic. In Bulgaria, for example, the teaching of Romanes has never been organised to reach a significant share of the Roma population, and has declined in recent years. Currently, there are no schools in Bulgaria where the curriculum is bilingual, nor are there any schools where the entire curriculum is taught in Romanes; there are very few teachers of Romani language. In Hungary, the number of teachers who speak Romanes or who are prepared to teach in Romanes or using bilingual techniques is negligible. No bilingual schools exist for Roma, and there are no schools in Hungary where the entire curriculum is taught exclusively in Romanes; some provision to study Romanes as a subject does exist, however. Language issues are less of a concern in Hungary than they are in other countries with large Roma populations since a high percentage of Hungarian Roma speak Hungarian, and not Romani languages. In Slovakia, there is no network of public primary or secondary schools that could provide education in Romanes. In Serbia, so far, education in Romanes (or bilingual education including Romanes) has not been offered in any school, although some elective courses are available. There is no official information about pre-school or school teachers who speak Romanes and use it for instruction. In the process of education, Roma are able to use their mother tongue only if they take the elective primary school subject "Roma Language with Elements of National Culture", but even this is currently possible only in the territory

of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. In part due to the diversity of the Romani language in Croatia, there has been no formal request for any Romani language to be included as an official language of instruction, and there are no teachers prepared to deliver this either. There is some evidence of mother tongue instruction as an additional course having been offered especially at the pre-school age. In Macedonia, the provision of Romanes as a language of instruction is not put into practice in schools, either; there are no schools in Macedonia with Romanes as the only language of instruction. Currently – due to the lack of qualified teachers and the lack of support for providing textbooks and other teaching materials – Romanes is an optional subject taught only in two elementary schools.

Of all the countries covered in this report, Romania is the one that has made by far the most progress in the area of mother tongue instruction, which is partially due to the efforts of and coherent measures taken by the Ministry of Education. At their parents' request, Roma students in Grades 1–12 may enrol in an additional Roma curriculum for Romanes language and literature. Today Romanes is taught as a mother tongue, by 480 Roma and non-Roma teachers (around one fifth are ethnically Romanian or Hungarian). The number of pupils studying Romanes and Romani History and Culture has risen from 50 in 1990 to over 25,500. Romania also reports positive numbers for teachers of Romanes, some of whom are not Roma themselves, whereas most other countries, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Croatia, to name a few, have reported almost nothing with regard to this. In Romania in the school year 2005–2006, out of 280,000 active teachers in Romania, 490 (0.18 per cent) were Roma teachers who were teaching Romanes and Roma History and Culture, starting with the pre-school level and ending with high school. One school in Maguri, Timiș County was reported developing an experiment of teaching mainly in Romanes.

Another issue that varies from country to country is the use of Roma teaching assistants (RTAs). Despite the need and confirmed benefits demonstrated at the local levels in all countries included in this report, some countries have taken more affirmative measures to meet the need than others. For example, in Bulgaria, just over 100 RTAs have been appointed to work as classroom facilitators throughout the country. One of the problems encountered is that municipalities often do not have the resources to hire such assistants. This same problem was reported in Romania where the local administration can choose not to retain the school mediators and opt to fund other local priorities, unless there is a conditional transfer of budgets involved. In Hungary, there are no centralised regulations for employing Roma mediators and RTAs at all, and the job has not even been registered as an official one in the country. In Romania, since 2002, Roma school mediators have played an important role in the framework of all the educational projects financed by the Phare, and it is estimated that more than 200 were employed, although actual numbers today are not available. In Serbia, strategic policy documents for Roma education envisage the introduction of RTAs in pre-schools and primary schools, as well as the employment of mediators to work with families in institutions with a large number of Roma children. However, there are currently no legal regulations in force to employ RTAs in schools and/or pre-schools,

although the Draft Law on Pre-School Education¹¹² provides for engaging RTAs. Starting from 2005, the Roma National Council and the Ministry of Education and Sport in Serbia have engaged 30 Roma coordinators for cooperation with the family within a pre-school education project financed by the REF. Slovakia, despite its weak education laws for the education of Roma, has made substantial funding available for teaching assistants: in 2006 the Ministry of Education allocated 130 million SKK (€3.76 million) to cover the wages of teaching assistants, and according to the Head of the Ministry of Education's Department of Education of Roma Communities, the annual increase in the number of teaching assistants is 310. This means that the number of teaching assistants is increasing each year. However, as many of these assistants are non-Roma and do not speak Romanes, their work in the classroom is of questionable value in some cases.

Desegregation

Not all Government policies, either for Roma or education-specific, recognise or address the segregation of Roma, and the need for desegregation of education. Slovakia is one country where it is reported that the segregation of Roma children in education is a phenomenon that is not mentioned explicitly in any of the Government documents and strategies. Other countries state that though segregation is not officially recognised, such as Croatia or Montenegro, and there are no official policies, the issue is addressed in the Decade Action Plan (see Annex 1), or as is the case with Montenegro, all projects related to inclusive education carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science in recent years have had a preventive desegregation-oriented element.

However, the implementation as usual remains a problem. Though the recognition of segregation, and desegregation strategies may be in place, its actual implementation in all of the countries monitored, has yet to take on a large scale.

In Bulgaria, two documents do address segregation specifically; however, since the structures dealing with the desegregation of Roma schools are the municipal governments, and with policies not having binding power on the municipal authorities, policies remain on paper. Hungary also reports that the Ministry of Education and Culture has no means to ensure effective and central control over desegregation. In Hungary, much emphasis is placed on ensuring equal treatment in education in Hungary, but few provisions are devoted to desegregation, and express obligations to desegregate are not imposed on school maintainers or on local governments. The Public Education Act omits such an obligation, and a Government policy aimed at integration may only be discerned from a couple of provisions in a ministerial decree regulating the integration quota for the socially disadvantaged. In the new Government Programme for a Successful, Modern and Just Hungary, 2006–2010 the Government reinforces its commitment to fight segregation in schools, but, like many previous official documents, this one too remains silent about the racial element of segregation. In Serbia, the State does not recognise the existence of segregation, and desegregation has not so far been dealt with seriously as a matter of policy, although in

some strategic documents certain preventive measures have been envisaged. In Romania, although the right to nondiscrimination had long been guaranteed, many inspectorates and school managers did not understand school segregation to be discriminatory, and a number of segregation cases were identified in Romanian schools. Therefore, to further clarify, in April 2004 the Ministry of Education and Research issued a notification, recognising and condemning segregation.

Romania and Hungary have undertaken more efforts at implementation of desegregation, Romania via its Phare Projects, and in Hungary via the National Network of Educational Integration, however, the results are unknown due to lack of internal monitoring and reporting.

Curriculum

One of the weaknesses in assessing whether the Decade countries have moved to embrace elements of multiculturalism in their national curricula is the fact that few analytical studies exist that could reflect on this. Quite simply, policy analysis at this level has not yet been widespread. For example, Hungary reports no reliable information is available as to whether there are any references to national minorities in national history or literature textbooks. Croatia reports that although there are sometimes references to national minorities, the Roma national minority is not commonly mentioned.

In some countries, the national curriculum provides for a certain level of the local curriculum, which should, in theory, take into consideration the local context, and reflect diversity, should that local context be diverse. This is the case for Hungary and Romania and will soon be so in Montenegro.

Although some changes have been made in several countries to make curriculum more diverse, this is often not reflected in textbooks. Bulgaria has initiated change in the curriculum since 2001 to include ethnic and religious diversity, and to convey the values of tolerance, and textbooks published in or after 2001 reflect this. However, while Roma traditions and culture are presented in some textbooks, stereotypical or even biased material about Roma still appears in classroom materials. The Hungarian National Core Curriculum stipulates that in grades 9–12 pupils shall be provided with information on the history of national and ethnic minorities living in Hungary, including that of the Roma. But in some Hungarian textbooks in the “Man and Society” section of the curriculum reflect deeply rooted anti-Roma stereotypes and bias, and that contrary to an express obligation in legislation, the history and culture of Roma have not been taught to majority children. In The educational curriculum in Serbia has not been very sensitive to the values of multiculturalism and identity of national minorities, and that currently there are neither curricular standards nor standards of textbook quality; further more, even though the law provides for the right to be taught in Romanes, there are rather few materials in Romanes, most of which were created by NGOs rather than State structures, and they are used mainly in optional language classes. Montenegro has made efforts in recent years to reform the

system for publishing school textbooks, with the aim to produce higher quality textbooks in terms of content, design and pedagogical approach, and in line with the principles of democracy and multiculturalism promoted by the strategy of the education reform process. However, there is no explicit reference to the Roma minority in the compulsory curricula for literature and history in primary schools. Multicultural issues do not occupy a significant position in the Slovak school curriculum and Slovak textbooks cannot be viewed as culturally sensitive. No special focus is given to ethnic minorities in “mainstream curricula”, which are in fact culturally biased. These books do mention Roma as a minority in Slovakia, but this is not sufficient for multicultural education.

In a 2005 report, the Romanian Government noted that the curriculum is being reoriented towards greater inclusion of all national minorities. Despite this, however, the presence of the Roma minority’s contributions to the development of Romanian society is almost nonexistent in school textbooks, and the way in which minorities are handled in the curriculum remains problematic, since it has been included only in those schools for education in the mother tongue, and not provided to the majority. As one expert noted, “Even the textbook on the Holocaust did not include reference to the Roma minority.”⁸⁴ Curriculum on Roma history and culture do exist, but as reported, it is used primarily for those studying Romanes. In Macedonia, only a few NGO have developed initiatives to create bilingual materials for early learners.

School curriculum, and its dealing with diversity, is an area that often gets overlooked and is not paid nearly enough attention in regards to social integration. Though some guiding policy frameworks may be in place in select countries, the implementation of those guidelines in practice remains almost unchanged. Moreover, though there may be some inclusion of the Roma minority in a handful of books, their depiction remains dubious, and there is very little mention of broader attempts to deal with concepts of multiculturalism or diversity in curriculum. Though efforts have been made towards increasing the available curricular material relating to Roma, current approaches seem to take too narrow a view and offer this to Roma only, and overlook the fact that the majority population must also be educated and have exposure to diversity, even more so than the minority groups.

More information is needed with regard to the degree of the curriculum’s importance in genuinely providing access to quality education, and in helping Governments and States in their efforts at social inclusion. More research, analysis and writing should be devoted to this area. Not surprisingly, this area is not always addressed in many of the Decade Action Plans.

⁸⁴ OSI roundtable, Bucharest, February 2007.

Teacher training

Just as it is important for the curriculum to reflect diversity in unbiased ways, so teachers need to be prepared to work with diverse groups of children, and to reflect upon their own biases and what they bring to the classroom when they teach those diverse children. Since higher education institutions have much autonomy in what they teach, there is little way to impose, or centralise, introducing a multicultural element into their curriculum, no matter how important it is to do so. In Romania, however, it was reported that some level of data to help monitor quality will be available with the new regulation regarding the system of quality management in each university, which is related to the Bologna Process.

Despite this, there does seem to be a trend in teacher preparation institutions (pedagogical departments within universities or pedagogical colleges) to introduce elements of multiculturalism into their offer, such as was reported for Bulgaria and Romania. The degree to which this has happened in Bulgaria, or the quality of the offer provided, has not been studied in any analytical way, or with a policy focus. Romania reports that many courses that are part of the psycho-pedagogical module of pre-service education cover topics such as anti-bias, tolerance, diversity and multiculturalism, which are embedded in different courses. There are no national available data concerning the teaching and learning strategies or the ratio between theory and practice for these courses. Some progress in this area has been made in Slovakia, but specifically in training teachers to work with Roma children, rather than diversity training more broadly, or training in concepts of multiculturalism.

Hungary, on the other hand, reports that the Ministry of Education and Culture officials acknowledged that courses dealing especially with tolerance, multicultural education and anti-bias training were not running in teacher training institutions, and that there are no pre-service training courses in bilingual techniques envisaged in the formation of educators and teachers, and nor are there specific courses oriented towards communication with children whose mother tongue is Romanes or Beash (a form of Romanian spoken in some Roma communities). A similar dearth in both pre- and in-service training is reported for Croatia and Macedonia. Serbia reports that officially, teacher training faculties and institutes do not have courses dealing with tolerance, multicultural education and training against prejudice, nor methodology of work with children from deprived surroundings, or other aspects of inclusive education. The formal education of pre-school and school teachers is largely focused on scientific disciplines/subjects that they are going to teach, and teachers mostly acquire theoretical knowledge, with no instructions as to how to implement it in practice.

In-service training is equally important to introduce topics touching upon diversity. However, systems need to be in place requiring teachers to update their skills regularly and requiring that the skills that they gain to include elements of multiculturalism, and in the least component of Roma culture. In Bulgaria, such an absence of a system is reported, and consequently, as revealed in the case study data, few teachers knew about or had access to regular, high-quality teacher education other than that offered by a

local NGO, which is a serious obstacle when considering improving access to quality education for Roma. This is also reported for Serbia, where there are no standards of professional training and advancement of teachers (in-service), no required compulsory contents or frequency of such training.

NGOs are often the ones who are responsible for providing training that deals with diversity and multiculturalism, such as in Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, and Serbia. Montenegro reports that Roma culture and tradition have been made an integral part of the official in-service teacher training scheme provided by the NGO “Pedagogical Centre of Montenegro” as the partner in the REI Project. To date, however, in that country there are no pre-service training courses in bilingual techniques for teachers. In Serbia, teacher training for bilingual education techniques has been carried out so far only through the REI “Equal Chances” project and has not been further extended. In Serbia, what does exist to address the issue of Roma in teacher education are largely a result of the personal efforts of a handful of university experts in Serbia concerned with Roma issues.

In Hungary, although in-service training has been offered to support teachers with integrative approaches in pedagogy, it is reported that teachers did not always appreciate this training, and perceived it negatively. In Romania, the news seems more positive with regard to in-service training where it is reported that the skills associated with training courses (use of interactive methods, alternative assessment methods, differentiated instruction, use of ICT in teaching) are more and more valued within the Romanian education system. There is even a course titled “Multi-Annual National Training Programme for Non-Roma Teachers Working with Roma Children and Students”, which has reached a large number of teachers, and other training with a focus on diversity has been reported through the Phare projects.

Just as there is a need for more information and analysis with regard to how curriculum deals with diversity issues, the same can be said for pre and in-service teacher preparation. Although a variety of training opportunities may be available for teachers in areas relevant to Roma education, the impact of such courses is not clear. Better monitoring of these important areas would provide Governments with a better basis for ongoing policy development.

Discrimination monitoring mechanisms

The degree to which the countries have the legal framework to protect against discrimination varies among countries, as does the means to monitor discrimination. The issue of discrimination in education for Roma, whether it be covert or open is a reality in all countries. How countries handle and approach the protection of such violations is an important issue at the heart of equal access to quality education.

Bulgaria has the legal framework in place, as well as a Protection against Discrimination Commission operational since November 1, 2005, that was set up specifically to handle cases of discrimination, but at the time of this report, no complaints in education had been submitted. One reason may be that the equality law

is not visible enough within Roma communities. Hungary has a variety of other systems in place to tackle discrimination in education: a Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities, which of out of 32 cases that the took on in 1995, one was related to education; an Equal Treatment Authority; the National Public Education Evaluation and Examination Centre can also investigate discrimination in schools and impose fines for petty offences or as a result of its administrative review; a Ministerial Commissioner for Educational Rights; finally, the Parliamentary Commissioners. Despite the varied possibilities for recourse for victims of discrimination in education, Hungary reports that the number of complaints to all bodies and forums is not high. In Romania, there is no specific institution for combating discrimination in education. The National Council for Combating Discrimination, established in 2002, is the basic structure for addressing complaints and resolution of discrimination cases. Romania also reports that the capacity of schools for handling discrimination is low and there should be local solutions in place for dealing with different situations – from verbal discriminatory remarks of children and teachers against Roma children, to harassment and physical threats. Education of school staff and school boards on discrimination issues is a pressing need. Slovakia's present legislative framework is fully compatible with EU standards, although its implementation has been widely criticised. As in Hungary, there are a variety of institutions in place to handle discrimination, such as the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (SNCHR) and the Public Defender of Rights – Ombudsman, to name a few.

In several countries, Croatia, Macedonia, and Montenegro, Serbia anti-discrimination frameworks are scarcely in place. In Croatia, although anti-discrimination mechanisms are part of all legal acts, there is no specialised body to hear claims on discrimination. In Macedonia, there is no comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation; it exists only in various anti-discrimination provisions scattered throughout several laws, and practical application is dubious, as there are no specific measures stipulated for non-compliance. There is no anti-discrimination legislation currently in force in Montenegro either. No specific anti-discrimination entity exists at the national level either, with concrete responsibilities for investigating and sanctioning discrimination practices. An Office of Ombudsman exists, but it faces certain challenges due to limited financial and human resources. The same is reported for Serbia, which under the current system, under the Law on the Foundations of the Education System, a complaint concerning a discriminatory behaviour can be submitted by a pupil or his parent/guardian to the principal or the school board, and there are sanctions envisioned in the law.

Under the current Serbian system, even if reported, cases of discrimination are insufficiently visible and rarely have a positive outcome. As reported in Bulgaria, this may indicate that Roma themselves do not have enough knowledge about their rights and opportunities of protection. It may also mean, however, that they fear possible negative consequences if they file a complaint, that they do not trust that official institutions are willing and able to solve this kind of problem, that they do not

recognise certain discriminatory acts as discrimination or violation of their rights, or even that the system itself is not very effective.

If discrimination against Roma and others, *inter alia*, in the education systems is to be effectively vindicated, the adoption of comprehensive laws as well as the establishment of competent bodies with adequate powers and resources appears indispensable and urgent. As countries move toward EU accession, they will be required at a minimum to adopt laws in alignment with the Racial Equality Directive (Directive 2000/43). However, that is often not enough, as was reported for Slovakia. International pressure should be strengthened to force States to comply with legal standards.

Finally, although several countries have provided for anti-discrimination actions within their DAP, as was discussed with policy implementation, there is little reporting on progress, something that is especially difficult especially if no indicators were outlined in the Decade Action Plan.

1.5.3 Barriers to quality education

School Facilities and human resources

Across the countries reviewed, there is evidence that schools with a high level of Roma students are inferior to those with lower numbers of Roma enrolled. At the same time, however, in all the countries involved in this monitoring, there are no systematic statistical data that would allow a systematic assessment of the state of infrastructure in schools with a high percentage of Roma students. Evidence on the deplorable material conditions of most schools with a high percentage of Roma pupils comes from reports, mostly from human rights organisations, which have collected data through direct observation, and most report similar conditions: a lack of running water, and indoor toilets, no computers, science facilities or libraries, fewer teaching aids, no books, and so on.

In Bulgaria, various reports have painted a grim picture of the material conditions in many segregated Roma schools; field research conducted in Veliko Turnovo in 2006 for this report indicates that only two out of the five schools with a prevailing number of Roma students have their own libraries, and that the number of volumes in these libraries is below the average for the municipality. In Hungary, in 40 per cent of schools there were differences between the equipment of segregated and majority classrooms. In over a third of schools majority-Roma classes had fewer teaching aids, whereas in under a third of these schools the furniture was in a worse state in majority Roma classes, and in Romania, 40 per cent of majority-Roma schools need major repairs, and in general schools with a higher percentage of Roma tend to be older; there is a large divide between the conditions of rural vs. urban schools, with the former being in much worse condition; moreover, 40 per cent of majority-Roma schools need major repairs, and in general schools with a higher percentage of Roma tend to be older. In Serbia, it is difficult to assess whether schools with a large percentage of Roma

pupils are in worse condition, since all schools in Serbia are in need of improvement; only 40 per cent of all school buildings are in a condition that does not require some repairs, and the condition of rural schools is generally worse than of urban schools. Nevertheless, such schools may be worse than normal, given the lack of infrastructure in Roma settlements, lack of local tax investments in schools, lack of parental contributions due to the poverty prevalent in Roma communities, and other factors determining quality of life. In Slovakia, special schools with a high concentration of Roma children are often said to be established in buildings that do not comply with official standards

There is some evidence that Roma schools may attract teachers who are underqualified, as in Hungary, where in every third school with over 80 per cent Roma enrolment, unqualified teachers are employed, in Romania, where over 45 per cent of teachers in schools covering Grades 1–8 are unqualified, or in Serbia, where there is evidence that mechanisms are at work that result in schools with a large number of Roma pupils having weaker teaching staff, who cannot easily find work elsewhere, or even insufficient staff. This phenomenon was also reported for Macedonia. In Croatia, younger teachers are commonly employed in rural areas, where most of the schools with a majority of Roma children are located, and there is a higher turnover of teachers employed in such areas, as positions in towns and cities are considered more desirable. These factors have an impact on the quality of education available to all children in such areas, including Roma. In Slovakia in smaller primary schools with Grades 1 (0) to 4 only, up to 22 per cent of teachers were unqualified, and a majority of these schools are located in rural areas and many are attended by Roma children, and other sources put that number up to one-third of the teachers.

Just as likely, however, is that teaching as these schools also affects teachers' motivation due to poor material conditions, a lack of opportunities for private lessons, overall difficult and unrewarding working conditions, such as in Bulgaria, or due to the distances that teachers must commute, as in Croatia. On the other hand, Montenegro reports that teachers working in schools that are likely to have a higher proportion of Roma have been equipped with skills by participating in many training programmes offered through governmental and non-governmental projects.

In Hungary, however, the poor conditions in majority-Roma schools revealed in the case study locations shows that staff turnover is consequently high, which has directly influenced the pace of developing new methodologies and approaches.

Overcrowding is reported in Roma schools in Romania. The likelihood of overcrowded classes in primary schools in which Roma pupils prevail (over 70 per cent) was more than three times higher than for all rural schools. Research undertaken for this report in the Pustă Vale community of Sălaj County found that due to insufficient space, the local school must conduct simultaneous teaching, bringing together students of different grades in the same class. In Slovakia, as schools merge and Roma populations increase, even schools with a two shift system may fail to provide enough adequate space for all of the children enrolled in the school.

In Hungary, school financing poses a problem. Sectoral neutrality is lacking within the education system; religious schools receive almost double the amount per student from the central budget than local government-run and private foundation schools. There are allegations that private foundation schools may even receive less central budgetary support. Many schools rely on grants to fund their work, and those without a grants coordinator may miss out on opportunities. Misuse of funds has also been reported concerning funds directly or indirectly relating to Roma, previously the Roma minority education allowance and most controversially of all, the special education allowance.

School results

Lack of data is a theme that appears in all sections of this report, as without reliable data disaggregated by ethnicity, language or other proxy, it is not possible to measure any kind of progress for the Roma minority in education, or any other sector. This is the case for every country involved in this report. Therefore, there is no national-level information that would allow a comparison of the examination results for exit/entry at critical points in the system between the national average and the average for Roma students.

What exacerbates this problem is the fact that a system of education must be sophisticated enough to have a system of national-level testing, which is linked to national standards. Not having such a national system causes standards to vary widely and be unreliable, as is the case in Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia, as results are dependent on the subjective opinion of teachers. In Macedonia, for example, although Roma students in the Braka Ramiz i Hamid were shown as having passable grades, an external evaluation of Roma primary students' skills showed that 8 per cent were illiterate. When systems are in place, the problem returns to the fact that data are not disaggregated. In Romania, where there are national tests in the eighth grade (*examen de capacitate*) and twelfth grade (*bacalaureat*), there are no clear available data for the school year 2005/2006 regarding the results of Roma students, although interviews reflect lower results; in Slovakia where testing takes place in Grades 9 and 12, data are not disaggregated.

When data are available through smaller-scale testing, and when designed correctly, results demonstrate that Roma pupils consistently under-perform in school outcomes compared to their majority peers, repeat grades more often, and drop out more frequently, all of which results in a population that lacks in literacy skills. In Hungary, for example, research showed that the repetition rate for Roma was fivefold higher and the rate of missing classes eightfold higher – 7.8 per cent and 1.5 per cent respectively – than the rates in question for the Hungarian majority peers. In Romania, by the beginning of Grade 8, only 29 per cent of students were Roma, showing significant drop-out over the eight years of schooling. In Serbia, a mere 30 per cent of Roma pupils who enrol in the first grade actually finish the primary school.

In segregated settings, there is evidence that literacy is far lower than it is in integrated settings. This is illustrated by material gathered at the local level for this report in

Bulgaria, although literacy for Roma across countries is lower than for the majority populations.

Curricular Standards

Throughout many countries covered in this report (Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia) there are differences between the curricular standards of special schools, which see a high percentage of Roma children, and mainstream schools, and often between segregated Roma classes and mainstream classes. This was not reported in Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Romania, or Serbia.

In Bulgaria, school standards for the early primary grades do not apply to students in remedial classes or in special schools. Those differ from mainstream classes/schools in the possibility of obtaining the respective educational degree, as well as in the length of the classes. However, they do not differ in the number of classes in the respective educational fields. In Hungary, segregated classes in mainstream schools follow a special curriculum, as they do in special schools. In Slovakia, many children in special schools fulfil their school attendance without having even basic reading and writing skills.

In some countries, such as Serbia, there are no official curricular standards, or standards for textbook quality, which results in Roma pupils reportedly taught an abridged curriculum, and often automatically passed from grade to grade without acquiring basic literacy in the early primary grades, which eventually precipitates early drop-outs. Macedonia also reports not having national curricular standards.

Lower expectations, however, also contribute to lower achievement, and are an unwritten lower standard. In Hungary; it was found that in 17 per cent of the schools teachers required lower than the average performance from Roma students. In Serbia, evidence also suggests that some teachers might lower expectations for Roma pupils as is illustrated in the results between Roma and non-Roma pupils on the National Assessment achievements. Furthermore, data also reveal that over 40 per cent of Roma pupils are in classes with the lowest quality of teaching, while only around 20 per cent of non-Roma pupils are in such classes. Croatia also reports teachers lowering standards in Roma-only classes; to further aggravate the situation in Croatia, in the absence of national standards, teachers use only their subjective assessments to judge pupils. Macedonia also reports a similar phenomenon.

A local-level, school-based curriculum is included in Romania, which is supposed reflect the characteristics of the local community and to meet the employment needs and opportunities of the region, which in theory, allows for a certain level of diversity to be introduced. Its implementation, however, relies on teachers being able to do so, which has proven to be challenging. Romania also reported that it supported teachers through inclusive education centers to include cultural and ethnic diversity, multicultural topics in civic education and other core curriculum subjects or optional subjects (such as geography or history). A similar practice is being introduced in

Montenegro, allowing for 20 percent of the curriculum to be local and school-based. However, its implementation in practice is yet to be tested.

Classroom practice and pedagogy

The majority of teachers across the countries covered in this report are still working in the old paradigm, that of frontal teaching with a passive learning style. This is a weakness with regard to many of the countries' education systems. Although official policy may require certain practice, i.e. more new interactive, child-centred methods, it does not have a system or means to monitor or support its implementation. Therefore, the *status quo* remains in practice in schools, and few teachers actively implement new techniques. Also, a lack of a systematic support and mentoring structure for teachers to succeed in using those methodologies hinders the widespread use of truly child-centered alternative teaching, most probably to the detriment of the students.

In Bulgaria while professional development courses are available, many are offered by NGOs and not part of recognised State, in-service teacher training system. In Slovakia, such NGO – delivered training is often one-off, and limited in number and scope, and in Macedonia, some teachers do not attend regular in-service training at all. In Romania, however, the experience built on different projects made it possible to refine institutional and teaching standards in recent years.

Although the state in-service training has improved in Bulgaria, their focus is on a lecture delivery, and based on theoretical knowledge, with little or no opportunity for teachers to implement in a practicum what they have been taught. The total number of teachers who took part in in-service training courses in 2005 was 5,358, just over 6 per cent of primary and secondary school teachers for the school year 2005/2006. In Serbia, it is reported practice has stagnated in the pre-service teacher training institutions, where the formal education of kindergarten and school teachers is largely focused on scientific disciplines/subjects, rather than on pedagogical techniques. In Slovakia, despite the growing number of different approaches, unstable funding and limited personal capacities of the training institutions tend to result in teachers being often offered short term, one-off training which provides them with little space to acquire in-depth understanding of the distinct methods and ability to use the methods in complementary ways. Some progress in changing pedagogical techniques on a larger scale has been reported for Montenegro, when a study undertaken by the World Bank underlined general satisfaction with the forms and extent of teacher training that was offered in the framework of the reform efforts. Montenegro also states that the shift from traditional teaching methods to an interactive approach and openness toward new concepts of pedagogical work is more likely to occur in integrated classrooms combining Roma and non-Roma pupils.

In Hungary, public opinion of new pedagogical techniques is weak, and teachers themselves indicate that they rely heavily on lecture-based lessons and seldom use cooperative methods. In Romania, despite the variety and number of training provision for teachers working in multicultural settings, attitudes remain conservative toward

pedagogy, and impact at school and especially at the classroom level is not well documented. In Serbia, components of what could be considered quality education – child-centered pedagogy, attention to language and bilingual techniques in the case of children coming from different language backgrounds (including working with Roma teaching assistants), inclusion of Roma culture in the classroom and school environment; family inclusion in the teaching and learning process – represent the exception, rather than the norm, with regard to pedagogical practice. In Serbia, as has been also reported in Croatia, there is resistance on the part of the teachers themselves to any innovative practice or curriculum.

School–community relations

There is very little systematic means for parental and community involvement in the education systems of the countries covered in this report. School Boards, or councils, exist in all countries, but their role and function varies widely, and despite their existence, they do not necessarily make for meaningful parental or community *involvement* in the education process; they may account, however, for parent representation. This distinction should be made. In some cases, parental school boards may exist (Bulgaria), or parent organisations (Hungary) but their function is limited.

Some countries, such as Romania, seem to have more opportunities available for parental representation, and perhaps involvement. Parents are represented on School Boards, Commission for Evaluation and Quality Assurance at the school level; at the level of each class, parents are represented in the “Class Council”, and there is also a Parents’ Representative Council, but the degree to which Roma parents are engaged is little known, although much positive feedback of this was reported through various Phare projects. In Serbia, the situation for Roma parental involvement seems dire; it is reported that the majority of those interviewed for the report could not cite one example of a school in Serbia in which a Roma parent would be elected to a school board; some claim that even if there are such cases, they are extremely rare and are by chance rather than as a result of a policy. In Hungary, parental involvement in school affairs depends primarily on parental activism, and in Croatia, no Roma parents serve as representatives in any of school councils in Croatia, and there is no report or knowledge of their involvement in any school activities.

There are some singular examples of good practice demonstrated, but mostly through NGO-run projects, such as in Bulgaria, where the Vidin desegregation project where parents are involved with parent meetings, school celebrations, and school boards, or in Serbia, where through the Equal Chances project, school mini-projects were quite successful at actively engaging Roma parents.⁸⁵ In Macedonia, in the REI project, when Roma parents were involved, there was a beneficial impact on the retention and

⁸⁵ See also, ESP, Experiences of the Roma Education Initiative: Documentation Studies Highlighting the Comprehensive Approach. Budapest: Education Support Programme (ESP) of the Open Society Institute, Budapest, OSI, 2007.

success of the Roma pupils in school. In Slovakia, the most extensive governmental programme in this respect was the “Mother and Child” initiative, focusing on the involvement of Roma mothers of children enrolled in pre-school. Montenegro, having recognised that family involvement was a problem that needed addressing, reports that from 2005, five Roma facilitators – the newly introduced actors with the task of improving school – community communication – have been engaged, and who might be good mediators between parents and teachers.

Discriminatory attitudes

Across the countries monitored, there is widespread negative prejudices and attitudes towards Roma in mainstream societies, also in regards to school integration for Roma.

In Bulgaria, in a 2005 Gallup poll, 86 per cent of respondents said they would not want their children attending school where more than half the children were Roma. Such widespread distrust partly explains the Government failures to implement school desegregation programmes, despite commitments. In Hungary, an ECRI report on anti-Roma sentiment reveals that although decreasing, this still affects a large segment of Hungarian society, 36–38 per cent in 2003. In Romania, research conducted by the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD), released in October 2004 showed a significant level of discrimination in relation to employment, authorities and schools. In Serbia, discrimination is named by the State policy documents as one of the key obstacles to equal access to education for Roma. In Croatia, research conducted in 1995 on a representative sample of 2,715 secondary school students examined the level of acceptance or rejection of certain ethnic groups. Out of 13 ethnic groups, only Serbs and Montenegrins (at a time when Croatia was at war with then-Yugoslavia) were ranked lower than Roma. In Macedonia, a UNICEF report on the Situation Analysis of Roma Women and Children’ states that 79.95 per cent of the individuals polled apply negative stereotypes to the “Gypsies”.

In Hungary, teachers were documented as having lower expectations of students, and students, consequently, expressed a lower level of enthusiasm for school. In Romania, the Phare “Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups, with a Special Focus on Roma” project reported that in Roma-majority schools, expectations for students were low:

If students achieved basic literacy and completed 8 grades, this was seen as a good achievement. Entry into an Arts and Trades College for vocational training was a very good achievement. University was an aspiration that was rarely, if ever, mentioned.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Maria Andruszkiewicz, *Desegregarea școlilor – progrese și provocări. Experiențele Programului PHARE 2003: “Acces la educație pentru grupurile dezavantajate”* (School Desegregation – Progress and Challenges; Experiences from the Phare 2003 “Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups” Project), unpublished report prepared for Phare 2003, presented in a roundtable in May 2006, pp. 6–10, available at <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/6758> (accessed on 28 February 2007).

Data taken from local research in Csököly in Hungary demonstrate that prejudiced attitudes and bias do exist, but that they are often unspoken and hidden, a comment that is also made with regard to Romania and Serbia.

In Serbia, “white flight” is reported as yet another example of discriminatory attitudes towards Roma by non-Roma parents who do not wish their children to share the school with Roma. This phenomenon was also reported for Bulgaria and Hungary.

School Inspections

School inspectors often have limited powers of enforcement, lack a mandate to handle segregation issues or actively support desegregation. Furthermore, their role is sometimes ambiguous, as new structures are created as systems continue to transform.

In Bulgaria, there are no provisions that outlaw geographical segregation, the existence of special schools and disproportional placement of Roma children in them. Therefore, this falls outside the scope of the scrutiny of the inspections. Moreover, it was reported that the inspectors tend to take a permissive view of the situation of the Roma schools, and often do not visit as frequently as they do in majority schools. The situation is similar in Macedonia, where the State Education Inspectorate (SEI) is concerned with compliance with laws and regular education process. Neither the law that regulates the work of the SEI, nor the general laws on education regulate the problem of segregation or discrimination. In Slovakia, though a number of annual inspection reports mention segregation of Roma children as a problem and recommend that schools and the Ministry pay attention to this issue, no major initiative has been undertaken. Equally, it is not within the competencies of the Inspectorate to issue sanctions relating to segregation.

In Hungary, there is no centralised inspection of schools, and quality control programmes focus on the material conditions of education, rather than on segregation issues. Monitors in charge of equal treatment in schools have been appointed in each district unit, which have conducted official reviews and found some schools guilty of discrimination. The fines, however, imposed on schools are very low, and cannot exceed HUF 100,000 (€367).

In Serbia, school supervision services, rather than school inspectorates, have a more supervisory and supporting role in educational matters: monitoring the school and teaching/learning process, proposing measures to modify noted malpractices, giving advice and support to school and teachers, and so on. In theory, the educational supervision service could be a systematic tool for monitoring barriers and obstacles to quality of Roma education, and also for supporting real pedagogical innovation and change on the school level, but there is no indication that it actually happens in practice today.

Romania appears to have the most advanced system in terms of mandating and allowing for inspectorates to tackle discrimination and segregation in education. In Romania, every county has an inspector for Roma education, which falls under the

administrative structure of the County School Inspectorate. In April 2004 the Ministry of Education and Research issued an internal regulation recognising and condemning segregation, which authorises Inspectors for Roma Education to formulate action plans to address cases of segregation that they identify, or cases where schools have a disproportionate number of Roma, or segregate Roma into separate classes. The school itself must ensure that the percentage of Roma is in line with the overall percentage of Roma children in the area within three years. Still there are no available consistent data regarding the quality and impact of such a system.

1.5.4 Constraints on access to education

Structural constraints

Across the region, data indicate that only a tiny proportion of Roma children attend pre-school, compared to the children of the majority group, who attend in much larger numbers. In Hungary in the school year 1999/2000 an estimation of only 17.39 per cent of pre-school attendees were Roma, and in Slovakia in the school year 2003/2004 this number was as low as 1.02 per cent. In recognition of the importance of pre-school for school preparation, and of the barrier to access that costs can represent for poor families, many countries have recently introduced a mandatory free year of pre-school for all children, usually called a zero year, which should increase the number of Roma children who have at least some pre-school experience before entering the first grade of primary school.

However, the number of places in pre-schools is reported to be inadequate to accommodate the actual population of pre-school age children in many countries. In Bulgaria alone, it is estimated that 32,000 children of pre-school age cannot be served by the current number of pre-schools in that country, whereas in Macedonia it is estimated that if all parents decided to send their children to pre-schools, only around 12 per cent would be accommodated in the existing facilities. As the proportion of Roma children among young children is generally higher than the proportion of Roma in the general population, Roma are disproportionately affected by the shortage of places, and with the expected increase in enrolment due to the introduction of the zero year in many countries, the problem increases exponentially.

Frequently, it is the poorest and most isolated areas that have the fewest pre-schools, areas where Roma tend to be concentrated. In some places in Hungary, pre-schools give priority to children from disadvantaged families to ensure they receive meals and care; in contrast, some pre-schools in Serbia initially allocate places to children both of whose parents are working, which puts the majority of Roma children at a disadvantage. Working parents are also given priority in Montenegro. In Romania there is a scarcity of pre-school education facilities in cities but also in small rural communities which are often inhabited by Roma. The phenomenon of overcrowding in kindergartens with a prevailing number of Roma is also documented in Romania. In Slovakia, the number of pre-schools is actually declining, as municipalities struggle to

find the funds to maintain them; the costs of transport to pre-schools outside the immediate area are generally too high for Roma parents to afford.

Legal and administrative requirements

Standard requirements for enrolment in pre-schools and schools in most Decade countries include sometimes a written request, a birth certificate and medical documentation. While what little data there are tend to be fragmented and unreliable, the number of Roma without identity papers is thought to be considerable in many countries, particularly those hosting displaced persons as in Montenegro and Macedonia.

The lack of identity papers among Roma was recognised as a problem in Romania over ten years ago, and since then a number of programmes have been developed to assist families in getting the appropriate documents. In Montenegro, NGOs have assisted Roma families with enrolment procedures, but case study research suggests that schools may simply waive the legal requirements to allow refugee children to enrol, an *ad hoc* solution that depends upon individual discretion rather than formal procedure. In Serbia, lack of documentation has been identified as a serious barrier to accessing pre-school education for Roma, yet this issue is not mentioned in the country's Decade Action Plan. At the primary school level, children may be admitted even where they lack necessary papers.

In Hungary and Bulgaria, few problems associated with a lack of personal documents have been reported. In fact, despite widespread indications that many Roma do not have the papers needed to formally enrol children in school, the actual number of children turned away from enrolment for this reason seems to be small. Nevertheless, Governments should address the documentation issue as part of education policy, to ensure that accessible procedures are in place to allow all eligible children to enrol in school.

In Macedonia, concerns have been raised that parents are not adequately informed about enrolment procedures; invitation letters are sent to the families of children expected to enrol in primary school, but as many Roma parents do not understand Macedonian well, or are illiterate, they may not recognise the significance of these invitations. Moreover, Roma who are not legally registered at their address may not receive a notification at all.

Costs

In many of the countries monitored, public pre-school is not part of compulsory education, and therefore there may be fees associated. Only in Hungary and Romania is public pre-school free of charge. In Serbia, Roma children may be eligible to attend pre-school free of charge, but are nevertheless unable to enrol due to the limited number of places. In Bulgaria and Croatia, local governments set the costs for pre-schools, and although many municipalities in Bulgaria allow for a degree of exemption based on social circumstances, others do not; in Vidin, for example, the monthly fee

determined by the municipal council is 30 levs (€15), or 10 per cent of the average salary in Bulgaria, an extraordinary amount of money for many poor families. In Slovakia, fees are calculated according to national legislation, while in Montenegro and Macedonia, pre-schools establish their own fees. Even where there is no charge for pre-school attendance, other costs such as clothing may prove too high for Roma families. Often, pre-schools may also ask families for additional money to cover extracurricular activities, which is another financial burden.

In primary school, incidental costs increase, including those for books and extracurricular activities. While in Hungary many forms of State support exist to ease the financial burden of education on disadvantaged families, in Croatia aid is available only where local authorities manage to secure donations or other additional funding. Even when State support is available, the cost of buying clothing and other materials is also cited as a persistent problem to access. In Bulgaria and Romania, special schools offering benefits such as free meals and accommodation may act as an incentive for poorer families to enrol their children there, rather than a mainstream school.

Poverty affects access to education in other ways as well. In Macedonia, Montenegro, and Romania, the reports note that Roma children may be withdrawn from school to work, as the income they bring may be essential to the family. In Romania, a teacher noted that in his class in a majority-Roma school:

Out of the 20 students I have, I wonder if four or five families could afford to compile a library for the child, to buy the books the students would like to have, or a school bag, because several students come to school bringing their things in plastic bags.⁸⁷

In Slovakia, disadvantaged parents receive a stipend depending on how well their child performs in school; this in turn may encourage families to send their children to special schools where standards are lower and better grades may be easier to achieve.

Residential segregation/Geographical isolation

Roma communities throughout Central and South-Eastern Europe are frequently physically separated from the rest of the surrounding community. These Roma communities may be distinct neighbourhoods within a city, separate villages, or unregulated settlements established on the outskirts of an existing town. The poor conditions in many Roma communities limit the extent to which children can be expected to study at home. Where families are crowded into small living spaces, there may be no area where a child can complete schoolwork; irregular power supplies may mean there is no light to read by.

Few Government education policies take note of the impact residential segregation may have on Roma children's access to quality schools. Schools serving areas where the

⁸⁷ Interview with a teacher, Bobesti, 22 February 2007.

majority of the population is Roma logically have high proportions of Roma enrolled, yet these are not considered to be segregated under some countries' own assessments. However, these "Roma schools" are frequently in worse physical condition, have fewer resources at their disposal, and carry a reputation for offering low-quality education. In many countries, teachers are less willing to work in rural schools generally; isolated schools with a high proportion of Roma are even less attractive.

Many Roma communities and neighbourhoods lack a local school, and transport may be too expensive or unavailable altogether. In Podgorica, Montenegro, a school in a Roma settlement currently accommodating first through third grades is expected to add the fourth grade in the future, as the roads to the main school outside the settlement are muddy and poor. In Bulgaria, while transport from one village to another would be State-supported, transport within a single town is not provided so Roma children in segregated neighbourhoods may have to find their own way to reach a school in another part of the town.

In Croatia, some Roma settlements are so isolated that children have almost no exposure to the Croatian language before they begin school, a phenomenon also reported for Macedonia. With no bilingual programmes available, teachers struggle to find ways to accommodate the children who must learn the language as well as the standard curriculum, and in at least one area, segregated Roma-only classes have been formed as a result.

School and class placement procedures

Segregation of Roma children may also take place as a consequence of administrative or other procedures for placement in specific schools and classes. In most countries monitored, except for Romania, children are assessed when they start school or earlier, to determine any intellectual disability or special educational needs that may warrant placement outside a mainstream school or class. In many countries, however, concerns have been raised that Roma children are too frequently diagnosed as having a disability, when in fact there may be a language or cultural barrier, or simply an inadequate assessment. Governments have taken steps to address this form of segregation, but problems persist. Oversight of the actual assessments appears to be poor in many countries, so that placement decisions may be inconsistent and discretionary. Roma parents may not be fully informed so as to help them to understand the process, and in some cases there have been allegations that special schools actively seek out Roma parents to encourage them to send their children to special schools.⁸⁸

Considerable research has been conducted on this issue in Bulgaria, where some schools for children with intellectual disabilities enrol 90 to 100 per cent Roma children. Studies have shown that the assessment procedures in Bulgaria are frequently arbitrary, and participation of someone who speaks the child's mother tongue may not be guaranteed. The problem of segregation in special schools has also been widely

⁸⁸ In Bulgaria and Slovakia.

condemned in Slovakia; a new regulation on placement procedures was adopted in 2005, but some research suggests that the guidelines promulgated under this regulation are not always followed.

In Macedonia, very few data on Roma enrolment in special schools are available, and there is disagreement as to whether Roma make up a disproportionate number of the students in such schools. The Government's National Roma Strategy does not acknowledge that overrepresentation is a problem, yet NGO reports indicate that placements are made without any assessment procedures at all.

School and class placement procedures within mainstream schools are often within the jurisdiction of the school's headmaster, and a school's placement of children can often be informal and arbitrary; there have been different reasons reported for the placement of Roma together in one class, spanning from the Roma parents having enrolled their child late to school, to linguistic reasons, or simply learning ability reasons. Although in Bulgaria it is rare to have separate classes, in other countries it is quite the norm, such as in Slovakia. In Serbia and Croatia, separate Roma-only classes have been reported to address the Roma children's limited knowledge of the language of instruction. A true programme for bilingual education, and adequate training and preparation of teachers, could more effectively address these children's needs, without resorting to segregation.

In many countries, parents have the right to choose which school their child may attend, despite catchment areas for school attendance. This often results in a phenomenon known as "white flight" whereby parents of majority children may choose to send their children to a school other than the one in their neighbourhood if there are a large number of Roma children. This phenomenon has been documented for Hungary and Serbia.

Language

Roma communities within the Decade countries are diverse; many speak Romanes as a first language, although there are variations and dialects within this language family as well. In Montenegro and Macedonia, a proportion of the Roma population speak Albanian, and in Croatia and Hungary, some Roma communities speak a form of Romanian called Beash; in short, many Roma are not native speakers of the countries in which they live, which can cause linguistic and other problems for the children when they enter school. In Bulgaria, as many as 88 per cent of the self-identified Roma are Romanes speakers, and in Macedonia this number is 80 per cent.

As mentioned above, the language barrier for Roma children can result in incorrect placement in a special school, or segregation in a Roma-only class. While pre-school programmes, and in particular the establishment of a mandatory zero year in some countries, can help Roma children to gain basic competence in the language of instruction before starting primary school, too few Roma children actually attend pre-school for this to have a widespread impact. Or, when children do have access, it is often the teachers and educators who are not trained to deal with helping children to bridge the

language gap from their home environment language to the language of instruction, and because of this, many children struggle with an unfamiliar language in school, and may fall behind and become frustrated and drop out. Schools thus fail to serve as a force to promote integration, and instead increase Roma children's sense of marginalisation.

Romania has demonstrated the greatest success in making Romanes part of the curriculum; in 2005 it was reported that Romanes instruction is ongoing in 135 schools, with 15,708 students taking part, under 257 teachers.⁸⁹ While in Hungary a State subsidy for minority education, including education in the mother tongue, is available for Roma, research has indicated that this is not consistently implemented in compliance with legal regulations. In Macedonia, a project to introduce bilingual teaching techniques in four schools is only being implemented in one. In Serbia, children who have returned from Western Europe with their families often struggle in school, as they are unfamiliar with the Serbian language and the Cyrillic alphabet.

⁸⁹ Council of Europe, *Second Report Submitted by Romania Pursuant to Article 25, Paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, received on 6 June 2005, Strasbourg, available at http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/minorities/2._framework_convention_%28monitoring%29/2._monitoring_mechanism/3._state_reports_and_unmik_kosovo_report/2._second_cycle/2nd_sr_romania.asp#P475_38732 (accessed on 28 February 2007).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations directed to individual States are included in the country reports. Here, only generally applicable recommendations and recommendations to the EU are noted.

2.1 To the Decade of Roma Inclusion International Steering Committee, Presidency, and Secretariat

- Initiate and endorse awareness-raising among Roma as to the value of data collection on social inclusion measures by ethnic group.
- Support the involvement of Roma organisations in efforts to promote ethnic monitoring as a means to identifying problems, arguing for targeted policies and programmes, monitoring action and evaluating impact.
- Facilitate dialogue between monitoring initiatives such as the DecadeWatch and participating States, to promote constructive debate on the progress of implementing Decade objectives in each country.
- Provide technical support to Governments in designing practical action plans to implement their Decade Action Plans for Education, including the creation of indicators, and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.
- Exert pressure on national Governments to follow through and implement their education action plans as they were developed within the framework of the Decade.

2.2 To Governments participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion

- Taking into consideration all strategies, both Roma-specific and general education, create a coherent policy for the education of Roma children, which is linked and relevant to existing strategies; Roma should be explicitly addressed and targeted.
- Establish mechanisms to ensure that education tasks within the Decade Action Plan that fall under the competency of local authorities are effectively implemented.
- In collaboration with the relevant bodies of the European Commission, take the necessary legal and administrative measures to develop methods of ethnic data collection in order to monitor the effects of policies on ethnic minorities, and to take corrective action as required.
- Respecting all relevant data protection laws, gather and make public in a readily comprehensible form statistical data on the situation of Roma in education,

disaggregated data on enrolment, performance and progression should be collected.

- Monitor progress towards the Decade Action Plan goals in education; engage and consult with civil society to establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, including the creation of indicators, and report openly on the progress of achieving the goals in the Decade Action Plan.
- Take the necessary legal, financial and administrative steps to end all forms of educational segregation of Roma children.
- Increase the number of Roma working in the education sector.
- Work towards improvement of access to personal documents and health care for Roma as one of the preconditions for their successful access to education, and, where appropriate, develop policies for displaced persons and refugees to gain access to education despite their not having appropriate papers.
- Ensure that all children have access to pre-school, adding facilities and classes as necessary to accommodate all children; eliminate any fees for disadvantaged children, and cover transport costs.
- Establish and monitor equal treatment criteria ensuring enrolment of disadvantaged children and maintaining integrated classes, and allocate funds from the central budgetary and EU funds only to schools and authorities that meet these criteria.
- Reduce the number of Roma in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities through ensuring that mainstream primary schools can offer the same benefits to disadvantaged children as special schools and improving diagnostic and assessment tools/instruments used in the assessment of children with special educational needs.
- Take steps to ensure that Roma children whose first language is not the language of instruction receive the support they need in schools, by supporting and fostering in-service and pre-service teacher training courses covering language acquisition and methodologies for bilingual education, ensuring that teacher training institutions have the proper curriculum and courses to prepare teachers of Romanes, and developing pre-school programmes that place particular emphasis on language acquisition and bilingual techniques.
- Create systems of national standards, linked to national-level assessment systems, so as to have reliable and comparable national knowledge of student outcomes disaggregated for ethnicity; standards and assessment systems should be linked with textbook creation and selection criteria and standards; make necessary changes in creation criteria to integrate cultural and ethnic diversity issues and ensure that Roma culture, language and history are integrated into those standards.

- In the absence of national systems, issue criteria for teachers to assess and grade student achievement, to prevent the subjective lowering of expectations and the inflation of grades for underachieving students.
- Allow for the provision of curriculum development at the school level that takes into account the local Roma community.
- Mandate in-/pre-service diversity training for all education professionals and provide support for in-service teacher training institutions to encourage new models and practices of school-based leadership and management, student-centred instruction and parent and community involvement.
- Create incentives to attract high-quality teachers to schools that may be in lower socio-economic areas, for example, professional development opportunities, and other incentives, for young teachers to teach in less desirable schools.
- Encourage educational institutions to strengthen links with Roma communities and parents, and ensure that they participate in decision-making and in the teaching/learning process.
- Promote community-based strategies to enhance the capacity of ethnic minority groups to engage with education systems.

2.3 To the European Union

- Adopt measures to support the collection of comparable data in all Decade countries, disaggregated by ethnicity (with a specific mention of the Roma minority), with appropriate protection of individual detail – and stress their relevance to education and social inclusion.
- Further specify the indicators necessary for the development of social inclusion policies as per the Lisbon Process, to include education, and develop indicators of more relevance to Roma, such as the development of a segregation “index” for education.
- Consider the adoption of EU rules prohibiting ethnic and racial segregation in the field of education, investigate further the development of legal measures in this area, and provide for formal monitoring with inspections and sanctions.
- Explore ways in which Union education policies and programming can address racial segregation in education and the widespread unequal and inadequate level of provision for Roma.
- Develop focused awareness-raising campaigns on the problems of anti-Roma racism and the current social exclusion crisis facing Roma in Europe, and encourage Decade Countries to undertake such awareness-raising campaigns.

- Use existing programmes such as the European Social Fund to include components for training and the empowerment of Roma groups and individuals in the field of education, in order for them to become more active in implementing and shaping policies and programmes.
- Encourage all Decade Countries to address Roma as a target group in their National Action Plans on Social Inclusion and Lifelong Learning, and other relevant policy frameworks.

ANNEX 1. DECADE ACTION PLANS MATRIX

Country	Language, Romanes Teaching, and Roma Teaching Assistants goals or sub-goals included in Action Plan	Desegregation goals or sub-goals included in Action Plan	Curriculum goals or sub-goals included in Action Plan	Teacher training goals or sub-goals included in Action Plan	Discrimination monitoring mechanisms goals or sub-goals included in Action Plan
Bulgaria	<p>1.3.8 Training and employment of assistant teachers in the receiving kindergartens and schools with the aim to ensure better adaptation of the children and pupils of Roma origin.</p> <p>2. Preservation and development of the cultural identity of the children and pupils from the Roma ethnic minority.</p>	<p>1.2 Desegregation of schools and kindergartens in the detached Roma quarters.</p>	<p>5.1.1 Review of the available textbooks and school aids for 4-12 grade and publication of new ones in which the Roma culture is presented.</p>	<p>2.2 Ensuring the necessary pedagogical and administrative staff for the implementation of programmes in intercultural learning, human rights, principles and values of the civil society.</p>	<p>1.1.7 Inclusion of provisions in the regulations of kindergartens, schools and supplementary units, as well as clauses in the job descriptions of school personnel, aimed at ensuring tolerance towards Roma children and creating appropriate school environment.</p>
Croatia	None	<p>5. Inclusion of Roma pupils in desegregated classes.</p>	<p>6. Inclusion of content on Roma (needs, culture, etc.) in the new school curricula.</p>	<p>4. Further training of kindergarten teachers, class teachers, headmasters and other staff for diversity, tolerance and equality.</p>	None
Hungary	<p>3. Employing and training Roma pedagogic assistants at schools.</p>	<p>1. Extension of integrated education, desegregation [...] elimination of all segregated classes, schools, and increase of the qualification level of Roma students.</p>	None	None	<p>Enforcing anti-discriminative elements by existing law and legal background.</p>

Country	Language, Romanes Teaching, and Roma Teaching Assistants goals or sub-goals included in Action Plan	Desegregation goals or sub-goals included in Action Plan	Curriculum goals or sub-goals included in Action Plan	Teacher training goals or sub-goals included in Action Plan	Discrimination monitoring mechanisms goals or sub-goals included in Action Plan
Macedonia	4. Increased number of appropriately educated Roma teachers.	None	3.4 Recommendation by the Ministry of Education and Science to introduce teaching material about Roma culture, tradition and history at the Pedagogical Faculty and other faculties involved in pre-service teacher training.	3.4 Recommendation by the Ministry of Education and Science to introduce teaching material about Roma culture, tradition and history at the Pedagogical Faculty and other faculties involved in pre-service teacher training.	None
Montenegro	2.4.3 supporting the development of the cultural identity of Roma children and young people. 9. Training of Roma assistants for inclusion in the teaching process.	2.6.3 Preventing segregations.	2.4.2 Incorporation of elements of Roma culture in curricula for children.	9. Teaching [staff] provided. Number of teachers trained to work with Roma children have attended the seminars for work with Roma children.	2.6.4 Implementation of anti-discrimination measures.
Romania	Not adopted	Not adopted	Not adopted	Not adopted	Not adopted

Country	Language, Romanes Teaching, and Roma Teaching Assistants goals or sub-goals included in Action Plan	Desegregation goals or sub-goals included in Action Plan	Curriculum goals or sub-goals included in Action Plan	Teacher training goals or sub-goals included in Action Plan	Discrimination monitoring mechanisms goals or sub-goals included in Action Plan
Serbia	<p>Providing quality education.</p> <p>Ensuring and training staff for the work with Roma children.</p>		<p>Providing quality education.</p> <p>Elaboration and evaluation of educational programs, schoolbooks and teaching materials, which address educational needs of Roma children and youth.</p> <p>Respecting differences and promotion of multicultural values.</p> <p>Improving educational environment on the basis of respect for differences and multiculturalism.</p>	<p>Inclusion of Roma in the education system and ensuring continuity in education.</p> <p>Making relevant regulations (criteria and procedures) for Certifying Educators and Teachers Trained for the Work with Roma Children.</p> <p>Providing quality education Training existing educational and teaching staff.</p> <p>Certifying educators and teachers trained for the work with Roma children.</p>	<p>Respecting differences and promotion of multicultural values.</p> <p>Preventing discrimination in education.</p>
Slovakia	None	Respecting differences and promotion of multicultural values Desegregation.	None	None	None

Source: Text and numbering taken from individual country Action Plans, as available at <http://www.romadecade.org/index.php?content=70> (accessed 18 November 2007)

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Equal access to quality education for
Roma

Croatia

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Executive summary

Croatia's Roma population is not as large as that of the other countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015. However, as Croatia has set an impressive pace towards European integration and adopted a wide range of programmes and policies aimed at meeting the criteria for accession since its formal acceptance as a candidate for membership in the European Union, considerable attention has been paid to the situation of Roma, including equal access to quality education. Nevertheless, the commitments made at the international level have not yet been translated into practical strategies to support communities, schools, teachers and students; a systematic approach, supported by the collection of relevant data on education for Roma children, is urgently needed to make the best use of existing good practices, and reverse negative trends. While Roma communities in Croatia are smaller and more dispersed than in some countries, an effective nationwide approach to education for Roma is just as crucial to ensuring the best possible results, for all children.

Croatian law places no limitations on the types of data that can be collected; nevertheless, available data on the Roma population are very scarce and unreliable. Official statistics on the total Roma population put the number at just below 9,500; other estimates suggest that the number could be as high as 40,000. Due to a high birth rate and short life expectancy, more than half the Croatian Roma population are under the age of 19. The lack of any centralised mechanism to collect data on education limits the availability of information on Roma participation and performance in schools; the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should consider establishing a database that consolidates data from pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools, disaggregated by ethnicity and mother tongue.

There is very little information on the extent of segregation in Croatia. While there have been several well-known cases where Roma children have been placed in separate classes, no comprehensive studies on the separation of Roma in mainstream or special schools have been conducted. Such a survey should be a high priority for the Government of Croatia.

As both a candidate for EU membership and a participant in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015, Croatia has adopted two main policies to address the situation of Roma: the National Programme for Roma (NPR) and the Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 (hereafter, Decade Action Plan). Both the NPR and the Decade Action Plan include sections on education, with goals, indicators and proposed budget allocations. The main national education programme merely refers to these specialised documents in addressing the education of Roma, however. Substantial budget allocations for the implementation of the NPR and Decade Action Plan have been made, yet information on actual activities carried out is minimal. One

government project, Improvements of Access and Quality of Roma education, for implementing elements of the Decade Action Plan has been funded by the Roma Education Fund.

Language issues present a serious obstacle for improving quality education for Roma; the Roma communities in Croatia are diverse, and there are two different language groups represented, neither of which is an official language of instruction. Roma teaching assistants have been working in a small number of schools, but it appears that the lack of training has limited the support that these assistants can offer in the classroom. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should reinforce efforts to introduce this position in classrooms wherever there are larger numbers of Roma students, and to ensure that adequate training and preparation are provided. This is all the more important given that no teachers are currently able to teach in any of the Romani languages, and teaching materials for working with Roma are extremely limited. The lack of official training for teachers working in multiethnic and multilingual classrooms should also be addressed, possibly using existing NGO courses and resources as a model.

Despite estimates that as few as half of pre-school age children actually attend pre-school in Croatia, the capacity of the pre-school system is already stretched. Positive examples of providing support to enrol Roma children in preschool coming from Medmurje county should be considered, and adequate space provided for increased numbers of children. While in some areas the costs of pre-school for Roma children are covered by central or local government resources, this support is not required or systematic. Governmental and other support underwrites some of the costs of primary school attendance for Roma, but again, this is unregulated and done primarily on individual initiative. Research suggests that some Roma communities are so isolated that children begin school with only the most minimal exposure to the Croatian language, and find it difficult to keep up in the classroom. As teachers have little training or support in working with children from varying backgrounds, the solution in some cases has been to place Roma children in separate classes where the pace is adjusted. This form of segregation persists, despite widespread agreement that all children could benefit from studying in mixed classes, and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should take the necessary steps to prepare teachers and schools for integrated learning.

As in other areas, there is a lack of data on Roma pupils' school results. There have been reports that teachers may issue passing marks to Roma children even where they have not learned the relevant material, in order to permit them to move up to the next grade. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should address the absence of official standards for marking students that makes such a practice possible, through the development of objective criteria for students' assessment. There is no monitoring of the actual pedagogical practice in the classroom, and the existing system of school inspections does not require any evaluation of teachers' work or students' performance. There is a need also to address this weakness by providing for quality monitoring and

support to teachers working, especially, in diverse schools and classrooms. Greater efforts to reach out to Roma communities could help schools to better meet the needs of Roma children; at the national level, more vigorous efforts to prevent discrimination and promote tolerance would help to ensure that all children have access to relevant, high-quality education.

1.2 Recommendations

1.2.1 Recommendations on monitoring and evaluation

Data collection

The Government of the Republic of Croatia should do the following:

1. Review and amend regulations to ensure that, to the full extent permitted by the relevant EU legislation, data collected are made available disaggregated by ethnicity, colour, religion, language, gender, age, location and nationality.
2. Take steps to improve the overall collection of data related to education, disaggregated according to ethnic group, including Roma and other ethnic minorities, with adequate safeguards for protecting sensitive information and the identity and privacy of individuals.

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should do the following:

3. Establish a centralised database on education indicators, with provisions for disaggregating data, including school achievement, failure and grade repetition rates, and create mechanisms for local education offices and schools to collect and transmit this data.
4. Establish a centralised database on Roma education, including information on the use of the Romani Chib and Bayash languages.

1.2.2 Recommendations for improving access to education

Structural constraints, legal and administrative requirements, costs

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should do the following:

5. Make two years of high-quality pre-school compulsory and free of charge for Roma.
6. Ensure that there is an adequate number of pre-school places available, through the construction of new classrooms, a revision in class scheduling, or reviewing the requirements for the number of children per class, to accommodate all children in the relevant age group.

7. Foster and support cooperation between local administration, social welfare centres, Roma teaching assistants and Roma NGOs to help to ensure the enrolment of Roma children in obligatory pre-school programmes.
8. Make provisions for those children who do not have the required documents for the administrative procedures for enrolment to have access to pre-school education.
9. Allocate funding for primary and secondary schools to ensure that children who qualify can receive support such as meals, clothes and after-school programmes.

Residential segregation/Geographical isolation

The Government of the Republic of Croatia should do the following:

10. Fulfil the measure detailed in the Decade Action Plan on promoting desegregation, including the goal on the inclusion of Roma pupils.
11. Adopt the necessary legal or administrative measures to prevent and sanction all forms of segregation with the explicit aim of implementing desegregation, and the appropriate means to do so, through the distribution of Roma pupils from segregated Roma communities into ethnically mixed classes and schools.

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should do the following:

12. Revise its National Programme for Roma to reflect the problem of segregation and develop a clear and comprehensive plan for desegregation, with competencies assigned at the national and the local level, including schools, local communities and parents.
13. Organise after-school education for Roma transferred from segregated Roma-only classes in ethnically mixed classes in order to compensate for the low quality of education received in segregated classes and to perform adequately in the new school environment.

School and class placement procedures

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should do the following:

14. Undertake a review of school and class placement procedures in all areas of Croatia where there are Roma minority communities.
15. On the basis of this assessment, work with schools and local authorities to ensure that the existing regulations on class placement procedures are respected, or revised, so that Roma children are not placed in segregated classes.

Language

The Government of the Republic of Croatia should do the following:

16. Fulfil the measure detailed in the Decade Action Plan to include Roma children in two-year pre-school programmes and improve such programmes by placing particular emphasis on language acquisition to strengthen readiness for school among Roma children.

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should do the following:

17. Initiate discussion with Roma community leaders, aiming towards recognising one or more Romani dialect as an official language of instruction in Croatia.
18. Support and foster in-service and pre-service teacher training courses covering language acquisition and methodologies for bilingual education and teaching in multicultural classrooms.
19. Develop curricula for Croatian language acquisition for Roma.

School facilities and human resources

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should do the following:

20. Create incentives such as scholarships to encourage younger Roma to enter the teaching profession.
21. Extend the programme of Roma teaching assistants currently in place in Međimurje and Varaždin Counties to other areas where there is a significant number of Roma children.
22. Ensure appropriate training for school mediators in order to raise their professional abilities and to use them more effectively in the educational process.
23. Offer additional benefits to teachers willing to work in rural schools, to reduce staff turnover in these schools.

Curricular standards

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should do the following:

24. Develop more transparent evaluation and grading standards at both the primary and secondary school level; at the secondary level, the State Matura could serve as a starting point for an improvement in grading criteria and establishing clearer grading patterns.
25. Establish in-service training modules on the history, cultural heritage and language of the Croatian Roma communities to allow teachers to incorporate elements in their lesson planning.

26. Introduce information about Roma history and culture into the main school curriculum, to positively portray the contribution of this ethnic group to the national heritage.
27. Develop more flexible procedures to give Roma more opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities.

School–community relations

The Regional Units of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should do the following:

28. Work closely with NGOs and community groups to ensure that efforts to improve education for Roma are coordinated, and that each school is truly responsive to community needs and interests.
29. Ensure that in schools where Roma pupils are enrolled Roma parents are represented proportionally in the schools Councils.

Discriminatory attitudes

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should do the following:

30. Include anti-bias education and/or education for social justice as a required pre-service and in-training course for teachers.
31. Include training on tolerance and diversity for local authorities and representatives of the local media, in order to prevent or counteract stereotypes and prejudice against Roma groups.

School inspections

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should do the following:

32. Instruct school inspectors of the Institute for School Development of the Republic of Croatia to better identify and sanction instances of discrimination against minority pupils.
33. Draft standards to be used in the inspection of schools, discouraging the overrepresentation (over 50 per cent) of Roma children in classrooms.
34. Take steps to improve the enforcement of existing laws on attendance in compulsory education, including sanctions against parents who fail to enrol their children.

2. BASIC EDUCATION INDICATORS

Croatian law places no limitations on the types of data that can be collected; nevertheless, available data on the Roma population are very scarce and unreliable. Official statistics on the total Roma population put the number at just below 9,500; other estimates suggest that the number could be as high as 40,000. Due to a high birth rate and short life expectancy, more than half the Croatian Roma population are under the age of 19. The lack of any centralised mechanism to collect data on education limits the availability of information on Roma participation and performance in schools; the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should consider establishing a database that consolidates data from pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools, disaggregated by ethnicity and mother tongue.

There is very little information on the extent of segregation in Croatia. While there have been several well-known cases where Roma children have been placed in separate classes, no comprehensive studies on the separation of Roma in mainstream or special schools have been conducted. Such a survey should be a high priority for the Government of Croatia.

2.1 Data collection

There are no limitations on the collection of national/ethnic data in Croatia. Nevertheless, there are very few reliable demographic data about Roma in Croatia. According to the *Act on the Population, Houses and Apartment Census* from 2000,¹ Article 5 allows persons the right not to declare their national and religious affiliation. The Statistical Yearbook reports the following:

The legal regulation [...] was printed on the Personal Questionnaire and, moreover, every enumerator was obliged to inform every person about it. In addition, the enumerator was also obliged to put the exact answer that he got from persons he enumerated. In the case that a person did not want to answer any of these two questions, the enumerator was obliged to put "A person did not answer".²

As provided by the Act, the answer about the national identity of children of up to 15 years of age was to be given by one of the parents, adoptive parents or guardians.³ Many Roma, due to suffering in the past and the social distance of the majority population, refuse to declare and identify themselves as members of the Roma national community. The high level of illiteracy among the Roma population also contributes to the lack of accurate data, as those who are unable to read or write are less likely to apply for identity papers or give notification when they change their place of residence. There are no estimates on the number or percentage of Roma who lack identity

¹ Act on the Population, Houses and Apartment 2001 Census (Zakon o Popisu stanovništva, kućanstva i stanova 2001) *Official Gazette*, No. 64/00 (Act on the 2001 Census).

² Republic of Croatia, Central Bureau for Statistics, *Statistički ljetopis 2005* (Statistical Yearbook 2005), p. 85, available at http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/ljetopis/2005/00-sadrzaj.pdf (accessed 18 October 2007).

³ Act on the 2001 Census.

documents.⁴ The problem of a lack of identity documents among the Roma population is further complicated when many people may share the same names and birth date.⁵

Roma in Croatia are considered an autochthonous ethnic minority with a specific tradition and a special cultural identity. The number of Roma has been increasing from year to year: according to the 1971 census there were 1,257 Roma living in Croatia; in 1981 there were 3,658; in 1991 6,695; while according to the 2001 census, there are 9,463 Roma in Croatia, representing 0.21 per cent of the total Croatian population (4,437,460). However, as in many other countries, the census undercounts the number of Roma; according to estimates by the Council of Europe there are around 40,000 Roma living in Croatia, which would represent some 0.9 per cent of the total population. This estimate has also been questioned, however.⁶

About 7.47 per cent of the total population in Croatia are members of national minorities. The proportion of Roma is increasing, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Roma population in relation to other national minorities in Croatia

	1971		1981		1991		2001	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Croats	3,513,647	79.38	3,454,661	75.08	3,736,356	78.1	3,977,171	89.63
National minorities – Total	774,723	17.50	651,831	14.17	713,311	14.19	331,383	7.47
Roma	1,257	0.03	3,858	0.08	6,695	0.14	9,463	0.21

Source: Central Bureau for Statistics, 2001⁷

⁴ The Ministry of Legal Affairs finances free legal advice and all costs related to the realisation of status rights for all Roma. The Ministry of Internal Affairs established mobile teams that visit Roma settlements to intervene in various issues related to Roma rights.

⁵ The Government Office for National Minorities has published, together with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Health and Social Care, the booklet “My Rights”, which includes information about the opportunities and means of gaining access to one’s rights in three main fields: status issues, health insurance and social care. The booklet was printed in the Romani and Croatian languages.

⁶ OSI Roundtable, Zagreb, June 2007. Explanatory note: Explanatory note: the OSI held a roundtable meeting in Croatia in June 2006 to invite critiques of the present report in draft form. Experts present included representatives of the Government, teachers, school administrators and non-governmental organisations.

⁷ Central Bureau for Statistics, Census of Population, Households and Dwellings from 31 March 2001. Available at <http://www.dzs.hr/> (accessed 22 October 2007) (hereafter, CBS, 2001 Census Data).

The largest number of Roma live in Međimurje County, in the north of the country. While the 2001 census results reported 2,887 Roma people in Međimurje,⁸ it is likely that the census underestimates the Roma population; according to an estimate made by the Međimurje County Government, the actual number of Roma people in 2001 was 4,229.⁹

Table 2. Roma population in relation to total population by county

County	1991	2001
Zagreb County	128	231
Krapina-Zagorje	2	4
Sisak-Moslavina	315	708
Karlovac	16	7
Varaždin	333	448
Koprivnica-Križevci	204	125
Bjelovar-Bilogora	144	140
Primorsko-Goranska	504	589
Lika-Senj	49	10
Virovitica-Podravina	86	4
Požega-Slavonija	0	7
Brod-Posavina	223	586
Zadar	7	4
Osijek-Baranja	782	977
Šibenik-Knin	42	8
Vukovar-Srijem	265	167
Split-Dalmacija	39	11
Istria	5	4
Dubrovnik-Neretva	637	600
Međimurje	1,920	2,887
City of Zagreb	994	1,946
Total on Croatian territory	6,695	9,463

Source: Central Bureau for Statistics, 2001

According to the 2001 census, the Roma population in Croatia is extremely young – 33.4 per cent of the population are under the age of nine, and the school-age population (ages 5 to 19) represents more than half (55.4 per cent) of the total Roma

⁸ CBS, 2001 Census Data.

⁹ Međimurje County, 2006 Official Statistics, unpublished.

population.¹⁰ Poor life expectancy for Roma also has an impact on the demographic make-up of the Roma population, as only 6.9 per cent of Roma people are older than 50.¹¹

Table 3. Population structure for children

Age group	Total population	Roma population	Share of Roma in overall population (%)
0–4	237,522	1,769	0.74
5–9	248,528	1,390	0.55
10–14	268,584	1,105	0.41
15–19	298,606	976	0.33

Source: Central Bureau for Statistics, 2001

2.2 Enrolment data and trends

As with data on Roma generally, statistics on Roma in the education sector are not altogether reliable. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport does not have available data on the exact number of Roma who are or should be included in each level of the educational system, but has estimated that about one third of Roma children have never been included in any form of education or schooling.¹² Data on Roma children who are enrolled in primary schools are available in the databases of only several counties (such as Međimurje, Osijek-Baranja and Varazdin Counties). Collecting data on the nationality of students is not common practice, however, and there is no reliable database on school-age children who are not enrolled in schools.

Children must complete 150 hours of pre-school before starting the first grade. According to the information received from the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, the general pre-school participation rate in Croatia is 43 per cent.¹³ The enrolment of Roma children in obligatory pre-school programmes is highly dependent on the cooperation between local administration and Roma NGOs. For example, the Pirgo pre-school in Čakovec (Međimurje County) has developed good cooperation between the mayor, city government and the “Roma for Roma” NGO. This particular

¹⁰ CBS, 2001 Census Data.

¹¹ CBS, 2001 Census Data.

¹² Government of the Republic of Croatia (Vlada Republike Hrvatske), *Nacionalni program za Rome* (National Programme for the Roma) 2003. Available at <http://www.vlada.hr/nacionalniprogramromi/EnpzmOIO.htm> (accessed 12 April 2007) (hereafter, National Programme for Roma).

¹³ Ministry of Science, Education and Sport (Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i sporta), *Plan razvoja sustava odgoja i obrazovanja 2005–2010* (Education Sector Development Plan 2005–2010) 2005. Available at <http://www.mzos.hr> (accessed 7 August 2007).

programme has made steady but still insufficient improvements in preparing children for school enrolment.¹⁴ Non-governmental sources such as Amnesty International state that “Despite improvements (especially in [...] Međimurje County) in recent years, the majority of Romani children in Croatia are not included in pre-school programmes.”¹⁵

In the school years 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 several pre-school education groups have been organised. In 2005 there were 12 pre-school education programmes for 340 Roma children (220 in five-hour and ten-hour programmes and 120 children in a three-hour programme per day). In 2006 there were 707 Roma children in pre-school education.¹⁶

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport estimates that 1,100 Roma children were included in the educational system in the school year 2002/2003. From that number, 1,900 children are in primary (compulsory) education (almost 1,000 of whom are in Međimurje County), while 200 Roma children attend secondary school.¹⁷ Also, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport estimates that around 5,000 Roma children have never been included in any form of education.¹⁸ According to data from the school year 2006/2007, there were 2,946 Roma pupils in primary schools in Croatia,¹⁹ although in official Government reports the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport estimates that there are 3,010 Roma pupils in primary schools in Croatia.²⁰

¹⁴ The case of the city of Čakovec, the capital of Međimurje, is always presented as the best example of cooperation between local authorities and Roma NGOs. It is the only case where a city completely finances the Roma pre-school and the mayor personally makes efforts to help Roma. It is also the only area where the head of the Department of Education attends every meeting with Roma parents whose children are attending the pre-school that they are financing.

¹⁵ Amnesty International, *Croatia: The Roma and the Right to Education Factsheet*, EUR 64/001/2006, 16 November 2006. Available at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR640012006> (accessed 4 October 2007) (hereafter, Amnesty International, *Croatia Factsheet*).

¹⁶ Commission for the Implementation of the National Programme for the Roma (Povjerenstvo za pracenje Nacionalnog programa za Rome), *Izvjescje o provodenju Nacionalnog programa za Rome za 2004., 2005. i 2006. godinu* (Report on the Implementation of the National Programme for the Roma in 2004, 2005 and 2006), 2007, p. 69. (hereafter, Commission for Implementation, *Report on the Implementation of the Decade Action Plan*).

¹⁷ National Programme for the Roma, p. 36.

¹⁸ National Programme for the Roma, p. 36.

¹⁹ Commission for Implementation, *Report on the Implementation of the Decade Action Plan*, p. 79.

²⁰ Commission for Implementation, *Report on the Implementation of the Decade Action Plan*, p. 9.

Table 4. Number of first-grade Roma pupils in secondary education and type of school

	2004	2006
Vocational schools (three-year programme)	14	58
Four-years secondary school	3	2

Source: Commission for Implementation,
Report on the Implementation of the Decade Action Plan, p. 14.

Table 5. Number of pupils in secondary education and type of school

		Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
2005/2006	Vocational schools	N/A	30	22	
	Four-year secondary school	N/A	N/A	N/A	3
2006/2007	Vocational schools	42	18	21	
	Four-year secondary school	6			

Source: Commission for Implementation,
Report on the Implementation of the Decade Action Plan, p. 17.

Table 6. Number of first-grade Roma pupils in secondary education and type of school

	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
2004	30	22	N/A
2006	25	20	N/A

Source: Commission for Implementation,
Report on the Implementation of the Decade Action Plan, p. 17.

From the tables it is apparent that very few Roma pupils continue their education. Those who do mostly go to vocational schools that last for three years. This is understandable, because it is the fastest way to get some kind of occupation and start to work, but graduates of these education programmes cannot enter a higher education institution.

Amnesty International states the following with regard to enrolment:

An estimated 86 per cent of Romani children at the age of seven attend elementary school. Attendance rates reach close to 95–100 per cent for Romani children aged between eight and 12, and gradually decrease for older children. Only approximately 70 per cent of Romani children at the age of 15 are attending elementary school. Virtually all non-Romani children between seven and 15 attend school.²¹

According to the 2005 UNDP survey *Vulnerable Groups in Central and Southeast Europe*, enrolment of Roma clearly lags behind that of the majority Croats, and significantly decreases the higher the age bracket, as Table 7 indicates:

Table 7. Enrolment rates, 2005

	Majority population in close proximity to Roma	Roma	IDPs/Refugees	National Average
primary (7–15)	100	89	94	96
secondary (16–19)	81	36	77	85
tertiary (20+)	9	3	2	40

Source: UNDP²²

2.3 Retention and completion

Only a small number of Roma students continue their education after primary school, and according to information from governmental and local authorities, currently there are Roma students only at the Teachers' College in Čakovec and one Roma student at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb.²³ These few students were part of a positive discrimination initiative in which governmental and local authorities requested help for these students to enter higher education institutions, and initiated on the discretionary basis of the Medimurje County governor and one professor from the Faculty of Political Science. While the Government has pledged to support Roma in pursuing higher education, at present there is no institution or framework for systematic implementation.

The only available data about Roma education or their educational profile are those of the Croatian Central Bureau for Statistics. As Table 8 indicates, 3,860 Roma aged 15

²¹ Amnesty International, *Croatia Factsheet*.

²² UNDP, *Vulnerable Groups in Central and Southeast Europe*, Bratislava: UNDP, 2005. Available at <http://vulnerability.undp.sk/> (accessed 4 October 2007) (hereafter, UNDP, *Vulnerable Groups*).

²³ Interviews with officials at the Medimurje County Office, Čakovec, September 2006.

or over (40.97 per cent of the total Roma population), did not finish primary school, which is compulsory in Croatia.

Table 8. Educational attainment (population aged 20 and over) by population group and gender

	Total population	Roma population			Share of Roma in overall population (%)
		Men	Woman	Total	
Without education	105,332	563	1,132	1,695	0.00
Grades 1–3 of primary (compulsory) school	166,371	436	384	820	0.49
Grades 4–7 of primary (compulsory) school	414,008	775	570	1,345	0.00
Primary (compulsory) school	801,168	596	383	979	0.12
Secondary schools (total)	1,733,198	232	76	308	0.02
Secondary vocational schools (1–3 years' duration) and schools for qualified and highly qualified workers	1,003,052	202	61	263	0.03
Secondary vocational schools (4 years or more)	553,416	27	14	41	0.00
Gymnasium	176,730	3	1	4	0.00
Two years of college and vocational studies	150,167	5	–	5	0.00
Four years of college, art academies and university studies	267,885	6	2	8	0.00
MA	12,539	–	–	–	0.00
Ph.D	7,443	1	–	1	0.01
Unknown	24,715	24	14	38	0.15

Source: Central Bureau for Statistics, 2001

These data also clearly indicate the problem of gender inequality at all levels of education. Out of 308 Roma with a secondary school diploma, only 76 of them (24.7 per cent) are women, 80.3 per cent of whom had completed vocational secondary school. Only 14 Roma (or 0.15 per cent of the official total Roma population) have a college or university degree, out of whom only two Roma women have a degree from a college, an art academy or university study.

Other sources of information based on the 2001 Census that were included in the REF Needs Assessment paper are slightly different. Out of 5,161 Roma aged 15 years and over (for whom information about their educational attainment is known) 1,301 Roma, about 25.2 per cent of the official Roma population, have completed primary education, 322 Roma, about 6.2 per cent of the official Roma population, have completed secondary education, and 14, about 0.3 per cent, have completed tertiary education.²⁴

According to non-governmental sources such as Amnesty International, “It is estimated that only 27 per cent of Romani pupils enrolled in elementary schools complete their elementary education. In some schools, 90-100 per cent of Romani children do not complete elementary education.”²⁵

The transition from classroom-based to subject-based education, in the fifth grade, is the moment when most Roma children drop out.²⁶ In addition, it appears that there is also a high drop-out rate of Roma children from primary education for reasons that are related to social and cultural practices and the prevailing poverty of most Roma: children may be sent to work at an early age, while girls often marry in their early teens and leave school.²⁷

The 2005 UNDP survey also sheds light on this phenomenon. As shown in Table 9, the survey looked at the share of people who reached and completed grade 5 as a share of all aged 12 and above.

²⁴ P. Hobljaj, *Needs Assessment for the Roma Education Fund – Background Paper Croatia*, 2005, Annex II (table 9). Available at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTROMA/Resources/NAREportFinalCroatia.pdf> (accessed 12 April 2007) (hereafter, *Needs Assessment Croatia*).

²⁵ Amnesty International, *Croatia Factsheet*.

²⁶ Interview with an official at the Medimurje Social Welfare Office, Čakovec, September 2006.

²⁷ Interview with an official at the Medimurje Social Welfare Office, Čakovec, September 2006.

Table 9. Share of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5

	Majority population in close proximity to Roma	Roma	IDPs / Refugees	National average
Share of people aged 12 and above with at least incomplete secondary education	74	17	50	
Share of people aged 12 and above who spent more than 4 years in school	92	70	84	90

Source: UNDP, Vulnerable Groups

These data reveal that only a small percentage of Roma, 17 per cent, have attended school long enough to have at least some, but nevertheless incomplete, secondary education. Although not designed specifically to measure drop-out rates, these data do offer some insight as to who does not reach higher levels of education.

Startling data on grade repetition come from research conducted in the framework of this project. In one of the schools examined in a case study for this report, in the Podsused neighborhood of Zagreb, almost 90 per cent of Roma pupils repeat grades.²⁸ According to teachers, this large percentage of the Roma pupils repeating classes cannot be linked solely to their insufficient knowledge of Croatian, but also to inappropriate learning conditions in their homes.²⁹

According to data from Medimurje County, Roma pupils did not regularly attend school; that is one of the biggest problems in the education of the Roma minority.

²⁸ Interview with the Podsused school principal, Zagreb, September 2006, case study Kozari Bok. For each country report in this series of EUMAP reports on “Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma”, three case studies were carried out to supplement and corroborate data gathered from other sources. Information from the case studies is integrated throughout the body of each country report. Annex 2 includes additional details from each of the case study sites. In Croatia the three sites are Darda (Osijek-Baranja County), Kozari Bok (City of Zagreb) and Kuršanec (Medimurje County).

²⁹ Interviews with teachers, Zagreb, September 2006, case study Kozari Bok.

Table 10. Number of hours that Roma pupils did not attend regular primary school class in the school year 2005/2006 in Međimurje County

	With excuse	Without excuse	Total
Primary school Macince	3,117	456	3,573
Primary school Kuršanec	1,904	5,252	7,156
Primary school Mala Subotica	977	1,327	2,304
Primary school Podturen	N/A	1,009	N/A
Primary school Kotoriba	821	1,512	2,333

Source: Commission for Implementation,
Report on the Implementation of the Decade Action Plan

While the Primary Education Act requires children younger than 15 to attend school, and provides sanctions for the parents of children who leave school at an earlier age,³⁰ these legal sanctions are not officially enforced.³¹

2.4 Types and extent of segregation

While information on segregation is limited, there are indications that Roma in schools are effectively marginalised. According to different documents and public discussions, two main potential areas of segregation have been identified: the placement of Roma pupils in special education institutions, and the segregation of Roma pupils in separate classes within a mainstream school.

There is no information available on the number or proportion of Roma children in special schools, nor on the number of appeals filed by Roma parents contesting the placement of their children in such schools.

There have been a number of reports of segregation of Roma children into separate classes in schools in Croatia. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has raised concerns about this practice in the Međimurje region,³² and the

³⁰ Act on Primary Education, *Official Gazette*, No. 69/2003.

³¹ Interview with an official at the Međimurje Social Welfare Office, Čakovec, September 2006.

³² ECRI. *Third Report on Croatia*, CRI(2005)24, 17 December 2004, paragraph 143. Available at http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/ecri/1%2Decri/2%2Dcountry%2Dby%2Dcountry_approach/croatia/1croatia_cbc_3.asp#P593_85557 (accessed 12 April 2007).

European Roma Rights Center has also condemned this problem.³³ This practice is common even in the higher grades of primary education when there are far fewer Roma pupils, who are nevertheless placed in separate classes.³⁴

Amnesty International has reported that in the school year 2001/2002, in the primary schools of Macinec and Kuršanec, around 83 per cent and 88 per cent respectively of all Roma children were taught in separate classes.³⁵

Roma children are also often placed in classes that follow a “special”, simplified curriculum, which represents a much lower level of quality than the mainstream curricula.³⁶ ERRC has reported as follows:

Segregated Roma-only classes provide inferior quality education in the form of a considerably reduced curriculum designed for students with developmental problems. Consequently, children who have completed their primary education in separate Roma-only classes as a rule do not go on to mainstream secondary classes.³⁷

Officially there are no segregated schools in Croatia. According to data from Međimurje County, it is apparent that some schools do have a large majority of Roma students.³⁸ There are also some schools in Međimurje County where “Roma classes” are organised, ostensibly based on the principle of forming classes according to the pupils’ previous knowledge of Croatian, but even this explanation is not always valid for this form of segregation.³⁹ The ERRC filed an application at the European Court of Human Rights in late 2004, charging that Roma students in Međimurje County had been segregated in Roma-only classes, and that up to 60 per cent of Roma children in the county were in similar separate classes.⁴⁰ The case is still pending.

The ERRC points out that educational segregation based on race/ethnicity is in violation of numerous Croatian and international legal standards, including the European Convention on Human Rights – in particular, of Article 3 (freedom from

³³ European Roma Rights Center, *Shadow Report of the European Roma Rights Center on the Republic of Croatia’s Combined Second and Third Periodic Reports to the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW 32nd Session 10 to 28 January 2005) 2005. Available at <http://www.errc.org/db/00/E2/m000000E2.doc> (accessed 12 April 2007) (hereafter, ERRC Shadow Report), p. 4.

³⁴ Interview with Kuršanec school principal, Kuršanec, September 2006.

³⁵ Amnesty International, *Croatia Factsheet*.

³⁶ ECRI, Third Report on Croatia, CRI(2005) 24.

³⁷ ERRC Shadow Report, pp. 21–22.

³⁸ Međimurje County (2006), Official statistics.

³⁹ ERRC Shadow Report, pp. 21–22.

⁴⁰ European Roma Rights Center press release, *Croatian Romani Children Sue at European Court of Human Rights over Racial Segregation in Schools*. Available at <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2080> (accessed 12 April 2007).

degrading treatment), Article 2 Protocol 1 (right to education), Article 13 (right to an effective domestic remedy) and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination).⁴¹

3. GOVERNMENT EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

As both a candidate for EU membership and a participant in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015, Croatia has adopted two main policies to address the situation of Roma: the National Programme for Roma (NPR) and the Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 (hereafter, Decade Action Plan). Both the NPR and the Decade Action Plan include sections on education, with goals, indicators and proposed budget allocations. The main national education programme merely refers to these specialised documents in addressing the education of Roma, however. Substantial budget allocations for the implementation of the NPR and Decade Action Plan have been made, yet information on actual activities carried out is minimal. One government project, Improvements of Access and Quality of Roma education, for implementing elements of the Decade Action Plan has been funded by the Roma Education Fund.

Language issues present a serious obstacle for improving quality education for Roma; the Roma communities in Croatia are diverse, and there are two different language groups represented, neither of which is an official language of instruction. Roma teaching assistants have been working in a small number of schools, but it appears that the lack of training has limited the support that these assistants can offer in the classroom. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should reinforce efforts to introduce this position in classrooms wherever there are larger numbers of Roma students, and to ensure that adequate training and preparation are provided. This is all the more important given that no teachers are currently able to teach in any of the Romani languages, and teaching materials for working with Roma are extremely limited. The lack of official training for teachers working in multiethnic and multilingual classrooms should also be addressed, possibly using existing NGO courses and resources as a model.

3.1 Government Policy Documents

Article 14 of the Croatian Constitution reads as follows:

Everyone in the Republic of Croatia shall enjoy rights and freedoms, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other belief, national or social origin, property, birth, education, social status or other characteristics. All shall be equal before the law.⁴²

⁴¹ European Roma Rights Center, Press Release *Renewed Action on Racially Segregated Schools in Croatia*, 28 October 2004. Available at <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2048&archiv=1> (accessed 4 October 2007).

⁴² Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (Ustav Republike Hrvatske), consolidated text published in *Official Gazette*, No. 41/2001, together with its corrections published in *Official Gazette*, No. 55/2001, art. 14.

This constitutional framework is the basis of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities⁴³ and the legal system of the Republic of Croatia.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia has adopted two main policies related to Roma issues: the National Programme for Roma (NPR) and the Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 (hereafter, Decade Action Plan).

3.1.1 The National Programme for Roma

In 1999 the Government initiated drafting a programme with the intention of systematically addressing and resolving the problems of the Roma community, aiming to rapidly improve living conditions and to ensure the social inclusion of Roma while preserving their tradition and culture. The programme was prepared over four years and included consultation with the Councils of the Roma national minority,⁴⁴ representatives of Roma associations, Members of Parliament representing national minorities, local and regional self-government, human rights associations and the relevant ministries and State bodies. The draft was shared with Roma representatives and was publicly discussed, especially with the competent bodies of the counties with the largest numbers of Roma residents. There have been reports, however, that Roma themselves did not view the consultation process as adequate.⁴⁵ The resultant National Programme for Roma (*Nacionalni program za Rome*, NPR) was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia in October 2003.⁴⁶

State administration bodies, local and regional self-government, other governmental and non-governmental institutions, domestic and foreign associations, international organisations, Roma and Roma associations and other interested citizens of Croatia are responsible for implementing the NPR.⁴⁷

Upon the adoption of the NPR, the Government then established the Commission for the Implementation of the National Programme for Roma (*Povjerenstvo za praćenje*

⁴³ The Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities (Ustavni zakon o pravima nacionalnih manjina). *Official Gazette*, No. 155/02.

⁴⁴ The Act on the Rights of National Minorities provides for Councils of National Minorities at the local, regional and State level. They are consultative bodies that provide opinions and proposals on relevant minority issues. The Councils are intended to improve contacts between minority groups and government agencies at all levels, and at the local level are funded by municipality or county budgets. Act on the Rights of National Minorities, Section III.

⁴⁵ Amnesty International, *False Starts: The Exclusion of Romani Children from Primary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia*, AI Index: EUR 05/002/2006, 16 November 2006. Available at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGEUR050022006> (accessed 12 April 2007) (hereafter, Amnesty International, *False Starts*).

⁴⁶ National Programme for Roma.

⁴⁷ National Programme for Roma, Introduction.

provedbe Nacionalnog programa za Rome).⁴⁸ The Commission is responsible for the following:

- systematic monitoring and coordinating implementation of the National Programme for Roma;
- proposing measures for improvement of the implementation of the Programme;
- producing recommendations, opinions, expert explanations and reports, and guidelines with regard to the implementation of the Programme;
- proposing amendments to the Programme;
- monitoring the distribution and expenditure of funds that are allocated from the State budget for implementation of the Programme measures.⁴⁹

The Commission currently has 23 members; the chair is Jadranka Kosor, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity.⁵⁰ The other members are drawn from the relevant ministries, the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Office for National Minorities, the Office for Human Rights, Međimurje County, the City of Zagreb human rights NGOs, representatives of Roma councils at the local and regional levels and Roma associations.⁵¹ The Office for National Minorities proposes the members from NGOs and from Roma councils. The Commission publishes notes from its meetings on the internet, including a list of approved funding allocations.⁵² Five working groups within the Committee have been established, including one on education, science and sport. No information on the results from this working group is available, however.

The NPR comprises several sections, each with a set of goals, measures, deadlines and funding (for 2004). For the section on education, the goals outlined are as follows:

⁴⁸ Through a resolution adopted by the Government on 21 November 2003, pursuant to Article 23, paragraphs 1 and 3, of the Act on the Government of the Republic of Croatia, *Official Gazette*, No. 101/1998, 15/2000 and 117/2001). See

http://www.vlada.hr/nacionalniprogramromi/Enpzr_povjerenstvo.htm (accessed 11 April 2007).

⁴⁹ Resolution Establishing the Commission for Monitoring Implementation of the National Programme for Roma (Odluku o osnivanju Povjerenstva za praćenje provedbe Nacionalnog programa za Rome), available at

http://www.vlada.hr/nacionalniprogramromi/Enpzr_povjerenstvo.htm (accessed 11 April 2007) (hereafter, Resolution Establishing the Monitoring Commission).

⁵⁰ See the Government website at

http://www.vlada.hr/nacionalniprogramromi/Enpzr_clanovipovjerenstva.htm (accessed 12 November 2007).

⁵¹ Resolution Establishing the Monitoring Commission, point 3.

⁵² See <http://www.vlada.hr/nacionalniprogramromi/Enpzrsjednice.htm#10> (accessed 12 November 2007).

- Inclusion of Roma children in pre-school programmes or preparatory programmes for school;
- Inclusion of school-age children in regular educational programmes and encouraging them to pursue higher education;
- Inclusion of young people and adults in additional educational programmes in accordance with the principle of life-long learning;
- Inclusion of adult Roma in the project “Croatia of Literacy: the Path to the Desired Future”;
- Scholarships for high school and university students;
- Printing of a Romani dictionary and other publications in Romanes;
- Training teachers and their assistants.⁵³

The measures outlined to meet these goals include developing tailored pre-school programmes to better prepare Roma children, providing meals in pre-school and primary schools, counselling sessions for Roma parents, expanding second-chance education for Roma who did not complete primary school, and creating more opportunities for Roma children to participate in extracurricular and after-school activities.⁵⁴

However, the NPR also indicates that Roma children who have not received adequate preparation for primary school should be placed in special classes or special groups in the first grade of primary school⁵⁵ – this endorsement of segregation is out of step with the Programme’s stated aim of increasing Roma inclusion, and should be reconsidered. There is no other mention of the separation or segregation of Roma children in education in the NPR.

Funds for the implementation of the National Programme for Roma were increased in the State Budget of the Republic of Croatia for 2005 to HRK 1,780,000 (Croatian Kuna, approximately €243,835⁵⁶) has been allocated for the work of the Office for National Minorities, which is an increase of 90 per cent over the previous year. The total funding estimated for the Programme’s education measures in 2004 was HRK 9 million (approximately €123,288).⁵⁷ However, the European Commission, in its 2005 Progress Report on Croatia, noted the following:

⁵³ National Programme for Roma, Education Section, Goals; see <http://www.vlada.hr/nacionalniprogramromi/EnpztOIO.htm> (accessed 15 November 2007).

⁵⁴ National Programme for Roma, Education Section, Measures.

⁵⁵ National Programme for Roma, Education Section, Measure B.1.

⁵⁶ The exchange is calculated at HRK 7.3 = €1.

⁵⁷ National Programme for Roma, Education Section, Measures.

Croatia now needs to ensure implementation of its other obligations and commitments through provision of adequate funding and concerted action from all levels of Government so that real improvements in the Roma's position are achieved. It appears that the financing currently foreseen for implementing measures aimed at improving the position of Roma will not be sufficient.⁵⁸

In July 2007 the Commission for the Implementation of the National Programme for Roma prepared the Report on the Implementation of the National Programme for Roma in 2004, 2005 and 2006 (Izjesce o provodenju Nacionalnog programa za Rome za 2004., 2005. i 2006.godinu) and the document was accepted by the Government.

3.1.2 Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015

In parallel with the implementation of the measures proposed in the NPR, Croatia joined eight other European countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015.⁵⁹ The Government Office for National Minorities, in cooperation with the relevant ministries, Roma associations and other stakeholders, prepared an Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 (hereafter, Decade Action Plan) that was adopted in February 2005 and published on 31 March 2005.⁶⁰ The Decade Action Plan mirrors the NPR in four areas: education, health care, employment and housing/infrastructure. Each year, the ministries and other relevant Government bodies responsible for the execution of particular tasks are asked to determine which measures will be implemented the following year and to submit their proposals to the Working Group for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Programme for Roma. These proposals are available to the public. This Working Group is led by the Head of

⁵⁸ European Commission, Croatia 2005 Progress Report ({COM (2005) 561 final}), Brussels, 9 November 2005, available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/key_documents/2005/package/sec_1424_final_progress_report_hr_en.pdf (accessed 12 April 2007) (hereafter, EC Progress Report 2005), p. 23.

⁵⁹ The “Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015”, an initiative supported by the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the World Bank, is an international effort to combat discrimination and ensure that Roma have equal access to education, housing, employment and health care. Launched in February 2005 and endorsed by nine Central and Eastern European countries, the Decade is also supported by the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Program. For further details, see the Decade website (<http://www.romadecade.org>) (accessed 12 November 2007).

⁶⁰ Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 (*Akcijski plan Desetljeća za uključivanje Roma 2005.–2015*), available at http://www.vlada.hr/nacionalniprogramromi/Eapdzr_U.htm (accessed 12 April 2007) (hereafter, Decade Action Plan).

the Office for National Minorities, and includes representatives from the relevant ministries, from the employment bureau, and from Roma councils and NGOs.⁶¹

The Decade Action Plan's education section includes a chart of goals, indicators, implementing agencies, available data and data to be collected, cross-cutting issues, and deadlines and financing details for pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education.⁶² Each of these categories is generally a restatement of the NPR. A report published in June 2007 by the DecadeWatch Initiative⁶³ notes the following:

Contrary to the recommendations of the International Steering Committee of the Decade, the Croatian DAP mostly lists absolute indicators, which do not compare the situation of Roma to that of the non-Roma population. Many of the indicators measure progress in terms of the number of beneficiaries or the number of actions carried out towards a specific goal, rather than in terms of outcomes or results.⁶⁴

The Decade Action Plan is more explicit in its aim to promote desegregation, and includes a goal on the inclusion of Roma pupils in desegregated classes, although the mechanisms for implementing this goal are unclear.⁶⁵

For the implementation of the NPR, the Roma Education Fund has contributed €551,000, while the EU's Phare programme approved €4 million and in 2005 and 2006 the Government gave about 6.7 million HRK (approximately €917,800).⁶⁶ Funds for the implementation of the National Programme for Roma and Decade Action Plan were increased in the State budget in 2006 to HRK 11,886,760 (approximately €1,584,901). Funding for the implementation of the National Programme and the Decade Action Plan in 2007 has been allocated to the Office for National Minorities, the of Science, Education and Sport, the Ministry of Health, the

⁶¹ See the Government website at http://www.vlada.hr/nacionalniprogramromi/Eapdzr_Papdzr.htm (accessed 12 April 2007).

⁶² Decade Action Plan, Education Section, available at http://www.vlada.hr/nacionalniprogramromi/Eapdzr_O05-15.htm (accessed 12 April 2007) (hereafter, Decade Action Plan, Education Section).

⁶³ DecadeWatch is the first assessment of Government action on implementing the commitments expressed under the Decade, conducted by coalitions of Roma NGOs and activists from all countries participating in the Decade. DecadeWatch is supported by the Open Society Institute and the World Bank; see the Decade website for more information at <http://www.romadecade.org/index.php?content=6> (accessed 25 September 2007).

⁶⁴ DecadeWatch, *DecadeWatch: Roma Activists Assess the Progress of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015*, 11 June 2007, Croatia country chapter, p. 68, available at [http://demo.itent.hu/roma/portal/downloads/DecadeWatch/DecadeWatch%20-%20Croatia%20\(English;%20Final\).pdf](http://demo.itent.hu/roma/portal/downloads/DecadeWatch/DecadeWatch%20-%20Croatia%20(English;%20Final).pdf) (accessed 25 September 2007) (hereafter, DecadeWatch Croatia report 2007).

⁶⁵ Decade Action Plan, Education section.

⁶⁶ Commission for Implementation, *Report on the Implementation of the Decade Action Plan*, p. 1.

Ministry of Internal Affairs and other bodies, and amounts to HRK 13,812,634 (approximately €1,841,685).⁶⁷

3.1.3 The National Programme for the Integration into the European Union

The 2005 National Programme for the Integration of the Republic of Croatia into the European Union (EU Integration Programme)⁶⁸ is the third such annual plan, and includes short- and medium-term priorities in relation to human rights and minorities. The EU Integration Programme lists the following as short- and mid-term priority measures (2005–2007) in the implementation of the National Programme for Roma:

- Continued monitoring of the implementation of the National Programme;
- Carrying out a survey “The Roma in Croatia: assimilation or integration”;
- Organising seminars on the acceptance of Roma in the media, to familiarise the media and the majority population with the negative effects of stereotypes and prejudice;
- Organising a roundtable on the means of promotion and balanced reporting on the Roma with representatives of the media and Roma;
- Financing special shows on Roma in the Roma language on Croatian Radio, Croatian Television and other local media;
- Carrying out a survey on Roma in the media by independent experts;
- Acceptance of the Roma culture, rights and customs, providing of accommodation facilities for the activities of Roma until the construction of the Roma centres, and promotion of the Decade for the Roma.⁶⁹

Accession funding has also been allocated to projects improving education for Roma. The Government received a total of €1.3 million from the Phare programme in 2005, and €2.5 was allocated in 2006 for the project “Improvement of the living conditions of Roma people”.⁷⁰ Croatia is contributing an additional 30 per cent to this amount.

⁶⁷ Official data of the Government Office for National Minorities.
<http://www.vlada.hr/nacionalniprogramromi/npzrnovosti.html> (accessed 10 September 2007).

⁶⁸ National Programme for the Integration of the Republic of Croatia into the European Union, available on the website of the Croatian Parliament at
http://www.sabor.hr/DOWNLOAD/2005/07/20/program_en.pdf (hereafter, EU Integration Programme) (accessed 11 April 2007).

⁶⁹ EU Integration Programme, p. 54.

⁷⁰ Phare (2005/2006). Support programmes for Roma, available at
<http://www.vlada.hr/nacionalniprogramromi/phare0506.htm> (accessed 12 November 2007) (hereafter, Phare support programmes for Roma).

From this funding, €800,000 is slated for education purposes; the 2005 component consists of the following:

- Increasing enrolment in pre-primary education as preparation for primary school;
- In-service training for teachers to improve their education;
- Support for secondary education that will help in continuation of their education at the university;
- Second-chance programmes for adults, especially women.⁷¹

3.2 Government education programmes

The main education programme, the Education Sector Development Plan 2005–2010 (*Plan razvoja sustava odgoja i obrazovanja 2005.–2010.*) was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia on 9 June 2005. It was created as a basic document for a World Bank loan to finance education reform, and aims to direct educational policy to improve the education system, so that it includes legal aspects, human resources, financial matters, scientific aspects and expertise.⁷²

The specific educational needs of Roma are mentioned only briefly in this plan, and mainly with reference to the specialised programmes for Roma, the NPR and the Decade Action Plan.

In 2006 the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport applied for Roma Education Fund resources within the *Decade of Roma Inclusion*, intended for systematic changes in Roma education. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport consulted the Open Society Institute–Croatia in the REF application process regarding taking over a model piloted by OSI–Croatia in Baranja, and designed a project to extend the model into the Međimurje region. The project, “Improvements of Access and Quality of Roma Education”, includes a one-year quality pre-school element, after-school and mentoring activities, encouraging Roma organisations to cooperate with local authorities, and teacher training. The Project was approved by the REF in April 2006. It supports the educational component of the National Programme for Roma in two of its four main areas: pre-school education and primary education. A total of 1,668 students and 200 teachers will be targeted.⁷³

⁷¹ Phare support programmes for Roma.

⁷² Education Sector Development Plan 2005–2010 (*Plan razvoja sustava odgoja i obrazovanja 2005.–2010.*). Available at <http://public.mzos.hr/fgs.axd?id=10287> (accessed 12 April 2007) (hereafter, Education Development Plan).

⁷³ A list of REF funded projects is available at <http://www.romaeducationfund.hu> (accessed 22 October 2007).

3.2.1 Minority language

The right to education in languages and scripts of national minorities is exercised by Roma and members of other national minorities in the Republic of Croatia pursuant to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and the Law on the Education in Languages and Scripts of National Minorities.⁷⁴ According to these regulations and on the basis of the adopted educational programmes, Roma and members of other national minorities are entitled to education in their mother tongue starting from pre-school programmes, if they so desire. Based on the Law on Education in Languages and Scripts of National Minorities, there are three basic educational models of national minorities:

- *Model A* – teaching in national minority languages and script: Croatian programmes are translated into minority languages and supplemented by topics related to special characteristics of that national minority;
- *Model B* – teaching in two languages: humanities are taught in the national minority language, natural sciences in the Croatian language; educational programme as in model A;
- *Model C* – special care for mother tongue and culture: five additional hours per week in the language and script of a particular minority; programmes related to the special character of a minority are implemented by five subjects: national minority language and literature, history, geography, music and visual art.
- Teaching in which an ethnic minority language is taught in a form that is used in a local community.
- Special educational forms: summer school, winter school, distance education.
- Special early start programmes for Roma children (compulsory pre-school programme for Roma children).⁷⁵

There are two major language groups of Roma in Croatia: Roma of the Bayash language group, or the *ljimba d' bjaš* (a Romanian/Vlach dialect) and the Roma of the *Romani Chib* language group. Romani Chib has no unique or written standard; it is a dialect system with over 60 dialects.

The results of research conducted by the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth show even greater diversity: Romanes is predominately spoken in Roma families (78.9 per cent), in any of the dialects of the Roma language (*Romani Chib* is spoken by 42.4 per cent of the subjects, and Bayash is spoken by 36.5 per cent), Albanian is spoken by 11 per cent of the Roma surveyed, and Croatian is spoken

⁷⁴ Law on the Education in Languages and Scripts of National Minorities, *Official Gazette*, No. 51/00.

⁷⁵ Needs Assessment Croatia, p. 15.

in only 6 per cent of families, while 4 per cent of the subjects called the language of their everyday communication Romanian.⁷⁶ In Međimurje County, where the majority of the overall Roma population live, almost 98 per cent use Bayash.⁷⁷

In part due to this diversity, there has been no formal request for any Romani language to be included as an official language of instruction in Croatia, although Government documents have described some provisions being made. According to one source:

There are two groups organized in Čakovec for the children of the Roma ethnic community, while the Roma Union in Zagreb has groups of children aged between 2 and 15. The humanitarian association *Djeca prva* organizes play groups for 100 children of the Roma ethnic group of pre-school and early school age, integrated with the children of other nationalities and with mothers participating in the programme.⁷⁸

Given the extent to which language barriers are viewed as a major obstacle to the effective education of Roma, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should initiate dialogue with Roma leaders to ensure that one or more languages can be used in schools officially.

3.3 Desegregation

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport has not issued any official document (recommendation or guidelines) related to instructions on the organisation and regulation of class placement to avoid segregation, and indeed does not acknowledge that segregation is a problem in Croatia. In the absence of such instructions, school authorities and municipalities are forced to create their own programmes for the gradual integration of Roma. According to interviews with local authorities, they are trying to do their best but are concerned that the situation will become more urgent because the number of Roma pupils is rapidly increasing, while the number of non-Roma pupils is decreasing, and there is no official recommendation on how to organise multiethnic classrooms in the school.⁷⁹ The National Programme for Roma does not address desegregation, although the Decade Action Plan calls for the inclusion of Roma in desegregated classes.⁸⁰

In the school year 2006/2007 Roma pupils attended schools in ten counties in Croatia and about 90 per cent of them were in ethnically heterogeneous classrooms. In 2004

⁷⁶ State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, “Structure of Roma families and their perception of parenting” 2002.

⁷⁷ Interview with teacher in primary school, Kuršanec, September 2006.

⁷⁸ Republic of Croatia, Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, Institute for Educational Development, Croatian Education System Interim Report, Zagreb, June 2000, p. 38.

⁷⁹ Interview with Head of the State Office for Social Affairs in Međimurje County, August 2006.

⁸⁰ Decade Action Plan, Education section, Primary education, goal 5.

there were 27 ethnically homogeneous classrooms⁸¹ and 57 ethnically heterogeneous classrooms, while in 2006 there were 84 ethnically homogeneous classrooms and 180 ethnically heterogeneous classrooms with Roma pupils.⁸²

Table 11. Number and type of classrooms according to nationality in Međimurje County in the school year 2005/2006

	Ethnically heterogeneous classrooms	Ethnically homogeneous classrooms
Primary school Macince	12	8
Primary school Kuršanec	10	13
Primary school Mala Subotica	7	6
Primary school Podturen	13	0
Primary school Kotoriba	16	0

Source: Commission for Implementation,
Report on the Implementation of the Decade Action Plan

3.4 Roma teaching assistants/school mediators

On 1 December 2002, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport approved the model of job description for the position of teaching assistants in the groups with Roma national minority.⁸³ There were no Roma teaching assistants working at the schools before the job description was approved. According to a recent report, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport financed the employment of 18 Roma assistants in 2004 and 15 Roma assistants in 2006. The cost for them in 2005 was 434,948 HRK (approximately €59,582)⁸⁴ According to the Ministry, as of April 2007, seven new Roma assistants have been employed. Almost all of them are male, although there is one female assistant in the Kuršanec primary school.⁸⁵ These classroom aides are expected to work with Roma children whose first language is not Croatian, from the first to the fourth grade of primary school, and to support pupils in both the social and the academic aspects of education.

⁸¹ "Ethnically homogeneous classrooms" means that there are only Roma pupils in the class.

⁸² Commission for Implementation, *Report on the Implementation of the Decade Action Plan*, p. 10.

⁸³ Their salaries are approximately 2,500 HRK (€342) according to the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport.

⁸⁴ Commission for Implementation, *Report on the Implementation of the Decade Action Plan*, p. 71.

⁸⁵ This Roma assistant attended the same primary school as a pupil. Now she is working in that school and studying at the Teachers' College in Čakovec.

Assistants mostly live in the same settlement, or they are well acquainted with the settlement in which pupils they work with live. They must have at least a secondary school diploma, and be fluent both in Croatian and in the Romani language spoken by the pupils. According to the model job description, some of the teaching assistants' responsibilities are as follows: to assist the teacher in preparing the children and the students for attaining proficiency in Croatian; acquiring skills for studying and for attracting children to school; facilitating the process of communication between the teacher and the students; assisting in the interaction with the parents; participating in the educational process and the out-of-school activities under the supervision of the teacher when needed; assisting the teacher in choosing appropriate methods, approaches and materials for carrying out the educational process.⁸⁶

The employment of Roma teaching assistants is listed in the National Strategy for improvement of the situation of Roma.⁸⁷ Assistants are required to continue their education while working and are provided with support in this process. All of the assistants are paid by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. The school council and school principal are the two bodies that decide if an assistant can be hired for a particular school.

Concerns over the appropriate training and working conditions for the Roma assistants have been raised, however. In 2006, Amnesty International reported the following:

Some Romani activists and parents in Croatia have expressed concern that, while a teacher is working with non-Romani children in class, Romani pupils are left with poorly trained Romani assistants and may therefore receive substandard education. For the employment of Romani assistants to be truly beneficial and conducive to the inclusion of Roma in schools, they must receive the necessary training. This would enable them to participate in the teaching process more fully and meaningfully, without having their role restricted to that of an interpreter or language facilitator, and would produce positive results for Romani and non-Romani pupils alike.⁸⁸

Most assistants have completed three-year programmes in secondary school, meaning vocational schools. For those assistants the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport is offering administrative and financial support to complete an additional year to be able to enrol in a higher education institution. It appears, however, that many Roma assistants choose not to continue their education, although policies and regulations favourable for them to become teachers are in place.

⁸⁶ National Programme for Roma. Education Section. Training of teachers and their assistants.

⁸⁷ National Programme for Roma, Education Section, Pre-school Goal 4.

⁸⁸ Amnesty International, *False Starts*.

3.5 Romanes teachers

According to the Act on the Rights of National Minorities, universities are obliged to implement a programme of education of pre-school, primary and secondary school teachers in order to work in education in the language and script of a national minority.⁸⁹ No pedagogical college currently offers a curriculum in any of the major Roma languages, however, and there is no information regarding the proficiency of teachers in any of the languages used by the Roma communities in Croatia.

There is not a single teacher of Roma origin in Croatia, and only one person with a teaching diploma among the Roma population.⁹⁰ However, in 2004/2005 three Roma students began their education at the Teachers' College in Čakovec.

There are no goals in either the National Programme for Roma or the Decade Action Plan that call for increasing the number of teachers proficient in Romani languages.

3.6 Educational materials and curriculum policy

Each year the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport publishes a list of approved textbooks, and it is up to teachers to choose which ones they will use during the year. In some textbooks that are approved for use in the Croatian schools by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, there are references to national minorities. Nevertheless, the Roma national minority is not commonly mentioned.

According to the Croatian National Educational Standard (2006), which is the official plan and programme for Croatian primary schools, all students should be able to name the national minorities of the Republic of Croatia, and learn about their main cultural characteristics. In addition, all students should learn about Roma victims of the Second World War under the fascist "Independent State of Croatia".

The Decade Action Plan calls for the inclusion of content on Roma in the new school curricula,⁹¹ but there is no information on whether this measure has been carried out. A recent report by Amnesty International on education for Roma in several countries notes the following for the case of Croatia:

One of the points of the National Programme for Roma is the organization in primary schools of "optional activities for Romani children who want to nurture their Romani culture, customs and traditions" [...] Such activities should instead be open to all children, Roma and non-Roma alike, with a

⁸⁹ Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, art. 11 (7).

⁹⁰ This individual does not work in the school as a teacher, but instead leads a Roma NGO in Croatia that deals mostly with Roma education.

⁹¹ Decade Action Plan, Primary Education Goal 6.

view to introducing in schools a truly inclusive and multicultural curriculum.⁹²

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport financially supports the publication of specific books and other educational materials for Roma. In 2007 the largest textbook publishing company, Skolska knjiga, donated all educational materials on information technology for beginners to Roma in Međimurje County.

3.7 Teacher training and support

Pre-service teacher training in Croatia is conducted at different higher education institutions, which are part of the university system. Classroom teacher training for teachers who will teach at the lower elementary school level is conducted at teachers' academies. Subject teachers, who teach at higher elementary school level and secondary schools, are educated at specific faculties. At present, there are no courses related to teaching Roma offered in any institution of pre-service teacher training. Training courses related to teaching Roma were only offered as part of in-service training organised by some NGOs such as Step by Step, Forum for Freedom in Education, and so on.

The Agency for Education organises in-service teacher training in Croatia, but currently workshops and courses for the teachers of Roma students, or teaching and learning in a multicultural environment, are not offered. Most of the in-service training courses for teachers who are working with Roma are organised by NGOs active in education. Those working in the field have indicated that the lack of guidance in teaching children from diverse backgrounds, and particularly the lack of support for bilingual education, is a serious problem in areas with large numbers of Roma children. There is an understanding that children, particularly Roma, who come from disadvantaged households are unable to cope with the demands of the mainstream curriculum, and a consequent acceptance of the need to segregate Roma children to adequately tailor lessons to their abilities.⁹³ Training and ongoing support could help to ensure that teachers have the resources that they need to allow each child in a class to follow the material and prevent the separation of Roma children into classes where standards are lowered.

The Decade Action Plan includes several goals related to preparing teachers to work with Roma students: in pre-school, the Plan requires further training of pre-school teachers and staff for diversity, tolerance and equality,⁹⁴ in secondary education, it calls for further teacher training focusing on intercultural aspects and respect for diversity,⁹⁵ and in higher education it provides for teacher training courses on introducing students

⁹² Amnesty International, *False Starts*.

⁹³ OSI Roundtable, Zagreb, June 2007.

⁹⁴ Decade Action Plan, Education Section, Pre-school education Goal 4.

⁹⁵ Decade Action Plan, Education Section, Secondary education Goal 2.1.

to multiculturalism and more specifically, on Roma languages, culture and history.⁹⁶ There is no information on the steps that the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport has taken or will take to implement these measures.

3.8 Discrimination-monitoring mechanisms

Anti-discrimination mechanisms are part of all legal acts. Article 14 of the Constitution sets out a general equality clause, while the Constitutional Law on the Rights of the National Minorities forbids any type of discrimination based on belonging to a national minority, and guarantees legal equity and equal protection to all national minorities.⁹⁷ Croatia has sanctioned all forms of discrimination as a criminal act in its Criminal Code.⁹⁸

There is no specialised body to hear claims on discrimination, as will be required for entry into the EU under the Racial Equality Directive (Directive 2000/43). The European Commission observed the following in 2005:

In general terms, it appears that the level of protection against discrimination is still far from the EU standards requiring the implementation of the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin [...].⁹⁹

The Government aims to provide free legal aid for Roma within the framework of a comprehensive legal aid service, independent of the judicial authorities and of the bodies of State administration or bodies of local or regional self-government, within three years.¹⁰⁰ Preparation of the National Strategy against all types of discrimination is also ongoing.

Although there is no special institution or body, in Croatia there are three independent bodies that aim to help victims of discrimination or where legal help is offered on protection from discrimination: the Public Ombudsman, the Ombudsman for Gender Equity and the Ombudsman for Children.

⁹⁶ Decade Action Plan, Education Section, Higher education Goal 3.

⁹⁷ Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities, *Official Gazette*, No. 155/02, arts. 2 and 4.

⁹⁸ Criminal Code, *Official Gazette*, No. 110/97.

⁹⁹ EC Progress Report 2005, p. 19.

¹⁰⁰ Lovorka Kušan and Ina Zoon, *Report on Roma Access to Employment in Croatia*, 2004, available at http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/stabilitypact/activities/Croatia/AccessEmployment2004_en.asp (accessed 26 September 2007).

4. CONSTRAINTS ON ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Despite estimates that as few as half of pre-school age children actually attend pre-school in Croatia, the capacity of the pre-school system is already stretched. Positive examples of providing support to enrol Roma children in preschool coming from Medmurje county should be considered, and adequate space provided for increased numbers of children. While in some areas the costs of pre-school for Roma children are covered by central or local government resources, this support is not required or systematic. Governmental and other support underwrites some of the costs of primary school attendance for Roma, but again, this is unregulated and done primarily on individual initiative. Research suggests that some Roma communities are so isolated that children begin school with only the most minimal exposure to the Croatian language, and find it difficult to keep up in the classroom. As teachers have little training or support in working with children from varying backgrounds, the solution in some cases has been to place Roma children in separate classes where the pace is adjusted. This form of segregation persists, despite widespread agreement that all children could benefit from studying in mixed classes, and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should take the necessary steps to prepare teachers and schools for integrated learning.

4.1 Structural constraints

Pre-school education is not obligatory except for 150 hours prior to enrolment in the first grade.¹⁰¹ Pre-schools can be established by local governments (municipalities and towns), legal entities and religious communities. According to data gathered by the Central Bureau for Statistics, in the school year 2002/2003 there were 1,067 pre-schools; of these, 920 pre-schools were private, and religious communities founded 54.

In general, the number of children enrolled in pre-schools is quite low – less than half of the total pre-school-age population; however, some 95 per cent of children complete the compulsory 150 hours.¹⁰² Nevertheless, there is inadequate pre-school capacity in Croatia. However, the number of newly-established pre-school education programmes for Roma is increasing. While in 2004 there were 12 programmes including 345 Roma children in 2006, there are currently eight pre-school programmes in which 707 Roma children participate.¹⁰³

4.2 Legal and administrative requirements

Procedures for enrolling children in kindergartens are flexible, but the Law on pre-school education emphasises the point that children from families with three or more children, children of single parents, and children from families that are living on welfare should be given priority when enrolling in the public pre-schools.

¹⁰¹ Pre-school Education Act, *Official Gazette*, No. 10/97.

¹⁰² Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, Official statistics 2006.

¹⁰³ Commission for Implementation, *Report on the Implementation of the Decade Action Plan*, p. 5.

Procedures for enrolling children in the first grade of school are determined by the Ordinance on elementary school enrolment.¹⁰⁴ The procedure set out in the Ordinance begins with compiling the official register of children, and goes on to cover conducting initial enrolment (to determine the number of school-age children), assessments of the children's abilities, conducting a medical check, and finalising the school enrolment.¹⁰⁵

According to the Constitution and the Law on Basic Education, parents and legal guardians are obligated to enrol their children in primary school, and make sure that children regularly attend classes and complete school assignments.¹⁰⁶ According to the law, the documents needed for enrolment of a child in primary schools are a medical exam and birth certificate.

The formal procedure for the school enrolment requires parents to apply and enrol their children in schools. Roma families face a disadvantage under these enrolment procedures, as the law regulates enrolment according to the child's permanent address, and the majority of Roma do not have valid identification documents. This is an additional obstacle in the school enrolment procedure. The effectiveness of the law regulations is highly dependent on the organisation and engagements of the social welfare centres and responsible administration in a local community.

An example of good practices in reducing these barriers comes from Međimurje County. The county officially announces a call for obligatory pre-school, which is required by the law, to ensure that the data in official records correspond to the actual situation. These formal announcements are followed by active recruitment of pre-school children and involve the social welfare centres and Roma teaching assistants who are employed in pre-school programmes. In addition, school-age children must undergo a medical check and test on the level of their basic knowledge. This is an additional opportunity to announce obligatory pre-school programmes to parents of school-age children.

4.3 Costs

Pre-school education is not provided free of charge. The body operating the pre-school determines the costs. The pre-school financing is decentralised. Hence, pre-schools are commonly run by the local governments. Nevertheless, the costs of the special pre-school programmes (such as special educational needs, programmes for the gifted, and early start programmes for children of ethnic minorities) are in most cases covered from the central budget. Local government is in charge of organising transportation to

¹⁰⁴ Ministry of Education and Culture Ordinance on the Enrolment of Children in Primary Schools, *Official Gazette*, No. 13/1991.

¹⁰⁵ Ministry of Education and Culture Ordinance on the Enrolment of Children in Primary Schools, *Official Gazette*, No. 13/1991.

¹⁰⁶ Act on Primary Education, *Official Gazette*, No. 69/03.

and from school for the students in lower primary grades who live three or more kilometres away from a school. The transportation should be organised for students in higher primary grades who live five or more kilometres away from a school.¹⁰⁷ From the school year 2007/2008 all primary school students and first-graders in secondary schools have free transportation. In the school year 2004/2005, some schools in Varaždin and Međimurje County had organised pre-school programmes in primary schools. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport co-financed them with 530 million HRK (approximately €70,667). In schools that have organised day care, Roma pupils are included and all financial costs are covered through either local or central government.

Both central Government and local government finance a pre-school education programme for Roma children in Međimurje County. The programme cost of the special programmes is calculated in the central budget and includes actual pre-school programmes, transportation, clothes, food and hygiene.¹⁰⁸ In some communities such as the city of Čakovec, in Međimurje County, the local government covers food and transportation costs, organises transportation and has found sponsors for other costs.

Primary education is obligatory and free of charge, and children from families with low socio-economic status often receive free textbooks and other financial support that covers school trips, extracurricular activities, and theatre and museum visits. Beginning with the school year 2007/2008 all primary school students will receive all textbooks and some other materials such as maps free of charge.

Since 2001, when the process of decentralising the education system began, some counties have offered textbooks free of charge, but there are no legal regulations that would require local authorities to do so, even for disadvantaged students. School directors are generally responsible for financial management issues, and may seek support from school funds, social welfare centres and private donations. This type of financial support is not regulated on an institutional level, but is initiated on a county level and commonly includes Roma children. There are no standardised criteria to determine which children are eligible for such aid, which is subject to the discretion of both donors and schools.

In some time periods, Roma children received a free school meal. Since parents started to receive financial support for their children (separate from the private donations to schools) schools started to require parental participation in return for the costs of school meals.

Secondary school education is not obligatory and its financing is not strictly regulated. Tuition is free, but families bear all other costs (such as textbooks and transportation). There are a number of available scholarships for secondary school students, and funds that cover housing costs in student dormitories. Certain local communities are very

¹⁰⁷ Act on Primary Education, *Official Gazette*, No. 69/03.

¹⁰⁸ Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, Official statistics 2006.

supportive and provide financial support for Roma students, but since the law does not regulate this type of support, it is highly variable, depending on the financial status of the local community and their willingness to make such allocations. But as part of the “Secondary school for all” programme, textbooks and transportation will be free of charge for all children in the first grade of secondary school from the school year 2007/2008.

Roma parents have noted that the poverty that children experience at home has a negative impact on their success at school. According to one parent, “If I had a bathroom and more rooms for children, they would have better learning conditions.”¹⁰⁹ In 2006 28 Roma pupils were living in student dormitories; of these, only two were girls. The costs for dormitories for Roma are paid from the State budget.¹¹⁰

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, and the Government Office for National Minorities¹¹¹ do provide financial support for Roma students in secondary education and students in higher education institutions through scholarships. However, there have been allegations that the screening process for these scholarships is inadequate, and funds that are intended for Roma students are given to non-Roma students; the applicant provides official documents where the nationality given is Croatian, which the Ministry accepts with an attached official statement made in the public notary office.¹¹² In the school year 2006/2007 89 scholarships for Roma students were awarded (51 to boys, 38 to girls). Out of that number, 81 scholarships are for secondary school students (49 boys, 32 girls) and 8 (2 men, 6 women) scholarships for students in higher education institutions.¹¹³

The Government Office for National Minorities also financed training in English language for Roma students in Zagreb and Čakovec.

4.4 Residential segregation/Geographical isolation

Research on the residential segregation of Roma communities in Croatia is scarce. A report to the Council of Europe in 2002 noted the following:

[The] Roma housing situation in Croatia reveals a strong pattern of residential segregation along ethnic lines.

Almost half of the registered [Roma] settlements (40 out of 100) are isolated, situated outside localities where the majority population live [...] Distances

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Roma parent, Zagreb, September 2006, case study Kozari Bok.

¹¹⁰ Commission for Implementation, *Report on the Implementation of the Decade Action Plan*, p. 16.

¹¹¹ The Government Office for National Minorities gave four scholarships for Roma students to higher education institutions in 2007.

¹¹² OSI Roundtable, Zagreb, June 2007.

¹¹³ Commission for Implementation, *Report on the Implementation of the Decade Action Plan*, p. 77.

between settlements and the nearest localities are often large, between two and five kilometres, roads, if they exist, are badly maintained, public transport, if it exist[s], is hardly reachable. In these settlements there are no educational or health services, and no commercial or cultural facilities.¹¹⁴

Teachers have indicated that due to the isolation of Roma communities, the limited obligatory pre-school period is insufficient to prepare Roma children for integration with their non-Roma peers, in terms of both language and culture.¹¹⁵

4.5 School and class placement procedures

According to the Ordinance on primary school enrolment, children should enrol in the school nearest to their residence, but exceptions are possible if parents provide a valid reason in a written request.¹¹⁶ Roma parents rarely request that their children attend a school outside their place of residence.

The overrepresentation of Roma children in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities is not well documented in Croatia. Parents should be present for the assessment procedure,¹¹⁷ and must give their informed consent before their children are placed in special education institutions.¹¹⁸

Enrolment in mainstream schools or special education institutions is regulated according to two procedures:

- All school-age children undergo a school entrance assessment. If the assessment commission determines that a child has special educational needs, a child is directed towards a special education institution.
- Children attending a mainstream school can be re-examined if it appears that their educational needs are not met. Children are commonly redirected to special education institutions in a period between the second and fifth grades.

Prior to enrolment in the first grade of primary school, children are evaluated by a commission (including the director of a special school, a pedagogue, a psychologist and classroom teachers) that is convened by the municipal health and education

¹¹⁴ Ina Zoon, *Report on Obstacles Facing the Roma Minority of Croatia in Accessing Citizenship, Housing, Health and Social Assistance Rights*, 2002, available at http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/stabilitypact/activities/Croatia/housingandsocialrights2002_en.asp (accessed 25 September 2007).

¹¹⁵ OSI Roundtable, Zagreb, June 2007.

¹¹⁶ Regulations on Primary Education of Students with Developmental Handicaps, *Official Gazette*, No. 23/91.

¹¹⁷ Ministry of Education and Culture Ordinance on the Enrolment of Children in Primary Schools, *Official Gazette*, No. 13/1991, art. 3.

¹¹⁸ Act on Primary Education (Zakon o osnovnom školstvu), *Official Gazette*, No. 69/03.

departments. This commission is part of the local health administration, and not the education system.¹¹⁹

There is no one widely accepted model that is followed when forming classes, which are drawn up based on the characteristics of each school, while in schools with a high number of Roma students, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport has issued additional support and guidelines. In areas where there is a high proportion of Roma families, there are classes with a large majority of Roma students.

The lack of knowledge of the Croatian language is often used as a reason for the placement of Roma children into separate classes, and has even been upheld by the Croatian courts. In April 2002, the families of 57 Roma children filed a lawsuit with the Čakovec Municipal Court charging the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, Međimurje County and the primary schools of Orehovica, Macinec, Kuršanec and Podturen with the segregation of Roma children on the basis of their ethnic origins. In September 2002 the court rejected the complaint, ruling that the alleged lack of adequate knowledge of the Croatian language justified the creation of separate Roma classes.¹²⁰

Material from one of the case studies conducted for this report illustrates how Roma-only classes affect education outcomes. In Međimurje County, Roma children commonly do not speak Croatian at home, which significantly influences their readiness for school. In the school in Kuršanec village, there are ethnically mixed classes and Roma-only classes. Roma parents indicate that they would prefer their children to attend mixed classes, because they believe that their children would socially and academically benefit from more extensive interaction with non-Roma children.¹²¹ Some parents expressed concern that not all Roma children have a chance to attend mixed classes: only Roma children who have a good command of Croatian attend classes with non-Roma children, while other Roma pupils attend ethnically homogeneous classes.¹²²

Teachers working in the lower grades (from the first to the fourth) of the Kuršanec school believe that Roma pupils who are able to understand and speak Croatian should attend heterogeneous classes. These are mainly pupils that previously attended a pre-school programme for Roma children. Nevertheless, teachers emphasise the point that Roma children who do not have a basic knowledge of Croatian would not benefit from the learning environment in heterogeneous classes.¹²³ Lower-grade teachers believe that

¹¹⁹ See EUMAP/MHI, *Rights of People with Intellectual Disabilities: Access to Education and Employment – Croatia*, Croatia, OSI, 2005, available at http://www.eumap.org/topics/inteldis/reports/national/croatia/id_cro.pdf (accessed 12 April 2007), p. 40.

¹²⁰ Amnesty International, *Croatia Factsheet*.

¹²¹ Interviews with Roma parents, Kuršanec, September 2006, case study Kuršanec.

¹²² Interviews with Roma parents, Kuršanec, September 2006, case study Kuršanec.

¹²³ Interviews with teachers, Kuršanec, September 2006, case study Kuršanec.

these children need additional written and oral practice exercises in Croatian, so that they will be able to deal with the course content in other school subjects.¹²⁴

According to higher grade teachers, all pupils should begin to attend mixed classes, as early as possible. According to the one of the teachers interviewed, “Only pupils who attended heterogeneous classes learned Croatian and were able to deal with the primary school programme on a satisfactory level.”¹²⁵

Some of the younger Roma pupils indicated that they would prefer to attend mixed classes, because they enjoy the company of Croatian pupils and feel that they are in a position to learn more.¹²⁶ Nevertheless, some of the pupils interviewed do not feel comfortable in the classes that they attend together with Croatian pupils and reported that they are mocked when they do not know something or when they receive a bad grade.¹²⁷ According to the majority of Roma pupils, they enjoy the company of their Roma peers in homogeneous Roma classes, but in these classes it is harder to focus on learning.¹²⁸

4.6 Language

Insufficient knowledge of the Croatian language at the time of entrance into the first grade of primary school is widely considered to be a major factor in the low educational attainment of the Roma population in Croatia. Only 6 per cent of Roma families surveyed for a study by the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth responded that they speak Croatian at home.¹²⁹

Both the National Programme for Roma and the Decade Action Plan place considerable emphasis on the importance of increasing Roma children’s proficiency in Croatian, and many Roma activists consider it a priority to ensure that Roma children are educated in Croatian. The Decade Action Plan’s goal to include Roma children in two-year pre-school programmes is one measure designed to improve children’s knowledge of Croatian before they begin primary school.¹³⁰ However, there must be a corresponding effort to train pre-school and school teachers to work with children whose first language is not Croatian, to effectively implement this goal. A course on Croatian as a second language, which was previously offered at the University of Zagreb, is no longer available.

¹²⁴ Interviews with teachers, Kuršanec, September 2006, case study Kuršanec.

¹²⁵ Interview with a teacher, Kuršanec, September 2006, case study Kuršanec.

¹²⁶ Interviews with Roma students, Kuršanec, September 2006, case study Kuršanec.

¹²⁷ Interviews with Roma students, Kuršanec, September 2006, case study Kuršanec.

¹²⁸ Interviews with Roma students, Kuršanec, September 2006, case study Kuršanec.

¹²⁹ Needs Assessment Croatia, p. 6.

¹³⁰ Decade Action Plan, Education section, Pre-school education Goal 6.

5. BARRIERS TO QUALITY EDUCATION

As in other areas, there is a lack of data on Roma pupils' school results. There have been reports that teachers may issue passing marks to Roma children even where they have not learned the relevant material, in order to permit them to move up to the next grade. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport should address the absence of official standards for marking students that makes such a practice possible, through the development of objective criteria for students' assessment. There is no monitoring of the actual pedagogical practice in the classroom, and the existing system of school inspections does not require any evaluation of teachers' work or students' performance. There is a need also to address this weakness by providing for quality monitoring and support to working teachers, especially, in diverse schools and classrooms. Greater efforts to reach out to Roma communities could help schools to better meet the needs of Roma children; at the national level, more vigorous efforts to prevent discrimination and promote tolerance would help to ensure that all children have access to relevant, high-quality education.

5.1 School facilities and human resources

No studies have been conducted on the infrastructure condition of schools with a high proportion of Roma. However, the EU's Progress Report on Croatia from 2005 notes that in general schools are "poorly equipped".¹³¹ Due to capacity issues, most schools work in two or three shifts. Some schools with a high number of Roma pupils, such as those in Beli Manastir, Zagreb, Rijeka, Kuršanec and Mala Subotica¹³² have good school infrastructure.

Croatia has a high unemployment rate (15.7 per cent), and 2 per cent of unemployed people hold a teachers' degree.¹³³ Younger teachers are commonly employed in rural areas, where most of the schools with a majority of Roma children are located. Many teachers commute from urban environments, to work in a rural area, which has had a negative impact on the teachers' overall involvement in the life of the school and local community where they teach. There is also a higher turnover of teachers employed in rural areas, as positions in towns and cities are considered more desirable. These factors have an impact on the quality of education available to all children in such areas, including Roma.

In most schools, especially at the primary level, there is a shortage of expert associates (pedagogues, psychologists, and the like). In schools with high proportions of Roma, these needs are felt even more acutely.

There are no goals in either the NPR or the Decade Action Plan that relate specifically to facilities or human resources, except on increasing the number of Roma teachers.

¹³¹ EC, Progress Report 2005, p. 44.

¹³² The primary school in Mala Subotica was constructed in 2005.

¹³³ Central Bureau for Statistics, 2001.

5.2 School results

School results form the key criterion for enrolling in higher education – grades from the seventh and eighth grades in primary school determine where a pupil can enrol in secondary school. School results from secondary schools and the result in the final exam are one of the criteria for enrolment in higher education institutions.

School results of Roma students are significantly lower than the results of other students. Although there are no official statistics on school results selected by ethnicity, the available information suggests that a significantly larger number of Roma students must repeat a class, receive lower final grades, have behavioural problems, and finally do not complete elementary school.¹³⁴ Even those who complete their schooling may not have acquired the knowledge expected. In Croatia there are no official criteria for grading, so assessment is based on the subjective opinion of the teacher. In many cases, teachers award higher grades to Roma pupils just to enable them to pass, although those grades are not in line with the pupils' understanding of the material.

Although there are no official statistics based on school documentation and reports, there are suggestions that Roma pupils who attended pre-school achieve better results, and the drop-out rate among them is lower than it is among those pupils who were not included in any pre-school programmes.¹³⁵

5.3 Curricular standards

There are several different components to the curriculum in Croatia, some of which are prescribed by the Ministry, some at the school level, and some by teachers themselves. The Government has elaborated a description of the curriculum in its responses to the European Union's pre-accession application questionnaire as follows:

Three types of curricula are an active part of school practice:

1. The framework curriculum which is passed in a centralized manner with the approval of the Minister of Education and Sports, and which contains a common compulsory part and an optional part.
2. The implementing curriculum which is passed by the school, and which elaborates the content of compulsory subjects by taking into account the local characteristics (history, geography, culture, etc.) and the level of knowledge and choice of optional subjects according to the students' interests, and the human and material resources of the school.
3. The operational curriculum which is produced individually by a teacher, or group of teachers of individual subjects, and is based on the school implementing curriculum. The teachers elaborate the contents and adapt them to the conditions of the school, the capacities of the students, and the

¹³⁴ OSI Roundtable Zagreb, June 2007.

¹³⁵ See, generally, P. Hobljaj (ed), *Izveštaj evaluacije interventnog programa predškole* (Evaluation Report on the Intervention Pre-school Programme), Zagreb: Open Society Institute, 2004.

local characteristics, by choosing methods, textbooks and other sources of knowledge.¹³⁶

It is therefore possible for schools or teachers to tailor a substantial portion of their lessons to the needs of their students. However, in practice there have been charges that this has meant that Roma children are held to lower standards, and given an inferior quality of education. The European Roma Rights Center's petition to the European Court of Human Rights noted that "The teaching syllabus for the pupils attending separate Roma-only classes is significantly reduced in scope and volume compared to the officially prescribed teaching plan and program."¹³⁷

Teachers have indicated that Roma pupils are not able to assimilate the material from the standard curriculum at the same pace or to the extent that non-Roma pupils can, due to language and cultural differences. The curriculum in all-Roma classes is accordingly reduced because the pupils "cannot relate to issues that are too far outside their own experience".¹³⁸ This may suggest that in practice the curriculum is not sufficiently flexible to allow teachers to meet the needs of a multiethnic classroom, and does not incorporate approaches that would give teachers a better means to relate the material to the individual children.

In 2005 some schools in Međimurje and Varaždin County were organising extracurricular activities related to Roma culture and tradition (such as music, art, literacy, and so on).

In the Croatian education system, grading is based on the individual teacher's criteria, and students have raised the concern that they are not graded objectively. More transparent evaluation and grading of student work are needed both on the primary and secondary school level. On the secondary level the State Matura could serve as a starting point for an improvement of the grading criteria and the establishment of clearer grading patterns.

5.4 Classroom practice and pedagogy

In Croatia, there is no external or informal evaluation of teachers' work, and it is not possible to draw any conclusions with regard to the quality of teaching in schools with a majority of Roma students. Teachers working in schools with a majority of Roma students do not receive additional training for work with the Roma population. Some local authorities (the city of Rijeka, Primorsko-Goranska County and the city of

¹³⁶ Government of the Republic of Croatia, *Information Provided by the Government to the Questionnaire of the European Commission*, Chapter 18, Education, available at <http://www.vlada.hr/zakoni/mei/Chp18/Chp18.pdf> (accessed 14 April 2007), pp. 29–30.

¹³⁷ The European Roma Rights Center, *ERRC Legal Action in Croatian School Segregation Case*, 2003. Available at <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=321> (accessed 9 November 2007).

¹³⁸ OSI Roundtable, Zagreb, June 2007.

Čakovec¹³⁹) have been financing self-evaluation of the primary schools¹⁴⁰ in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their schools.

As noted above, some experts have indicated that teaching methodologies for use in diverse classrooms are not appropriate for use with Roma children in Croatia, but it appears that such methods are not widely supported or used in the classroom in any case.¹⁴¹ The lack of bilingual education opportunities also contributes to frustration on the part both of teachers and of the Roma community.¹⁴²

5.5 School–community relations

Education governance in Croatia is conducted on three levels: central (the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport), regional (21 counties), regional units (counties are grouped under the six regional departments of the Agency for Education, which focuses on quality control and evaluation), and local (schools). The school governmental body is a school council, which consists of three school representatives (three teachers), two representatives of the Parents' Council and two representatives of the owners (local community or city, county).

In primary schools, each class has a parents' representative in a school council. Some schools have well-organised cooperation between the school and the local community. However, no Roma parents serve as representatives in any of the school councils in Croatia, except in the Kuršanec primary school.

In the lower grades of primary school, parents are commonly involved in the work of the classes, but their involvement is dependent on the overall school atmosphere, and teachers' interests and organisational abilities. Most commonly, parents come to schools to make presentations on topics in the area of their expertise, or may organise classroom visits to sites of special interest. There are no reports of Roma parents participating in such activities.

Within the Decade Action Plan there are activities related to informing Roma parents about the need to include their children in pre-school education programmes. At the end of 2006 there were 350 meetings around the country with Roma parents, organised by schools in co-operation with local authorities.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Self-evaluation is part of the local development programme in education "School Improvement and Sustainable Leadership – Čakovec Process".

¹⁴⁰ Some of those schools have Roma students.

¹⁴¹ OSI Roundtable, Zagreb, June 2007.

¹⁴² OSI Roundtable, Zagreb, June 2007.

¹⁴³ Commission for Implementation, *Report on the Implementation of the Decade Action Plan*, p. 4.

5.6 Discriminatory attitudes

Croatian society has mostly expressed a negative attitude toward the Roma. Certain forms of social labelling or stigmatising do exist. The marginalisation of Roma is mostly visible in several important dimensions: economic, spatial, cultural and political.

Research conducted in 1995 on a representative sample of 2,715 secondary school students in Croatia examined the level of acceptance or rejection of certain ethnic groups.¹⁴⁴ Out of 13 ethnic groups, only Serbs and Montenegrins (at a time when Croatia was at war with then-Yugoslavia) were ranked lower than Roma on most of the attributes from the Bogardus social distance scale.¹⁴⁵

Roma pupils report experiencing stigmatisation in schools, especially in situations in which the Roma are called Gypsies. According to the representative of a Roma NGO, the most difficult problem in the process of integrating the Roma is precisely the question of identity.¹⁴⁶ Roma pupils themselves note that they enjoy the opportunity to play with children of other ethnicities, but that they dislike hearing negative comments and experience injustice from other children and teachers. One girl said “During the physical education class one boy approached me and called me Gypsy. I reported this to a teacher and she told me not to bother this boy.”¹⁴⁷

5.7 School inspections

Formal education inspections ensure the application of school laws, just like other laws and individual rules relating to the rights and obligations of employees, the rights and responsibilities of students and parents, and the rights and responsibilities of the local community.

The Agency for Education of the Republic of Croatia conducts the school supervision. It is a non-profit public institution that offers professional support on a pre-school, primary and secondary level of education. The Agency for Education also conducts monitoring, assessing the quality of the teaching and educational processes, and the introduction of innovations.

These two forms of monitoring are intended to ensure the implementation of national educational policy. However, there have been concerns raised about whether this form of monitoring has an effect on the quality of education offered; as there is no

¹⁴⁴ Hrvatić, N., & Posavec, K. (2000). Intercultural education and Roma in Croatia. *Intercultural Education*. 11(1), 93-105. and Previšić, V. (1996). Sociodemographic characteristics of secondary-school students and social distance towards national and religious groups. *Social Research – Journal for General Social Issues*. 5(5-6), 859-874.

¹⁴⁵ E. S. Bogardus, “A Social Distance Scale”, *Sociology and Social Research* 17 (1933), pp. 265–271.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with a Roma NGO representative, Zagreb, December 2006.

¹⁴⁷ Interviews with Roma pupils, Zagreb, September 2006, case study Kozari Bok.

evaluation of curricular standards, there is no way to determine whether a teacher's efforts are reflected in student success.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ OSI Roundtable, Zagreb, June 2007.

ANNEX 1. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

A1.1 Structure and organisation

The educational system in Croatia includes pre-school education, primary education, secondary education and university education. Pre-school education is available for children from the age of six months to their entrance to the first grade of primary school.

All pre-primary education programmes must have authorisation from the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, and are established as legal entities. Primary education is obligatory and free of charge for all children aged seven to fifteen. The secondary school system in Croatia includes general education and vocational education. Each stage of education can be provided by public, private and church educational institutions, and public schools and institutions of learning. According to law regulations, citizens may open private schools and learning centres.¹⁴⁹ There are a total of 5 private elementary and 27 private secondary schools.

Compulsory basic education enrolls students from seven to fifteen years of age, with the current structure that consists of four years of classroom-based curriculum and four years of subject-based curriculum. The primary school participation rate is 96.5 per cent.

Secondary education enrolls students from 15 to 19 years of age. The total of 460 various programmes last three or four years, while some short programmes last two years. The secondary school participation rate is 86 per cent.

Tertiary education includes non-university and university education that lasts two to six years. The tertiary education participation rate is 31.3 per cent, of which 22.9 per cent is university education.

Pre-school education (institutional) [ISCED 0] takes place from the time when a child is one year old and lasts until the age of six or seven. It takes place in nurseries or kindergartens. There is also the “pre-school” that basically represents a “zero school year” as a form of preparation for primary school. The Pre-school Education Act regulates the activity of pre-school education.¹⁵⁰ Pre-school education is not compulsory and attendance at pre-school education institutions is not a prerequisite for enrolment at compulsory school. The founders of pre-school education institutions are local self-government units (districts and towns), natural and legal persons or religious communities.

Pre-school education is realised through regular programmes, which last from five to ten hours a day. The average number of children per group is 20, with one pre-school

¹⁴⁹ Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, *Official Gazette*, No. 41/01.

¹⁵⁰ Law on Pre-school Education, *Official Gazette*, No. 10/97.

teacher for every 12 children. Since 2000 there has been a growing tendency for children to attend pre-school education institutions. The pre-school programme, comprising 150 hours of teaching (free of charge for the parents), involves around 95 per cent of the child population in the year prior to their enrolment at elementary school.

Since pre-school education in Croatia is highly decentralised, some local communities have initiated pre-school programmes for Roma children, which usually include some compensatory elements and longer-than-usual school preparatory programmes (from October to July).

Pre-school education includes children of the members of national minorities, such as Austrians, Czechs, Germans, Hungarians, Italians, Roma, Serbs and others. The mainstream programmes also include children with special needs and children with minor disabilities, as well as gifted children, for whom special educational and developmental programmes are being developed.

Primary education (compulsory education) [ISCED 1–2] provides a broad general education lasting eight years. Primary education is organised in two four-year-long stages: single-teacher education (where only one teacher does all the teaching) [ISCED 1] and subject teaching (where the teaching is done by subject teachers) [ISCED 2]. Primary schools may comprise one or more branch schools; these are mostly four-grade schools for first- to fourth-grade pupils, mainly in the so-called mixed class, but there are eight-grade branch schools as well. Organisationally, the work of elementary schools is done in one shift (20 per cent), two shifts (73 per cent) and three shifts (7 per cent).

Secondary education [ISCED 3] is divided into four-year general education (gymnasium), four-year vocational education (technical and other vocational schools), four-year art education and three-year vocational schools and professional schools for occupations that require lower educational qualifications.

In upper secondary education, occupations requiring lower and medium educational qualifications are divided into 33 fields of work (mechanical engineering, shipbuilding, metallurgy, economics and commerce, hotels and tourism, agriculture, health care, railway service, printing, and so on). The programmes for crafts occupations, which last for three years, are carried out in two ways: education within a unified system entirely within the school, and education within a dual system where students do their practical work in an external workshop.

From 2009 a State Matura will be implemented with the aim of increasing the quality of teaching and learning by introducing new quality assurance procedures.

A1.2 Legal roles and decision-making

In 2001, Croatia started the process of decentralisation of the educational system, starting with financial decentralisation and continuing into management, the curriculum and human resources. The education governance is conducted on three levels: central (Ministry of Science, Education and Sport), regional (21 counties), regional units (counties are grouped in the six regional departments of the Institute for School Improvement, which focuses on quality control and evaluation), and local (schools).

The Ministry retains overall responsibility for all levels of educational system and is the main policy-making body with major financial responsibility and control. All the functions, apart from primary education, are transferred, with regard to their fiscal capacity to the municipalities. According to estimates of the network of schools and their capacities, primary education is decentralised down the level of the towns. The decentralised expenditures of primary schools that are not in the area of these towns are taken over by the municipalities.¹⁵¹

The process of decentralisation of finances started with the changes to the Law on Primary Education and the Law on Secondary Education¹⁵² from 1 July 2001. The process is based on the transfer of the founding rights for primary and secondary schools, which includes the obligation for partial financing of educational programmes.

The act of transfer of rights happened on 1 January 2002, when schools became owners of the school buildings. This legally means that school owners cannot sell or rent the school building without agreement on the part of the school founders. School statutes regulate the amount of resources that school owners control, as the amount is not specified by law. Towns have founding rights for establishing primary schools, while municipalities have founding rights establishing primary and secondary schools. Primary schools from smaller towns that do not have the required level of income are funded on a municipal level. The Ministry of Finance determines which towns can be financial carriers. All municipalities have at least one town that serves as a school founder.

The two main decision-making bodies are the school council and school director. School councils consist of seven members (three teachers, two parents and two county representatives). A school council is responsible for the yearly financial and working plan. Although the employment of new school personnel is under school directors' authority, enquiries for new teaching positions are directed towards the local authorities and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. Schools have autonomy when employing and dismissing teachers. Teachers' salaries are determined on the State

¹⁵¹ Ministry of Finance *Decentralization of the Public Sector in Croatia*, 2001. Available at <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UNTC/UNPAN017656.pdf> (accessed 22 October 2007).

¹⁵² Law on Secondary Education, *Official Gazette*, No. 69/03.

level, but local government can decide to place additional funds to raise the salary level. This option is rarely utilised, and additional funds from local sources are generally directed towards the implementation of additional school projects and programmes.

A1.3 School Funding

Pre-school education is organised and financed on the local level.¹⁵³ According to the Law on pre-school education,¹⁵⁴ pre-school education is co-financed from the central budget for children with special needs, gifted children, children from ethnic minorities (a total of 1,700 Czech, Roma, Serbian and Italian children in 2005) and preparatory year programmes (a total of 16,000 children who were not involved in the regular pre-school programmes in 2005). The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport has determined specific criteria and measures for co-financing pre-school programmes, based on the number of children and the length of the programme.¹⁵⁵ The Ministry verifies pre-school education investments for each fiscal year. The pre-school education investments from the central budget in the time period from 2001 to 2004 are presented in Table A1.

Table A1. Pre-school education investments from the central budget 2001–2004

Programme	2001	2002	2003	2004
Special needs	570	653	541	937
Gifted children	0	0	66	156
Ethnic minorities	110	117	143	196
Pre-school ¹⁵⁶	0	0	159	469
Total	679	770	910	1,758
Capital expenditures	359	635	1,780	1,308
TOTAL	1,039	1,405	2,690	3,066

Source: Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, 2005

¹⁵³ Law on Pre-school Education, *Official Gazette*, No. 10/97.

¹⁵⁴ Law on Pre-school Education, art. 50.

¹⁵⁵ Regulations of methods of disposition of funds from the state budget and measures of co-financing pre-school education, *Official Gazette*, No. 134/97.

¹⁵⁶ Meaning short preparation for primary school.

Finances needed for the work of public schools, separate classes or educational groups in a language of an ethnic minority are provided from the central budget.¹⁵⁷ Centralised costs for primary and secondary school consist of gross earnings for employees in primary and secondary schools, travelling costs for employees in primary schools, compensation for employees, increased costs of schooling for additional programmes for ethnic minorities, programmes for children with special needs, school library equipment, information technology programmes, in-service training of teachers, capital projects (only for projects that started prior to July 2001), participation in financing of alternative and private schools, and other programmes of common interest.

¹⁵⁷ Act on Education in the Language and Scripts of National Minorities (Zakon o odgoju i obrazovanju na jeziku i pismu nacionalnih manjina), *Official Gazette*, No. 51/00 and 56/00.

ANNEX 2. CASE STUDIES

A2.1 Case study: Darda (Osijek-Baranja County)

A2.1.1 Administrative Unit

Osijek-Baranja County is located in the north-eastern region of the country. The total population of the county in 2001 was 330,506, of whom 72,583 people are aged 17 or under.¹⁵⁸ The main city is Osijek. After Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia in 1991, Serbian forces held the eastern part of the country for five years, and from 1996 to 1998 the region was under the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES).¹⁵⁹ The county's population is over 80 per cent Croat, but also includes Serbs, Hungarians and Roma.¹⁶⁰

Osijek-Baranja County has a lower GDP than other regions in Croatia. Darda is situated in the south-western part of Osijek-Baranja County, approximately ten kilometres from the regional centre Osijek. According to the 2001 Census, in Darda there were a total of 5,394 people, 3 per cent of whom were Roma. Other ethnic groups that live in Darda are Croats (52 per cent), Serbs (28 per cent), Hungarians (8 per cent) and others.¹⁶¹

A2.1.2 Roma and the Community

Local authorities in Osijek-Baranja County do not have up-to-date data on Roma households the members of which are legally registered as residents. According to demographic data, which were collected for the 2001 census, there are 314 Roma households in Osijek-Baranja County, with an average of 3.6 people per household. In 2001, there were a total of 977 Roma people in Osijek-Baranja County (0.3 per cent of the total population).¹⁶² Roma people in Darda live in a total of 12 separate communities and 19 joint communities with other ethnicities.¹⁶³

Croatian counties largely differ in terms of the amount of money allocated to the Roma community on a local level. For example, in 2006, Osijek-Baranja County allocated HRK 90,000 (approximately €12,400) for the Roma National Council, which is 0.06 per cent of the Osijek-Baranja County budget. In addition, the Roma

¹⁵⁸ CBS, Census Data 2001.

¹⁵⁹ See the official UNTAES website at http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co_mission/untaes.htm (accessed 18 October 2007).

¹⁶⁰ CBS, Census Data 2001.

¹⁶¹ CBS, Census Data 2001.

¹⁶² CBS, Census Data 2001.

¹⁶³ Interview with local NGO representative, Darda, June 2006.

Organisation in Beli Manastir, the “Roma Heart–Organisation of Roma” and the Roma Culture Club “Darda” each received HRK 4,000 (approximately €550).

In Osijek-Baranja County, there is a National Council of Roma through which Roma people participate in local governance. The National Council of Roma is active in offering solutions, opinions and suggestions, and proposes candidates for the county elections.

According to data collected in 2004, on the percentage of Romanes-speakers in the county, 8 per cent of people who identify themselves as Roma speak the Romani Chib dialect, 39 per cent speak Bayash, 31 per cent speak other Romani dialects, and 22 per cent of Roma do not speak any Romani dialect.¹⁶⁴ Local non-Roma people who live near the Roma community do not speak any Romani language.

In Osijek-Baranja County Roma people live in the existing administrative units, villages and towns. According to the Osijek-Baranja County programme of activities and measures for improvement of community infrastructure in the Roma communities,¹⁶⁵ the level of infrastructure differs in different locations. The majority of these towns and villages do have electricity, streetlights and road access.

In Darda there are three separate Roma settlements: Novo naselje, Zlatnica and Kod groblja. Novo naselje and Zlatnica are typical Roma settlements where Roma people live in a separate community, while Kod groblja is a joint community of Roma and non-Roma people. Darda has a health centre, which is a central public health institution for people living in a town.

Novo naselje consists of brick houses, which were built for workers in the early 1960s. On average, each brick house has several three-bedroom flats. The Roma families who live in these houses do not own them. The roads crossing the settlement are in poor condition, although this Roma settlement is a part of Darda and has good public transportation links via buses and trains to the neighbouring towns of Osijek and Beli Manastir. Novo naselje has a water supply infrastructure and access to the sewage network. There are no food stores in Novo naselje, but there is a plan to build a Roma social centre in 2007.

Zlatnica is the second large settlement in Darda and has a majority Roma population. Roma people came to Darda from other villages in Baranja, after a flood in 1965. Houses in Zlatnica are privately owned, and they differ from each other in terms of their size and the way in which they were built. The road passing through Darda is narrow and in poor condition. Zlatnica is the only part of Darda that does not have a water supply infrastructure and access to the sewage system. There are no public institutions in Zlatnica.

¹⁶⁴ N. Hrvatić, “Roma People in Croatia: From Migrations to Intercultural Relations”, *Migrations and Ethnical Themes* 4 (2004), pp. 367–385 (hereafter, Hrvatić, “Roma People in Croatia”).

¹⁶⁵ Report on the National Programme for Roma in Osijek-Baranja County (2006).

Kod groblja is a settlement with an ethnically mixed population. Houses in Kod groblja are privately owned, and public infrastructure and overall living conditions are much better than those in Novo naselje and Zlatnica. The roads passing through Kod groblja are well kept, and the whole settlement has access to the water supply infrastructure and the sewage system, and electricity and telephone lines.

Although the main social interactions of the Roma community are confined to Roma people in their settlements, relationships between Roma and non-Roma people in Darda are formed and maintained more often than they are in other parts of Croatia. It is significant that Roma children report that they have non-Roma friends and commonly visit their houses to play and study together.¹⁶⁶

A2.1.3 Education

School and education network

According to the information provided by the director of the Darda school, in 2006 the school received HRK 40,000 (approximately €5,300) from the local government.¹⁶⁷ The school administration noted that it is hard to determine the total amount of money received from the central level and the amount of money received from the local level. Nevertheless, it is known that the money that is received from the central Government covers teacher and other staff salaries, and additional programmes that are organised for children of ethnic minorities.¹⁶⁸ The aforementioned money is comparable to the yearly operating budget of other schools in Croatia and is sufficient to run a school.

The elementary school in Darda (grades 1–8) has 640 students. This is the only school in the town, and draws students from all three Roma neighbourhoods.

Administrative requirements for access

Since the Roma population in Darda is quite homogeneous and there are clear data on the number of Roma families in Osijek-Baranja County, it is administratively easier to reach parents of school-age children and inform them about the school enrolment procedure. This is a procedure that the school administration practises on a yearly basis. In addition, the Roma population in Osijek-Baranja County speak Croatian, and thus they have a better understanding of the regulations.

Costs

The additional cost of schooling was a frequent cause for concern among Roma parents from Darda. These costs are based on the requirements for sports clothes that children should have during the physical education classes and other additional materials that

¹⁶⁶ Interviews with Roma children, Darda, July 2006.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with the director of the Darda school, August 2006.

¹⁶⁸ Interviews with teachers at the Darda school, September 2006.

their children need in their classes. Roma parents report that these requirements are hard to meet due to the fact that they are not employed and subsist on social welfare support.¹⁶⁹ It is not possible to speculate on the exact amount of the social welfare support received, since it is determined on an individual basis.

School and class placement procedures

Classes are formed according to the results in the school enrolment tests, so that each class has children of various abilities. The school entrance testing process is not standardised, but it is conducted by a physician specialising in medicine in schools and by the school expert team (which includes the school psychologist, a school pedagogue and a classroom teacher). The assessment is made to determine the level of knowledge of each child, and the classes are formed so that they are equal according to the pupils' ability level, gender and nationality. In the Darda school there are pupils of different nationalities (Roma, Croat, Serb, German and Hungarian) and the goal is to have different nationalities in each of the classes. In the Darda school, classes are formed in order to have a proportional number of male and female pupils, and pupils of various ethnicities. There are no ethnically homogeneous classes in the Darda school. The school director believes that their class placement procedure is effective, and that their results prove that mixed classes are working well.¹⁷⁰ Roma parents from Darda indicated that their children benefit from socialisation and interaction with non-Roma children.¹⁷¹

A large majority of the pupils interviewed expressed their satisfaction with the fact that they are attending ethnically heterogeneous classes, and appreciate the opportunity to interact with children of different ethnicities and to learn Croatian.¹⁷²

School infrastructure and human resources

The average number of pupils per class in the Darda school is 25. The classrooms and hallways are spacious, so that there is enough room for pupils. School bags, shoes and jackets are stored in separate rooms. Teachers organise the seating arrangements, and ensure that Roma and non-Roma pupils share desks.¹⁷³ In a cases when pupils may choose with whom they will share a desk, Roma pupils commonly share desks.¹⁷⁴

In the Darda school, there are a total of 35 personal computers. All the computers are in the information technology classroom and are used by pupils who attend classes

¹⁶⁹ Interviews with Roma parents, Darda, July 2006.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with the director of the school in Darda, August 2006.

¹⁷¹ Interviews with Roma parents, Darda, July 2006.

¹⁷² Interviews with Roma students, Darda, July 2006.

¹⁷³ Interview with a teacher, Darda, September 2006.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with a teacher, Darda, September 2006.

there. It is interesting that all of the pupils from lower grades interviewed expressed their desire to work more often on school computers.¹⁷⁵

While the majority of the teachers from the Darda school have teaching credentials for those courses that they are teaching, the art teacher does not have any formal education in the area of art. In the Darda school there are no Roma teaching assistants or helpers. The school director is familiar with the State programmes on training for Roma teaching assistants, but did not receive any official announcement from the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport on this issue.¹⁷⁶

Enrolment data and school retention and completion

As shown in Table A2, there is a significant change in the number of Roma pupils who attend schools in Osijek-Baranja County. Local authorities have unofficial information suggesting that this change is not related to the school drop-outs, but to the fact that a larger number of Roma pupils who attend schools declare themselves to be of a non-Roma ethnicity.

Table A2. Primary school network in Osijek-Baranja County

	Primary schools	
	2005	2006
Total number of schools	24	19
Number of Roma pupils enrolled	281	237
Total number of segregated schools	0	0
Number of pupils enrolled in segregated schools	0	0

Source: Official Statistics for Osijek-Baranja County, 2006

In Osijek-Baranja County, it is common that girls leave schools prior to completion, due to early marriage. With regard to the number of pre-school-age children, some children are not registered, and so it is not possible to track them.

In Table A3, data on primary school enrolment for Osijek-Baranja County are presented.

¹⁷⁵ Interviews with Roma students, Darda, July 2006.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with the director of the Darda school, August 2006.

Table A3. Primary school enrolment in Osijek-Baranja County

Enrolment Numbers									
	Elementary education (compulsory)								
COUNTY	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	Total
Osijek-Baranja*	32	27	28	35	52	28	19	16	237

Source: Official Statistics for Osijek-Baranja County, 2006

School results

In the Darda school, all of the Roma pupils achieve basic literacy by the fourth grade.¹⁷⁷ According to the unofficial data given by the school director, in the Darda school almost half the Roma pupils repeat classes.¹⁷⁸ Roma pupils interviewed frequently mentioned the fact that school subjects are quite difficult. One girl said, however, “I like to go to school because that is an opportunity for me to learn to read and write. These skills will help me in the future, because I will be able to help my children with their school once I get married and have children.”¹⁷⁹

At the same time Roma pupils state that their parents are not in a position to help them with their learning and that they would benefit from an extended school day.¹⁸⁰

In the school, Roma pupils are active members of various folklore and cultural societies, and have good results in the sports competitions. According to interviews, some of the Roma pupils do achieve good results in subject areas such as mathematics, foreign languages and literature. Nevertheless, most of the Roma pupils could report only about positive feedback that they received from their physical education teachers.¹⁸¹

School–community relations

Various extracurricular programmes that are implemented in the Darda school give provision for parental participation in the school activities. According to the opinion of some teachers, Roma parents are commonly involved in the extracurricular programmes. One of the teachers interviewed said “Roma mothers participated in the extracurricular activities in my class. They helped with redecoration of the classroom.” Nevertheless, some other teachers and school personnel comment on the low interest of the parents in participating in the school activities. Conversely, Roma parents

¹⁷⁷ Interview with a teacher, Darda, July 2006.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with the director of the Darda school, August 2006.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with a student at the Darda school, July 2006.

¹⁸⁰ Interviews with Roma students, Darda, July 2006.

¹⁸¹ Interviews with Roma students, Darda, July 2006.

interviewed say that they would be more than willing to participate in the school activities but nobody invites them.

Teachers believe that Roma parents play a crucial role in their children's school success. It is easy to recognise Roma pupils who have parents who are actively engaged and help them with their studying. The Roma pupils interviewed believe that their parents do not have the necessary knowledge to help them with their studies and that they would benefit from an extended school day, and the opportunity to receive additional help with their homework from teachers.

Discriminatory attitudes

Roma pupils in the Darda school commonly comment that they enjoy the opportunity to study and play with children of other ethnicities, but that they dislike hearing negative comments. One Roma girl said "Other children insult us, telling us that we are Gypsies and that we should not be in their company."¹⁸²

Educational materials and curriculum policy

In the Darda school, free textbooks are available for all first-grade pupils. The amount of money that is given to the parents of first-grade pupils is HRK 500 (approximately €70), and this is provided from the local government sources.

As elsewhere in Croatia, in the Darda school there is no bilingual curriculum for Roma students. The school library does have some materials on Romani history and culture.

Teacher training and support

In the Darda school, teachers participated in the "Teacher Training for Critical Thinking Project", which was sponsored by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. The external institutions conduct the official evaluations of the project, and the school received feedback on the programme results. In 2004, OSI Croatia has implemented the "After-School Tutoring Program for Roma Children" as a part of the Roma Education Pilot Project in Beli Manastir (also in Osijek-Baranja County). At the present time, the after-school tutoring programme has not been implemented.

Teachers reported that they would appreciate the opportunity to attend bilingual education classes if they were to be offered. The main issue is that of time, because they are currently involved in other teacher training programmes offered by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. These programmes are linked to the ongoing changes in the Croatian educational system and are geared towards the implementation of the Croatian National Educational Standard.

¹⁸² Interview with a student, Darda, July 2006.

Discriminatory attitudes

In the Darda school, a majority of the concerns that were expressed in the interviews conducted for the purpose of this case study are related to the name-calling that Roma pupils experience from their school peers.¹⁸³

School mobility

In the Darda school, there is not a high drop-out rate for Roma children. In Osijek-Baranja County generally, there is no evidence of non-Roma pupils transferring from schools with a high percentage of Roma pupils to schools with a low percentage of Roma (the phenomenon of so-called “white flight”). Also, there are no cases of Roma pupils transferring to another school.¹⁸⁴

A2.2 Case Study: Kozari Bok (City of Zagreb)

A2.2.1 Administrative Unit

Zagreb is the capital of Croatia, located in the central region of the country. With a population of 779,145, it is also the largest city, and has both a city assembly and 17 district self-governments that are elected locally.¹⁸⁵

In the City of Zagreb, Roma people have settlements in ten city districts/locations (Kozari Bok, Borongaj, Ferenščica, Plinarsko naselje, Struge, Sopot, Savica, Petruševac, Požarinje and Dubec). Roma communities in Zagreb are not independent administrative units. According to the only available demographic data on Roma population in the City of Zagreb, there are a total of 410 Roma households in Zagreb with an average of 5.6 people per household.¹⁸⁶ These numbers are not confirmed by the Roma NGOs/leaders. In Zagreb, Roma live both in separate communities and mixed communities with other ethnicities. This case study focuses on the Roma settlement in Kozari Bok, where Roma people live in a mixed community.

Representation of Roma in the local councils is determined according to the number of Roma in the total population. There are no reserved places for Roma representation on the local councils. County administrative representatives do not have exact data on the number of Roma who hold positions in different towns, municipality and county councils. There is no Roma representative in the Zagreb City Council.

¹⁸³ Interviews with pupils from Darda school, June 2006.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with the director of the Darda school, June 2006.

¹⁸⁵ City of Zagreb website, available at <http://www.zagreb.hr/Dokument.nsf/AboutZagreb?OpenPage> (accessed 15 April 2007).

¹⁸⁶ Central Bureau for Statistics, 2001.

A2.2.2 Roma and the Community

According to research findings from 2004, in Zagreb 48.2 per cent of the Roma population speak Romani Chib, 4.5 per cent speak Bayash, while 7.1 per cent speak another dialect, and 40.2 per cent do not speak any dialect of Romanes.¹⁸⁷

The Roma population in Kozari Bok use various Romanes dialects in their everyday life. Although parents have a basic knowledge of Croatian, they do not speak to their children in Croatian. Nevertheless, Roma parents in Zagreb emphasise the point that it is very important for their children to learn Croatian language and culture in schools, as a poor knowledge of the language has a negative impact on the children's school success.¹⁸⁸

Kozari Bok is a part of the town with a large Roma population. There is an existing community infrastructure that includes road access, access to the sewage system, gas, electricity, telephones and transportation. Still, the majority of Roma families cannot afford to use the existing infrastructure, and live in houses without electricity and running water. These families generally use community water supplies, and brick stoves for cooking and heating. Roma parents who live in Kozari Bok emphasise the point that their living conditions have a significant influence on their children's school achievement.¹⁸⁹

There is a wide range of living conditions for the Roma communities in Zagreb. Some families in the north-eastern part of the country are quite wealthy and have established retail businesses, but in Kozari Bok (in the south-eastern part of Zagreb), Roma families live in poor or extremely poor conditions. The poorest families live in houses made from various recycled materials, while somewhat wealthier families are living in larger brick houses.

The public transportation facilities in Kozari Bok are quite good: there is a regular bus line near the Roma settlements as well as a streetcar line. Kozari Bok does not have its own post office, bank, cinema or theatre. The roads in the settlement were paved several years ago, and this improved the quality of life in this part of Zagreb. There is a Catholic church in the Kozari Bok centre, but there is no exact information on the religious affiliation of the Roma people who live in the settlement. There are a couple of privately owned food stores and a Health Centre that was founded by the city government.

The primary school and a public pre-school are within walking distance from the settlement. The schools serve an entire city district. The nearest high school is in a neighbouring district and it takes approximately 20 minutes to get there by public transportation.

¹⁸⁷ Hrvatić, "Roma People in Croatia".

¹⁸⁸ Interviews with Roma parents, Zagreb, September 2006.

¹⁸⁹ Interviews with Roma parents, Zagreb, September 2006.

According to interviews, there have been no conflicts between the Roma and non-Roma population around Kozari Bok. The Roma community is culturally and socially isolated, and interactions are mainly within the settlement. The large majority of Roma in the settlement are unemployed, so it is more difficult to develop interaction and relations with their non-Roma neighbours. There are no existing institutional contexts for these relationships. School-age children have an advantage in this sense, as Roma and non-Roma children commonly play together. After leaving school these contacts usually vanish. Roma leaders interact more frequently with the non-Roma community.

Roma parents from the City of Zagreb who have been interviewed are aware of the situation in other schools, but emphasise the point that the school that their children attend is rather good. Roma pupils interviewed reported that they do have interaction with children who attend schools in other parts of town.¹⁹⁰

A2.2.3 Education

The school and education network

Roma pupils from Kozari Bok attend either the primary school in Kozari Bok or the primary school in Podsused (a neighbouring city district). According to statements of the parents interviewed, they usually choose to enrol their children in the school that is close to their home.

The primary school in Podsused is in the vicinity of Kozari Bok. The school building is 50 years old, but is in good condition. The Podsused school has seven regular classrooms, ten classrooms that are equipped for subject teaching, and a school library with various educational materials and books. The school gym is equipped with a locker room and two toilets. The school is equipped with a school kitchen, administrative rooms and separate toilets for pupils and teachers.

At the beginning of the school year 2006/2007, there were a total of 654 pupils in the school. There were a total of 30 Roma pupils in the Podsused school and they were placed in 28 classes. The researchers had easier access to the school teachers and principal from the Podsused school. They previously cooperated with the Podsused school and established good relations with the school administrative personnel.

School financing is equivalent to the criteria and measures in all other schools in Croatia. Since there is partial decentralisation of educational financing in Croatia, decentralised funds are divided according to the decisions made on a local governmental level. Although the City of Zagreb has a significantly higher GDP than the other regions in Croatia, this fact does not significantly influence educational financing. According to the information provided by the director of the Podsused

¹⁹⁰ Interviews with Roma parents and children, Zagreb, September 2006.

school, in 2006 the local government financed certain school repairs and renovated school playgrounds.¹⁹¹

According to the governmental politics, additional financial sources are allocated for the programmes that are directly linked to the Decade for Roma Action Plan and other governmental initiatives. The Podsused school is not included in any of these programmes, and does not receive additional funds.

The Podsused school council is in charge of various decisions related to financing, teachers, the school curriculum and extracurricular activities.

Administrative requirements for access

Enrolment at the Podsused school follows the procedures set out in the law on enrolment (see section 3.2). Potential problems with enrolment of Roma children do occur, due to the fact that some parents do not speak Croatian, and do not have a full understanding of the requirements for entry. In addition, it is difficult to determine the actual size of the Roma population in the City of Zagreb, due to the relative dispersion of Roma settlements, which affects both the accuracy of information on the number of school-age children at the community level and the likelihood that the Regulation on the elementary school enrolment will be reinforced with all parents of school-age children.

Costs

Primary school in Croatia is compulsory and free of charge. Estimated costs incurred by the participation in local public school is HRK 500 (approximately €70) per school year, and is based on the daily spending for transportation, school trips, and so on. In the case of Roma pupils, these costs are usually covered from the local government funds, private businesses or Red Cross sources. The school coordinates division of some of the funds (such as private businesses donations), but on some occasions they are directly given to the Roma families.

The additional cost of education is based on the requirements for additional educational materials for certain classes, such as art classes or physical education. Roma parents from Kozari Bok have indicated that they do not have sufficient financial funds to meet these requirements.¹⁹² Also, they report that their living conditions influence children's school success.¹⁹³

School and class placement procedures

In Zagreb classes are formed according to the points that children earn during the school entrance assessment. The assessment is made to determine the level of

¹⁹¹ Interview with the director of the Podsused school, Zagreb, September 2006.

¹⁹² Interviews with Roma parents, Zagreb, September 2006.

¹⁹³ Interviews with Roma parents, Zagreb, September 2006.

knowledge of each child, and the classes are formed to equally distribute children according to ability level, gender and nationality.

In the Podsused school, Roma pupils are included in heterogeneous classes, but they are also placed in supplementary classes where they receive additional instruction in the Croatian language. Supplementary classes commonly take place after or before regular school hours. The children attend them on a weekly basis, and they last 45 minutes (the same as a regular school class). Classroom teachers and teachers of Croatian language teach these classes. The teacher–student ratio in supplementary classes allows a more individualised approach to each student. The school director emphasises the point that it would be necessary to have Roma assistants and mediators who would facilitate communication between teachers and Roma pupils in the first grades of primary school.¹⁹⁴

The director also stated the opinion that Roma pupils should attend mainstream classes with other pupils. According to teachers, however, Roma pupils should attend regular classes with other children, but it is necessary for them to attend additional classes to give them additional practice in Croatian.¹⁹⁵ One teacher suggested that Roma pupils should attend regular classes with other pupils, but that it would be useful to hold additional classes in Romanes for Roma children.¹⁹⁶

Roma parents strongly believe that it is good for their children to attend classes together with pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. They believe that an ethnically heterogeneous environment positively influences their children’s learning.¹⁹⁷

Based on responses from teachers at the Podsused school, it appears that they are aware of the poor living conditions that some of their Roma pupils experience, and understand that it is necessary to provide Roma pupils with additional instruction and help with their everyday school tasks. As one teacher said, “Potential problems with reading and writing skills of Roma pupils can be avoided with additional attention that should be given to Roma pupils in the first grade of elementary school. The greatest problem that Roma pupils are facing is inadequate learning conditions at their homes.”¹⁹⁸

According to the Podsused school director, Roma pupils are not commonly placed in special schools. This is a result of the extensive assessment of children’s abilities and educational needs, which is conducted during the school entrance testing.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ Interview with the director of the Podsused school, Zagreb, September 2006.

¹⁹⁵ Interviews with teachers at the Podsused school, Zagreb, September 2006.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with a teacher at the Podsused school, Zagreb, September 2006.

¹⁹⁷ Interviews with Roma parents, Zagreb, September 2006.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with a teacher at the Podsused school, Zagreb, September 2006.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with the director of the Podsused school, Zagreb, September 2006.

School infrastructure and human resources

In the Podsused school there are traditional and specialised classes, a fully equipped school gymnasium, library, and kitchen with dining room. The school library is well equipped, and has a separate reading area. Each classroom has a television and video. In addition, teachers of geography, biology and chemistry commonly use laptops to facilitate their teaching. The information technology classroom has 14 personal computers. Parents from Kozari Bok who have been interviewed believe that the school is very well equipped.²⁰⁰

In the Podsused school, all of the employed teachers are qualified to teach. As with most schools in Zagreb, there is a low staff turnover rate.

Academic achievement

In the Podsused school, Roma pupils generally enter school with a lower knowledge of Croatian, meaning that it is difficult to determine the level of literacy that they achieve by the fourth or eighth grade. The majority of Roma students must repeat a grade, clearly indicating serious problems in this regard.

Students at the Podsused school are involved in numerous extracurricular activities, such as sports, music school and foreign languages. According to information from the school director, Roma pupils achieve above-average results in various sport activities.²⁰¹ Nevertheless, Roma pupils do not participate in regional mathematics, language, and chemistry competitions.

Pupils have an opportunity to enrol in extracurricular activities. The activities that are offered in the Podsused school are as follows: drama section, eco section, arts section, art workshops, scouts, first aid, dance section, origami, drama section, folk dances section, film and theatre section, school choir, school gardening section, journalism, chess, volleyball and football.

According to a non-governmental organisation representative, Roma children face large problems on a daily basis due to poverty, inadequate parental care, health risks and inadequate educational opportunities, and this fact influences school retention and completion. Besides the social exclusion that is experienced by Roma pupils, lack of knowledge or a poor knowledge of Croatian represents an additional obstacle in the process of their integration into the school system.²⁰²

Roma pupils need a chance to recognise their own talents, and improve their skills in school. It is necessary to keep Roma children in schools, because the educational level is directly linked to the chances for future employment. One Roma pupil said “I like to

²⁰⁰ Interviews with Roma parents, Zagreb, September 2006.

²⁰¹ Interview with the director of the Podsused school, Zagreb, September 2006.

²⁰² Interview with the representative of a Roma NGO, December 2006.

go to school because I want to learn and get a good job. I would like to be a hairdresser and have my own hair salon.”²⁰³

School–community relations

The school council is directly linked to the community, since two of the school council members are community representatives. The school administration is usually responsible for making financial decisions and must submit a yearly financial and working plan.

According to parents, parental inclusion in school programmes is limited. The majority of the parents interviewed comment that they are not notified about ongoing programmes in the schools that their children attend. According to the school director, the school administration did not receive any written complaints from parents about Roma pupils’ treatment, and while there have been verbal complaints from Roma parents, these are not based on realistic facts.²⁰⁴

Roma parents do believe that the teachers and administration have a positive attitude towards Roma pupils. In addition, Roma parents appreciate the opportunity to enrol their children in extended programmes at the local schools, which provide social and educational services and activities that help to meet their children’s needs.²⁰⁵ The Podsused school does offer additional programmes, but some extracurricular activities could be attended at the neighbouring schools.

Educational materials and curriculum

In the Podsused school, all pupils receive free textbooks, paid for by local government sources.

Roma pupils do not have access to a bilingual curriculum. There are currently no training programmes in bilingual education, although teachers would be willing to attend such programmes and believe that bilingual education skills would help them in the provision of a higher quality of education for Roma pupils.²⁰⁶

There are two ongoing programmes at the Podsused school: “Communication Skills” and the UNESCO programme for “Bullying Prevention”. Both of the programmes include teacher education modules, while the bullying prevention programme also includes modules for children and parents.

²⁰³ Interview with a pupil, Zagreb, September 2006.

²⁰⁴ Interview with the director of the Podsused school, Zagreb, September 2006.

²⁰⁵ Interviews with Roma parents, Zagreb, September 2006.

²⁰⁶ Interviews with teachers, Podsused school, Zagreb, September 2006.

A2.3 Case Study: Kuršanec village (Međimurje County)

A2.3.1 Administrative Unit

Međimurje County is in the northernmost region of Croatia, on the border with Hungary. The total population of the county was 118,426 people at the time of the 2001 census, of whom 17,351 were between the ages of 4 and 17.²⁰⁷ There are a total of 12 Roma settlements in Međimurje County, but there are no up-to-date data on the number of Roma households whose inhabitants are legally registered as residents. The most recent information is from the 2001 Census, according to which there are 598 Roma households in Međimurje County and 5.1 people per household.²⁰⁸ This equals approximately 3,050 people.

Kuršanec is the second-largest village in Međimurje County and administratively belongs to the city of Čakovec. The roads to Kuršanec are good, but the roads inside the village are of poor quality.

A2.3.2 Roma and the Community

County administrative representatives in Međimurje County do not have data on the number of Roma who hold positions in different towns, municipality and county councils. Still, Međimurje County representatives emphasise the fact that local authorities hold regular meetings with Roma settlements' representatives.

Data on trends in the overall school-age population (3 to 18 years old) are not available. According to the field study data on the percentage of Romanes-speakers, in Međimurje County the Roma population includes 87.6 per cent Romani Chib-speakers, 9.3 per cent speakers of other Romani dialects, and 3.1 per cent who do not speak any dialect of Romanes.²⁰⁹ The Roma population in Kuršanec generally speak their dialect of Romanes at home.

According to the local government representatives in Međimurje County, road access, running water, electricity and telephone lines are present in a majority of Roma settlements in the county.²¹⁰ One of the larger Roma settlements in Međimurje County is Kuršanec (approximately 10 kilometres from Čakovec). Although all Roma settlements are linked with Čakovec (Međimurje County) and Varaždin (Varaždin County) via public bus lines, the buses run only two or three times a day and the local population rarely use the public bus system. The majority of Roma people use bicycles or share cars, which are owned by some people in the settlement. According to the

²⁰⁷ CBS, Census Data 2001.

²⁰⁸ CBS, Census Data 2001.

²⁰⁹ Hrvatić, "Roma People in Croatia".

²¹⁰ Interview with a local government representative, Čakovec, August 2006.

2001 Census, a total of 1,314 people were living in Kuršanec.²¹¹ Kuršanec is a mixed community, which administratively belongs to the city of Čakovec.

In the Roma settlement in Kuršanec there is neither a gas supply nor running water, and people use wood logs for heating and pumps for their water supply. The Roma settlement in Kuršanec consists of two main parts, an older part with single-room houses that are built of lower-quality materials and a newer part that has solid brick houses. However, the old part is connected to the electricity network while the new part is not included in the regular electricity infrastructure – a large number of households use a single electricity connection, because it is very expensive to get a new electricity connection. Some households in the old part of the settlement do have telephone lines, but the majority of the population rely on mobile phones.

The roads that are leading to Kuršanec are quite good. Nevertheless, the asphalt road leading to the Roma settlement (two kilometres from Kuršanec's centre) is narrow and severely damaged. In addition, there are no asphalt roads within the settlement itself, meaning that there is an area of mud and water in front of the houses.

In Međimurje County schools are placed in the vicinity of the larger Roma settlements, in a maximum distance of seven to eight kilometres. In Kuršanec, the elementary school is placed four to five kilometres from the Roma settlement. Free transportation is ensured for all school children, even for the children who live near the schools. The majority of high schools are in a nearby town: Čakovec (ten kilometres from Kuršanec) and Varaždin (seven to eight kilometres from Kuršanec).

In Međimurje County, Roma are mainly employed in construction companies and small private businesses. According to unofficial data, there are approximately 80 employed Roma people in Međimurje County.²¹² Still, the main sources of income for Roma people in Međimurje County are social welfare, maternity leave funding and child support, seasonal jobs and begging. Roma people who have completed secondary school education work for private employers, but do not have officially registered businesses of their own.

A2.3.3 Education

School and education network

The Kuršanec school is some four kilometres outside the Roma settlement. The school was renovated in 1999. It has two floors and separate classrooms for lower grades (1–4) and higher grades (5–8). The school has nicely kept classrooms that are provided with additional educational materials and technology for certain subjects.

²¹¹ CBS, Census Data 2001.

²¹² Interview with a local government representative, Čakovec, August 2006.

In the school year 2006/2007, the Kuršanec school had 430 pupils, of whom 257 pupils (approximately 60 per cent of the total) are of Roma ethnicity. In the school year 2005/2006, a total of 52 Roma pupils of Roma ethnicity and 21 pupil of Croat ethnicity entered the first grade. The pupils were placed in one mixed class (4 Roma and 21 Croat pupils), and three homogeneous classes with 16 Roma pupils each. It is apparent that there is a problem of Roma-only classes in the Kuršanec school.

The number of pupils in the classes varies from 14 to 26 pupils. Each classroom has approximately 60 square metres, and an estimate of average space per pupil is 3.5 metres. The school has running water, indoor toilets, central heating, equipped laboratories and library. The school yard is large and well designed, with a volleyball court, a large green yard and an orchard.

In the Kuršanec school, students may use computers during the regular classes and during after-school activities and elective classes. The average number of pupils per computer is 2–3.

The school receives HRK 670,000 (approximately €92,000) per year. In Međimurje County, 14 per cent of the finances are covered from the local government (decentralised) sources, while the rest of the expenses are covered from central Government sources.

Administrative requirements for access

According to the Kuršanec school director, problems with school enrolment occur when Roma parents do not follow the required administrative procedure and the process becomes more complicated and time-consuming.²¹³ Some parents do not speak Croatian, and do not have a full understanding of the requirements for registration.

Costs

One of the main concerns of Roma parents whose children attend the Kuršanec School is related to the daily lunches that children receive in schools. Both parents and children report that they are not satisfied with the lunches' quality and believe that they should receive better-quality meals based on the price that is paid for these lunches by various humanitarian organisations.²¹⁴ Roma parents do not pay for their children's lunches.

Patterns of segregation

There are both mixed classes and segregated classes for Roma only at the Kuršanec school. Roma who have a limited command of Croatian are placed in Roma-only classes. The main difference between mixed classes and Roma-only classes is in the pace of the instruction. Since Roma pupils who are placed in Roma-only classes do not have

²¹³ Interview with the director of the Kuršanec school, Kuršanec, September 2006.

²¹⁴ Interviews with Roma parents and students, Kuršanec, September 2006.

sufficient knowledge of Croatian, most of the first-year learning activities are related to language training.

In the school, there is no evidence of Roma pupils moving from a segregated Roma classes to a school with mixed classes. Nevertheless, there were cases of Roma pupils transferring to other schools, but this transfer was linked to family relocation. It is significant that parents of the Roma pupils who attend schools in Međimurje County believe that it would be better for their children to study with non-Roma peers in the same classroom. The parents strongly believe that their children will learn Croatian faster if they spend time with their non-Roma peers.²¹⁵ According to the official school data on the number of pupils in Krušanec school, it is apparent that there is a high drop-out rate of Roma pupils.²¹⁶

There were two cases of non-Roma pupils transferring to schools with a low percentage of Roma. The reasons could be directly linked to the increase in the number of Roma pupils and decrease in the number of non-Roma pupils in the Kuršanec school. Due to the lack of knowledge of Croatian, Roma pupils demand more attention from the teacher, and some non-Roma parents believe that their children do not receive enough teacher attention and a good quality of education.²¹⁷

In the Kuršanec school, children choose with whom they will share a desk. Most of the Roma pupils who attend mixed classes sit with other Roma pupils. Nevertheless, Roma pupils report that they have non-Roma friends, and that they help them with schoolwork.²¹⁸ Non-Roma children do not commonly come to Roma settlements, but do play with Roma children between classes and during the sport activities. Roma students from higher grades do visit their non-Roma peers at their homes, but non-Roma students do not come to Roma settlements.

According to information provided by the special education school director in Čakovec (Međimurje County), the percentage of Roma pupils in special education schools does not exceed their percentage in mainstream schools.²¹⁹

Human resources

In the Kuršanec school, all of the employed teachers are qualified to teach. Teachers in the homogeneous Roma classes did not attend seminars or conferences that would focus on bilingual education. One teacher indicated that he would be willing to learn the language and is doing his best to learn Romani phrases from pupils in his classes.²²⁰

²¹⁵ Interviews with Roma students, Kuršanec, September 2006.

²¹⁶ Kuršanec school official statistics 2005/2006.

²¹⁷ Interviews with Roma parents, Kuršanec, September 2006.

²¹⁸ Interviews with Roma students, Kuršanec, September 2006.

²¹⁹ Interview with the director of the special school, Čakovec, September 2006.

²²⁰ Interview with a teacher at the Kuršanec school, Kuršanec, September 2006.

Two Roma teaching assistants are employed in the school. They have been working in the school for the last four years and are paid through the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport funds, like any other teacher. While Roma teaching assistants work under the direct supervision of the classroom teachers, the school director and school pedagogue also observe and evaluate their work. The Roma teaching assistants' everyday activities are linked to the direct work with Roma children, and they also help in contacts with Roma parents.

Enrolment and retention

In 2001, a pre-school for Roma children that is a part of the Kuršanec school was initially financed as a part of the Pre-school Programme for the Roma (1998–2002). The pre-school is free of charge.

There are no available educational statistics at the level of the administrative unit in Međimurje County. Also, there are no exact statistical data on school drop-out rates for boys and girls. According to the information received from a local government representative, it is common for girls to leave schools prior to completion, due to early marriages.²²¹ Social welfare services in Međimurje County reported that common-law marriages were customary among partners aged 16 and over, and as many as 60 per cent of teenage girls entered into such marriages, which were often prompted by pregnancies.²²² One of the reasons for school failure and dropping out could be related to a sense of inadequacy and poor achievement; as one boy said, “When I receive a bad grade on the first day of school, I do not feel like going there any more.”²²³ Government sources noted that an increase of maternity and child allowances two years ago contributed to an increased birth rate among Roma.²²⁴

With regard to pre-school children, some children are not registered, and so it is not possible to track them. Even on the school level, it is difficult to determine the real number of the school-age children who do not attend school.

Table A4 presents data on the primary school enrolment for Međimurje County. According to these data, in Međimurje County there is a significant decline in the number of pupils who attend higher grades of elementary school.

²²¹ Interview with an official at the Međimurje Social Welfare Office, Čakovec, September 2006.

²²² Interview with an official at the Međimurje Social Welfare Office, Čakovec, September 2006.

²²³ Interview with a student, Kuršanec, September 2006.

²²⁴ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, “Croatia: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices”, 2005. Available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61642.htm> (accessed 15 May 2007).

Table A4. Primary school enrolment in Međimurje County

COUNTY	Number of children enrolled per grade (compulsory education)								Total
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	
Međimurje	276	239	178	197	188	97	74	46	1,295

Source: Official Statistics for Međimurje County, 2006

These numbers suggest a high occurrence of school drop-outs. According to the information received from the Kuršanec school, the number of school drop-outs among Roma children is decreasing.²²⁵ According to the Kuršanec school principal, Roma children leave school due to “insufficient parental support and care”, low interest in education, low motivation due to poor school results, difficulties in dealing with the school programme, and early marriage (mainly for girls).²²⁶

Table A5 presents the Međimurje County statistical data on the Roma pupils’ school attendance and class repetition in the last four years. It is possible to conclude that there is a slight decrease in the number of Roma children repeating classes. The official data on ethnicity are collected on a Međimurje County level, and is not possible to obtain similar data for each of the Croatian counties.

²²⁵ Kuršanec School Official Statistics 2005/2006.

²²⁶ Interview with a Kuršanec school principal, Kuršanec, September 2006.

Table A5. Roma pupils' class attendance and repetition

	2001/2002		2002/2003		2003/2004		2004/2005	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Kotoriba	55	23	65	16	72	6	69	3
Donja Dubrava	10	2	6	0	13	1	17	0
Domašinec	33	3	33	1	49	0	61	5
Kuršanec	190	66	197	43	207	33	229	46
M. Središće	25	0	40	6	52	4	52	5
M. Subotica	115	85	120	42	118	46	120	23
Macinec	195	84	216	91	245	87	248	76
Orehovica	86	N/A	90	N/A	86	5	101	10
Podturen	48	15	50	16	48	12	49	26
Pribislavec	102	26	107	28	110	29	109	26

A – Number of Roma pupils

B – Number of Roma pupils repeating class

Source: Official Statistics for Međimurje County, 2006

Academic achievement

In the Kuršanec school Roma pupils enter school with a lower knowledge of Croatian; teachers emphasise the fact that Roma children's level of literacy at the school entrance is quite low.²²⁷ In addition, for many Roma pupils, school entrance means a first encounter with books, writing paper and pens. In these cases positive results are possible when schoolwork is highly individualised.²²⁸ Teachers report that a small number of Roma pupils learn to fluently read, write and understand a written text by the fourth grade. The majority of Roma students learn to read and write short texts by the fourth grade, but are not able to interpret written texts.²²⁹

In the Kuršanec School, 17 per cent of pupils repeat classes, the largest number repeating the first and the second grade. According to teachers, only a small number of Roma pupils learn to read and write by the end of the first grade, and this is a reason for a large number of Roma pupils failing the first grade.²³⁰

²²⁷ Interviews with teachers, Kuršanec, September 2006.

²²⁸ Interviews with teachers, Kuršanec, September 2006.

²²⁹ Interviews with teachers, Kuršanec, September 2006.

²³⁰ Interviews with teachers, Kuršanec, September 2006.

Most of the pupils from lower grades interviewed say that they like to go to school, and feel happy when they receive positive feedback and additional attention from their teachers.

The Kuršanec school offers several extracurricular activities (computer programming, drama, dance, singing, visual arts, and so on) that are open to all pupils. According to teachers, Roma pupils do enrol in some extracurricular activities and in these cases teachers provide the necessary educational materials to the pupils.²³¹ Roma pupils do not participate in national competitions for mathematics, literature or chemistry, but in recent years, Roma pupils have taken part in the State drama group competitions.

School–community relations

Various extracurricular programmes that are implemented in the Kuršanec school allow for parental participation in school activities. The parents are commonly involved in the extracurricular programmes, but school personnel have noted the low interest of Roma parents in participating in the school activities. This low interest is probably linked to an insufficient understanding of Croatian. Furthermore, most of the Roma parents were not aware of the UNICEF programme “For Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools”, which was taking place in the Kuršanec school; only one Roma mother was aware of this project and was actively participating in the workshops organised. This is a year-long programme that involves pupils, parents, teachers and school administrative staff.

Teachers interviewed emphasised the fact that Roma parents rarely attend parental meetings, and that they are more likely to come to school after they receive an official invitation from the school administration. It is significant that some of the Roma parents interviewed feel unwanted and complain that they are not invited to participate in the school programmes.²³² Table A6 presents statistical data on the Roma parents attending parental meetings at the school in Kuršanec. The data were collected for the four meetings that were conducted in each of the classes throughout the school year. The data are available for the years 2003/2004 and 2004/2005, and show a slight increase in the parental meeting attendance among Roma parents.

Table A6. Percentage of Roma parents that attended parental meetings

	2003/2004	2004/2005
1	42.86	44.81
2	31.65	33.09
3	40.39	42.22
4	44.69	46.72

Source: Official Statistics for Međimurje County, 2006

²³¹ Interviews with teachers, Kuršanec, September 2006.

²³² Interviews with Roma parents, Kuršanec, September 2006.

Educational materials and curriculum policy

In the Kuršanec school, free textbooks are available for the children of families that are under the care of the Social Welfare Services. Most of the Roma pupils belong to this category. Roma and non-Roma pupils whose parents are employed are not eligible to receive free textbooks.

Roma pupils do not have access to a bilingual curriculum. According to teachers, the available textbooks in Romani languages are not a solution for Roma pupils in Međimurje County. These textbooks are not written in a dialect that is commonly used among Roma people in Međimurje. In addition, one teacher said “While Roma people should keep their language and culture, it is necessary for them to learn Croatian. This way they will be able to actively participate in all areas of public life.”²³³

Teacher training and support

The Kuršanec school (Međimurje County) participated in the UNICEF programme “For Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools”, which consisted of a series of workshops for teachers, pupils and parents with the goal of the prevention of bullying in schools. There was an ongoing evaluation of the project, where all of the participants gave their feedback on the effects of the project activities.

Teachers at the Kuršanec school have attended various teacher training sessions and seminars that focused on changes in the Croatian educational system where teachers have the opportunity to consult with experts on the alternative teaching methods that could be used in their everyday work. It is important to emphasise the point that Kuršanec school personnel (teachers, school principals, and so on) are aware of the fact that pupils lose motivation after repeated failure. For this reason they commonly seek advice from educational experts outside the school. The teachers interviewed emphasised the fact that educational experts were giving them a large variety of suggestions on teaching methods and approaches that could be helpful in the schooling of Roma pupils. Also, teachers attended “Step by Step” programme workshops and believe that these workshops were the most helpful.

Discriminatory treatment

Parents interviewed for this case study had an overall positive experience with the schools and teachers. Nevertheless, some parents and pupils complained about maltreatment that they experienced from teachers and other pupils. Although pupils and parents who participated in this case study did not provide a concrete example of school maltreatment, it is significant that many of them expressed a wish to change the way in which they are treated. Pupils from lower grades expressed a wish to change the way in which other pupils treat them, and prevent other pupils from saying bad words

²³³ Interview with a teacher, Kuršanec, September 2006.

to them. In addition, Roma pupils from higher grades of elementary school state that some teachers do not treat them well.²³⁴

²³⁴ Interviews with Roma parents and students, Kuršanec, September 2006.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

BDE	Bureau for Development of Education – part of the MES
FOSIM	Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
MCMS	Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
REF	Roma Education Fund
REP	Roma Education Program
SEI	State Education Inspectorate
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SSO	State Statistical Office
UNDP	United Nations Development Programmes
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WB	World Bank

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Executive summary

Macedonia's struggles to develop a cohesive multiethnic society are well known, and much progress has been made in the past six years. However, the Roma population in Macedonia has not yet achieved equality with the other ethnic groups in the country, a fact that the Government has recognised in joining the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015. Policies targeting equal access to education for Roma have not measured up to expectations, but a very serious lack of data and research greatly limits the extent to which progress could be measured. The Government must take concrete steps first to construct an accurate picture of the situation of Roma in education, and then to refocus policy to address the needs of the Roma community, alongside those of the other ethnic groups living in Macedonia today.

There are no prohibitions on the collection of personal data in Macedonia; nevertheless, information disaggregated by ethnicity is limited, and data about the Roma population in particular are fragmented and unreliable. Improving data collection should be a priority for the Government. Unofficial estimates of the size of the Roma population are up to three times higher than the official figure of 53,879. Some 2,500 Roma from Kosovo remain in Macedonia as refugees. A substantial disparity exists between the level of education of the majority population and the Roma population: almost a quarter of adult Roma have no education whatsoever. No reliable estimates are available as to the number of school-age Roma children who are not attending school at all, but research suggests that this is a substantial figure. Drop-out rates among Roma are also difficult to pinpoint, with estimates ranging from almost 8 per cent to as high as 49 per cent of Roma leaving primary school early. The lack of a comprehensive survey on the existence or extent of segregation in Macedonia is a shortcoming that the Government should address, but existing demographic data indicate that Roma live in urban areas, and some research indicates that Roma are overrepresented in special schools and classes for children with intellectual disabilities.

In 2004 the Government adopted the National Roma Strategy, which includes a section on education. However, the National Roma Strategy necessarily suffers from the lack of data, and fails to specifically delegate implementation responsibilities. The Government has since adopted a series of Action Plans for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015, which contain concrete tasks and goals. The Action Plan on education does not address a number of key issues, most notably segregation, and the Government should therefore consider updating its overall approach to education for Roma in a revised policy document. General education policy also gives little attention to the needs of Roma specifically, but civil society organisations have been actively developing and implementing various projects supporting education for Roma, with the approval of the Ministry of Education and Science.

No formal desegregation initiatives exist, and indeed, the National Roma Strategy proposes that additional schools should be established in majority-Roma areas. More research on the extent of segregation is needed, in order to formulate an approach appropriate to the scale of the problem. While a plan to introduce Roma mediators into pre-schools has been proposed, there is no information that any such mediators are currently working in classrooms. Similarly, while legislation provides for the possibility of using Romanes as a language of instruction, this has not been carried out in any schools, and very few teachers are proficient in the language. Teacher training is continuous and compulsory, but more research on the impact of these courses is needed to ensure that they are tailored to the needs of the school population. Although Macedonia has not yet adopted comprehensive anti-discrimination measures in line with EU accession requirements, the Decade Action Plan for education proposes establishing a working group that would address issues of discrimination or conflict in schools. It is unclear how effective this mechanism can be, however, as its scope and mandate are limited.

At present, school facilities are sufficient to accommodate the school-age population. However, as one year of pre-school is now compulsory, the Ministry of Education and Science should monitor the situation to ensure that there are enough places for all children to enrol as required. Little information on the extent to which administrative requirements present a barrier to enrolment has been gathered, but given the high number of Roma without identity documents, the Government should commission research to assess the scope of the issue. Roma parents who are illiterate or unfamiliar with the Macedonian language may also fail to understand the written invitation to enrol their children in primary school. Although data are limited, there are reports suggesting that Roma children may be enrolled in special schools without an appropriate assessment from the relevant commission, even while many children with disabilities do not attend school at all. A number of programmes to support Roma children whose first language is not Macedonian are being carried out, which is an important step towards better integration.

Infrastructure problems plague the Macedonian school system, including schools with a high proportion of Roma students. The poor condition of buildings, combined with a lack of appropriate teaching aids, is a serious obstacle to high-quality education. Reportedly, schools with larger numbers of Roma enrolled also have more teachers without qualifications. While the available information does not suggest that Roma pupils earn lower marks than average, there are indications that Roma children may advance from grade to grade without acquiring basic skills and knowledge. The Ministry of Education and Science must take steps to improve the objectivity and reliability of the marking process, to ensure that student progress can be appropriately tracked. In some areas, Roma parents are actively involved in school affairs, and these successful examples should be used as models for areas where school relations with the Roma community are less developed. As in many other areas, NGO initiatives may provide valuable experience and expertise.

1.2 Recommendations

1.2.1 Recommendations on monitoring and evaluation

Data collection

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia should do the following:

1. Review and amend regulations to ensure that, to the full extent permitted by the relevant EU legislation, data collected are made available disaggregated by ethnicity, colour, religion, language, gender, age, location and nationality.
2. Take steps to improve the overall collection of data related to education, disaggregated according to ethnic group, including Roma and other ethnic minorities, with adequate safeguards for protecting sensitive information and the identity and privacy of individuals.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

3. Establish a centralised database on education indicators, with provisions for disaggregating data, including school achievement, failure and grade repetition rates, and create mechanisms for schools to collect and transmit these data.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

4. Regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of the education Action Plan of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (hereafter, Decade Action Plan for education), revising its priorities, measures and activities, in accordance with real achievements.
5. Develop clear indicators to monitor and evaluate the implementation of Roma-related education initiatives.
6. Initiate an evaluation of in-service teacher training in order to improve this practice.

1.2.2 Recommendations for improving access to education

Structural constraints, legal and administrative requirements, costs

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia should do the following:

7. Fulfil goal 2.2 detailed in the Decade Action Plan for Education, providing conditions for the inclusion of all Roma children in the (future) compulsory pre-school education.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

8. Take the necessary steps to provide adequate pre-school places to accommodate all children in the relevant age group, through the creation of new pre-schools, the enlargement of existing facilities, or other measures.
9. Develop procedures to allow undocumented Roma children to enrol in pre-school and primary school.
10. Consult with NGOs that have developed successful pre-school programmes, to share good practices and potentially scale up small-scale initiatives.
11. Allocate funding for primary and secondary schools to ensure that children who qualify can receive support such as meals, clothes and after-school programmes.

Local authorities should do the following:

12. Take steps to ensure that Roma parents are appropriately informed about primary school enrolment procedures, including providing the relevant information in an accessible format and language.

Residential segregation/Geographical isolation

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia should do the following:

13. Adopt the necessary legal or administrative measures to prevent and sanction all forms of segregation with the explicit aim and appropriate means of implementing desegregation through the distribution of Roma pupils from segregated Roma communities into ethnically mixed classes and schools.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

14. Initiate professional and public debate about the issue of segregation.

School and class placement procedures

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

15. Improve oversight over the commissions assessing children for placement in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities, to ensure that each child receives an appropriate evaluation, and that no child is placed in a special school without such an assessment.
16. Provide the necessary training and support to teachers in mainstream schools to discourage the transfer of children from these schools to special schools for behavioural issues.

Language

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia should do the following:

17. Fulfil the goals 4.1, 4.3 and 4.4 detailed in the Decade Action Plan for Education, establishing a study group in Roma language at the Pedagogical Faculties, ongoing in-service teacher training for Roma about the use of Roma language in the teaching process, and establishing a Department for Roma Studies.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

18. Develop and improve pre-school programmes that strengthen readiness for school among Roma children, placing particular emphasis on language acquisition.
19. Refer to existing NGO examples of good practice for bilingual language instruction and materials.
20. Develop and foster in-service and pre-service teacher training courses covering language acquisition and methodologies for bilingual education and teaching in multicultural classrooms.
21. Ensure that teacher training institutions have the proper curriculum and courses to prepare teachers of Romanes.
22. Ensure systematic solutions for the professional engagement of Roma Teaching Assistants, and find incentives and positive discrimination measures to include more Roma in the training and education necessary for this job.

1.2.3 Recommendations on improving the quality of education

School facilities and human resources

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

23. Allocate financial resources for school infrastructure reconstruction and maintenance, in order to bring the quality of buildings in deprived areas and regions to acceptable standards.
24. Exchange information with countries where Roma mediator or Roma Teaching Assistant programmes are currently being implemented, to develop an appropriate programme to train and employ teaching assistants or mediators in classrooms to facilitate the learning environment for Roma.
25. Define recruitment criteria, procedures, job description and secured financing for Roma Teaching Assistants (RTAs or mediators), and ensure their continuous education and support through mentorship.

26. Improve the quality of education through the provision of incentives to teachers working in schools showing a tendency to enrol higher numbers of Roma children; such incentives should be linked with ensuring a better quality of education for Roma children.

Curricular standards

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia should do the following:

27. Fulfil goal 3.4 detailed in the Decade Action Plan for Education, to introduce teaching material about Roma culture, tradition and history at the Pedagogical Faculty and other faculties involved in pre-service teacher training.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

28. Prioritise the development of national level curricular standards and standards of textbook quality, and introduce standardised testing, for an independent assessment of student achievement.
29. Review the educational curricula for all schooling in pre-tertiary education with regard to diversity and multiculturalism, and make amendments to the curricula as necessary.
30. Introduce information about Roma history and culture into the main school curriculum, to positively portray the contribution of this ethnic group to the national heritage.
31. Establish in-service training modules on the history, cultural heritage, and language of the Macedonian Roma communities to allow teachers to incorporate elements in their lesson planning.
32. Encourage secondary schools to propose new elements to the curriculum, as the law permits, to reflect the needs and interests of their students and communities.
33. Issue criteria for teachers to assess and grade student achievement, to prevent the subjective lowering of expectations and the inflating of grades for underachieving students.

Local Education Authorities should do the following:

34. Support schools to implement optional lectures and other programmes and activities that are in the students' and community's interest, so as to reflect the diversity of the community that it serves.

Classroom practice and pedagogy

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia should do the following:

35. Fulfil goal 3.1 detailed in the Decade Action Plan for Education, training of teachers on intercultural learning and respecting differences.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

36. Urgently review the system of in-service teacher education to focus on and improve the quality of teaching and the professionalism of teachers.
37. Ensure that in-service as well as pre-service training covers the following areas: child-centred pedagogy, interactive teaching methodology, individualised approach, anti-bias education, methodologies for second language learning, multicultural education, and effective ways of involving parents and communities.

School–Community Relations

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia should do the following:

38. Fulfil goals 2.3 and 2.4 detailed in the Decade Action Plan for Education, increasing the number of Roma parents in Parents' Boards in the schools, and introducing compulsory annual school programmes for cooperation with Roma parents.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

39. Work closely with NGOs and community groups to ensure that efforts to improve education for Roma are coordinated, and that the school is truly responsive to community needs and interests.
40. Ensure that in schools where Roma pupils are enrolled Roma parents are represented proportionally in the school councils.
41. Involve school headmasters and teachers in training, and support schools, to find and/or create ways to involve parents and communities in school life and the learning process.

Discriminatory attitudes

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia should do the following:

42. Pass without delay comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, including in the field of education, and ensure its effective implementation.
43. Fulfil goals 2.5 and 3.2 detailed in the Decade Action Plan for Education, introducing compulsory annual school programmes to decrease stereotyping, overcome prejudices and improve mutual respect between the students of different ethnic communities, and defining and implementing systems and

mechanisms for punishing and rejecting inappropriate behaviour and responses of teachers in schools resulting from stereotyping and prejudices about the Roma.

44. Consider the creation of an equality body at the national level, as required by the EU's Directive EC/2000/43 (the "Race Equality Directive"), empowered with concrete responsibilities for investigating and sanctioning discrimination practices, including education.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

45. Include anti-bias education and/or education for social justice as a required pre-service and in-training course for teachers.
46. Include training on tolerance and diversity for local authorities, school maintainers and representatives of the local media, in order to prevent or counteract stereotypes and prejudice against Roma groups.
47. Empower the National Working Group established under the Decade Action Plan for Education, and make clear its composition, mandate or activities with regard to teaching staff and school management, in order to identify and manage conflict situations.

School inspections

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

48. Issue instructions to inspectors explicitly directing them to evaluate the quality of teaching for Roma pupils.
49. Recruit Roma inspectors, in line with the Law on Education Inspection (2005).

2. BASIC EDUCATION INDICATORS

There are no prohibitions on the collection of personal data in Macedonia; nevertheless, information disaggregated by ethnicity is limited, and data about the Roma population in particular are fragmented and unreliable. Improving data collection should be a priority for the Government. Unofficial estimates of the size of the Roma population are up to three times higher than the official figure of 53,879. Some 2,500 Roma from Kosovo remain in Macedonia as refugees. A substantial disparity exists between the level of education of the majority population and the Roma population: nearly a quarter of adult Roma have no education whatsoever. No reliable estimates are available as to the number of school-age Roma children who are not attending school at all, but research suggests that this is a substantial figure. Drop-out rates among Roma are also difficult to pinpoint, with estimates ranging from almost 8 per cent to as high as 49 per cent of Roma leaving primary school early. The lack of a comprehensive survey on the existence or extent of segregation in Macedonia is a shortcoming that the Government should address, but existing demographic data indicate that Roma live in urban areas, and some research indicates that Roma are overrepresented in special schools and classes for children with intellectual disabilities.

2.1 Data collection

Macedonian legislation does not forbid the collection of data on ethnicity. However, in general, there is a deficit of good-quality data disaggregated by ethnicity. Data on Roma are particularly difficult to come by. The scarce available data are unsystematic and often contradictory, and should be treated with caution with regard to their reliability.

The most recent population census, from 2002, includes data on ethnicity. However, by law, respondents can choose whether or not they wish to answer the questions on ethnic affiliation (and also those on religious appurtenance).¹ According to the census results (see Table 1), out of the total population of 2,002,547 in Macedonia, the Roma population is 53,879 (or 2.7 per cent).² Roma are thereby the fourth-largest ethnic group in Macedonia.

¹ Law of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia, *Official Gazette*, No. 16/2001, art. 11. Furthermore, according to the same law (art. 36), the forms must now be printed not only in Macedonian, but also in Albanian, Turkish, Vlach, Romani and Serbian, and respondents have the right to answer in the language of their choice.

² Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office (SSO), *Census of Households, Population and Dwellings*, 2002, available in Macedonian and English at http://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/kniga_13.pdf (accessed 21 November 2006) (hereafter, SSO, 2002 *Census Data*).

Table 1. Population – breakdown by ethnicity (2002 census)

Ethnicity	Total	Share (%)
Macedonian	1,297,981	64.2
Albanian	509,083	25.2
Turkish	77,959	3.9
Roma	53,879	2.7
Serb	35,939	1.8
Bosniak	17,018	0.8
Vlach	9,695	0.5
Other	20,993	1.0
Total	2,022,547	100

Source: State Statistical Office (SSO)³

Out of the total population in the Republic of Macedonia, 38,528 or 1.9 per cent declared that Romanes is their mother tongue.⁴ Assuming that all of these are ethnic Roma, this would indicate that 71.5 per cent of the Roma population know Romanes.

Based on the 2002 census data, the Roma population is a young one, with 28.5 per cent in the 0–14 age group and only 3.8 per cent aged over 65; the school-age population is higher for Roma than it is for the majority population (see Table 2).

³ SSO, *2002 Census Data*.

⁴ Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia, 2002 – Book X. p. 197. A mother tongue is defined as “the language that the person learned to speak in his/her early childhood i.e. the language the person considers to be his/her mother tongue, regardless of whether the person still uses it not”. See p. 17.

Table 2. Pre-school and school-age population – national and Roma populations (2002 census)

Age group (years)	National level		Roma only	
	Share of the population (%)	Total per age group	Share of the population (%)	Total per age group
1–5	6.2	125,398	10.2	5,496
6	1.4	28,316	2.3	1,239
3–6	5.1	102,631	9.7	5,223
7–10	5.9	119,330	7.8	4,203
11–14	6.4	129,443	8.2	4,418
15–18	6.5	131,466	7.6	4,095
Total	100	2,022,547	100	53,879

Source: SSO⁵

The results of the census were, however, reportedly disputed by members of various minority communities.⁶ Unofficial sources claim that there are up to 150,000 Roma inhabitants in Macedonia (or over 7 per cent of the population),⁷ which is almost three times higher than the official figure. Other sources estimated the Roma population at 135,490, that is, 6.77 per cent of the total population,⁸ or claim that Roma make up 5–6 per cent of the total population in Macedonia.⁹

⁵ SSO, *2002 Census Data*.

⁶ See Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the implementation of the FCNM in FYROM, para. 41 (hereafter, *Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the Implementation of the FCNM in FYROM*).

⁷ See, for example, Roma Education Fund, *Needs Assessment Study for the Roma Education Fund Background Paper, 2004*, p. 5, fn. 15, available at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTROMA/Resources/REF_Needs_Assessment.pdf (accessed 6 December 2006) (hereafter, REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*).

⁸ Education Support Program, *Monitoring Education for Roma 2006 A Statistical Baseline for Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe*, Budapest: Open Society Institute, p. 6, available at http://www.soros.org/initiatives/esp/art.s_publications/publications/monitoring_20061218 (accessed 28 September 2007) (hereafter, ESP, *Education for Roma, Statistical Baseline*).

⁹ Roma Education Fund, *Country Assessment and the Roma Education Fund's Strategic Direction Advancing Education of Roma in Macedonia 2007*, p. 8. Available at http://demo.itent.hu/roma/portal/downloads/Education%20Resources/Macedonia_report.pdf (accessed 28 September 2007) (hereafter, REF, *Country Assessment, 2007*).

It can be assumed that the very significant difference between the number of Roma registered in the census and the numbers indicated in unofficial reports is mainly a result of the stigmatisation and negative stereotypes associated with this group, which may result in many respondents not wishing to self-identify as Roma.

Location of Roma in Macedonia

According to the 2002 census data, of the total official Roma population (53,879) nearly half (43.6 per cent) live in the capital, Skopje (see Table 3), and almost one quarter of the total Roma population (24.8 per cent or 13,342 people¹⁰) are concentrated in Shuto Orizari Municipality, located close to the centre of Skopje. Of the total population of Shuto Orizari Municipality, 60.6 per cent are Roma (30.3 per cent are Albanian and 6.5 per cent are Macedonian); this is the only majority-Roma municipality in the country. Roma in Shuto Orizari have achieved certain minority rights following their compact (some say segregated) residence, most notably in a higher degree of political participation in local affairs.

¹⁰ SSO, 2002 Census Data.

Table 3. Distribution of Roma in Macedonia (2002 census)

Municipality (only those with at least 1,000 Roma)	Total no. of Roma per municipality	As a proportion of total Roma population (%)
Skopje	23,475	43.6
Bitola	2,613	4.8
Vinitsa	1,230	2.3
Gostivar	2,237	4.2
Debar	1,080	2.0
Dolneni	2,597	4.8
Kichevo	1,630	3.0
Kochani	1,951	3.6
Kumanovo	4,256	7.9
Prilep	4,433	8.2
Tetovo	2,357	4.4
Shtip	2,195	4.1
Other municipalities	3,825	
Total	53,879	43.6

Source: SSO, 2002 census data

Around 2,500 Roma refugees from Kosovo remain in Macedonia (in 1999, following the NATO intervention, there were around 6,000).¹¹ Out of the total number, some 700 live in the Shuto Orizari refugee camp, between 300 and 400 live in a camp near Katlanovo, and the remainder have taken up private accommodation in Shuto Orizari or other municipalities in Macedonia.¹²

¹¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Blagoja Stojkovski, head of the Asylum and Illegal Immigration Department in the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, November 18, 2003. in *Background: the Plight of the Kosovo Roma Refugees*, available at <http://hrv.org/bacgrounderr/eca/macedonia1203/2.htm> (accessed 14 May, 2002).

¹² UNHCR estimates the number at about 300. UNHCR FYR Macedonia, Information Update, No. 33, August 4, 2003. See also *Background: the Plight of the Kosovo Roma Refugees*, available at <http://hrv.org/bacgrounderr/eca/macedonia1203/2.htm> (accessed 14 May, 2007).

Data on education

Official data on education can be found in a variety of sources, such as school reports, as well as censuses and surveys.

The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) collects educational statistics through a reporting process in which individual schools report to the Ministry at least once a year. An annual report on primary education is produced and made publicly available.¹³

At the same time, individual schools also report to the State Statistical Office (SSO), which produces annual reports on school data. This includes, for example, figures on the total number of enrolments and graduates, schools and classrooms, and teachers and other staff (see Annex 1). However, the data on enrolment and graduates are of limited value for analysing the situation of Roma, as they are rarely available broken down by demographic categories of the population other than gender or age, and data on Roma are not systematic. The ethnic affiliation of students is based on self-identification, and is recorded in a medical exam that is part of the process of registering children for primary school, when the child and parent(s) meet with the school psychologist and pedagogue.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy's (MLSP), *National Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia* (National Roma Strategy 2004) explicitly acknowledges the lack of relevant statistics, including those in education, and stipulates that the State has the duty to provide them,¹⁴ but so far a systematic collection of disaggregated data has not been undertaken.

The data on national education attainment levels reveal clear differences between the national and the Roma population. In 2002, over half (51.8 per cent) of the adult

¹³ Ministry of Education and Science (MES) annual reports on primary education:

Jovanka Trimchevska, *Анализа за дејноста основно образование – учебна 2004–2005 година (Analysis of Primary Education – in the School Year 2002/2003)*, MES, Skopje (hereafter, MES, *Report on Primary Education 2002–2003*);

Jovanka Trimchevska, *Анализа за дејноста основно образование – учебна 2004–2005 година (Analysis of Primary Education – in the School Year 2003/2004)*, MES, Skopje (hereafter, MES, *Report on Primary Education 2003–2004*);

Jovanka Trimchevska, *Анализа за дејноста основно образование – учебна 2004–2005 година (Analysis of primary Education – in the School Year 2004/2005)*, MES, Skopje (hereafter, MES, *Report on Primary Education 2004–2005*);

Jovanka Trimchevska, *Анализа за дејноста основно образование – учебна 2005–2006 година (Analysis of Primary Education – in the School Year 2005/2006)*, MES, Skopje (hereafter, MES, *Report on Primary Education 2005–2006*).

¹⁴ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), *National Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia*, available at http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/wbstorage/files/files/strategija_romi.pdf (accessed 14 November 2007), 2004, pp. 13–14 (hereafter, MLSP, *National Strategy for Roma*).

Roma population had either no education at all or had never completed even elementary education, as compared to only 18.0 per cent for the total population (see Table 4).

Table 4. Educational attainment levels – breakdown by ethnicity and gender (2002)

	Total population (age 15+)		Roma population only		
			All	Male	Female
<i>Total Numbers</i>	<i>1,596,267</i>		<i>36,910</i>	<i>18,568</i>	<i>18,342</i>
Educational attainment level	Number	%	%	%	%
Still in primary education	2,531	0.2	0.8	0.8	0.7
Without education	67,358	4.2	23.2	14.2	32.3
Incomplete primary education	219,507	13.8	28.6	27.0	30.3
Primary school	559,082	35.1	37.4	42.9	31.7
Secondary school	588,554	36.9	9.7	14.5	4.8
High school	50,302	3.2	0.2	0.3	0.1
Higher school, faculty, academy	104,081	6.5	0.2	0.3	0.2
Master's degree	2,783	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Doctorate	2,069	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	1,596,267	100	100	100	100

Source: SSO¹⁵

There are also disproportionate illiteracy rates among Roma, and particularly among Roma women. The 2005 UNDP *Profiles of Vulnerability, Faces of Poverty Faces of Hope* (hereafter, UNDP *Vulnerability Report*) is one of the only available sources for disaggregated data on illiteracy (see Table 5).

¹⁵ SSO, 2002 census, Book XIII.

Table 5. Illiteracy rates – breakdown by ethnicity and gender (2005)

Age group	Illiteracy rates (%)			
	Majority population in close proximity to Roma	Roma		
		Total	Male	Female
Total	98	84	94	75
15–24	100	90	93	87
25–34	100	87	98	77
35–44	100	83	93	74
45+	95	78	92	63

Source: UNDP¹⁶

According to another UNDP report, in 2002 only 3.6 per cent of the entire population over ten years old were literate,¹⁷ but there were important disparities at the municipal level (see Table 6 below). In the predominantly Roma Shuto Orizari Municipality the illiteracy rate is 12.0 per cent (4.7 per cent among males and 19.2 per cent among females), higher than the illiteracy rates in most other urban municipalities.

¹⁶ UNDP, *Vulnerability Report – Macedonia*, Education data.

¹⁷ United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Socio-economic Disparities among Municipalities in Macedonia*, reprint, UNDP, 2004, p. 81 (hereafter, UNDP, *Socio-economic Disparities among Municipalities*). The information comes from the SSO.

Table 6. Illiteracy rates by municipality (2002)

	Municipality	Total	Female	Male
Highest illiteracy rates	Vitoliste	24.0	33.9	14.5
	Klecevice	15.9	28.2	4.8
	Staravina	15.1	24.8	5.8
	Orsac	13.7	23.6	4.9
	Karbinci	13.6	18.9	8.6
	Demir Kapija	12.5	14.6	10.5
	Kosel	12.5	19.7	5.5
	Rankovce	12.4	21.7	4.0
	Staro Nagoricani	12.4	20.7	5.1
	Samorkov	12.3	22.9	3.1
	Shuto Orizari	12.0	19.2	4.7
	Sipkovics	11.3	15.7	7.1
	Zitose	11.1	17.6	4.7
	Konopiste	10.8	17.0	5.5
Belciste	10.1	17.1	15.0	
Lowest illiteracy rates	Kisela Voda	1.0	1.5	0.4
	Gevgelija	0.9	1.3	0.5

Source: UNDP, Socio-economic disparities among municipalities

For this study, the lack of official data on key indicators is a serious limitation. In Macedonia, there is an urgent need for data on critical points, such as the net enrolment rate, disaggregated by sex, age group, place of residence and ethnicity, which at present is unavailable.

2.2 Enrolment data and trends

No accurate statistics on the participation and achievement of Roma in schools are available in Macedonia, including the number of children who have never been enrolled in school. Case study research conducted for this report in the majority-Roma municipality Shuto Orizari found a particular street that, according to NGO leaders, represents a negative extreme, where 100 children aged eight to nine are not enrolled in

school, out of a total of 200 to 300 children in that age range.¹⁸ More generally, the great numbers of pupils in the local Makarenko evening school illustrates that many children passed school age without attending. There are in total 200 pupils at the school, of whom some 100 to 150 were never enrolled in school.¹⁹

Pre-school enrolment

In Macedonia, children can attend pre-school between the ages of one and five. From the school year 2005/2006, there is also a compulsory preparation year (“zero year”) for all children aged six, prior to starting the first grade of primary school.²⁰

Pre-school education takes place in different types of pre-schools: day-care centres (nurseries), kindergartens (in a small, medium or large group), nursery schools in a pre-school, and nursery schools in a primary school (pre-school preparation centres).²¹ Day nurseries are intended for children under the age of two, while children from the age of two to school age can attend kindergartens, and are divided according to their age. Pre-school preparation centres in primary schools are intended for those children who are one year younger than the age of attending the first grade at primary school. The other pre-schools are independent, or associated where there are groups of children from nurseries, kindergartens and pre-primary schools.

The total number of children enrolled in pre-school education in Macedonia decreased in the early 1990s. The Ministry of Education and Science report, *Education for All 2000*, attributes this to the worsening of social-economic conditions after 1991.²² The report cites as the main reason the fact that the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, which finances pre-schools, does not cover expenses for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.²³

¹⁸ Interviews with Latifa Sikovka and Kimeta Hasan, NGO leaders, 1 June 2006, case study Shuto Orizari. For each country report in this series of EUMAP reports on “Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma”, three case studies were carried out to supplement and corroborate data gathered from other sources. Information from the case studies is integrated throughout the body of each country report. Annex 2 includes additional details from each of the case study sites. In Macedonia the three sites are: Gostivar, Shuto Orizari (Skopje) and Shtip.

¹⁹ Interview with Kimeta Hasan, 1 June 2006, case study Shuto Orizari.

²⁰ Law on Amending and Appending the Law of Primary Education, *Official Gazette*, No. 63/04, art. 3.

²¹ See, for example, Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office (SSO), *Pre-school Organisations for Child Care and Upbringing 2005* (bilingual edition: Macedonian/English), June 2005, Skopje (hereafter, SSO, *Pre-school Organisations 2005*), p. 9.

²² Ministry of Education and Science (MES), *Education for All 2000* (hereafter, MES, *Education for All 2000*).

²³ MES, *Education for All 2000*.

Over the last decade, there has been a slight decrease in the *total number* of children enrolled in pre-school. This can be partly explained by the declining overall school-age population. However, overall there has been a slight increase in the pre-school enrolment *rate* over the last decade (see Table 7), although in the school year 2004/2005 the gross pre-school enrolment rate stood at only 20.5 per cent.²⁴

Table 7. Pre-school enrolment rate – total for public and private pre-schools (1995–2005)

Year	Total number of children aged 0–7:		Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) (%)
	in pre-schools	in the population	
1995/1996	38,245	281,977	13.6
1996/1997	37,506	279,621	13.4
1997/1998	36,666	273,128	13.4
1998/1999	37,766	267,706	14.1
1999/2000	38,348	260,995	14.7
2000/2001	37,801	254,951	14.8
2001/2002	36,502	248,535	14.7
2002/2003	36,417	235,043	15.5
2003/2004	36,605	228,193	16.0
2004/2005	36,392	222,598	16.4

Source: SSO²⁵

In the school year 2004/2005 a total of 34,606 children aged 0–6 attended pre-schools. Of these, 20,967 attended the 51 public pre-schools, including 2,778 in infant pre-schools, 10,720 in kindergartens and 6,434 in pre-school preparation centres (zero year).²⁶ According to official data, there were only 36 children with intellectual or physical disabilities in the kindergartens.

²⁴ SSO, *Pre-school Organisations 2005*, p. 9. The SSO provides data on both the *gross* pre-school enrolment rate and the *net* pre-school enrolment rate. The General Enrolment Rate (GER) is the total enrolment in a specific level of education regardless of age expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education in a given school year. It indicates the capacity of the education system to enrol students of a particular age group. Net Enrolment Rate (NER) Enrolment of the official age-group for a given level of education expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population. See <http://genderstats.worldbank.org/edstats/Regionalindicators/Caribbean/definition.html> (accessed 16 November 2007).

²⁵ SSO, *Pre-school Organisations 2005*, p. 10.

²⁶ SSO, *Pre-school Organisations 2005*, p. 9.

Very few data are available about Roma children in pre-school education, although it can be estimated that the number attending is very small. Case study research conducted for this report in Gostivar found that while no precise data are available, it appears that Roma in Gostivar in general do not send their children to pre-school.²⁷ In the school year 2005/2006, in four primary schools in Gostivar 86 Roma out of a total of 450 pupils were enrolled in the zero year of pre-school.²⁸

The UNICEF study *Vulnerability of Romani Children in the Municipality of Shuto Orizari – Skopje* (hereafter, UNICEF *Shuto Orizari Report*), from 2000, looks specifically at the situation of Roma children living in this one municipality (total 6,936 children).²⁹ The report points out that, of those of pre-school age (total 2,240), only 5.27 per cent (118) were engaged in programmes for children of pre-school age in the youth centre, and 8.44 per cent (189) attended kindergartens or pre-schools. But the vast majority (86.30 per cent, or 1,927 children) were not involved in any of these forms of education and care. The proportion is even higher for children aged 0–3 (97.15 per cent). It should be noted, however, that the predominantly Roma Shuto Orizari Municipality presents a rather specific case in Macedonia (see section 2.1) and is not always representative of other areas with a high proportion of Roma residents.

The zero year for children aged six was made compulsory from the school year 2005/2006. Officially, in the preceding (2004–2005) school year there were only 588 Roma children attending zero year (see Table 8). This is well below the actual number of Roma children in this age group – 1,239 based on census data (see Table 2), but the actual number of Roma children in pre-school may be two times higher according to unofficial sources.³⁰

It is possible that the official numbers of children appear so low because they only refer to those pre-school groups that are included within State primary schools, excluding those that exist in State kindergarten buildings (the zero year is offered in both kinds of institutional settings) or pre-school groups that exist in communities. According to the SSO report, in 2004–2005 there were only 20,967 in total in all public pre-schools, of whom 6,393 children were attending the “Preparatory group in primary education (0 group)”.³¹ There are only a small number of private pre-schools, mainly in Skopje; the zero year is part of official education and must be provided by the State.

²⁷ Interview with Goce Krajcevski, school inspector, 18 May 2006, case study Gostivar.

²⁸ Case study Gostivar.

²⁹ D. Lakinska-Popovska, *Vulnerability of Roma Children in the Municipality of Shuto Orizari*, UNICEF and World Bank, 2000, p. 6 (hereafter, UNICEF, *Shuto Orizari Report*). Also available online at <http://facta.junis.ni.ac.yu/teme/teme1-2002/Teme1-2002-06.pdf> (accessed 26 April 2007); see also TEME 1/2002, Niš, pp. 143–167.

³⁰ REF, *Country Assessment*, 2007, p. 13.

³¹ SSO, *Pre-school Organisations 2005*, p. 11.

As shown in Table 8, in the school year 2005/2006 there was a marked increase in the total number of children attending the zero year (up by 10.4 per cent, from 15,660 to 17,470), but figures on Roma specifically are not yet available.

Table 8. Number of students enrolled in the zero year of pre-school education – breakdown by gender and ethnicity (2002–2006)

School year	National level			Roma		
	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male
2002/2003	15,226	7,182	8,044	379	194	185
2003/2004	14,618	7,328	7,290	433	202	231
2004/2005	15,660	7,556	8,104	588	277	311
2005/2006	17,470	–	–	–	–	–

Source: MES³²

The UNICEF *Shuto Orizari Report* finds somewhat higher enrolment rates, but this could also be because the age range includes children aged seven, who should have already been in the first grade of primary school. According to the report, in 2000, out of 1,013 children aged 4–7, 12.15 per cent attended some form of pre-schooling: 6.88 per cent attended State institutions, while 5.27 per cent attended preparatory classes organised by the non-governmental “Nadez” (Hope) Centre for Social Initiatives.³³

The Roma Education Fund’s *Country Assessment 2007* for Macedonia observes that the proportion of Roma attending the zero year is 1.6 per cent.³⁴

An expert with the Roma Education Program (REP)³⁵ of the Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia (FOSIM) has suggested that the lack of participation of Roma pupils in pre-schools is largely due to the poor economic situation of Roma families,

³² MES, *Report on Primary Education 2002–2003*; MES, *Report on Primary Education 2003–2004*; MES, *Report on Primary Education 2004–2005*.

³³ UNICEF, *Shuto Orizari Report*.

³⁴ REF, *Country Assessment*, 2007.

³⁵ The Roma Education Program (REP) is a part of the Education Program of the Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia (FOSIM). The REP is in its second year of implementation and aims to prepare pre-school-age Roma children from targeted communities for entry into primary education, improve retention and achievement rates of targeted Roma primary and high school students, and promote equal opportunities and increase the academic achievement of university students. For further details, see <http://www.soros.org.mk/default.asp?lang=eng&menuid=242> (accessed 10 April 2007).

who are usually not in a position to cover the costs of attending pre-school.³⁶ The REP works with Roma students in five settlements, helping them to remain in the school system. About 300 children of pre-school age participate in the programme.³⁷

This lack of pre-school education means that many Roma children – and especially those confronted with initial language barriers – have not been starting primary school on an equal basis with their non-Roma counterparts. The revised social policies introduced when the zero year of pre-school education was made compulsory (starting from the school year 2005/2006) are expected to make an impact on pre-school attendance. Otherwise, the benefits of pre-school education will remain out of reach of the vast majority of Roma children.

Primary school enrolment

According to the annual reports on primary education prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science, there are different trends in the enrolment of children in primary education at the national level and for Roma specifically.

At the national level, the enrolment rate is declining (see Table 9) as are the total numbers of children enrolled (see Table 10). For example, the total number of pupils enrolled in the first grade decreased by 4,305 (or 2.55 per cent) between the school years 2000/2001 and 2005/2006.³⁸ Over this same period, the total number of pupils enrolled in primary education (Grades 1–8) decreased by 28,094, or 11.3 per cent, from 248,901 to 220,807.

Table 9. Enrolment rate in primary education (2002–2006)

Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) – breakdown by school year									
1994/ 1995	1995/ 1996	1996/ 1997	1997/ 1998	1998/ 1999	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	2003/ 2004
97.6	97.9	98.4	98.4	98.9	99.1	99	97.9	95.6	95.4
	261,226	260,241	259,314	257,240	254,828	248,901	244,114	237,124	232,140

Source: SSO³⁹

³⁶ Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia (FOSIM), *Roma Education Program, Baseline Study*, 2004, FOSIM, p. 10 (hereafter, FOSIM, *REP Baseline Study*).

³⁷ FOSIM, *REP Baseline Study*, p. 17.

³⁸ MES, *Report on Primary Education 2005–2006*.

³⁹ SSO, *Millennium Development Goals Indicators*, available online at http://www.stat.gov.mk/english/MDG_eng/INDICATOR6_eng.pdf (accessed 1 May 2007).

There has been a decrease in the overall school-age population, due mainly to the falling overall birth rate, but the proportion of school-age Roma children is increasing, due to the comparatively young Roma population.

The total number of Roma pupils enrolled in primary education (Grades 1–8) increased from 8,113 in the school year 2003/2004 to 8,968 in the school year 2005/2006, an increase of 10.5 per cent (see Table 10).

**Table 10. Number of students enrolled in Primary Education (Grades 1–8)
– breakdown by gender and ethnicity (2000–2006)**

School year	Total			Roma		
	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male
2000/2001	248,901	–	–	–	–	–
2002/2003	237,218	114,721	122,497	8,346	4,073	4,273
2003/2004	232,143	112,562	119,581	8,113	3,974	4,139
2004/2005	226,493	109,471	117,022	8,392	4,055	4,337
2005/2006	220,807	108,296	112,511	8,968	4318	4,650

Source: MES⁴⁰

Despite this positive trend for the total numbers of Roma enrolled in primary education, Roma enrolment rates still lag well behind the national average. However, estimates of Roma enrolment rates are hampered by the lack of reliable data on the actual total Roma population. As shown below in Table 11, the 2005 UNDP *Vulnerability Report* provides estimates for the enrolment rates in primary education for the majority population living close to Roma (98 per cent) and for Roma (81 per cent for boys and 71 per cent for girls).⁴¹

⁴⁰ MES, *Report on Primary Education 2003–2004*; MES, *Report on Primary Education 2004–2005*; MES, *Report on Primary Education 2005–2006*.

⁴¹ UNDP, *Vulnerability Report – Macedonia*, Education data.

**Table 11. Enrolment rates for primary education (ages 7–15)
– breakdown by ethnicity, gender and age (2005)**

		Enrolment rate (%)		
		Majority population in close proximity to Roma	Roma	National average
Total		98	76	82
Female		99	71	82
Male		98	81	82
Breakdown by age:	7	100	91	96
	8	100	86	96
	9	100	92	97
	10	100	63	99
	11	100	71	94
	12	95	85	93
	13	100	74	94
	14	100	57	72

Source: UNDP, Vulnerability Report⁴²

Other sources on Macedonia give lower estimates for Roma enrolment rates, however. For example, the report of the Open Society Institute's Educational Support Program (ESP) (hereafter, *ESP Report*) provides estimates of net enrolment rates (NER) for Roma in primary education that range between 28.8 and 72.3 per cent, depending on whether official population figures or unofficial estimates are used.⁴³

It should also be remembered that the *proportion* of children of primary school age is higher in the Roma population than it is for the national population. For example, according to the 2002 census data (see Table 2), 11.0 per cent of the national population are aged 7–14 (221,961 children), while for Roma the corresponding figure is 16.0 per cent (8,621 children). The UNICEF *Shuto Orizari Report* (2000) provides a slightly higher estimate, based on numbers that differ somewhat from those accepted by the MES, with about 19 per cent of the Roma population in Shuto Orizari aged 7–14.⁴⁴ According to this report, the MES figures for the school year 1999/2000 show

⁴² UNDP, *Vulnerability Report – Macedonia*, Education data.

⁴³ Education Support Program, *Monitoring Education for Roma 2006: A Statistical Baseline for Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe*. Budapest, OSI 2006, p. 6.

⁴⁴ In the UNICEF research, out of the 13,974 inhabitants (3,122 families) included in the sample, there were 6,936 children, of whom 2,632 (37.95 per cent) were aged 7–14 (or about 19 per cent of the total inhabitants). UNICEF, *Shuto Orizari Report*. UNICEF, *Shuto Orizari Report*, pp. 145–146.

that, of the total number of 247,898 children enrolled in primary education, there were 8,279 Roma children (3.34 per cent).⁴⁵

There are no available official data as to the proportion of Roma children who have never been enrolled in school. The UNICEF *Shuto Orizari Report*, however, gives some indication. Of the 2,632 children in primary school aged 7–14 years included in the survey, about 20 per cent were not in school.⁴⁶ Case study research conducted for this report in Gostivar revealed that according to the NGO Mesecina, the enrolment of Roma children in Gostivar over the past five years has increased, as a result of the various programme activities undertaken by the local NGOs.⁴⁷ NGOs estimate that around 10 per cent of Roma children from Gostivar have never been enrolled in school and are left out of the educational process.⁴⁸

The most recent report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) shows that the proportion of Roma school-age population in school is very roughly estimated as being between 70 and 80 per cent.⁴⁹

Secondary school enrolment

According to the UNDP report *Data and Indicators about Municipalities in Macedonia*, in secondary education, at the national level the gross enrolment rate (GER) for the school year 2002/2003 was 71 per cent (73 per cent for boys, and 71 per cent for girls). The net enrolment rate (NER) was lower, at 63.5 per cent (65 per cent for boys and 62.2 per cent for girls).⁵⁰ This report does not contain any information about Roma, but the UNDP *Vulnerability Report* reveals significantly lower secondary level enrolment rates for Roma, and particularly Roma girls (see Table 12).

⁴⁵ UNICEF, *Shuto Orizari Report*, p. 6.

⁴⁶ UNICEF (2000) *Vulnerability of Roma Children in the Municipality of Shuto Orizari*, *Shuto Orizari Report*, 4.2 Children's school attendance p. 25.

⁴⁷ Interview with a representative of Mesecina, 16 June 2006, case study Gostivar.

⁴⁸ Interviews with representatives of the NGOs Mesecina and Centre for the Protection of Roma Rights, 16 June 2006, case study Gostivar.

⁴⁹ OECD (2007), p. 31.

⁵⁰ The source for the data is the State Statistical Office (SSO). The GER is calculated for the age group 15–18 years old. UNDP, *Data and Indicators about Municipalities in Macedonia*, reprint, 2004, p. 81.

Table 12. Enrolment rates for secondary education (ages 16–19) – breakdown by ethnicity and gender (2005)

	Enrolment rate (%)		
	Majority population in close proximity to Roma	Roma	National average
Total	74	19	46
Female	74	13	46
Male	73	25	46

Source: UNDP⁵¹

The *ESP Report* dataset shows a NER for Roma of between 4.9 and 12.3 per cent (for the 14–18 age range).⁵²

Compared with the enrolment rates in primary education, the rates of Roma enrolment in secondary education clearly point to very high drop-out rates, with resulting low completion rates. Calculated from a 2007 OECD study, 12.8 per cent of Roma primary school graduates continue their studies at the secondary level.⁵³

Furthermore, the *ESP Report* shows that 569 Roma children are enrolled in secondary education. Compared with official data for the Roma population regarding the total number of Roma in the 14–18 age range who are eligible to enrol in secondary education, this represents 12.3 per cent; against unofficial data on the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER), this percentage is even lower, only 4.9 per cent.⁵⁴

Starting from the school year 2007/2008 the Government is encouraging Roma students' enrolment in secondary education through affirmative action, so that Roma students may enter mainstream secondary state schools without meeting the minimum standards entry.⁵⁵

⁵¹ UNDP, *Vulnerability Report – Macedonia*, Education data.

⁵² Education Support Program, *Monitoring Education for Roma 2006: A Statistical Baseline for Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe*. Budapest, OSI 2006.

⁵³ REF, *Country Assessment*, 2007, p. 32.

⁵⁴ Education Support Program, *Monitoring Education for Roma 2006: A Statistical Baseline for Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe*. Budapest, OSI 2006, p. 15.

⁵⁵ OSI Roundtable meeting, Skopje 20 June, 2007. Explanatory note: the OSI held a roundtable meeting in Skopje in June 2007 to invite critiques of the present report in draft form. Experts present included representatives of the Government, parents and non-governmental organisations.

2.3 Retention and completion

Since the institutions responsible for educational statistics do not collect systematic information about students by age and ethnicity at any level of education, there are no official data on the average number of years spent by Roma children at the different levels of education.⁵⁶ Indeed, there is no comprehensive survey about retention and completion of the school at any level.

The UNICEF report *Early Dropouts of Pupils from Primary and Secondary Education in R. Macedonia, 2003* (hereafter UNICEF, *Early Dropouts*) provides data on drop-out rates both at the national level and for Roma specifically. According to this source, for the overall population in the school year 2003/2004, the drop-out rate per grade was 1–2 per cent (see Table 13).⁵⁷ However, the Government has acknowledged that the lowest drop-out rates are observed among ethnic Macedonians, while the highest are found among Roma.⁵⁸

Table 13. Grade progression for primary school pupils (school year 2003/2004)

Grade	Proportion (%)
2	99.0
3	99.4
4	99.7
5	99.6
6	98.3
7	99.2
8	98.7

Source: SSO⁵⁹

⁵⁶ A. Petkovska, *Early Dropouts of Pupils from Primary and Secondary Education in R. Macedonia*, UNICEF, 2003, cited in REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*, p. 31 (hereafter, UNICEF, *Early Dropouts*).

⁵⁷ A. Dragovich, *Baseline Assessment Education Modernisation Project*, MES, 2004, pp. 17–19.

⁵⁸ Government of Macedonia, Secretariat for European Affairs, *Answers to the Questionnaire for the Preparation of the European Commission's Opinion on the Application of the Republic of Macedonia for Membership of the European Union*, submitted to the President of the European Commission on 14 February 2005. English version available at <http://www.sei.gov.mk/download/Questionnaire/3-18%20-%20Education%20and%20training.pdf> (accessed 7 December 2006) (hereafter, *Macedonia EU Questionnaire 2005 – Education*).

⁵⁹ SSO, *Statistical Review 411*; SSO, *2002 Census Data*. Figures in table calculated by the team.

According to the MES, in the school year 1998/1999 7.96 per cent of the Roma students enrolled in primary school dropped out.⁶⁰

Estimated drop-out rates for Roma pupils are also available from the UNICEF *Early Dropouts* report (see Table 14), which was carried out in 2001–2002 in 862 primary schools (from the total number of 1,020 in the country).⁶¹ Based on the data from this study, the REF report *Needs Assessment 2004* concludes that the proportion of Roma students dropping out between the first grade and the completion of the eighth grade may be as high as 48.63 per cent.⁶²

⁶⁰ UNICEF, *Shuto Orizari Report*, p. 6.

⁶¹ UNICEF, *Early Dropouts*.

⁶² REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*, p. 31.

Table 14. Drop-out rate for primary school pupils – breakdown by grade, gender and ethnicity (school year 2001/2002)

Grade	Sex	Macedonian			Roma		
		No. of pupils enrolled	No. of pupils dropping out	Drop-out rate (total for M/F combined)	No. of pupils enrolled	No. of pupils dropping out	Drop-out rate (total for M/F combined)
1	M	7,097	50	0.7	543	35	5.7
	F	6,799	50		479	23	
2	M	7,080	51	0.9	535	22	5.2
	F	6,897	71		451	29	
3	M	7,353	82	0.7	487	–	2.4
	F	6,980	24		475	23	
4	M	7,612	62	0.6	476	–	2.9
	F	7,346	25		460	27	
5	M	7,983	93	0.9	563	161	25.6
	F	7,265	47		430	93	
6	M	8,063	33	0.4	382	49	9.4
	F	7,593	25		317	17	
7	M	8,384	72	0.6	311	25	9.9
	F	7,799	25		274	33	
8	M	8,648	103	0.7	302	7	2.6
	F	8,107	12		195	6	

Source: UNICEF, *Early Dropouts*

The above data provide information about the so-called cohort drop-out rates: the number of students who continue education from the first to the second grade, from the second to the third grade, and so on. It does not provide information about the retention rates. Nevertheless, the findings indicate visibly higher drop-out rates for Roma.

As shown in Table 14, the majority of Roma drop-outs occur following the transition from the lower to upper primary grades (Grades 5–8). This is the most critical period, when the largest drop-out of students occurs – both generally and among Roma particularly. One explanation is that from the first to the fourth grade, children have one teacher for all material, while in Grades 5–8 the instruction is subject-based, with

different teachers for each subject. Moreover, the material becomes more difficult. In addition, by law, between Grade 1 and Grade 4 pupils automatically continue into the next grade and must not repeat the same grade.⁶³ Under this system, many children who may not be making academic progress nevertheless continue into the upper grades and enter Grade 5 without the necessary skills. There may also be social reasons why drop-outs occur at the upper primary stage:

The transfer towards higher grades produces difficulties for pupils in terms of learning materials, and also as a result of the inability to obtain assistance and support by their parents who are uneducated. Additional reasons for school dropouts are the feelings of discomfort and lack of acceptance by peers, the need to be more actively engaged in household work and earning for life. An important reason for school dropouts among Roma pupils, in addition to the above, is also the parents' fear that female children in puberty will be out of their control and thus be exposed to different risks and dangers.⁶⁴

Other barriers to the completion of primary education are the fact that many Roma children do not speak Macedonian, the official teaching language, or because Roma living in settlements do not have residence permits, which makes it difficult for local authorities to ensure their children's enrolment. In some cases parents use their children as a labour force, and do not send their children to school. According to a school inspector interviewed for this report in Shtip, there is a problem of dropping out after the fifth grade, generally because children join their parents in economic activities, most often seasonal employment.⁶⁵

The *REF Report*, based on State statistical data, estimated that of those who are enrolled, around one quarter of Roma children do not continue primary education beyond the fourth grade and around 45 per cent of Roma children have not completed eight years of primary education. Slightly more than one tenth of Roma students continue from primary to secondary education. Of those who do enrol, more than one half (56 per cent) complete secondary education.⁶⁶

According to the *ESP Report*, the share of 15-year-old Roma who have completed primary education is 50.8 per cent (based on official data the estimated number of 15-

⁶³ Law on Primary Education, *Official Gazette*, No. 63/04, art. 63.

⁶⁴ S. Sazdovski, *Образованието – излез од магицхниот круг на проблеми кај Ромите (Education – the Way Out of the Magic Circle of Roma Problems)*, cited in REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*, p. 32.

⁶⁵ Interview with Marija Kitanova, 16 June 2006, case study Shtip.

⁶⁶ REF, *Country Assessment*, 2007, p. 31.

year-old Roma is 18,566, and based on unofficial estimates it is 46,689).⁶⁷ According to the same report, 11.6 per cent of Roma older than 15 have completed secondary education.⁶⁸

2.4 Types and extent of segregation

Based on previous research, the EUMAP methodology for this monitoring project recognises three types of *de facto* segregation with regard to Roma children:

- schools with a majority of Roma pupils, located in predominantly Roma-populated (segregated) areas – informally called *Roma schools*;
- school classes with a majority of Roma pupils situated in mainstream schools (remedial classes or simply majority Roma classes);
- disproportionate placement of Roma pupils in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities.

Whether or not these types of segregation exist in Macedonia is open to debate. The existence of segregation of Roma in education is not officially recognised, and there are very few, even unofficial, data on the subject.

Residential segregation

Many Roma are geographically isolated, or segregated, in Macedonia. This segregation may not be imposed by the Government, but the consequence is *de facto* segregation in education. Despite the fact that the majority (95 per cent) of the Roma population in Macedonia live in urban areas, out of the total number of Roma households, 46 per cent live in houses with acceptable living conditions, 38 per cent are without minimum living standards, 15 per cent are in new housing and 2 per cent are in apartment buildings.⁶⁹ The level of poverty among the Roma population is higher than it is at the national level: the overall proportion of people who are below the poverty line is 30.2 per cent, and for Roma population, 88.8 per cent live below the poverty line.⁷⁰

No information is available about segregation in pre-primary school, and nor is there any information about the organisation of groups by ethnicity, or any answer to the

⁶⁷ OSI, *Monitoring Education for Roma: A Statistical Baseline for Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe*, 2006, p. 6.

⁶⁸ OSI, *Monitoring Education for Roma: A Statistical Baseline for Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe*, 2006, p. 15.

⁶⁹ Report of the Republic of Macedonia on Millennium Development Goals, in REF, *Country Assessment*, 2007, p. 14.

⁷⁰ Data for preparation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2002; World Bank assessment of poverty in Macedonia, in OECD, p. 14.

question of whether children are placed in mixed groups or Roma-only groups in mixed schools.

Enrolment figures from the majority-Roma municipality of Shuto Orizari show both the net and gross enrolment rates to be over 100 per cent,⁷¹ which may signal the diversion of Roma pupils from other municipalities.⁷² In fact, during a recent interview, an MES employee mentioned complaints about the refusal of secondary schools to enrol Roma in various towns in Macedonia.⁷³ An obvious alternative for Roma pupils who are thus turned away by a non-Roma school is to seek acceptance in schools with a higher prevalence of minority pupils, or ethnically segregated schools.

The European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) and the Kumanovo-based National Roma Centrum (NRC) in their *Written Comments to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* in 2000, provided the following information:

3.6.4 Violations of the right of Roma to education take the form of discriminatory and segregationist practices, such as the segregation of Romani children into so-called “Roma classes”, in classes for the mentally disabled or even within classrooms; [and] racially-motivated abuse in school [...]⁷⁴

Segregation in special schools

The number of students enrolled in special primary and lower secondary schools has fallen slightly in recent years – down from 1,292 students in the school year 2001/2002 to 1,125 in the school year 2002/2003 (while in the same school years 316 and 312 students attended the special upper secondary schools).⁷⁵

However, according to non-governmental sources, the segregation of Roma children in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities is an increasing problem.

⁷¹ UNDP, *Data and Indicators about Municipalities in Macedonia*, reprint, UNDP, p. 210.

⁷² They may also indicate high rates of grade repetition, which, taken in conjunction with the ethnic background of students, is indicative of a lower quality of education, as well as segregation.

⁷³ Interview with Voislav Mihajlovic, Bureau for the Improvement of the Languages of the Members of Communities in Macedonia, 25 July 2006.

⁷⁴ Written Comments of the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) and the National Roma Centrum concerning the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for Consideration by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights at its 37th session, 19 September 2006, available at http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/docs/Comments_ERRC_NRC_Macedonia.pdf (accessed 20 April 2007) (hereafter, ERRC and NRC, *CESCR Comments*).

⁷⁵ SSO, Statistical Review No. 2.4.3.06*440, *Primary, Lower Secondary and Upper Secondary Schools in the Republic of Macedonia at the Beginning of the School Year 2002/2003*.

In the school year 2004/2005 there were in total 45 special primary and lower secondary schools in Macedonia, of which 13 are in the Skopje region. These were attended by a total of 1,045 students, of whom the majority (889 students in 40 schools) had intellectual disabilities, while 29 students (in one school) were “educationally neglected” students; the remainder (in four schools) had hearing, visual and physical disabilities.⁷⁶ In the four special upper secondary schools (three in the Skopje region, one in Shtip), there were a total of 328 students attending, of whom the majority (272) had intellectual disabilities.⁷⁷ The number of Roma attending these schools is not known.

Unofficial data indicate that in comparison with children of any other ethnicity, Roma children are disproportionately more represented in schools and classes for children with learning disabilities. Unofficial school data show that almost 30 per cent of students in special primary schools, special classrooms within mainstream schools, and institutes for education and rehabilitation are Roma,⁷⁸ and as many as 60–70 per cent of Roma children may be attending these special schools.⁷⁹ The REF *Country Assessment* indicates the following:

Almost 30 per cent of students in special primary schools, special classrooms within regular schools, and the institutes for education and rehabilitation are Roma. The proportion of Roma in special schooling goes far beyond the percentage of Roma in the overall population in the country, a situation that indicates a serious bias in the enrolment procedure, and in the distribution of social benefits and aid to families.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ SSO, *Primary and Secondary Education 2004–2005*, p. 29.

⁷⁷ SSO, *Primary and Secondary Education 2004–2005*, p. 43.

⁷⁸ Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), “Education Fund for Roma” project overview, available at <http://www.sdc.admin.ch/index.php?navID=65552&clangID=1&> (accessed 1 May 2007).

⁷⁹ Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), “Education Fund for Roma” project overview, available at <http://www.sdc.admin.ch/index.php?navID=65552&clangID=1&> (accessed 1 May 2007).

⁸⁰ REF, *Country Assessment*, 2007, p. 27.

3. GOVERNMENT EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

In 2004 the Government adopted the National Roma Strategy in 2004, which includes a section on education. However, the National Roma Strategy necessarily suffers from the lack of data, and fails to specifically delegate implementation responsibilities. The Government has since adopted a series of Action Plans for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015, which contain concrete tasks and goals. The Action Plan on education does not address a number of key issues, most notably segregation, and the Government should therefore consider updating its overall approach to education for Roma in a revised policy document. General education policy also gives little attention to the needs of Roma specifically, but civil society organisations have been actively developing and implementing various projects supporting education for Roma, with the approval of the Ministry of Education and Science.

No formal desegregation initiatives exist, and indeed, the National Roma Strategy proposes that additional schools should be established in majority-Roma areas. More research on the extent of segregation is needed, in order to formulate an approach appropriate to the scale of the problem. While a plan to introduce Roma mediators into pre-schools has been proposed, there is no information that any such mediators are currently working in classrooms. Similarly, while legislation provides for the possibility of using Romanes as a language of instruction, this has not been carried out in any schools, and very few teachers are proficient in the language. Teacher training is continuous and compulsory, but more research on the impact of these courses is needed to ensure that they are tailored to the needs of the school population. Although Macedonia has not yet adopted comprehensive anti-discrimination measures in line with EU accession requirements, the Decade Action Plan for education proposes establishing a working group that would address issues of discrimination or conflict in schools. It is unclear how effective this mechanism can be, however, as its scope and mandate are limited.

3.1 Government policy documents

The main official documents regarding the situation of Roma in education are the following:

- *National Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia* (hereafter, National Roma Strategy);⁸¹
- *Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion* (hereafter, *Decade Action Plan*).⁸²

⁸¹ MLSP, National Roma Strategy.

⁸² Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, *Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion in the Republic of Macedonia*, November, 2004. Available in Macedonian at <http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/proekti/obrazovanie.htm> (accessed 1 May 2007) (hereafter, MLSP, *Decade Action Plan*).

Both the National Roma Strategy and the *Decade Action Plan* place education high on the agenda, and devote substantial attention to the problem of the low educational attainment of Roma.

3.1.1 The National Roma Strategy

The National Roma Strategy determines four different education levels as priority areas for intervention: pre-school, primary, secondary and higher.

In pre-school education, the recommended measures include the following:

- A policy for including another compulsory year of linguistic preparation for Roma children (aged between five and six years), in addition to the compulsory zero year;
- Enrolling children without necessary documents (i.e. unregistered children);
- Encouraging the Roma community to develop a more positive attitude towards education;
- Incentives in the form of free books and educational supplies, and/or scholarships;
- Keeping track of the attendance of the Roma children (through the Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with the social services, the Statistical Bureau and the local self-government);
- Legal sanctions for parents for the persistent absenteeism of their children.⁸³

In primary education, the recommended measures include the following:

- Free textbooks and other instruction materials, adequate clothing and transport to the place where the child is educated;
- Intensive work with children on homework and mastering the course material;
- Whole-day instruction for the poorest children with the provision of free meals;
- Allocating social assistance for families that send their children to school;
- Financial and other types of assistance for schools that provide whole-day instruction for Roma, from the first to the fourth grade, or integrate Roma children in some other way;
- Adequate multicultural training for teachers who work with Roma.⁸⁴

⁸³ MLSP, *National Roma Strategy*, p. 44.

⁸⁴ MLSP, *National Roma Strategy*, p. 46.

In secondary schools, the recommended measures include the following:

- National quotas for Roma in secondary schools;
- Professional secondary and gymnasium classes in Shuto Orizari, the largest Roma settlement in the Republic;
- Free housing for Roma in secondary boarding schools;
- Assistance in textbooks and other learning materials;
- Scholarships for Roma pupils, especially those who are the most talented;
- Opening youth centres in Roma neighbourhoods to stimulate the further formal and informal education of youth;
- Work with the parents to encourage girls to continue in education;
- Coordination between secondary schools and employment centres.⁸⁵

The National Roma Strategy recognises the lack of statistical data and reliable sources on Roma education as one of many problems related to Roma education that are included in an extensive list. However, this list is not organised in a coherent way, and nor is it based on any classification with linked reasons for the problems. The difficulty in organising a policy document in a coherent way is partially related to the fact that there are no reliable data. The lack of research and data is reflected throughout the whole Strategy, as well as in other official policy documents.

Unfortunately, despite the overall positive approach, and the fairly comprehensive and thoughtful listed measures, in the absence of any specific implementation mechanisms the National Roma Strategy remains primarily a declaratory document. The Decade Action Plan is therefore intended to be the implementation arm of the National Roma Strategy.

3.1.2 The Decade Action Plan

The Decade Action Plan was adopted following the Government's commitment to join the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015.⁸⁶ A national coordinator for the Decade of

⁸⁵ MLSP, *National Roma Strategy*, p. 49.

⁸⁶ The “Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015”, an initiative supported by the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the World Bank, is an international effort to combat discrimination and ensure that Roma have equal access to education, housing, employment and health care. Launched in February 2005 and endorsed by nine Central and Eastern European countries, the Decade is also supported by the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Program. For further details, see the Decade website (<http://www.romadecade.org>) (accessed 14 November 2007).

Roma Inclusion based in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy forms a direct connection to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. A National Committee was established in 2004, which set up a Working Group that drafted four action plans, related to education, housing, employment, and health care for Roma in Macedonia.⁸⁷ The National Working Group consists of representatives of the Ministries of Labour and Social Policy, Education and Science, Transport and Communications, and Health, members of Roma NGOs, Roma members of Parliament, and the Roma mayor of Shuto Orizari. In January 2005, the Government adopted the Decade Action Plan and the National Roma Strategy. National Action Plan for the Roma Decade and the Strategy for Roma in Macedonia. Both were fully supported by the Parliament. In November 2005, the National Working Group was granted the status of a governmental coordinative body, in charge of preparation, implementation, and monitoring of all activities connected to the Roma Decade and the National Roma Strategy.⁸⁸

The section on education identifies four areas of action:

- Greater inclusion of the Roma population at all levels of the education system;
- A reduced drop-out rate for Roma children at all levels of the education system;
- Strengthening the capacity of teaching staff and school management to identify and manage conflict situations provoked by a lack of understanding of culture-sensitive differences;
- An increased number of appropriately educated Roma teachers.⁸⁹

Each area has short-term goals/activities. Also listed are the relevant indicators, monitoring body, the existing data sources, and the timeframe. While each area is devoted to a relevant action, overall the Decade Action Plan for education lacks ambition and omits a few crucial areas for prospective action, most notably desegregation – to address both residential segregation, and the segregation of Roma pupils in schools for children with intellectual disabilities – and overcoming the language barrier of Roma pupils.

The Decade Action Plan does not address the inconsistency and insufficiency of the existing data sources (for example, the great gap between the official and the estimated real number of Roma pupils), which might pose a serious barrier to the implementation and limit the effectiveness of the State intervention. In addition, the time frame for the implementation is extremely vague (“2005–2015” for most activities) and it is not clear who precisely will be responsible for the implementation of

⁸⁷ Available at http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/akcioneni_planovi.pdf (accessed 2 November 2007).

⁸⁸ OSI Roundtable, Skopje 20 June, 2007.

⁸⁹ MLSP, *Decade Action Plan*, pp. 11–14.

each activity. Nor is it clear from the Plans how much each activity will cost, and where the funding should come from.

Some Roma and other stakeholders in Macedonia have criticised these measures for the absence of concrete targets and actions, and the lack of political will to actually implement the proposed measures.⁹⁰

3.2 Government education programmes

3.2.1 The National Education Strategy

The Government has also adopted the National Strategy for the Development of Education 2005–2015 (hereafter, National Education Strategy) and programmes for its separate areas, although these do not specifically focus on Roma.⁹¹ The National Education Strategy was developed by the Government in 2004 to set out the path ahead for required reforms, in accordance with EU education standards. The document defines the State’s mission in the area of education as, “education for all through provision of educational equality; increase of participation opportunities; increase of educational, cultural and economic competitiveness of the Macedonian society”.⁹²

The references to Roma in this document are, however, minimal. One reference is to the high birth rate of the Roma population, and the other is to the high drop-out rate.⁹³ There are no specific provisions within this larger strategy on education for any specifics regarding Roma or other minorities (for example, regarding aspects such as language provision or multicultural curricula).

Based on the National Education Strategy, the draft “Programme for the development of pre-school education” has been prepared. In the draft programme, Roma children are listed among disadvantaged groups, alongside children from economically underdeveloped areas, children from socially vulnerable families, and children with mental or physical disabilities.⁹⁴ The draft programme mentions among its key

⁹⁰ ERRC and NRC, *CESCR Comments*.

⁹¹ Ministry of Education and Science, Bureau for Development of Education (BDE), *National Strategy for Development of Education in the Republic of Macedonia*, 2004, pp. 41–42. Available in English at <http://www.npro.edu.mk/english/index-en.htm> and in Macedonian at <http://www.mon.gov.mk/pmo/docs/MK/strategija-mk.pdf> (both accessed 1 May 2007) (hereafter, MES, *National Education Strategy*).

⁹² MES, *National Education Strategy*, pp. 9–10.

⁹³ MES, *National Education Strategy*, p. 10 and p. 30.

⁹⁴ Ministry of Education and Science, *Draft Programme for the Development of Pre-school Education*, 2006, p. 2. Available in Macedonian at http://www.see-educoop.net/portal/id_fyrom.htm (accessed 20 April 2007) (hereafter, MES, *Draft Programme on Pre-school*).

intervention areas increasing the pre-school attendance of Roma, as well as of children from poor areas.⁹⁵ In the accompanying document on primary education, Roma are singled out as having the highest drop-out and illiteracy rates.⁹⁶

The programme on secondary and post-secondary education in the country has no specific reference to Roma, except in comparison to other ethnic groups in some general statistical overviews.⁹⁷

There are no specific education policies for implementing the National Roma Strategy or the Decade Action Plan for education. The National Education Strategy has explicitly acknowledged the slow and inefficient reform process to date.

Reporting on the activities resulting from the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the Minister for Labour and Social Policy pointed out that, besides the commitment of the administration to facilitate and manage this process, most of the ministries concerned have established separate funds to meet this commitment.⁹⁸ However, many Roma claim that no positive effects from any of the State's initiatives have emerged yet: according to a resident of Shuto Orizari, "Most Roma [...] have not even heard of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. People rarely come to visit, talk to its residents, hear what they have to say, and see what kind of problems they are experiencing."⁹⁹

However, there are a number of projects targeting Roma in the education process. The State contributes mostly by accepting and approving the realisation of such initiatives in educational facilities and through the MES administration. One is the project "Inclusion of Roma children in public pre-school organisation (kindergarten)",¹⁰⁰ which is scheduled to last from May 2006 to August 2008. The project was established by the Roma Education Fund (REF), supported by UNICEF and also supported and implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in the framework of the National Roma Strategy and Decade Action Plans. The aim of this project is to help and support Roma children in enrolling in and completing pre-school, and to aid in the better integration of Roma children in pre-schools. To date, around 450 pre-

⁹⁵ MES, *Draft Programme on Pre-school*, p. 11.

⁹⁶ MES, *Draft Programme for the Development of Primary Education, 2006*, pp. 8–9.

⁹⁷ MES, *Draft Programme on Secondary and Post-secondary Education, 2006*.

⁹⁸ Macedonian Information Agency (MIA), *Achievements of the First Year of the Roma Decade Presented*, press conference reporting on the achievements of the first year of the implementation of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, 14 March 2006.

⁹⁹ According to Ines Mustafovska, a Roma student of journalism, in M. Mancic, *The Decade of Roma Inclusion: One Year Later*, Media Diversity Institute, art., available at <http://www.media-diversity.org> (accessed 14 November 2007).

¹⁰⁰ See the website of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy at <http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/default.asp?ItemID=DE4F5CABE4E81A4196A2B6C0E4716ABC> (accessed 2 November 2007).

school-age children are participating, with the involvement of 16 municipalities, and 15 kindergartens, whose directors are employed for 22 months.¹⁰¹

Other activities coordinated and implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science include affirmative action in the enrolment of Roma students in secondary schools, based on students' ethnic self-identification, as officially noted in their school diplomas. The Ministry also supports the development of local action plans for Roma integration by municipal councils and the municipal Commissions for Interethnic Relations. This process is still at an early stage, however, and very much depends on the initiatives of Roma NGOs. A programme for Roma language and culture is under development, and will be taught as an optional subject in primary education; the programme has been piloted in Shuto Orizari. In addition, in 2006 about 30 Roma NGOs were running various projects related to education at all levels of education, with the approval of the Ministry of Education and Science.¹⁰²

Some analysis carried out by the REF in its *Country Assessment 2007* suggests that the legislative and administrative changes that are envisaged in the Decade Action Plans are still to be developed and implemented, and the prerequisite structures (secretariat and national council) have not yet been established.¹⁰³ Decentralisation issues and the new Law on Local Government places greater responsibility on the municipal level. However, only minor action has started thus far.

Also, on a programme level, implementation is progressing only slowly. So far, no new policies have emerged from the joint efforts of the four relevant ministries: social assistance is not connected with educational attainment; there is no textbook provision for families living on social welfare; and decisions to grant stipends and scholarships do not substantially depend on the socio-economic status of families.

3.2.2 Donor-funded activities

The most visible programme is the Roma Education Programme (REP), which is run by the Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia (FOSIM) in cooperation with Ministry of Education and Science and the Bureau for the Improvement of the Languages of the Members of Communities in Macedonia. The programme was initially financially supported by USAID and OSI (via the Roma Education Initiative), and is now funded by the Roma Education Fund (REF).¹⁰⁴ It seeks to increase the number of

¹⁰¹ See the website of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy at <http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/default.asp?ItemID=DE4F5CABE4E81A4196A2B6C0E4716ABC> (accessed 2 November 2007).

¹⁰² REF, *Country Assessment*, 2007, p. 41.

¹⁰³ REF, *Country Assessment*, 2007, p. 27.

¹⁰⁴ See the FOSIM website at <http://www.soros.org.mk/default.asp?lang=eng&menuid=242> (accessed 5 October 2007).

Roma pupils continuing to secondary education, by granting scholarships and providing additional classes. The project aims to increase enrolment and transition rates, decrease drop-out rates, and improve the school performance and attendance of Roma students. Around 300 pre-school-age children are participating, in Roma Education Centres located in five Roma settlements (Dendo vas in Dame Gruev, Skopje; Sonchogledi in Klanica, Skopje; Drom in Lozja, Kumanovo; Kham in Sredorek, Kumanovo; Aid for the Handicapped and the Poor in Trizla, Prilep). These centres work to give Roma children basic preparation in mathematics, Macedonian language and other skills that will give pupils a good start in their primary education. Around 600 Roma children from five primary schools are receiving mentor support to improve school performance in written homework, and tutoring in various subjects. Around 240 Roma students at 58 secondary schools continued in their third year of secondary education, to receive scholarships and mentor support from 107 teachers. Around 40 students in various social sciences and humanities will continue to receive a scholarship and tutorial assistance from junior university faculty, peers and professionals.

Another project on Roma education implemented by the FOSIM is the “Alliance for Inclusion of Roma in Education”, a four-year project founded by the Roma Education Fund and implemented by the FOSIM, with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science’s Department for Development and Promotion of Education in Languages of Minorities.¹⁰⁵ The objectives of the project is to help to Roma students improve school performance, improve the retention rate and transition rate of Roma students from primary to secondary schools, and from secondary school to university level. In the school year 2005/2006, 657 students in secondary schools were involved, and 498 students from 76 secondary schools continue to receive scholarships and mentor support in the school year 2006/2007.

“Equal educational opportunities for Roma children” covers three school years (2006/2007, 2007/2008 and 2008/2009); it was established by the Dutch Embassy in Macedonia, and implemented by the FOSIM.¹⁰⁶ Around 1,600 Roma children from ten primary schools in Macedonia will receive direct and indirect additional after-school assistance based in their schools. The aim of this project is to improve the performance of Roma students in the lower grades (1–4) and to increase the retention rate of target Roma students in subject-based upper grades in primary schools. Training for school teachers is carried out by the Step by Step Foundation, while nine NGOs are engaged in the implementation of parent activities and out-of-school activities for students.

¹⁰⁵ See the FOSIM website at <http://www.soros.org.mk/default.asp?lang=eng&menuid=242> (accessed 5 October 2007).

¹⁰⁶ See the FOSIM website at <http://www.soros.org.mk/default.asp?lang=eng&menuid=242> (accessed 5 October 2007).

Founded and managed by the UNICEF office in Skopje, “Education for all” is a project that aims to ensure high-quality education for all students in Macedonia, reducing the drop-out rates in primary and secondary education, and providing conditions for the reintegration of students who have dropped out (mostly Roma students). The project also seeks to increase the enrolment of children from vulnerable groups (including Roma girls) in primary and secondary education. Seminars have been conducted for school managers, teachers and school administration, including psychologists, and sociologists. Professional and promotional publications have been disseminated. A survey of teachers and students was conducted to assess the reasons for dropping out, and a strategy for preventing drop-outs as a phenomenon was created, based on the results of the survey.¹⁰⁷

The project “Novel approach to raising awareness for education, technology and civil rights among the Roma population”, funded by the Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation’s European Agency for Reconstruction, has been carried out in Bitola, raising awareness of education and technology among the local Roma population by providing access to computers, internet and multimedia services, and improving the quality of public administration services for the Roma community through the establishment of an Information Centre in the Roma settlement.¹⁰⁸

The Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCMS) founded a project in 2001 titled “Applied Education for Young Roma”.¹⁰⁹ This project contributes to increasing the integration of Roma children in primary schools, and improving their job opportunities and possibilities for generating income. The project includes awareness-raising events organised by local civic organisations in cooperation with local primary schools, and support for vocational training provided by the Workers’ University in cooperation with private companies.

Many other smaller projects in education, which are intended for the Roma community and/or are run by Roma NGOs with the support of international donors, have been carried out or are being carried out in Macedonia. These projects address various aspects of education, such as additional classes, cooperation with schools, awareness-raising among parents, literacy classes for adults, and many other issues, depending on the local context, resources, capacities of the organisation, and other factors.

¹⁰⁷ REF, *Country Assessment*, 2007, pp. 41–42.

¹⁰⁸ REF, *Country Assessment*, 2007, pp. 41–42.

¹⁰⁹ See the website of the Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation, <http://www.mcms.org.mk/WBStorage/Files/Postignuvanja%20POR%20-%20ANG.pdf>; <http://www.mcms.org.mk/default-mk.asp?ItemID=E9A52965E337843A4306BC7317A080> (accessed 5 October 2007).

3.2.3 Minority language education

The official language, and main language of instruction in education, is Macedonian, written in the Cyrillic alphabet. However, any minority with a representation of at least 20 per cent at the national level (in practice, this means Albanians)¹¹⁰ is entitled to use its language and alphabet officially at the national level. Similarly, at the local level, every community with at least 20 per cent representation in the municipality can use its language for official purposes at the local level.

For pupils from minority communities, this means that education can be in the language and the alphabet of their community.¹¹¹ This applies to the Albanian, Serbian and Turkish minorities, as well as, starting from 2006, the Bosniak community. To have minority language education, communities are not required to live in compact settlements; however, it is necessary to have enough children to form a class or a school. A class has to be between 24 and 35 pupils in size, and the school must have at least 16 classes. In special cases, the law stipulates that a class can be formed with a smaller number of pupils.¹¹² According to the law, members of minority communities that receive education in languages other than Macedonian have the following rights:

- to use textbooks in the language and the alphabet of the minority community;¹¹³
- to use teaching materials and documentation, in addition to the Macedonian language in the Cyrillic alphabet, in the language and the alphabet of the minority community.¹¹⁴

Roma have been recognised as a minority in the Macedonian Constitution since the country's independence. However, Romanes has so far not been used as a language of instruction in any school in Macedonia. There are no educational materials in Romanes and not enough competent teachers. In addition, the ongoing standardisation of the Roma language and the lack of trained staff are the most commonly cited reasons for the failure to implement the positive legal provisions in practice for the Roma.¹¹⁵ The *REF Country Assessment* notes the following:

According to the legislation, Romanes can be a language of instruction, but this provision is not put into practice in schools. Currently – due to the lack

¹¹⁰ According to the 2002 census, 64.2 per cent of the population are ethnic Macedonians and 25.2 per cent are ethnic Albanians. SSO, *2002 Census*.

¹¹¹ Law on Primary Education, *Official Gazette*, No. 52/02, consolidating text, 40/03, 42/03 and 63/04; Law on Amending and Appending the Law of Secondary Education, *Official Gazette*, No. 67/04, art. 49.

¹¹² Law on Primary Education, art. 49.

¹¹³ Law on Primary Education, art. 85, and Law on Secondary Education, art. 31.

¹¹⁴ Law on Primary Education, art. 99, and Law on Secondary Education, art. 74.

¹¹⁵ Interviews with school staff.

of qualified teachers and the lack of support for providing textbooks and other teaching materials – Romanes is an optional subject taught only in two elementary schools.¹¹⁶

3.3 Desegregation

Although the National Roma Strategy acknowledges the “appearance of segregation and discrimination” in education and in practice,¹¹⁷ the Decade Action Plan does not mention it at all. There are no measures for desegregation proposed in any of the official documents.

The residential segregation of Roma means, by extension, segregated education. However, the National Roma Strategy downplays the scale of the problem, and even attributes the practice of sending children to special schools to the preference of some Roma parents, in order to enable their children “to more easily finish school and get employment”.¹¹⁸

The Ministry of Education and Science conducted a project called “Inclusion of Children with Special Needs in Mainstream Schools”, which has been implemented on a small scale for five years and includes 73 primary schools and 13 kindergartens for children with special needs. Another project, led by UNICEF, has overseen the deinstitutionalisation of 24 children with special needs through the development of community services that help take children out of residential care institutions and place them with families.¹¹⁹

The National Roma Strategy mentions the Government’s efforts to improve the process of identification of the children with special needs through the establishment of the National Coordinative Body for the Equal Treatment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, composed of representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Health, and additional experts. This body will be responsible for identifying children who genuinely need this status and type of education, and preventing referrals to special schools of children without such disabilities.¹²⁰

However, the National Roma Strategy does not address the problem of segregated schools in Roma settlements. On the contrary, it recommends building more schools in Roma settlements, in order to ensure an adequate structural capacity for enrolling the Roma children in need of education.¹²¹ In the meantime, plans for establishing a

¹¹⁶ REF, *Country Assessment*, 2007, p. 26.

¹¹⁷ MLSP, *National Roma Strategy*, p. 42, also footnote 93.

¹¹⁸ MLSP, *National Roma Strategy*, p. 42.

¹¹⁹ MLSP, *National Roma Strategy*, p. 27.

¹²⁰ MLSP, *National Roma Strategy*, p. 42.

¹²¹ MLSP, *National Roma Strategy*, p. 46.

secondary school in Shuto Orizari, stipulated in the Decade Action Plan¹²² have been met with concern about possible segregation if the Roma children are to remain bound to the territory of this predominantly Roma municipality.¹²³

In 1998 the Step by Step programme of the Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia (FOSIM) began to conduct pre-school programmes in Roma settlements. Community pre-schools were opened with the aim of ensuring equal access to pre-school education to Roma children, to prepare children for school using an appropriate methodology, and thus to help Roma children in the process of socialisation. According to the representatives of the NGO who were involved in that project in Shtip, the initiatives in that municipality failed, because non-Roma parents began transferring their children to other schools, and only Roma children remained.¹²⁴

3.4 Roma teaching assistants/school mediators

The National Roma Strategy proposes additional training and expanding of the staff and inclusion of Roma mediators in schools.¹²⁵ The Decade Action Plan also envisages ongoing in-service teacher training for Roma about the use of Roma language in the teaching process.¹²⁶

The MLSP has prepared a project for pre-schools entitled “The Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Pre-schools” that envisages the employment of Roma mediators to facilitate the communication between the children and the staff.¹²⁷ This project was approved and funded by the REF in March 2006. The objectives of the project are the following:

- to provide grants on a competitive basis, with Roma NGO participation, to ten public pre-schools;
- to train fifteen Roma assistants in pre-schools to improve communication with parents;
- to coordinate activities with Roma Education Centres.

¹²² *Decade Action Plan*, Education section, short-term goal and indicator 1.4.

¹²³ See *Vest* 12 April 2005 on the plans and promises by the Minister, on the occasion of the Roma day on 8 April, to build the school. However, as the local authorities have acknowledged, no real opportunity exists to build the school, because of its unregulated location.

¹²⁴ OSI Roundtable meeting, Skopje 20 June, 2007.

¹²⁵ MLSP, *National Roma Strategy*, p. 44.

¹²⁶ MLSP, *Decade Action Plan*, education section, short-term goal 4.3, pp. 11–14.

¹²⁷ Interview with Mrs. N.D from the Department for Child Protection, MLSP, Skopje, 10 August 2006.

There is, however, no definition of the role of Roma Teaching Assistants (RTAs) or school mediators; nor are any professional requirements, competences or job description specified anywhere. In none of the three case study locations analysed for this report are Roma assistants actually working in the classroom.

3.5 Romanes teachers

The limited proficiency of many Roma pupils in the Macedonian language has been identified in the National Roma Strategy as one of the causes of their limited success in the education system.¹²⁸ On education, the Decade Action Plan provides for establishing “ongoing in-service teacher training for Roma about the use of the Roma language in the teaching process”.¹²⁹

However, there are currently no official programmes providing for education in Romanes. Nor are there any schools in Macedonia with Romanes as the only language of instruction, despite the right, in theory, of Roma as a recognised national minority to establish such schools.

Experts have noted that there have been no formal initiatives from parents to introduce Romanes as a language of instruction in schools or to offer Romanes classes. There have been initiatives from civil society, but they did not succeed in mustering enough support to introduce new curricula for formal education.¹³⁰ In addition, the ongoing standardisation of the Roma language and the lack of trained staff are the most commonly cited reasons for the failure to implement the positive legal provisions in practice for the Roma.¹³¹

In 1996, Romanes courses were offered to teachers in four schools.¹³² For this purpose 20 teachers were trained. At present, however, this practice continues only in three schools – in Kichevo, in Tetovo and in one school in Skopje.

There is a Macedonian–Romanes language dictionary and Romanes grammar book,¹³³ and the Decade Action Plan section on education envisions opening a department for

¹²⁸ MLSP, *National Roma Strategy*, p. 41, also footnote 90.

¹²⁹ MLSP, *Decade Action Plan*, short-term goal 4.3.

¹³⁰ OSI Roundtable meeting, Skopje, June, 2007.

¹³¹ SI Roundtable meeting, Skopje, June, 2007.

¹³² European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), *A Pleasant Fiction: The Human Rights Situation of Roma in Macedonia*, ERRC, Budapest, 1998, available at <http://www.errc.org/db/00/11/m00000011.pdf> (accessed 1 May 2007) (hereafter, ERRC, *A Pleasant Fiction*), p. 77.

¹³³ Interview with the Roma folklorist and linguist Trajko Petrovski, in the Macedonian daily newspaper *Utrinski Vesnik*, 22 February 2003.

Roma studies at Skopje University.¹³⁴ Another positive sign is the fact that the new concept of primary education will include Roma language and history subjects in the third grade of the national curriculum.¹³⁵

3.6 Educational materials and curriculum policy

The Law on Primary Education¹³⁶ and Law on Secondary Education¹³⁷ stipulate that curricula are elaborated in accordance with model curricula developed by the Ministry of Education and Science, or proposed by the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE), in which there is a determined level of flexibility in the realisation of teaching fields and topics.

The Bureau for Development of Education – a semi-independent body within the Ministry of Education and Science – is responsible for preparing and monitoring the realisation of the curricula and syllabi, as well as establishing proposals for their amendment, in accordance with the relevant education laws.¹³⁸ Schools must implement the compulsory subjects prescribed by the curricula and the syllabi, but do have the right to also include additional subjects or courses. This is in line with the measure of autonomy granted to schools to establish their own annual programme (see Annex 1).

Textbooks are not provided free of charge; parents must buy textbooks and education materials and supplies. Some schools organise the transfer of books from year to year, but this is difficult in practice when there are so many educational reforms and the textbooks change so often. Occasionally the State undertakes some activities to provide textbooks (such as the recommendations of the National Roma Strategy – see section 3.2). Some municipalities also intervene in this regard as well, and there is financial help from some other sources such as charities and donations.

¹³⁴ See MLSP, *Decade Action Plan*, education section, short-term goal 4.4, “Establishing a Department for Roma Studies”, and short-term goal 4.1 “Establishing a study group in the Romani language at the pedagogical faculties”.

¹³⁵ OSI Roundtable meeting, Skopje 20 June, 2007

¹³⁶ Law on Primary Education, art. 24, and Law on Secondary Education, art. 21

¹³⁷ Law on Secondary Education.

¹³⁸ The BDE establishes professional commissions (consisting of teachers who prepare the curriculum of the corresponding subject, together with teachers from the teacher training colleges and BDE consultants) to prepare the draft teaching curricula, which are then submitted to the schools for an opinion, before a final draft document is drawn up. These documents are then reviewed by the MES Pedagogic Service. The Minister brings a ruling for approval and implementation of the teaching curricula and syllabi in schools on the proposal of the Pedagogic Service.

In 2005 the Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC), a large NGO funded by multiple donors,¹³⁹ jointly with the Ministry and the BDE, started the “Permanent education for young Roma” programme, to provide bilingual education materials. The textbooks are offered for free and contain additional information enhancing the positive image of Roma, such as by introducing stories about the famous jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt and the actor Yul Brynner.¹⁴⁰ Through the programme, textbooks are distributed in 15 primary schools in 11 towns in Macedonia. Apparently, however, the textbooks are not part of the official curriculum.

In 2003, a private publishing house (MI-AN) printed an edition of six children’s books in Romanes (four books prepared by Macedonian authors and one by an Albanian author, plus a collection of fables).¹⁴¹ In 2001, UNICEF and the MES announced the publication of bilingual illustrated books for pre-school education.¹⁴²

3.7 Teacher training and support

The basic (pre-service) training of the teaching and management staff for pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools is carried out in the faculties of pedagogy at four universities in Macedonia.¹⁴³

Continuous advanced training of teachers is required for every teacher, expert associate, tutor or principal.¹⁴⁴ This in-service training is carried out at the following levels:

- State or regional – mostly by the local branches of the BDE;
- Schools/educational institutions such as professional groups of teachers;
- Expert meetings, roundtables, symposiums;
- Pedagogical and professional magazines.

¹³⁹ Further information on the MCIS is available on their website (<http://www.mcms.org.mk/default-en.asp>) (accessed 14 November 2007).

¹⁴⁰ *Vecer*, 27 December 2005.

¹⁴¹ *Utrinski Vesnik*, 4 September 2006.

¹⁴² *Dnevnik*, 7 May 2001.

¹⁴³ The requirements with regard to the qualifications of the school principals for all levels of education are established by the Law on Child Protection, the Law on Primary Education and the Law on Secondary Education.

¹⁴⁴ The advance training falls under the regular working hours schedule and is within the framework of the forty-hour working week, regulated by laws, programme documents, and the relevant rulebooks.

The continuous vocational and pedagogical teacher training is conducted by the BDE.¹⁴⁵ Seminars are thematic and linked to the following areas: the approach to the realisation of the curricula and syllabi in the pre-school, elementary and in the secondary education; application of certain aspects of the educational technology; project implementation, such as didactical or programme innovations.¹⁴⁶

According to the analysis of the Education Modernisation Project Report,¹⁴⁷ most teacher-training activities from 1994–2004 were *ad hoc* in nature and consisted of projects with limited geographical coverage.

In Macedonia, teacher training takes place at several levels: training of teachers, training of mentor-teachers, and training of trainers. The total number of teachers trained and the total number of trainers are not available, however. Most of the content of in-service activities follows international practices, but the impact of these activities in teacher methods and students results is unknown and needs to be examined. No consistent and reliable evaluation process of any staff training activity at the level of the Ministry of Education and Science exists.

In-service teacher training directly aims at the continuous development of teachers. However, this does not imply that all training activities were beneficial for professional development. Relatively few activities are dedicated to professional practice in order to improve the quality of teaching; even fewer are planned for the benefit of school centres, perhaps least of all for the benefit of the pupils, who are the central objective and ultimate aim of any form of teachers' education. Thus, there is no coordination between the training activities and no focusing on the continuous professional development of teachers.

Case study research conducted in Shtip found that while several teachers expressed interest in receiving training in work with Roma children, including bilingual education, no programmes were currently available. Indeed, interviews in Shtip suggested that no teachers have received additional training in any field.¹⁴⁸

3.8 Discrimination Monitoring Mechanisms

3.8.1 Legislative framework

There is no comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in Macedonia. Various anti-discrimination provisions are scattered throughout several laws, such as the Criminal

¹⁴⁵ According to the Law on Primary Education, art. 76, para. 2 and the Law on Secondary Education art. 79, para. 2. See *Macedonia EU Questionnaire 2005 – Education*.

¹⁴⁶ *Macedonia EU Questionnaire 2005 – Education*.

¹⁴⁶ SSO, *Statistical Review 411; Macedonia EU Questionnaire 2005 – Education*.

¹⁴⁷ Education Modernisation Project Report.

¹⁴⁸ Interviews with teachers, 18 June 2006, case study Shtip.

Code and the recently adopted gender equality law. Article 9 of the Macedonian Constitution contains a general equality clause.¹⁴⁹ But its practical application is dubious, as there are no specific measures stipulated for non-compliance.

The National Roma Strategy provides an overview of the legal anti-discrimination framework, domestic and international. The Law on Secondary Education states that “Everyone, under equal conditions determined by this law, has the right to secondary education. Discrimination based on gender, race, skin colour, national and social origin, political and religious belief, property and social position, is not permitted.”¹⁵⁰

Generally, anti-discrimination provisions are almost never invoked, and there are no known cases of Roma bringing or winning discrimination lawsuits; this is the case despite serious allegations made by domestic and international monitors of discrimination against Roma children in education.

Research conducted by the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) uncovered discriminatory practices, such as placing Roma pupils in seats in the back row because, allegedly, other pupils do not wish to sit next to Roma children, and teachers take no notice of racist behaviour towards Roma.¹⁵¹

Although the Government has been often criticised for failure to adopt anti-discrimination legislation, it appears that the authorities do not have plans to introduce such legislation any time soon.¹⁵² As part of the *acquis communautaire*, Macedonia will be required to transpose the EU’s Race Equality Directive (Directive 2000/43) into national law.

3.8.2 National Working Group

The Decade Action Plan provides for the establishment, within the Ministry of Education and Science, of a National Working Group in charge of the implementation of the broadly defined objective of “strengthening the capacity of teaching staff and school management to identify and manage conflict situations provoked by a lack of understanding of culture-sensitive differences”,¹⁵³ a euphemism for confronting racially motivated discrimination. The Decade Action Plan even includes specific indicators for monitoring the implementation of this objective, such as the following:

¹⁴⁹ “All citizens of Macedonia are equal in their freedoms and rights, regardless of gender, race, skin colour, national or social origin, political or religious beliefs, property or social status.” Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, art. 9.

¹⁵⁰ Law on Secondary Education.

¹⁵¹ ECMI Report.

¹⁵² *Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the Implementation of the FCNM in FYROM*.

¹⁵³ *Decade Action Plan*, section on education, short-term goal 3.3, states “Establishing a body within the Ministry of Education and Science to deal with interethnic intolerance and conflicts.”

- the number of punished (reprimanded) teachers and school managements for inappropriate behaviour;
- an established body dealing with interethnic intolerance and conflicts;
- the number of cases processed by the body.

However, there is no information about the composition, mandate or activities of the proposed new body, or any knowledge of whether any actual cases have been processed. It appears doubtful, furthermore, that a sub-body of the Ministry of Education and Science can have sufficient authority and powers to enforce its decisions outside the strictly classroom incidents, for instance, punishing discriminatory acts that are committed not by teachers but by non-Roma pupils or parents.

If discrimination against Roma and others, *inter alia*, in the education system is to be effectively vindicated, the adoption of a comprehensive law, as well as the establishment of a competent body with adequate powers and resources, appears indispensable and urgent.

4. CONSTRAINTS ON ACCESS TO EDUCATION

At present, school facilities are sufficient to accommodate the school-age population. However, as one year of pre-school is now compulsory, the Ministry of Education and Science should monitor the situation to ensure that there are enough places for all children to enrol as required. Little information on the extent to which administrative requirements present a barrier to enrolment has been gathered, but given the high number of Roma without identity documents, the Government should commission research to assess the scope of the issue. Roma parents who are illiterate or unfamiliar with the Macedonian language may also fail to understand the written invitation to enrol their children in primary school. Although data are limited, there are reports suggesting that Roma children may be enrolled in special schools without an appropriate assessment from the relevant commission, even while many children with disabilities do not attend school at all. A number of programmes to support Roma children whose first language is not Macedonian are being carried out, which is an important step towards better integration.

4.1 Structural constraints

There are both public and private pre-schools in Macedonia. In 2004, there were a total of 51 public pre-schools (infant nurseries, kindergartens and pre-schools) in Macedonia, with 183 buildings (one pre-school may consist of several buildings). This is a slightly lower number than in 2003 (152 pre-schools, with 183 buildings).¹⁵⁴ The existing pre-school facilities can accommodate up to 24,000 children.¹⁵⁵ In 2005, a total of 20,967 children attended these public pre-schools.

According to the 2002 census data, there were 177,050 children of pre-school age (aged 0–6).¹⁵⁶ This means, hypothetically, that if all parents decided to send their children to pre-schools, only around 12 per cent would be accommodated in the existing facilities.

The 2004 UNICEF *Country Programme Document (CPD)* noted that “Pre-school facilities remain concentrated in urban areas and the enrolment rate has been static at 12 per cent since 1990, partly due to low investment in infrastructure.”¹⁵⁷

According to the 2002 census, out of the total number of Roma in Macedonia, 10.2 per cent were aged 1–5 and 2.3 per cent aged 6 (in total 6,735 children, or 12.6 per cent). The total number of Roma in pre-school education is not known, but officially

¹⁵⁴ State Statistical Office (SSO), *Statistical Review: Population and Social Statistics, Pre-school Organisation for Children Care and Upbringing*, 2.4.6.02 522, SSO, Skopje, 2006, p. 9.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Mrs. N.D, MLSP Department for Child Protection, Skopje, 10 August 2006.

¹⁵⁶ There were 148,972 children in the 0–5 year old age group, 126,226 in the 1–5 age group, and 154,304 in the 1–6 age group. SSO, *2002 Census*. See also section 2.1.

¹⁵⁷ UNICEF, *Revised Country Programme Document: the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 1 November 2004*, UNICEF, p. 3.

only 588 Roma (aged 6) attended the zero year in the school year 2004/2005 (see Table 8).

The issue of pre-school capacity has so far not been an issue of public debate. However, with the introduction of a compulsory zero year of pre-school in the school year 2005/2006, this low capacity could become a structural problem and should be closely monitored to ensure that all children have access to pre-school as required.

The law does not provide procedures or regulations on enrolment in cases when the number of applicants exceeds the number of free places in the pre-school. In such cases, special commissions at the individual pre-schools are called to decide on the matter.¹⁵⁸

The maximum number of children that can be enrolled in one class group depends on their age, as regulated by the Law of Child Protection.¹⁵⁹ For children with intellectual disabilities, groups in mainstream facilities should include five to eight children.¹⁶⁰

4.2 Legal and administrative requirements

Pre-school enrolment

The documents required for enrolling a child in a pre-school are the birth certificate and a medical certificate stating the child's health condition. This often poses problems for the enrolment of Roma children, as many do not have birth certificates, and/or cannot obtain medical certificates.

Birth certificates are an acute problem for many Roma children, due to often unregulated citizenship and/or residence, and missing birth certificates and other identity documentation of their parents. There are no definitive data on the number of undocumented Roma in Macedonia, but estimates appear very high. According to the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), in 1997 Macedonia officially recognised 4,356 Roma to be without citizenship, and a further 7,407 to have an "unknown" status. However, the ERRC report also states that this is an "implausibly low number".¹⁶¹

Another estimate, from 2006, concerns school-age children, in particular Roma children in Kumanovo, and urges the authorities to accept about 400 local Roma children of enrolment age (six years old), who are without birth certificates.¹⁶² One newspaper article from 2005 cites a number of 10,000 Roma living in Macedonia

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Mrs. N.D, MLSP Department for Child Protection, Skopje, 10 August 2006.

¹⁵⁹ Law on Child Protection, *Official Gazette*, No. 98/2003, art. 55.

¹⁶⁰ Law on Child Protection, art. 55.

¹⁶¹ ERRC, *A Pleasant Fiction*, p. 26.

¹⁶² *Dnevnik*, 30 August 2006.

without citizenship (based on an interview with an NGO representative).¹⁶³ This number would represent an extremely high percentage of the official Roma population in the country, but these Roma are probably not included in the official census figures.

In 2003, Macedonia hosted some 2,500 Roma refugees displaced from Kosovo as a result of the 1999 war. In that year, Human Rights Watch found that Macedonian authorities have not taken adequate measures to ensure the equal access of Roma children to education.¹⁶⁴

Medical certificates are free of charge and are easy to obtain for persons who have access to State health care, but people who are undocumented do not have such access.

The National Roma Strategy acknowledges that pre-school education is a problem, with negative implications for the success of Roma ensuing in subsequent levels of education.¹⁶⁵ However, there still seems to be a lack of recognition among authorities of the role that legal and administrative criteria play in limiting the access of Roma children to pre-school education. For example, personnel at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy stated that the legal and administrative requirements do not present a barrier to Roma children's enrolment in kindergartens. Rather, they regard the economic status (poverty) of Roma parents, their "mentality" and their traditional ways of caring for children as the key problems.¹⁶⁶

In contrast, the REF *Country Assessment* notes that the fact that some parents do not have a permanent residence could be used as an administrative barrier to deter the enrolment of Roma children.¹⁶⁷

Primary school enrolment

Similarly to pre-school enrolment, the documents required for enrolling a child in primary school are the birth certificate and the medical certificate. In addition, children without a formal registered address and/or children whose parents are illiterate may be further disadvantaged in enrolment procedures.

The enrolment process for the first grade of the primary school begins every year in May. The local authorities send out invitations to enrol children in school to parents whose children, according to official records, turn seven that year.

¹⁶³ *Vreme*, 09 September 2005.

¹⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch (HRW), Macedonia: End Cruel Limbo for Kosovo Refugees, Human Rights News, available at <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2003/12/10/macedo6571.htm> (accessed 20 April 2007).

¹⁶⁵ MLSP, *National Roma Strategy*, p. 42.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Mrs. N.D, MLSP Department for Child Protection, Skopje, 10 August 2006.

¹⁶⁷ REF, *Country Assessment*, 2007, p. 32.

Parents are obliged by law to enrol their child in school, or risk fines for the failure to do so,¹⁶⁸ which may affect Roma families in particular. Families whose members are undocumented, or are not registered at the address where they are living (and are therefore missing from the official lists), may never receive such an invitation. Also, parents who are illiterate or lack proficiency in the Macedonian language, as is the case with many Roma parents (see Table 12), may not understand the content and implications of the invitation.

When the child is already attending a pre-school, this institution will arrange for the child's medical check-up, and certification of the physical and psychological development of the child; the parents only need to furnish the child's birth certificate. If the child is not enrolled in pre-school, the parents need to obtain all the necessary documents themselves, and bring the child to the school, usually the nearest school, for an interview. There are no school entrance exams for the first grade of the primary school.

Parents can choose any school regardless of their domicile, and the Law on Primary Education¹⁶⁹ stipulates that the primary school has a duty to cover all potential pupils in the area (region) demarcated by the municipality, in a timely manner.

Secondary school enrolment

Secondary education is not compulsory. After completing primary school, pupils are entitled to enrol in any secondary school under equal criteria. Pupils attend secondary education free of charge. There is a public competition for enrolment in each secondary school. If the number of applicants exceeds the number of places in the particular school, then additional criteria are employed in selection. One of the additional criteria is a qualification exam.¹⁷⁰

4.3 Costs

The costs of education have long been identified as one of the most significant barriers to access to education for economically disadvantaged groups, including a large number of Roma.

¹⁶⁸ Law on Primary Education, art. 49.

¹⁶⁹ Law on Primary Education, art. 48.

¹⁷⁰ Law on Secondary Education, art. 53.

Pre-school education

Pre-school education, even in public facilities, is fee-based. The kindergartens charge their own fees. Usually, this is around €25 a month¹⁷¹ for full-day care (that is, between 8 and 12 hours). This includes childcare, meals and daytime naps. There is an option to have part-time childcare, without meals and nap times (for example, half a day or four hours). The fee for such an arrangement starts at €1 per hour (meaning that it actually is less expensive to enrol the child full time). These fees are above what most Roma parents can pay.¹⁷²

Primary and secondary education

Primary and secondary education in Macedonia is nominally free. However, there are associated costs that parents must cover, which add up into a major obstacle for poorer Roma families, such as clothing, textbooks, educational supplies and transport. At the start of the school year, it is expected that parents spend around 3,000 MKD (Macedonian Denars, about €50,¹⁷³ or at least 25 per cent of the average salary) on the child's school-related expenses. Subsequently, additional expenses, such as excursions, lunches and participation in events, may come to cost at least an additional 1,500 MKD (about €25), although extracurricular activities are voluntary.

In addition, a report by the ECMI noted the so-called “opportunity cost” for impoverished Roma families of sending their children to school, instead of sending them to earn money through work.¹⁷⁴ Even when Roma children do go to school, they can soon find that their schooling comes into conflict with the necessity of earning a living for survival, as they have neither the time nor suitable conditions at home for doing the required homework. The ECMI report quotes a Roma respondent saying “It cannot be expected from a child when s/he returns home and has nothing to eat to think about school [...] when s/he is thinking about how to go and help [his/her] parents or to earn on his/her own so that s/he can eat.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ This is the State-subsidised amount; the real cost is €60 per month, and the great majority do pay the full fees. (These categories are taken from the Table: Children in pre-school institutions for care and education by participation, in: SSO, *Statistical Review: Population and Social Statistics, Pre-school Organisations for Children Care and Upbringing*, 2.4.6.02 522, 2006 p. 11).

¹⁷² REF, *Country Assessment*, 2007, p. 32.

¹⁷³ The exchange is calculated at €1 = 60 MKD.

¹⁷⁴ ECMI Report, p. 30.

¹⁷⁵ ECMI Report, pp. 30–31.

4.4 Residential segregation/Geographical isolation

The vast majority of Roma in Macedonia are settled on the outskirts of urban areas, usually without any infrastructure or public services in the vicinity, in bad living conditions and with an unresolved property status.¹⁷⁶

The fact that Roma are isolated geographically has an impact on the schools that they attend. Schools are either absent completely in majority Roma-populated areas (as are other public services) or are in very bad condition. The 1998 ERRC report *A Pleasant Fiction* notes that “Schools are often not close to Roma neighbourhoods, and parents fear sending their children long distances on heavily trafficked roads.” Moreover, “Roma almost invariably live far from cultural institutions such as libraries [and] the schools which Roma attend tend not to have libraries of their own.”¹⁷⁷

Case study research in Shuto Orizari suggests that the transport costs are prohibitively high for Roma children attending a special school, which is five kilometres from the municipality. As a result, many children recommended for transfer to a special school often drop out of the education system altogether and end on the streets begging.¹⁷⁸

Although there are no precise data, Roma representatives in several towns (Kumanovo, Gostivar, Veles, Stip and the Topana district of Skopje) have claimed that the majority of children living in compact Roma settlements were not going to school at all, either never having started, or having dropped out before completing primary education.¹⁷⁹

Moreover, the isolation of Roma children has consequences for their language proficiency, which can lead to lower achievement in schools, and even referrals to special schools due to language problems (see section 4.5).

4.5 School and class placement procedures

In mainstream schools, there are no specific regulations for class placement. There have, however, been reports that Roma children have been placed in segregated classes in some schools:

For instance, during the 2005–2006 school year, school authorities placed five Romani pupils in segregated “Roma-only” classes in the Goce Delchev elementary school in Gostivar, ... because the ethnic Macedonian and

¹⁷⁶ FOSIM, *Roma Education Program, Baseline Study, 2004*, FOSIM, p. 7.

¹⁷⁷ ERRC, *A Pleasant Fiction*, p. 89.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Kimeta Hasan, leader of the NGO Luludi, 1 July 2006, case study Shuto Orizari.

¹⁷⁹ Jennifer Tanaka, report prepared for the Education Support Program, Budapest, unpublished, p. 15 (hereafter, Tanaka, *ESP Report*).

Albanian teachers in other classes will not accept the children in their classes.
[...]¹⁸⁰

The education of children with special educational needs (SEN) in Macedonia is regulated by the Law on Primary Education.¹⁸¹ However, there is no special legislation on the education of this group of children. The Law on Child Protection (2004) provides for the possibility of “children with intellectual and physical development impediments” being included in pre-schools based on the “finding and opinion of the appropriate professional institution”.¹⁸²

Children enter special schools or classes after a commission of professionals from the Mental Health Institute for Children has verified that they have special educational needs. These commissions are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health, not the Ministry of Education and Science. Assessments take place before the first grade or based on referrals from schools. Theoretically, a child can only be sent to a special school if she or he has obtained a “categorisation” document from this Commission. The *Rulebook for Categorisation and Registering of Persons with SEN*¹⁸³ places children in several groups, according to their disabilities.¹⁸⁴ However, in reality, most children who genuinely do have special educational needs (SEN) tend to stay at home, while those children who are enrolled into special schools often do not have any real disabilities; the system has been criticised as flawed and particularly detrimental for the Roma minority:

What happens is that parents usually do not take children before the Commission because the examination is not free of charge, and also because they fear that children will be in this way stigmatised and that this will negatively affect their future lives (for example, concerns that female Roma will not get married). As a result these children are most often out of the educational process.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ Written Comments of the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) and the National Roma Centrum concerning the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for consideration by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights at its 37th session, 19 September 2006, available at http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/docs/Comments_ERRC_NRC_Macedonia.pdf (accessed 20 April 2007) (hereafter, ERRC and NRC, *CESCR Comments*).

¹⁸¹ Law on Primary Education, Law on Secondary Education.

¹⁸² Law on Child Protection.

¹⁸³ Rulebook for Categorisation and Registering of Persons with Special Educational Needs.

¹⁸⁴ REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*, p. 33.

¹⁸⁵ REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*, p. 33.

The REF *Needs Assessment* also found the following:

In our [Macedonian] system this regulation is usually disobeyed. Roma children may enrol without categorisation, and without any carried out tests (from the evidence of the Centre for Educational Support “Den do vas”) in the special school or in the special classes within the regular schools.¹⁸⁶

The National Roma Strategy also recognised that Roma are too easily enrolled in special schools (see Section 3.3). Indeed, there were reports that Roma children are often accepted to special schools for children with mental or physical disabilities even without any special needs. Thus, the president of the NGO Romani Baht in Veles reported that most of the students in the local special school were Roma, although only between five and ten children had real problems, while the others attended for social and economic reasons.¹⁸⁷ Some parents reportedly sent their children to a special secondary school in Skopje because that school had an arrangement with a local factory to provide guaranteed (low-paying) jobs to its “graduates”. The school was also said to receive support from charities, and the students received free books, educational materials, clothes and meals.¹⁸⁸

A parent of a child placed in a special school has spoken out against the practice of transferring children after they were already accepted in a mainstream school in the first grade. According to this parent, these children were only transferred to a special school later because they were viewed as undisciplined and difficult to manage in the classroom. Other factors, such as the language barrier, a lack of parental involvement with the school, and teachers’ reluctance to work with children seen as problematic, also play a role in these children’s underperformance.¹⁸⁹

Students with disabilities who attend special schools, as well as special classes within mainstream schools, can then continue their education in special secondary schools or in mainstream secondary schools.

4.6 Language

The number of Roma educators and employees in education is so low that it defies any reasonable explanation. Even in pre-schools, where the educational level required is lower for some positions, the level of Roma representation is extremely low. For example, according to the State Statistical Institute (SSO), in 2005 there were only 19 (self-declared) Roma employees in public pre-schools (their positions are not specified),

¹⁸⁶ REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*, pp. 33–34.

¹⁸⁷ Tanaka, *ESP Report*, p. 13.

¹⁸⁸ Tanaka, *ESP Report*, p. 13.

¹⁸⁹ Interviews with NGO representatives Kimeta Hasan and Latifa Sikovska, 1 July 2006, case study Shuto Orizari.

out of the total 3,406 employees (0.6 per cent, as compared to 5.5 per cent for Albanians).¹⁹⁰ In primary and secondary schools there are fewer than 20 Roma teachers. There are initiatives to open a Romology department at the largest State university, in Skopje, to study the language and culture of Roma, but as yet there are not enough Roma students at the Pedagogical Faculty.¹⁹¹

At the same time, the language barrier has been recognised as an important problem for Roma children's access to education. There are no official data on the language proficiency of Roma children of pre-school age. However, according to a report by ECMI, about 80 per cent of the Roma population in Macedonia speak Romanes as a first language, while smaller Roma communities speak Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish as a mother tongue.¹⁹² ECMI also noted that Roma children who enrol in primary school without knowing the language of instruction (usually Macedonian) will have lower levels of achievement, and such children are often "channelled into educational institutions for children with special needs as a result of their linguistic disadvantage".¹⁹³

The head of the Governmental Coordination Body for the Decade of Roma Inclusion has denied the possibility that Roma children can be misdiagnosed and sent to special schools for children with intellectual disabilities, due to linguistic incompetence, and stated that the issue of Roma and special schools is not alarming in any way.¹⁹⁴ The National Roma Strategy, however, recognises the grave implications of the limited proficiency of many Roma pupils in the Macedonian language for their subsequent educational prospects.¹⁹⁵

There are a number of programmes directed at overcoming the language barrier faced by Roma children. The latest project of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy aims to include 15 Roma pre-school personnel to work in 15 kindergartens, each of which will enrol 15 Roma children.¹⁹⁶ In primary schools, a Ministry of Education and Science project involved providing 20 teachers with training in bilingual techniques. The project covered four schools in 1996 but only one currently implements the project, in the Braka Ramiz i Hamid school in the predominantly Roma Shuto Orizari

¹⁹⁰ SSO, *Primary and Secondary Education, 2004–2005*, p. 13.

¹⁹¹ Interview with V. Marjanovic, Bureau for the Improvement of the Languages of the Members of Communities in Macedonia, Skopje, 25 July 2006.

¹⁹² ECMI Report, p. 29.

¹⁹³ ECMI Report, pp. 29–30.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with V. Marjanovic, Bureau for the Improvement of the Languages of the Members of Communities in Macedonia, Skopje, 25 July 2006.

¹⁹⁵ MLSP, *National Strategy for Roma*.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Mrs. Maberka Kamberi, MLSP, Skopje, 14 August 2006.

Municipality.¹⁹⁷ Parents in this municipality have indicated their concern that children should learn the language of instruction, noting that until children master Macedonian, they are forced to be passive in classes and have difficulty expressing their own ideas.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ Article detailing the additional classes in Romanes offered in the initial years in this school: *AI TV*, Biljana Stefkovska, “73% od romskite deca se nadvor od obrazovniot process” [73 per cent of Roma Children are outside the Educational Process], news archive on the *AI TV* website, 21 November 2004, available at <http://www.a1.com.mk/vesti/default.asp?VestID=39734> (accessed 1 May 2007). This practice reportedly continues in three schools, in Kichevo, Tetovo and in one school in Skopje. (see section 3.5) , OSI Roundtable, June 2007, Skopje.

¹⁹⁸ Interviews with parents, 7 July 2006, case study Shuto Orizari.

5. BARRIERS TO QUALITY EDUCATION

Infrastructure problems plague the Macedonian school system, including schools with a high proportion of Roma students. The poor condition of buildings, combined with a lack of appropriate teaching aids, is a serious obstacle to high-quality education. Reportedly, schools with larger numbers of Roma enrolled also have more teachers without qualifications. While the available information does not suggest that Roma pupils earn lower marks than average, there are indications that Roma children may advance from grade to grade without acquiring basic skills and knowledge. The Ministry of Education and Science must take steps to improve the objectivity and reliability of the marking process, to ensure that student progress can be appropriately tracked. In some areas, Roma parents are actively involved in school affairs, and these successful examples should be used as models for areas where school relations with the Roma community are less developed. As in many other areas, NGO initiatives may provide valuable experience and expertise.

5.1 School facilities and human resources

According to the 2004 Roma Education Fund (REF) Needs Assessment Study, the most serious problem within the educational system in Macedonia is the alarming condition of school infrastructure and equipment:

The general assessment is that majority schools in Macedonia are in poor condition that reflects the quality of the educational process. The lack of space, the lack of equipment with teaching aids and supplies, inappropriate hygienic conditions are the key indicators of the lack of financial means of schools and the limits that educational system faces. [...] schools from rural and remote locations ... are in far more neglected conditions compared to those in urban and economically wealthier communities.¹⁹⁹

In reference to the predominantly Roma school Braka Ramiz i Hamid in Shuto Orizari, the REF states that “The aforementioned conditions partially improved when a Roma director was assigned (in the period when Shuto Orizari was created as a separate municipality with the majority Roma population).”²⁰⁰ The relatively good conditions in the Braka Ramiz i Hamid school, mentioned in the REF report, are also due to the fact that it was one of the ten schools included in the Education Modernisation Project carried out in the Skopje region with support from international donors and the Ministry of Education and Science.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*, Paris, December 2004 p. 39.

²⁰⁰ REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*.

²⁰¹ Ministry of Education and Science, “Education Modernisation Project: School Development Planning and School Development Grants”; see <http://www.mon.gov.mk> (accessed 15 November 2007) (hereafter, MES, Education Modernisation Project). The Ministry of Education and Science received a Dutch Bridging Grant to the amount of €300,000 for the period June 2003–July 2004 for the project implementation.

The 2005 Progress Report of the Education Modernisation Project²⁰² mentions the Braka Ramiz i Hamid school as an example of a success story. The school pedagogue was quoted as saying the following:

Our school is faced with various problems such as lack of equipment and teaching aids, outdated laboratory equipment, lack of textbooks and school materials. The population of Shuto Orizari is in a very difficult social and financial situation, the school building needs reconstruction. Our involvement in the Education Modernisation Project has resulted in an improvement of education and teaching activities that were lately somehow neglected.²⁰³

However, problems remain. The 2004 REF report also states that “Although part of the school is renovated (windows, doors etc.), [...] the school still faces lack of teaching aids, space and sanitary problems.”²⁰⁴ The student body is twice the capacity of the school, and so some classes are reportedly held in the basement of the school.²⁰⁵ At the same time, issues of overcapacity do not appear to be a national problem, as many schools do not operate to full capacity, due to declining enrolment rates (see section 2.2).

Concerning human resources, it has been noted that schools with a high percentage of Roma (and some other minority) students often have teachers “without necessary qualifications and, as a result, the quality of education is lower, the drop-outs are highest”, and the number of students who are continuing to higher levels of education is below average.²⁰⁶ According to the 2004 report prepared by the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), the quality of the instruction in the Braka Ramiz i Hamid school is considered to be lower than in schools with a smaller proportion of Roma pupils, as some teachers reportedly “feel degraded if they work in a Romani environment with Romani children.”²⁰⁷ Research conducted for this report revealed rumours that there may be a practice of sending some teachers to this school as a “punishment”, but this could not be confirmed.²⁰⁸ The National Roma Strategy also

²⁰² MES, Education Modernisation Project.

²⁰³ MES, Education Modernisation Project, 2005 Progress Report, p. 35.

²⁰⁴ REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*, p. 39.

²⁰⁵ Tanaka, *ESP Report*.

²⁰⁶ This is noted in the Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia, Macedonia Draft Strategy 2001, p. 13, in the context of their programmes and funding priorities for teacher training in minority schools.

²⁰⁷ ECMI Report, 2004 p. 30.

²⁰⁸ Interviews with teachers and NGO leaders, 3 July 2006 and 1 July 2006, case study Shuto Orizari.

briefly mentions “worse teaching conditions in schools where Roma go compared to the others, giving negative impact on the quality of education”.²⁰⁹

5.2 School results

In Macedonia, student achievement is measured on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest possible mark and 5 is the highest. Out of total number (229,564) of students who finished mainstream primary and lower secondary schools, 54.8 per cent finished with 5 (excellent), 18.7 per cent with 4 (very good), 15.5 per cent 3 (good), 7.6 per cent with 2 (sufficient), and 2.6 per cent with 1 (descriptive estimate).²¹⁰

The available data for Roma achievement are scarce. However, according to the REF, the averages for Roma in the Braka Ramiz i Hamid primary school are as follows: in the school year 2001/2002 the average mark was 3.11, in 2002/2003 it was 3.24, and in 2003/2004 it was 3.32.²¹¹

School marks, however, do not represent an objective picture of pupils' achievements. According to the findings of the project “The Other in Higher Education Curricula in the Republic of Macedonia”,²¹² which investigated the level of language skills (reading and writing) among primary school pupils, Roma children at the end of the second grade have not developed basic reading and writing skills.²¹³ An estimated 80 per cent of the children in the sample were illiterate. Those pupils either could not read at all, or had difficulties reading even simple phrases and sentences, or could read but did not understand the meaning of the text.²¹⁴ The study revealed equally poor results in writing. According to the project, a “large part of the pupils who finished the second grade had [a] low level of literacy,” and a “large part of the Roma pupils who finished the second grade could not accept the programme for the third grade.”²¹⁵

²⁰⁹ See MLSP, *National Roma Strategy*, p. 42.

²¹⁰ See <http://www.stat.gov.mk> (accessed 14 November 2007).

²¹¹ MES, *Education Modernisation Project, Progress Report 2005*, p. 36.

²¹² This project is supported (financially) by the Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia (FOSIM) conducted by the Faculty of Philosophy – Institute for Pedagogy, in Skopje.

²¹³ According to the education system in Macedonia, pupils who have finished second grade should be literate – should know to read and write. Foundation Open Society Institute (FIOM), *Educational Needs of the Roma Children in the Republic of Macedonia*, FIOM, Skopje, 2005, p. 63 (hereafter, FIOM, *Needs of Roma Children*).

²¹⁴ The research was carried out in several primary schools in Macedonia where Roma pupils comprise at least 50 per cent of the total number of pupils. The sample size was 400 Roma students in the second grade who enrolled in the school year 2004/2005. FIOM, *Educational Needs of Roma Children*, pp. 49–113.

²¹⁵ FIOM, *Educational Needs of Roma*, pp. 49–113.

Due to the fact that pupils who complete the second grade show a very low level of literacy, they are faced with difficulties in following the curriculum for the third grade. Interpretation and conclusions drawn from research on the educational needs of Roma children in the framework of the project “The Other in Higher Education Curricula in the Republic of Macedonia” revealed the fact that Roma children have not totally developed basic reading and writing skills. According to the survey data, 84 per cent of Roma children would not pass a dictation examination.²¹⁶ Furthermore, 66 per cent of the respondents in the survey did not have developed abilities for reading at the basic level (reading words and simple sentences, and understanding the reading materials), while 80 per cent could not write at a basic level (for example, using capital letters and punctuation).²¹⁷

Indeed, the Ministry of Education and Science “Draft Strategy for Development of Education”, points out that “evaluation and assessment [are among] the weak points of the system”.²¹⁸ Student assessment relies on the marks given by the teachers themselves. However, when the results are not satisfactory in terms of the students’ advancement to the next grade levels, the teachers may be penalised. Existing legislation also requires parental permission for children to repeat a school year. Many teachers therefore reportedly find it easier just to pass Roma children, year after year, regardless of their performance, at least until they reach the fifth year of primary school.²¹⁹ In addition, some teachers may adopt a “sympathetic” or “flexible” attitude, given that students who are made to repeat may eventually drop out, and will therefore not have the right to state health care, for which the compulsory primary education is required.²²⁰

However, this means that, within the same educational programme, Roma pupils may be receiving a lower quality of instruction than non-Roma pupils, due to lower standards applied to measure their performance. In this regard, the National Roma Strategy specifically recommended the “promotion of clear and objective criteria for grading the knowledge of the children (not to be lenient up to the fourth grade)”.²²¹

²¹⁶ FIOM, *Educational Needs of Roma Children*, pp. 63–65.

²¹⁷ FIOM, *Educational Needs of Roma Children*, pp. 63–65.

²¹⁸ MES, *Draft Strategy for the Development of Education*, 2000, p. 33.

²¹⁹ ECMI Report, 2004, p. 29–30.

²²⁰ ESP Report, unpublished, on file with EUMAP.

²²¹ MLSP, *National Roma Strategy*, p. 45.

5.3 Curricular standards

5.3.1 Standards

National educational standards are defined in accordance with the Laws on Pre-School, on Elementary and on Secondary Education, and amendments thereto.²²² The Bureau for Development of Education (BDE) is responsible for preparing teaching curricula and syllabi; monitoring the realisation of the teaching curricula and syllabi, and drawing proposals for their amendments.

The standards, developed on the proposal of the BDE, are as follows.

At the end of the second grade, students are supposed to do the following:

- read aloud and be able to show that they understand the basic meaning of the text;
- read for themselves and show that they understood the text;
- write with a knowledge of basic punctuation.

However, the MES has recognised that there is no “clear, unified and public standard”, or any “systematic monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the educational system (programmes, process, staff, management, organisations)”.²²³ There is no standardised and external system of measuring the pupils’ achievement (such as external examinations and representative research of learning outcomes). As a result, ethnic disparities remain invisible. The bureaucratic practice of reporting average marks is not only unsuitable to exploring the difference in achievement among pupils from different ethnic groups, but on the contrary contributes to hiding such differences.²²⁴ There are no particular regulations. Article 5 of the Law on Primary Education states that “For the students with special needs, depending on the type and degree of special needs, special schools and classes are formed within the elementary schools.” Only the medical examination determines the type of special needs of a child that should be enrolled in elementary education.

5.3.2 Curricula

The official position regarding the curricular standards is summarised in the answers that the Government has prepared for the European Commission, as follows:

The Bureau for Development of Education is competent for preparing teaching curricula and syllabi, monitoring the realization of the teaching

²²² Law on Primary Education, Law on Secondary Education.

²²³ MES, *Draft Strategy for the Development of Education*, 2000, p. 33.

²²⁴ Peter Radú, *Inequalities in the Macedonian Education – Report for the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Macedonia*, 2000 (unpublished), p. 7.

curricula and syllabi and drawing proposals for their amending, in accordance with the Laws on Pre-School, on elementary and on Secondary Education. The Bureau establishes professional commissions consisting of teachers who realize the curriculum of the corresponding subject, teachers of the teacher training faculties and consultants of the Bureau. The professional commissions draw draft-teaching curricula that are submitted to the schools for an opinion, on which basis a final draft – document is drawn. These documents are afterwards reviewed by the Pedagogic Service of the Ministry of Education and Science. The Minister brings a ruling for approval and implementation of the teaching curricula and syllabi in schools on proposal of the Pedagogic Service. The procedure of drawing of the curricula and syllabi is public and transparent, and the very procedure of their bringing is centralized.²²⁵

The structure for the teaching curricula and syllabi is determined by the amended Law on Secondary Education;²²⁶ it should contain objectives, teaching fields, topics and subject matters, educational standards and profiles of the teaching staff that realise the teaching curriculum. The curricula are elaborated in accordance with model curricula, which are developed by the Ministry based on proposals from the Bureau for Development of Education, and which allow for a degree of flexibility.

Pre-schools and primary schools must follow the established curriculum, but secondary schools have the right to propose a curriculum – however, there is no indication that a school has taken this opportunity.

All schools draw up an annual programme for educational activities, including compulsory subjects prescribed by the curricula and syllabi, as well as elective subjects, optional lectures and other programmes and activities that are in the students' and community's interest.²²⁷ Of the three case study locations studied for this report, only in Shuto Orizari had the school made an effort to prepare a programme reflecting the Roma community's needs and interests, offering optional classes as an elective subject within the curriculum. All students from the first to the fourth grade in Braka Ramiz i Hamid are enrolled in Roma language courses; given the limited numbers of trained teachers who apply their knowledge of bilingual techniques in this school, there is no bilingual curriculum in the strict meaning of the term.²²⁸

²²⁵ Macedonia EU Questionnaire 2005 – Education.

²²⁶ Law on Secondary Education

²²⁷ EU Questionnaire.

²²⁸ Case study Shuto Orizari.

5.4 Classroom practice and pedagogy

Teachers have the freedom to enable them to achieve the teaching aims determined by the curriculum, and to decide on the most appropriate teaching methods.²²⁹ Research in three case study locations conducted for this report suggests that many teachers do not regularly participate in in-service training (see section 3.7), which undoubtedly affects the extent to which they are familiar with the latest teaching methodologies, particularly those relevant to teaching in a diverse classroom.²³⁰

As noted above, with regard to Roma pupils, the teachers appear to “adjust their classroom assessment practice to the perceived policy expectations, [which has a] detrimental effect on the quality of teaching, because it detaches classroom assessment from the real achievement of pupils”.²³¹

5.5 School–community relations

Schools are managed through the School Boards. The Primary School Board for each primary school has the following responsibilities:

- to propose the school Statute;
- to propose an annual working plan to the founder (the municipality);
- to propose a closing account to the founder;
- to announce public tenders for the post of the school director;
- to interview candidates for the post of the school director;
- to propose short-listed candidate for the post of the director to the mayor of the municipality;
- to give an opinion to the school director on hiring teachers, professional associates and tutors;
- to decide on the appeals and the complaints of the school employees;
- to decide on the complaints of pupils, parents/guardians;
- to consider other matters established in the school statute.²³²

Secondary School Boards have similar responsibilities.²³³

²²⁹ Macedonia EU Questionnaire 2005 – Education.

²³⁰ Case study research in Gostiva, Shuto Orizari and Shtip.

²³¹ Peter Radú, *Inequalities in the Macedonian Education – Report for the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Macedonia*, 2000 (unpublished), p. 7.

²³² Law on Primary Education, art. 114.

²³³ Law on Secondary Education, art. 89.

The Board members are appointed for a period of four years. Board decisions are taken by majority vote. According to the law, parents are included in the School Board. In primary schools, three parents are selected from the Parents' Council. According to the Law on Secondary Education, in small secondary schools (up to 24 classes) there are two representatives of the students' parents or guardians, and in large secondary schools (over 24 classes) there are three such representatives.

The practice of Roma parents' involvement in the education process in schools is not widespread in Macedonia. It was piloted through the Roma Education Initiative (REI), in cooperation with Roma NGOs/community centres, and within the Step by Step methodology, which was an integral component of REI. The National Roma Strategy also recommends the establishment of such centres to play a similar role with parents' involvement.²³⁴

An external evaluation of the REI Macedonia project, which is included in the REI Final Report, states that those Roma students enrolled in primary education who had participated in the activities of the Roma Education Centres (RECs) had a lower drop-out rate than those who did not (2.3 per cent of students in the RECs leaving school in primary grades, as compared to 6.3 per cent of those not attending the RECs).²³⁵ While the impact of such projects must be assessed over the long term, it is reasonable to conclude that the involvement of Roma parents in the educational process of their children clearly has a beneficial impact on the retention and success of the Roma pupils in school.²³⁶

In Gostivar, Roma parents participate in school activities, while in Shuto Orizari, where the Roma population is dominant and the school is run by a Roma director, the parents' involvement is regarded as unsatisfactory. The reason cited for the parents' lack of interest in their children's education in Shuto Orizari is their illiteracy. Interviews conducted for this report with parents themselves and with some Roma NGOs in Shuto Orizari point to the general lack of information and poor awareness about the opportunities for parents to be involved in school activities. There were a great number of complaints about the authoritarian style of the school director and irresponsible behaviour of teachers, but there seems to be little understanding of the parents' role in advocating change. The parents appeared intimidated and helpless and the belief that there is nothing they can do appears to be widespread. Parents expressed

²³⁴ MLSP, *National Roma Strategy*, pp. 47 and 49.

²³⁵ Roma education centres are situated within community-based Roma NGOs and include community development and educational support to its community members. The specifics of activities for each NGO differ, but most offer pre-school groups and out-of-school support in the form of homework tutoring and extra classes for language and maths to the children of the community that it serves.

²³⁶ Proactive Information Services (2006). *REI Final Report*, Education Support Program, Budapest, available at <http://www.osi.hu/esp/rei> (accessed 5 November 2007) (hereafter, REI, *Final Report*).

dissatisfaction because of the obvious lack of transparency in the communication with the school authorities.²³⁷

5.6 Discriminatory attitudes

The existence and extent of discriminatory attitudes of teachers towards Roma pupils is difficult to document, as they usually take indirect form. However, there is some recognition that such bias does exist in Macedonia – although seemingly less acute and articulated than in some other countries in the region – and that discriminatory treatment of Roma pupils has a negative impact on the quality of education for the members of this minority.

The UNICEF report on the Situation Analysis of Roma Women and Children states that Roma are “the most subject to prejudices uniformly encountered within other ethnic communities in Macedonia. 79.95 per cent of the individuals polled apply negative stereotypes to the Gypsies.”²³⁸ Some NGOs reported that “Roma children are not accepted like normal children,” and that in the mixed classes, it is not uncommon to find Romani children sitting in the back of the room, alone or next to other Romani children.²³⁹ The 2006 ERRC-RNC report claims that “Romani children face prejudice, exclusion and abuse by school authorities, teachers and other pupils”, which results in segregationist practice.²⁴⁰ The 2004 ECMI report also noted “that Romani children in ethnically-mixed schools are sometimes isolated from non-Romani children by teachers who place them in the last row of the classroom” and that non-Romani children “avoid mixing with their Romani classmates.”²⁴¹

The National Roma Strategy has acknowledged the presence of discriminatory attitudes and practices towards Roma pupils in schools, such as insensitivity of some teachers and staff to the problems and needs of the Roma children, racial stereotyping

²³⁷ Interviews with parents, 7 July 2006, case study Shuto Orizari.

²³⁸ Aloui Lazhar, Violeta Petrovska-Beska and Mirjana Najcevska, *Situation Analysis of Roma Women and Children*, UNICEF, 1999, p. 9.

²³⁹ Discussion at Daja Roma women’s organisation in Kumanovo, June 2000.

²⁴⁰ Written Comments of the European Roma Rights Center and the National Roma Centrum concerning the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for consideration by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights at its 37th session, 19 September 2006, para. 3.6.6, available at http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/docs/Comments_ERRC_NRC_Macedonia.pdf (accessed 2 November 2007).

²⁴¹ ECMI Report, 2004, p. 31, citing interviews with participants of the focus groups from Skopje and Kumanovo.

of Roma, and inflexible attitudes of the school management personnel regarding the enrolment policy, especially in schools where Roma are a very small minority.²⁴²

Case study research from Shuto Orizari has indicated that tensions between the Albanian and Roma minorities have spilled into the sphere of education. There have been a number of violent incidents involving pupils from the 26 Juli primary school, between Albanian and Roma pupils.²⁴³ It has been alleged that this is an orchestrated action to deter Roma from attending this school.²⁴⁴ Parents have indicated that they opt for another school and avoid 26 Juli school out of concerns for the safety of their children, in spite of the expectation that if Roma children are exposed to a multiethnic school environment it could prove helpful in adopting a more positive approach to education.²⁴⁵

At the same time, in majority Roma schools, such practices are said to be overcome, and the pupils are treated well. This prompts the conclusion that the existing discriminatory attitudes towards Roma are a hidden engine of segregation: Roma are made to feel unwelcome in non-Roma schools but are welcome in Roma schools. Moreover, these attitudes have a negative impact on the quality of education that Roma receive. The National Roma Strategy also has noted the “ghettoisation that has a negative impact on competitiveness and motivation of children”.²⁴⁶

The REI Final Report points out the following:

Quality teaching and inclusive educational environments make a difference to children’s success. Children achieve in supportive environments that are child-centred, respectful, and where high expectations for success are the norm. Quality education and desegregation efforts are mutually supportive: *quality education practice helps the process of desegregation through stimulation of high academic results.* Change in teacher practice and attitudes are intertwined, and both have an impact on student success. While quality early years intervention is clearly crucial, if school success is to be sustained for Roma students, supports and quality pedagogy need to be injected at the higher grades.²⁴⁷

²⁴² Ministry of Education and Science, Bureau for Development of Education, *National Strategy for Development of Education in the Republic of Macedonia*, 2004, pp. 41–42.
<http://www.mon.gov.mk/pmo/docs/MK/strategija-mk.pdf> (accessed 2 November 2007).

²⁴³ Interview with Latifa Sikovska, 1 July 2006, case study Shuto Orizari.

²⁴⁴ Interview with Latifa Sikovska, 1 July 2006, case study Shuto Orizari.

²⁴⁵ Interviews with Roma parents, 7 July 2006, case study Shuto Orizari.

²⁴⁶ MLSP, *National Roma Strategy*, p. 44.

²⁴⁷ REI, *Final Report*.

In the light of the existence of discriminatory attitudes towards Roma pupils, they apparently do not enjoy a supportive and respectful environment in schools, and thus lack access to true high-quality education.

A parent interviewed for this report in Shtip indicated that his child experienced discriminatory treatment from one particular teacher in the school.²⁴⁸ The previous year the school formed a class for talented pupils and his child was selected; according to the parent, from the onset the teacher protested at a Roma child being part of a class for excellent pupils and refused to give him the highest mark throughout the year. The parent accused the majority of school teachers of discriminatory practices, and similar concerns were also raised by the Roma local councillor and the leader of the Roma NGO Cerenja.²⁴⁹

5.7 School inspections

The State Education Inspectorate (SEI) is a State administration body within the MES.²⁵⁰ The Law that regulates the SEI's mandate supplements the old one from the 1995²⁵¹ The need has arisen to change this law in order to accommodate for the changes brought with the decentralisation process and accompanying education reform.

The human resource capacities of the SEI have been strengthened in the past few years and the numbers of employees has grown from 30 in 2004 to 44 in 2006. The SEI is headed by a director and deputy responsible for the educational inspections. The SEI is further organised around the various levels of education: pre-school and primary education, secondary education, and higher education and research institutions. Another structural division is on the regional level.

There are three kinds of inspections regulated by Article 19 of Law on Education Inspection: integral evaluation of the education institutions, needs-based (incidental) inspection, and control inspection.²⁵² The integral evaluation is based on the self-evaluation questionnaire issued by the SEI and complemented with visits on the spot. The self-evaluation framework covers seven categories: teaching plans and programmes (curriculum), pupils' achievements, learning and teaching processes, support and aid offered to the pupils, the school atmosphere, resources, and the management of the school and creation of school policies. In almost each of them there are themes relevant to the Roma pupils.

²⁴⁸ Interview with a parent, 18 June 2006, case study Shtip.

²⁴⁹ Interviews with parents, 15 June 2006, case study Shtip.

²⁵⁰ Law on Education Inspection, *Official Gazette*, No. 52/05.

²⁵¹ Law on Education Inspection, *Official Gazette*, No. 33/95.

²⁵² Law on Education Inspection.

Under the category *curriculum*, sub-category 1.2 *the quality of the curriculum*, of the self-evaluation questionnaire, one question asks to what degree the curriculum helps the personal and social development of male and female children of different ethnic backgrounds. The category *pupils' achievement* on drop-out asks about the identification of certain ethnic groups or children from poor families that are more prone to dropping out, or retention. In the third category, about *learning and teaching processes*, there are a number of questions regarding the stimulation of the school environment for the male and female pupils, or pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, questions on whether there is any special care in teaching and assessing the knowledge of pupils who learn in other languages, and questions about the activities in relation to the multicultural character of the school. The category *school atmosphere* in particular devotes great attention to gender and culturally sensitive issues, in particular in the sub-category 5.3. *equality and equity*. This framework gives inspectors an opportunity to specifically evaluate the quality of teaching for Roma pupils; however, no research has been done to indicate the extent to which inspections take this aspect into account.

According to the 2004 SEI report, there were 1,270 inspections in 334 primary schools with 688 satellite schools,²⁵³ and 238 inspections in 90 secondary schools. There are no data available on the number of inspections in schools with a majority or high percentage of Roma pupils.

In the course of its inspection, the SEI prepares a report, and recommendations that oblige the school to act accordingly in a reasonably short period of time between 5 and 15 days after the report is delivered. If the Inspector concludes that there is a case of a breach of law, or that the school neglects the findings of the inspection, the case can be referred to court. The inspectors can propose different measures ranging from fines to a demand that an employee be expelled from the job.

The SEI is concerned with compliance with laws and regular education process. Neither the law that regulates the work of the SEI nor the general laws on education regulate the problem of segregation or discrimination.

Article 4 of the Law on Education Inspection²⁵⁴ guarantees the appropriate and equitable representation of citizens belonging to all communities in the SEI. In reality, however, there is only one Roma referent (administrative officer), and no Roma inspector is employed in the SEI. There are 30 employees within SEI: Director, Head of Inspection, Advisor – State Education Inspector for Higher Education, Advisor – State Education Inspector for Secondary Education, 25 Advisors – State Education

²⁵³ The central school is located in a bigger settlement, and the satellite is part of that school in rural remote areas. They share a common administration, but the building and classes are in this remote separate unit of the school.

²⁵⁴ Law on Education Inspection.

Inspectors in charge of regional inspection, and Advisor for Normative and Legal Affairs.²⁵⁵

It appears that schools with larger Roma populations are not given the same level of scrutiny in the process as those with fewer Roma students. For example, an inspection was conducted in a school with a majority of Macedonian pupils and only 30 Roma pupils, and another in a school with a mixed ethnic composition, out of which 57 were Roma pupils. The two reports are of unequal quality and length. The report that deals with a smaller Roma student body is much more comprehensive. Out of the 24-page report, the Roma pupils appear on eight pages in various contexts. In most cases, the problems noted indicate lower achievement (pp. 7, 23), bad discipline (p. 16), and dropping out (p. 8). The report also notes the efforts to overcome the situation (pp. 7, 8, 13, 23), and criticises both the school for not doing enough for improvement (pp. 11–13), and the Roma parents for lack of cooperation (p. 16).²⁵⁶

Interviews with SEI personnel indicate that there seems to be a poor understanding of State initiatives concerning the Roma community, such as the National Roma Strategy or the Decade Action Plan.²⁵⁷ However, the finding of the case study research in Gostivar demonstrates that the School Inspector was aware of the Roma Decade and even participated in the development of the Local Action Plan for the Roma Decade.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Law on Education Inspection.

²⁵⁶ Unpublished documents of the State Education Inspectorate – integral inspection reports.

²⁵⁷ Interview with the Independent Officer in the SEI, 14 August 2006.

²⁵⁸ Interview with the school inspector, 18 May 2006, case study Gostivar.

ANNEX 1. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

A1.1 Structure and organisation

The Macedonian educational system (excluding tertiary education) is divided into three levels: pre-school education, primary education and secondary education. There are also special educational institutions for children with special educational needs (SEN), at the pre-school, primary and secondary levels of education.²⁵⁹

A1.1.1 Pre-school education

Pre-school education is available in different types of pre-school, for children up to seven years of age, until the beginning of primary education. Day nurseries are available for children up to age two, kindergartens for children aged two to seven, and pre-primary education in primary schools for children aged six to seven. Public pre-schools exist only in urban areas, while pre-school classes in primary schools are located in both rural and urban areas.

In the past, pre-school education was optional. However, starting from the school year 2005/2006, the so-called zero year has become compulsory for all children who reach the age of six before the end of the calendar year²⁶⁰ and who are not enrolled in Grade 1 of primary school. The zero year is a preparatory pre-school course for six-year-olds, which can take place either in a pre-school or a primary school and aims to enable the more equal start of children upon their entrance into primary education.

Parents need to cover some of the costs of pre-school education. This amounts to slightly more than €20 a month.

A1.1.2 Primary education

According to the Constitution, primary education is compulsory and free.²⁶¹ Children must be enrolled in primary school in the calendar year in which they will reach the age of seven. Children who reach the age of six before the start of the school year in September may also be enrolled, but only on the basis of a positive opinion from a doctor, pedagogue or psychologist.²⁶² This medical examination is obligatory for all children; it determines whether the child should be enrolled in Grade 1 of primary school at the earlier or later age, or should be referred to a special school.²⁶³

²⁵⁹ This section uses Chapter 18 (on education, training and youth) of the *Macedonia EU Questionnaire 2005 – Education* as a reference.

²⁶⁰ Law on Primary Education, art. 46.

²⁶¹ Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, art. 44(3).

²⁶² *Macedonia EU Questionnaire 2005 – Education*, p. 3.

²⁶³ Law on Primary Education, art. 5.

Primary education lasts nine years.²⁶⁴ It is broken down into the following levels:

- zero year (for children aged six);
- basic primary education, from Grades 1–4 (for students aged 7–11);
- upper primary education, from Grades 5–8 (for students aged 11–15).

There is no entrance examination to enrol in the primary school, but there is a medical examination. Basic primary education (Grades 1–4) is classroom instruction. That is, students have one teacher for each grade, for all subjects. Beginning with Grade 5, students have subject instruction, that is, different teachers for each subject. There is no certification at the end of basic primary education and no entrance examination prior to enrolling in upper primary education. Upon successful completion of upper primary education, students are awarded certificates of completion.

For children who reach the age of 15 without completing primary school, primary education is no longer compulsory.²⁶⁵ However, for people over the age of 15, primary education can be provided under a reduced curriculum, and the pupil can still receive the primary education certificate upon completion. Such education is usually carried out in the context of primary schools or Workers' Universities.

In the school year 2004/2005, there was a total of 1,015 mainstream primary and lower secondary schools (499 four-grade schools, 1 five-grade, 2 six-grade and 513 eight-grade schools) in Macedonia.²⁶⁶ These were attended by a total of 227,254 students, of whom 48,484 (21 per cent) were in the Skopje region; there were a total of 13,972 teachers in these schools.

A1.1.3 Secondary education

Secondary education is also free, but it is not compulsory. There are four types of secondary education institutions: gymnasium (high school), technical secondary education, vocational secondary education, and secondary school of arts.

To enrol in mainstream secondary education, students must be no older than age 17. Each year secondary schools announce competition for enrolment, and students finishing primary education can apply at any school. Although there are no entrance examinations for secondary schools, in cases where the number of applicants exceeds the number of available places, secondary schools can hold internal examinations, with admission granted on the basis of the results, together with the primary school grades.

²⁶⁴ Art. 3 of the Law on Primary Education stipulates that “every child from the age of 7 to 14 is entitled to free and compulsory primary education”.

²⁶⁵ Law on Primary Education, art. 52.

²⁶⁶ SSO, *Primary and secondary education 2004–2005*, p. 9.

The *gymnasium* (high school) is a four-year programme for students aged 15–19. During the second half of the final year, students must write and defend a thesis (*Matura*), and pass written and oral examinations in a given subject. Graduation from high school entitles students to proceed on to higher (university) education.

Technical secondary education is a three-year programme for students aged 15–18, while *vocational secondary education* is a four-year programme for students aged 15–19. Both types of schools provide training for certain professions, and upon successful completion of practical and written examinations, students receive certificates of completion of secondary education. The certificate of completion of technical secondary school does not entitle students to apply for university. They must first pass all of the exams for the final year of secondary education, which is very difficult, as well as fee-based. However, from the school year 2006/2007, the four-year secondary vocational education will end with the State Matriculation Examination or School Final Examination (*Matura*). The State Matriculation Examination enables a student to enter higher education, while the School Final Examination provides entrance to the labour market.

Specialised *secondary schools of arts* are four-year programmes. Students must pass entrance exams, and upon successful completion of final examinations (*Matura*) they are eligible to proceed on to the university level.

Secondary education for adults practically does not exist in Macedonia.²⁶⁷

In the school year 2004/2005 there was a total of 9,055 students (in 345 class sections) following three-year study programmes in regular upper secondary schools, and 86,213 students (in 2,763 class sections) following four-year study programmes in these schools (of these, 1,028 were in private schools).²⁶⁸

A1.1.4 Special education

Admission to special schools or institutions is, in theory, based on the diagnosis and categorisation of the designated Categorisation Commission, which consists of: a pedagogue, a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a social worker, and an expert in disabilities.²⁶⁹

The integration or acceptance of children with SEN in mainstream pre-schools is not the norm. Rather, there are special pre-schools for children with hearing or visual

²⁶⁷ MES, *Draft Strategy for the Development of Education*, 2000, p. 28.

²⁶⁸ SSO, *Primary and Secondary Education 2004–2005*, p. 33.

²⁶⁹ The Ministry of Education and Science notes that the current system is “improper, formal [...] reflect[in] some dominant attitudes towards children with difficulties and points out the negative stereotypes [...] from which it is almost impossible to escape from”. (Ministry of Education and Science –2, 1999: 58) “Education for All – Report 2000”.

impairments, or learning disabilities. However, practically all of such institutions are in Skopje, and only a negligible number of children with SEN are actually covered.

While primary education is compulsory for all children, the integration of children with SEN in the educational system is noted as a current weakness.²⁷⁰ Depending on the level of their disability, pupils diagnosed as having special educational needs may by law be integrated into the regular classes of mainstream primary schools or placed in classes in separate special schools.²⁷¹ However, in practice, at most, an estimated 15 per cent of children with SEN are included in primary education.²⁷²

In the school year 2005/2006, special classes in mainstream primary schools were available in 21 primary schools, in 18 municipalities.²⁷³ In this year, the network of special primary education consisted of the following: four special schools for children with SEN and six centres for rehabilitation, for certain types of disabilities (*Zavodi za rehabilitacija za odredeni vidovi poprečnost vo razvoj*). These were distributed among the municipalities as follows: Skopje (6), Strumica (2), Bitola (1) and Veles (1).

The special classes for children with SEN in mainstream primary schools, as well as all classes in special schools, fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science. The centres for rehabilitation are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, but the costs of their primary (and secondary) education activities are financed by the Ministry of Education and Science.

The educational activities for children in special schools are organised in a way that is intended to enable them to gain knowledge in an easier way, as well as preparing them for life and integration in the community.²⁷⁴

Children attending special schools are entitled to free transport.

Students with SEN can continue in secondary education much longer than other students, up to the age of 25. Secondary vocational education is available for students with special education needs, taught according to adapted curricula. Students with higher degrees of special needs can instead receive training.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁰ Ministry of Education and Science –2, 1999, p. 61.

²⁷¹ Law on Primary Education, art. 5.

²⁷² One project that is supposed to run until 2001 involves the integration of children with SEN into 5 mainstream primary schools (4 in Skopje and 1 in Bitola). The project is supported and assisted by UNICEF, UNESCO and the University of Manchester, and is managed by the Educational Institute of Macedonia.

²⁷³ MES, *Report on Primary Education 2005–2006*, p. 18.

²⁷⁴ *Macedonia EU Questionnaire 2005 – Education*, p. 17.

²⁷⁵ *Macedonia EU Questionnaire 2005 – Education*, p. 5.

A1.2 Legal roles and decision-making

The administration of the Macedonian educational system takes place on three levels: the central Government, the municipality, and the school.

The Government is responsible for developing educational policies, funding education from the State budget, and overseeing the quality of education. The State Education Inspectorate (SEI) assesses the legal compliance of the educational institutions with appropriate legislation, and evaluates their quality based on the standards set by the Ministry and the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE), which is responsible for preparing teaching curricula and syllabi.

Public schools are established and operated by the municipalities, subject to endorsement by the Government.²⁷⁶ The municipality is the founder of the school has the following responsibilities: setting up, financing and administering schools, organising transport and food for pupils, and organising accommodation in the school dormitory.²⁷⁷ For primary schools, the mayors of the municipalities appoint the school directors. For secondary schools, the mayors of the municipalities and the Mayor of the City of Skopje appoint the school directors. The School Board comprises seven members, in small primary schools (up to 24 classes) and 9 members in large primary schools (with more than 24 classes).²⁷⁸ In both cases, two members are representatives of the municipality. In secondary schools, the School Board consists of 12 members, of which 3 are representatives of the founder (the municipalities or the City of Skopje for public schools, or the Government for State schools).²⁷⁹

The autonomy of individual schools consists in drafting and implementing annual programme and plans. The annual programme includes the following: teacher and human resources requirements; number and details of classes; general timetables; number of teaching hours; school activities; list of equipment and teaching aids. In addition, besides the realisation of compulsory subjects prescribed by the official curricula and syllabi, schools can decide on elective subjects, optional lectures, and other programmes and activities, which are in the students' interest, as well as in the interest of the school and the local environment, for which the conditions for their realisation exist. For example, a school can include in its curriculum information about minorities, even if such information is not included in the official curricula/syllabi.

A1.3 School funding

Education is funded primarily through the State budget. Each school is a separate budgetary unit. Schools are also separate legal units, and each school manages its own

²⁷⁶ Law on Primary Education, art. 15.

²⁷⁷ Law on Primary Education, art. 52.

²⁷⁸ Law on Primary Education, art. 113.

²⁷⁹ Law on Secondary Education, art. 21.

budget. The school's annual programme determines its funding needs, and schools are obliged to submit their annual financial plans in a timely manner to the school's establisher.²⁸⁰

For pre-school education State funding is provided through the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, but is limited to paying staff salaries and providing equipment for nurseries and kindergartens. Educational materials and meals are paid for with funds generated from the enrolment fees.

For primary and secondary education, State funding is administered through the MES to the Municipalities' Councils, which then distribute funds to the local schools.²⁸¹ Most of the State funding is used to cover teacher and staff salaries, rents and equipment. Other costs are borne by parents, including educational materials, textbooks, school supplies and lunch fees.

Since 2000, annual public expenditure on education has represented on average about 3.5 per cent of the GDP (see Table A1). The share of primary education in both the total State budget and as a proportion on the GDP has been in decline; from 10.04 per cent of the State budget in 1998 to 6.75 per cent in 2002.²⁸²

Table A1. Education as a share of GDP (2000–2004 as a percentage)

Year	Education	Primary		Secondary	
	Share of GDP	Share of State budget	Share of GDP	Share of State budget	Share of GDP
2000	3.4	7.06	1.93	2.74	0.75
2001	3.3	5.64	1.83	2.09	0.68
2002	3.55	6.75	2.05	2.67	0.81
2003	3.8*	–	–	–	–
2004	3.7*	–	–	–	–
2005	3.6	–	–	–	–

Source: Report from the "Education Modernization Project"

*Statistical Review: National Economy and Finances 3.4.6.01 525 Gross Domestic Gross Domestic Product, 2004, Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office, Skopje 2006.

²⁸⁰ Law on Primary Education, art. 114.

²⁸¹ Law on Budget and Law Amending and Appending the Law on Budget.

²⁸² *Education Modernisation Project Report; SSO, Statistical Review: National Economy and Finances 3.4.6.01 525, Gross Domestic Product, 2004, SSO, Skopje, 2006.*

Per-pupil funding is used as the basis for the allocation of funding to primary schools in the municipal area. Besides the total number of pupils, other factors that could influence the funding received by schools include the curriculum, the type of the school object, and the school location.²⁸³ There is no available information on whether rural schools receive more funding than urban schools.

Starting from 1 January 2007 it is expected that, within the scope of new possibilities offered by decentralisation, the municipalities will participate in funding education with additional income. Apart from the budget resources, the schools may raise funds from other sources, such as self-financing activities, donations or credits. The additional funds thus created cannot be used for the employee's salaries in the schools.²⁸⁴

Table A2. Costs per pupil in primary and secondary education (1998–2003)

Year	Per student cost (MKD)	
	Primary education	Secondary education
1998	17,622	NA
1999	17,154	19,270
2000	17,935	19,753
2001	17,185	17,025
2002	20,069	20,914
2003	NA	21,319

Source: Education Modernisation Project Report

There is no special allocation in the State budget for minority education.

²⁸³ Law on Primary Education, art. 125.

²⁸⁴ Law on Primary Education, art. 126.

ANNEX 2. CASE STUDIES

A2.1 Case study: Gostivar

A2.1.1 Administrative Unit

The city of Gostivar is located in the north-western part of Macedonia, in the upper Polog region. The city lies on an important crossroads to Tetovo and Skopje, Kichevo and Ohrid, and Debar. Gostivar is a major city in this area. In the town, as well as in the region generally, Albanians are in the majority. In Gostivar, besides Albanians, Macedonians and Roma, there is a significant Turkish community. In Gostivar Municipality there are around 68,000 Albanians, 20,000 Macedonians, 13,000 Turks and over 2,000 Roma.²⁸⁵ The Macedonians, Albanians and Turks live in the town as well as in its surrounding villages, while Roma live only in the city itself.

Figures on the number and percentage of Roma households legally registered as residents, as well as the general population in Gostivar Municipality, including the number of Roma inhabitants, were not available from representatives of the local authorities. The Roma community in Gostivar is concentrated in Balindolska (“Roma street”), the town centre, Pazar (market), Fazanerija and Cigłana. All these neighbourhoods are in the urban area, most of them quite central, although the last two are over one kilometre from the centre of the town. Pazar and Balindonska have a higher concentration of Roma residents, but are not Roma ghettos as such.

According to the estimates of the Roma NGO Mesecina, around 2,000 Roma inhabitants live in Gostivar.²⁸⁶ There are large numbers of Roma who are not registered, especially those who live in Fazanerija. According to the information from another NGO in Gostivar, the Centre for the Protection of Roma Rights, there are 500 houses or between 2,000 and 2,500 inhabitants, out of whom between 1,200 and 1,500 are registered.²⁸⁷ This suggests that up to 65 per cent of Roma households are not legally registered.

While uncertain about the details concerning Roma population in this regard, the secretary of the municipal administration noted that in the municipality the problem with non-registered houses is widespread and the local administration implements various measures to increase the percentage of legally registered households.²⁸⁸

There is no local budget allocation for the Roma community, as the municipality policy is to treat all citizens equally. The Roma community is not represented in the

²⁸⁵ Interview with a representative of the NGO Mesecina, Gostivar, 16 June 2006.

²⁸⁶ Interview with a representative of the NGO Mesecina, Gostivar, 16 June 2006.

²⁸⁷ Interview with a representative of the NGO Centre for the Protection of Roma Rights, Gostivar, 20 May 2006.

²⁸⁸ Interview with Selim Ademi, the secretary of Gostivar Municipality, Gostivar, 17 May 2006.

local council. Two people who belong to the Roma ethnic group were nominated from the candidates' list of the SDSM party (Socijal Demokratski Sojuz na Makedonija, Social Democratic Party of Macedonia), but they were not elected. There are no other institutional mechanisms to ensure the participation of Roma or any other community in local government. Each member of the council is elected directly by the citizens at local elections. The local authorities mentioned the fact that on the council's commission for interethnic relations, which is still not consolidated, a place will be reserved for a representative of the Roma community.²⁸⁹

Table A3. Total number of pre-school and school-age population, Gostivar Municipality, 2002

3–6 years	4,848
7–10 years	6,181
11–14 years	6,497
15–18 years	6,152

Source: SSO²⁹⁰

Table A4. Students enrolled in Gostivar Municipality, 2004/2005

	Pre-school	Primary education	Lower secondary
Boys	559*	2,668	2,723
Girls	474*	2,366	2,675
Total	1,033*	5,004	5,398

Source: *MES Report on Primary Education 2004–2005*.

* data refer to enrolled children in infant schools at primary schools

A2.1.2 Roma and the Community

Official data are not available for years more recent than 2002, when the Roma population's distribution by age was as shown in table A5:

²⁸⁹ Interview with Sultan Amiti, advisor for education in Gostivar, Gostivar, 18 May 2006.

²⁹⁰ SSO, *2002 Census Data*.

Table A5. Total number of Roma population in Gostivar, 2002

3–6 years	173
7–10 years	219
11–14 years	194
15–18 years	191

Source: SSO²⁹¹

An NGO estimates that out of the 500 Roma families only three or four families speak Romanes.²⁹² Another NGO estimated that between 5 and 10 per cent of Roma families speak Romanes.²⁹³ The great majority of Roma in Gostivar speak Macedonian and attend school classes in this language.

The compactness of the small town offers access to all institutions to the Roma communities; transport is not an issue for most Roma families. Distance from and access to schools are not mentioned as problems, and schools organise transport for any students who face difficulties getting to school otherwise.

Most Roma are unemployed and live off the modest social welfare payments and through the informal sector. The main occupations of those formally employed are in the communal hygiene company, in the lowest positions. Roma in Gostivar rely on seasonal work as construction workers for income. They are also engaged in trade, as retailers, or as carriers in the market. Some of them work in one of the humanitarian initiatives in the NGO sector in Gostivar.

Two NGO representatives gave very different estimates for the average household income of a typical Roma family. The estimates given by Mesecina suggested that the average monthly household budget in Gostivar is around 12,000 MKD (€200).²⁹⁴ The Centre for the Protection of Roma Rights estimated that the average monthly household budget is around 3,000 MKD (€50) and that the majority of the Roma population receive social welfare payments.²⁹⁵

In Gostivar, Roma inhabitants are considered to be a “bridge” for communication between Macedonians and Albanians. This was not the case during the conflict in

²⁹¹ SSO, *2002 Census Data*.

²⁹² Interview with a representative of the NGO Mesecina, Gostivar, 16 June 2006.

²⁹³ Interview with a representative of the NGO Centre for the Protection of Roma Rights, Gostivar, 20 May 2006.

²⁹⁴ Interview with a representative of Mesecina, Gostivar, 16 June 2006.

²⁹⁵ Interview with a representative of the NGO Centre for the Protection of Roma Rights, Gostivar, 20 May 2006.

2001, when in general communication was strained, but before and after the conflict period social, business, and interethnic relations with non-Roma neighbouring communities seem to have been generally regarded as unproblematic. Members of the Roma community have daily communication through business and friendly contacts, and in the school, as well.

A2.1.3 Education

School and education network

There are seven pre-schools in the municipality, six of which are part of a primary school. Ten primary schools and four secondary schools serve the municipality. There are no discrete special schools in Gostivar, but there is a special class in each of two mainstream primary schools.

The Bratstvo i Edinstvo school is a primary school located in the centre of town near the Roma settlement. At the school, 330 Roma pupils or 15 per cent of the total number of pupils are Roma.

Enrolment and completion

A total of 86 children attended the zero year class in the school year 2005/2006 at the Bratstvo i Edinstvo primary school; of these, 35 were Roma, and nearly half were girls.

Table A6. Enrolment at Bratstvo i Edinstvo primary school, Gostivar, 2005/2006

Grade	Total	Female	Roma	Female Roma
1	88	45	31	17
2	106	54	37	22
3	125	60	39	20
4	87	49	37	19
5	125	53	42	25
6	122	61	46	20
7	116	53	30	18
8	123	59	31	16

Source: State education inspector in Gostivar

Administrative requirements for access

No problems were reported among Roma in Gostivar relating to the administrative requirements and the enrolment procedures for school. The deputy director of the Bratstvo i Edinstvo primary school reported that children usually but not always enrol

in the closest school to their homes, but as Gostivar is not divided into any districts this “residence rule” is not strictly enforced.²⁹⁶

Costs

Due to different estimates as to the average income for a Roma family, it is unclear to what extent costs are a barrier for Roma attending school. Parents used to receive financial support when their child was enrolled in a special school, but this support was discontinued recently.

School and class placement procedures

The director of the Bratstvo i Edinstvo school stated that there are no cases of unfair or discriminatory transfer of children.²⁹⁷ Roma are distributed evenly across the classes in the school. Classes are formed to achieve a balance between gender, ability and other factors. Parents and teachers have limited rights to influence this procedure. Teachers may choose five pupils for their classes. The rest are distributed according to other criteria.

School infrastructures

There are numerous problems in the primary schools in the town that Roma pupils attend, as is the case almost everywhere in the country. One of the schools has a leaking roof, and in another there are no laboratories, while in all of them the toilets are in very bad condition.

The Bratstvo i Edinstvo school, in contrast, is in generally good condition and has been recently renovated with a complete change of the roof and reconstructed toilets. Still, it is an old building and the walls of the classrooms and corridors are wet, the floor’s surface is damaged, and the furniture is old and worn-out. There is running water in the school and indoor toilets and the school has its own heating system. There is no laboratory in the school. Besides the library there is also a computer room for the pupils. In general the pupils are satisfied with the conditions and the central location of the school.²⁹⁸

School results

In the school year 2005/2006 in the Bratstvo i Edinstvo school there were 42 Roma pupils in the fifth grade, three of whom will repeat the grade while seven others got no marks for being absent too many times. The percentage of grade repetition for Roma pupils in the fifth grade is around 24 per cent.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ Interview with Nikola Veleviski, deputy director of the Bratstvo i Edinstvo school, Gostivar, 12 June 2006.

²⁹⁷ Interview with the director of the Bratstvo i Edinstvo school, Gostivar, 12 June 2006.

²⁹⁸ Interview with pupils at the Bratstvo i Edinstvo school, Gostivar, 3 June 2006.

²⁹⁹ Interview with the director of the Bratstvo i Edinstvo school, Gostivar, 12 June 2006.

It is reported that there are a few Roma pupils in the higher grades who are still functionally illiterate.³⁰⁰ A teacher stated that, in comparison with earlier years, the literacy rate is increasing and in each class there are two or three Roma pupils who achieve excellent results, although other Roma children may not do as well.³⁰¹ In the school year 2004/2005 one Roma pupil participated in the national competition for geography.

School–community relations

Involvement of parents in the schools' everyday work is modest and is limited to the participation in the School Board. In the case of the Bratstvo i Ednistvo school there are Roma parents on the School Board.

Educational materials and curriculum policy

In the past there was an incidental provision of textbooks, free of charge, for Roma pupils. Currently, Roma pupils' access to school textbooks is not a subject of any special treatment, and parents must buy textbooks and other materials. There are no special programmes about Roma history and culture and they are not a part of the regular curricula either. The Roma who predominantly use Macedonian as their mother tongue attend schools where Macedonian is the language of instruction. No teachers are prepared to lecture in the Roma language, and nor is there a Roma teacher employed in any of the schools in Gostivar.

Teacher training and support

Interviews suggest that there is not much additional training in any field and this component of upgrading the quality of teaching seems neglected. There are no training programmes in bilingual education. Teachers were part of the project "Education for all" organised by the Bureau for Development of Education, and another group of teachers took part in the mentorship programme for additional work with Roma pupils organised by the NGO Mesecina. There is no programme for Roma assistants working at the Bratstvo i Edinstvo school.

A2.2 Case Study: Shuto Orizari

A2.2.1 Administrative Unit

Shuto Orizari is unique in Macedonia, as Roma are in the majority there and enjoy a great degree of autonomy including control over the municipal administration.

Shuto Orizari Municipality is one of the ten municipalities that Greater Skopje comprises. According to the 2002 census, Shuto Orizari has a total population of 22,017 people (5,102 households), of whom 8,578 are aged 19 and under (see Table A7).

³⁰⁰ Interview with the director of the Bratstvo i Edinstvo school, Gostivar, 12 June 2006.

³⁰¹ Interview with a teacher at the Bratstvo Edinstvo school, Gostivar, 3 June 2006.

Shuto Orizari has the largest population of Roma in Macedonia – of the total 53,879 Roma registered in the 2002 census, 13,342 were in Shuto Orizari Municipality (see Table A8). Roma thereby made up 60.6 per cent of the population – the second-largest group (30.3 per cent) was that of ethnic Albanians, and there were 1,438 ethnic Macedonians.

Table A7. Population of Skopje/Shuto Orizari, by age

Age group	Total	0–4	5–9	10–14	15–19	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–44
Shuto Orizari	22,017	2,149	2,169	2,218	2,042	2,058	1,856	1,663	1,591	1,573
Skopje total	2,022,547	122,757	143,184	160,339	165,422	161,945	153,461	148,281	149,837	146,902
Age group	45–49	50–54	55–59	60–64	65–69	70–74	75–79	80–84	85+	Unknown age
Shuto Orizari	1,355	996	723	613	473	308	117	63	32	18
Skopje total	142,688	127,760	95,234	89,822	84,443	61,969	40,384	18,975	7,941	1,203

Source: SSO, 2002

Table A8. Population of Skopje/Shuto Orizari, by ethnic identification

Total	Macedonian	Albanian	Turkish	Roma	Vlach	Serb	Bosniak	Other
22,017	1,438	6,675	56	13,342	–	67	177	262
2,022,547	1,297,981	509,083	77,959	53,879	9,695	35,939	17,018	20,993

Source: SSO, 2002

As with the country as a whole, in Shuto Orizari, there is a discrepancy between the official numbers and unofficial estimates of the Roma population. There are over 19,000 registered voters in the municipality,³⁰² although the census recorded only 13,439 people of voting age in the municipality, and, according to the mayor of Shuto Orizari, officially there are around 23,000 residents.³⁰³

Some estimates of the number of residents come close to double the official total and put the number of Roma in the municipality at 40,000.³⁰⁴ This could be a plausible estimate, given the demographic structure of the Roma population, which is very

³⁰² Interview with Erduan Iseni, mayor of Shuto Orizari, Shuto Orizari, 20 July 2006.

³⁰³ Interview with Erduan Iseni, Shuto Orizari, 20 July 2006.

³⁰⁴ Interview with Erduan Iseni, Shuto Orizari, 20 July 2006.

young, and the high incidence of unregistered Roma. There are six localities in the municipality, or more precisely in the urban area “Shutka”, where up to 30 per cent of the residents are unregistered. For example, in Brsjacka Buna Street, out of 51 people surveyed by an NGO, 15–16 people did not have personal documents.³⁰⁵

The mayor estimates that in Shuto Orizari there are around 5,000 Roma households, including the unregistered, and refugees from Kosovo who remained there after the 1999 crisis.³⁰⁶ According to the mayor, there are 4,219 households that are legally registered, while the rest are unregistered households and refugees.³⁰⁷

Shuto Orizari Municipality is composed of three parts: the urban settlement Shuto Orizari which is adjacent to the Cair and Butel Municipalities and is three kilometres from the centre of Skopje, and of two villages, Gorno and Dolno Orizari. The Roma are concentrated in the Shutka, while the two villages at the outskirts of the town are mostly Albanian.

Shuto Orizari is a residentially segregated Roma community – the only one set up as a distinctive administrative unit in Macedonia. The municipality is also officially bilingual (Romanes/Macedonian) because Roma make up a majority of the population. The municipality has its own local council, headed by an elected mayor, who is Roma. There are ten Roma councillors, eight Albanians and two Macedonians.³⁰⁸ This high representation of Roma in the local council still does not correspond to the ethnic composition of the municipality, however. According to an NGO representative, “This amounts to an overall disadvantage for the Roma in this municipality, but it is a result of the way in which the Roma parties function.”³⁰⁹

There are also 23 Roma working in the local administration.³¹⁰ There is no other institutional mechanism in place to ensure a greater participation of Roma in the local governance.

There is no specific, separate local budget allocation for the Roma community. However, the overall budget is very small and insufficient to tackle the various problems that urgently require a solution. According to the mayor, 2,778,007 MKD (€46,300) are allocated from Shuto Orizari Municipality for each primary school. The

³⁰⁵ Interview with Kimeta Hasan of the NGO Luludi, Shuto Orizari, 1 July 2006. The Mayor estimates the number of unregistered households to be less than one thousand, while Ms. Shikovska, from the educational centre Nadez, estimates over one thousand of these households.

³⁰⁶ Interview with Erduan Iseni, Shuto Orizari, 20 July 2006.

³⁰⁷ Interview with Erduan Iseni, Shuto Orizari, 20 July 2006.

³⁰⁸ Interview with Demir Sulejman – Shuto Orizari Council Member, president of the commission for education (He is Roma), Shuto Orizari, 20 July 2006.

³⁰⁹ Interview with Kimeta Hasan, Shuto Orizari, 1 July 2006.

³¹⁰ Interview with Erduan Iseni, Shuto Orizari, 20 July 2006.

total budget for the two primary schools in the municipality (Braka Ramiz i Hamid and 26 Juli) is 5,556,014 MKD (€92,600). This budget covers administrative costs for the two schools, and it has not been increased recently.³¹¹

The community infrastructure is in very poor condition. The roads are bumpy, spotted with holes, narrow, and covered in mud from the many streets that have never been paved. There is access to the sewage network and electricity, but these utilities are overstretched and inappropriate to the needs of the significantly enlarged settlement. There are many problems with the supply of water in summer and with electricity in winter. The sewage system has been expanded and renovated recently, but this intervention did not solve the problem entirely. There is a telephone network in place. There is public and private bus transport that serves the municipality with two bus lines in regular operation.³¹² Garbage collection does not appear to be regulated: garbage is dumped at several locations within the community.

There is little development within the community: just a pre-school, two primary schools, post office, bank and primary health centre; as of recently there is a police station and the chief commander is Roma. Citizenship documents cannot be processed in the municipality, and there is no social welfare centre either. There are no recreational or cultural centres. The activities of many grassroots Roma NGOs partially fill this gap, but there is a clear need for more State-supplied services.

A2.2.2 Roma and the Community

Roma in Shuto Orizari are mostly Muslims and are bilingual. Most of them use one of the many Roma dialects and go to the Macedonian language primary and secondary schools. Correspondingly to the dialects, Roma in Shuto Orizari belong to different Roma groups, which may have some implications in their social organisation, but this issue remains largely unexplored. Etymology suggests that some groups were formed around traditional crafts, such as the Barutchii (workers with gunpowder), Kovachi (blacksmiths), Dzambazi (people dealing with horses), and some groups have their roots in particular localities, such as the Gilanlii and Pristevaci (from Gnjilane and Pristina, respectively). It should be noted that while they speak different dialects of Romanes, they can easily understand each other.

As shown in table A9, there are a large number of school-age children in the municipality.

³¹¹ Interview with Erduan Iseni, Shuto Orizari, 20 July 2006.

³¹² Interview with Demir Sulejman, Latifa Sikovska and Kimeta Hasan, NGO leaders, Shuto Orizari, 1 July 2006.

Table A9. Pre-school and school-age population, Shuto Orizari

Years	Male	Female
0–4	825	837
5–9	872	821
10–14	855	897
15–19	832	799

Source: State Statistical Office, 2002

While precise figures are not available, residents report a positive trend of increased school enrolment, and state that this creates additional problems for proper accommodation of these children in the existing school network.³¹³

The municipality is not very large, and the Roma settlement is concentrated in one compact area; the two primary schools Braka Ramiz i Hamid and 26 Juli are within walking distance of each other. However, the roads and streets are in extremely bad condition, and this causes great difficulties, especially on rainy days, when mud is a serious problem. The high schools are distributed around the larger city area, within a distance of about ten kilometres. Young Roma from Shuto Orizari must use public transport if they go to high school.

There are no large businesses in the municipality, and unemployment is widespread. One estimate holds that around 20 per cent of Roma has regular employment, while the rest are unemployed and are involved in unregulated trading.³¹⁴ The main occupations are petty trading, handicraft and self employment. In general, Roma occupy the lowest positions in the labour market. Most of the employees in the communal hygiene sector in Skopje are Roma. Roma women often work as cleaning ladies in private apartments in the middle-class households in the city of Skopje. Roma also engage in collecting recycling material. There are no discernible patterns of seasonal work for the Skopje Roma.

The better-off Roma families in the municipality usually receive money from family members who work abroad in western European countries. The main income of the Roma community is social welfare payments. Recently, however, even this is becoming harder to obtain under new regulations imposed by the Government.³¹⁵ The average

³¹³ Interviews with NGO leaders Kimeta Hasan, Latifa Sikovska and Erduan Iseni, Shuto Orizari, 1 July 2006.

³¹⁴ Interview with Erduan Iseni, Shuto Orizari, 20 July 2006.

³¹⁵ New social welfare regulations require residents to show a paid electricity bill.

household budget of a typical Roma family (of five to six persons) is around 4,000 to 5,000 MKD (€70 to €85).³¹⁶ Some estimates push this amount to lower levels.

The social structure of the Roma community is predominantly poor. The richer section of the Roma community is not larger than 2 per cent, or some 400 households. There are around 20 per cent who are middle class, with solidly built houses and regular incomes, and the rest are poor.³¹⁷

Social and interethnic relations with non-Roma neighbouring communities are generally positive, but are especially burdened by strong negative stereotypes and prejudices, which causes some problems. In general the neighbourly relations tend to be good. The institutional contexts for interethnic relationships are working places, markets and schools, where, depending on context, the influence of prejudices is felt at various degrees. The question of the level of the cultural and social isolation of Roma community is a complex issue; as one NGO leader put it, “The integration of non-Roma is needed more than the integration of Roma.”³¹⁸ The main hurdle is not the Roma willingness to adapt and integrate, but the readiness for acceptance by the majority.

It has been reported on several occasions that the greatest challenge for interethnic relations in this municipality is the relationship between Roma and Albanians, as these two groups compose the great majority of the population. Currently, the ratio in the 26 Juli school is 70 per cent Albanian to 30 per cent Roma.³¹⁹

A2.2.3 Education

School and education network

The schools are managed by a school director, the managerial board, the parents’ council and representatives of the local community. This management body decides about the curricular plans, the yearly programme in accordance with the programme given by the Ministry of Education and Science, and also any extracurricular activities. The ultimate authority is with the Ministry, but the responsibility for day-to-day decisions lies with the director.

The total amount of finances comes from the central government. The local government only distributes the money allocated from the central budget. The main

³¹⁶ Most of the representative interviewed, including Erduan Iseni, Latifa Sikovska, Kimeta Hasan and Demir Sulejman, agreed on these estimates.

³¹⁷ Interview with Erduan Iseni and Kimeta Hasan, Shuto Orizari, 20 June and 1 July 2006.

³¹⁸ Interview with Kimeta Hasan, Shuto Orizari, 1 July 2006.

³¹⁹ Interview with Latifa Sikovska, Shuto Orizari, 1 July 2006.

criteria are the number of classes and the number of pupils. The two schools in the municipality get equal funding: 2,778,007 MKD (€46,300) in total for each school.³²⁰

Enrolment and completion

The numbers of Macedonian pupils in both the 26 Juli and the Braka Ramiz i Hamid schools are very small.

It is also difficult to establish the number of Roma children who attend “informal” kindergartens operated by NGOs and not recognised by the state as formal education. One centre that has been functioning in the municipality for around five years claims that, on a yearly basis, they have around 100 children attending.³²¹

In contradiction to the claim that there are five or six Roma children per year enrolled in special schools one respondent claims that 60 to 70 per cent of the children in special schools are Roma.³²²

Some 300–320 children are enrolled in the two pre-schools in the municipality, and approximately 2,700 Roma children attend the two primary schools.³²³ It is unclear why so few Roma children attend pre-school; those who do spend between one and two years there. According to an interview, many Roma children drop out of school in the fifth and sixth grades;³²⁴ however, other information suggests that while many Roma children must repeat a grade at some point, they do ultimately complete primary education. Only small numbers of Roma pupils in the Braka Ramiz i Hamid school (around 120) finish primary school without repeating a grade.³²⁵ Around 30 to 40 pupils drop out between the fifth and the eighth grade.³²⁶

The average age at enrolment in pre-school in Shuto Orizari is six, and this corresponds to the regular recommendation for enrolment age. The average age of enrolment in the first grade of primary school is, seven, and again this corresponds to the regular recommendation; however, according to the local school inspector, there are more than a few cases of children being enrolled at the age of eight.³²⁷

³²⁰ Interview with Erduan Iseni, Shuto Orizari, 20 July 2006.

³²¹ Interview with Kimeta Hasan, Shuto Orizari, 1 July 2006.

³²² Interview with Kimeta Hasan, Shuto Orizari, 1 July 2006.

³²³ Interview with Saip Iseni, director of the primary school Braka Ramiz and Hamid, Shuto Orizari, 2 July 2006.

³²⁴ Interviews with Roma children of the primary school Braka Ramiz and Hamid, 4, July 2006.

³²⁵ Interview with Saip Iseni, Shuto Orizari, 2 July 2006.

³²⁶ Interview with Saip Iseni, Shuto Orizari, 2 July 2006.

³²⁷ Interview with Asan Ramadani, inspector for education for Shuto Orizari Municipality, 10 July 2006.

Language

Most people interviewed agreed that the Macedonian language, which is the language of instruction that most Roma choose, is a serious impediment for Roma pupils, especially in the first years of formal education. The modest extracurricular programme in place in the Braka Ramiz i Hamid primary school for learning Romanes cannot overcome this difficulty; NGO activities that aim to overcome this difficulty, such as the Nadez Centre, where additional help with homework is offered by experienced staff, are important but also insufficient. However, there were no reports that insufficient language skills in the language of instruction have been used as a pretext for sending Roma pupils to special schools.

Discriminatory attitudes

A local assistant reported instances of hidden and silent discrimination against Roma, for example, the evidence of inappropriate treatment of the pupils by some teachers, such as striking Roma pupils or the use of inappropriate language. These forms of verbal and physical abuse are limited to just a few of the teachers, but are alarming nevertheless.³²⁸

School and class placement procedures

The practices and criteria for allocating children in mainstream schools to segregated Roma classes are hard to establish in the context of this municipality, given its predominantly Roma population. In the mixed school 26 Juli, the segregation is a consequence of the different languages of instruction. Roma mainly study in Macedonian-language classes, while Albanians attend classes held in their mother tongue. In the majority-Roma school Braka Ramiz i Hamid, the language of instruction is Macedonian and the classes are formed on the basis of pupils' achievements: the best students are grouped together and are taught by better teachers. The school pedagogue and psychologist determine class placement according to the results of tests and school records.³²⁹

Practices and procedures for placing children in special schools start in the mainstream school, when the school recommends children for testing with the State Institution for Mental Health. Every year, there are about five to six children placed in special schools.³³⁰ There are, however, cases of parents not agreeing to their child being transferred to a special school. A parent explained that her daughter was recommended to go to special school, but, because of the transport costs involved, she refused to agree to this placement. Her daughter went on to successfully complete the eighth grade at the mainstream primary school.³³¹

³²⁸ Interviewed Roma pupils from Braka Ramiz i Hamid, 4 July 2006.

³²⁹ Interview with Saip Iseni, Shuto Orizari, 2 July 2006.

³³⁰ Interview with Kimeta Hasan, Shuto Orizari, 1 July 2006.

³³¹ Interview with Roma women, Shuto Orizari, 20 June 2006.

The practices and procedures of reassessment for children in special schools are almost nonexistent, and no one interviewed could recall when a reassessment took place.

Infrastructure and human resources

Almost every item of school infrastructure at the Braka Ramiz i Hamid school, such as running water, indoor toilets and equipped laboratories, has been improved recently in the last years through various grants and international organisations. However, it still often happens that the school is closed for several days, due to a lack of water or heating. The last time that this happened was last winter 2006, and again on the repeated visit by the research team in March 2007.

The Braka Ramiz i Hamid school is significantly overcrowded. It has a capacity of around 1,000 children, but the actual number of children enrolled is double this. The classes are organised in three shifts.³³²

There are three computers in the school, donations from the Foundation for an Open Society – Macedonia's "Equal educational opportunities for Roma children" project in 2007, but in general there is no teaching based on computer use, and the pupils have no access to the computers, which are only used by teachers.

Overall, the physical condition of the school building is good. The condition and quality of the walls and floors are not perfect, but the overall appearance is not very different from that of an average Macedonian school. However, the furniture is very old and damaged.

Parents expressed the greatest concerns about hygiene in the school, the conditions of the toilets especially. They pointed that in the immediate surroundings of the school there are many garbage dumps that are a threat to the health of their children. Also, they complained about the inappropriate heating in the classrooms and the frequent cuts in the water supply.³³³

Academic achievement

The percentage of grade repetition for Roma pupils cannot be established with any precision. It is understood, however, that the school emphasises the continuation of education. Some four or five pupils per class in the fourth grade in the Braka Ramiz i Hamid school do not meet the standards for functional literacy. In the eighth grade this number decreases to up to three pupils per class.³³⁴

School–community relations

The school governance body is composed of the school director, the managerial board and the parents' council. The types of decisions that the school governance body

³³² Interview with Saip Iseni, Shuto Orizari, 2 July 2006.

³³³ Interviews with parents, NGO "Nadez", Shuto Orizari, 7 July 2006.

³³⁴ Interview with Saip Iseni, Shuto Orizari, 2 July 2006.

usually takes concern the everyday functioning of the school. Involvement of parents in the schools' everyday work is restricted to the participation in the parents' council. The role of this council seems very limited. The most direct link of the parents with the school is the parents' meetings that are organised by teachers. This is usually one-way communication.

School inspections

There were two inspections in the Braka Ramiz i Hamid school in 2005. No measures have been taken as a result of school inspection. The findings of school inspectors' reports were not made available.

Educational materials

Roma pupils' access to school textbooks is not provided by any special measures. Parents are responsible for providing their children with the necessary materials. This presents a great financial burden for Roma families, who rank amongst the poorest in the country.

A history teacher maintains a collection of textbooks on Roma history and culture, which the students are free to borrow, but this is entirely on the teacher's own initiative.

Teacher training and support

There are numerous training programmes for teachers organised by the Ministry of Education and Science. 20–30 teachers from each school in Shuto Orizari participated in training in the last two years. Some of the topics of the training courses that they attended are Methodology Step by Step, Critical Thinking, Education for Social Justice, and so on. The findings of evaluation reports were not available.

Training programmes in bilingual education are organised especially for the teachers in pre-schools and in lower primary education.

A2.3 Case study: Shtip

A.2.3.1 Administrative Unit

The city of Shtip is the regional centre for the eastern part of Macedonia. Shtip is renowned as an industrial region with highly developed textile, leather and food-processing industries. In spite of being a regional centre, Shtip is a relatively small town, and the Roma community lives in the vicinity of the centre. According to the representative of the municipal administration at the last census in Shtip, 2,195 citizens registered as Roma out of 47,796 in total.³³⁵ Roma NGO leaders give varying

³³⁵ Interview with a representative of the Shtip municipal administration, Shtip, 16 June 2006.

estimates of the Roma population, from 2,500 to 6,000, and the low numbers on the official statistics are attributed to Roma registering as Turks.³³⁶

It is difficult to establish the real number and percentage of Roma households legally registered as residents. The municipality does not have evidence about the legal and illegal Roma households and their number. According to the estimates of NGOs from Shtip, between 65 and 90 per cent of Roma households are not legally registered.³³⁷ The Roma community in Shtip is not a distinct administrative unit and is integrated into a broader administrative unit in the town.

Shtip Municipality is a separate unit of local self-government. According to the criteria determined by the law, Shtip Municipality has 23 members of the local council. There is one Roma representative³³⁸ on the local council, but there are no other institutional mechanisms to ensure the participation of Roma or any other community in local government. There is no special local budget allocation for the Roma community, as the municipality policy is to treat all citizens equally.³³⁹

There are no available numbers on the school-age population more recently than 2002, presented in table A10:

Table A10. Pre-school and school-age population, Shtip Municipality, 2002

3–6 years	1,943
7–10 years	2,307
11–14 years	2,871
15–18 years	3,114

Source: SSO³⁴⁰

A2.3.2 Roma and the Community

The Roma community in Shtip is concentrated in one settlement. This form of isolation, in the opinion of the local councillor, should be considered ghettoisation.³⁴¹ There are no institutional contexts for regulation of the interethnic relations, but on a

³³⁶ Interviews with Enisa Demirova, representative of the NGO Cerenja, and Shenaj Osmanov, representative of the NGO Centre for the Protection of Roma Rights, Shtip, 5 June, 2006.

³³⁷ Interviews with Enisa Demirova, Shenaj Osmanov, Shtip, 5 June 2006.

³³⁸ Interview with Omer Demirov, local councillor, Shtip, 16 June 2006.

³³⁹ Interview with Suncica Gjuftavska, Shtip Municipal Administration, Shtip, 16 June 2006.

³⁴⁰ SSO, *2002 Census Data*.

³⁴¹ Interview with Omer Demirov, Shtip, 16 June 2006.

positive note, however, the municipality will employ one Roma relations assistant in the local administration.³⁴²

The Roma community in Shtip is composed of Romanes-speakers and Turkish-speaking Roma. The estimates given by the respondents of the size of the Roma community vary, too. The estimates of a representative of the NGO Centre for the Protection of Roma Rights in Shtip are in accordance with the official statistics, accepted by the local authorities as well.³⁴³ Two other representatives noted that a large segment of the Roma community goes unrecognised as such because they speak Turkish.³⁴⁴ Official figures set the number of the Roma community in Shtip at 2,195, as presented in table A11:

Table A11. Total number of Roma population in Shtip, 2002

3–6 years	175
7–10 years	212
11–14 years	194
15–18 years	191

Source: SSO³⁴⁵

One NGO representative estimates the Roma population at 2,500 or 3,000, of whom around 70 per cent are Romanes-speakers.³⁴⁶ In contrast, other representatives gave estimates of between 5,000 and 6,000 Roma living in the municipality, of whom 30 per cent are Romanes-speakers and 70 per cent Turkish-speakers.³⁴⁷

Community infrastructure is adequate: several roads have been paved, and there is access to the sewer system, water, telephones, and electricity in most households, but the services are not running without problems. Most of the telephones are disconnected because of failure to pay the bills. Water is often cut off in summers, as consumption is high, and as the town and the particular Roma settlement are built on hills, shortages are frequent. There is no public transport in the town at all, but the

³⁴² Interview with. Sunchica Gjuftevska, the head of the Mayor's Office in Shtip, Shtip, 16 June 2006.

³⁴³ Interview with Shenaj Osmanov, of the NGO Centre for the Protection of Roma Rights, Shtip, 5 June 2006.

³⁴⁴ Interviews with Enisa Demirova and Omer Demirov, who is a member of the Local Council from the Roma community in Shtip, Shtip, 5 and 16 June 2006.

³⁴⁵ SSO, *2002 Census Data*.

³⁴⁶ Interview with Shenaj Osmanov, Shtip, 5 June 2006.

³⁴⁷ Interviews with Enisa Demirova, of the NGO Cerenja, Shtip, 5 June 2006.

settlement where most Roma live is quite close to the centre of the town and transport is not viewed as a problem.

There are no pharmacies, public or private health institutions, or any other institution in the Roma settlement proper, but the facilities in the centre of town are easily accessible. To improve hygienic conditions the Italian government financed the establishment of a public bath that includes washing machines. However, this is not used frequently, as the 50 MKD price (about €0.80) for the services is too high for the local Roma population.

According to the local NGOs, the percentage of Roma formally employed is between 10 and 20 per cent.³⁴⁸ Roma in Shtip rely on seasonal work in the surrounding fields for employment.³⁴⁹ They also participate in picking cherries and other fruits, engage in illegal timber trade, and collect old steel and scrap metal for resale. Women find employment in the poorly paid textile industry for which this town is famous. Besides these forms of income collection, most of the Roma are unemployed and live off the modest social welfare payment.³⁵⁰ Many are ineligible for social welfare because of their unregulated legal status and lack of documents. The estimate about the average household budget of a typical Roma family in Shtip varies between 2,500 and 5,000 MKD (€40 to €80).

The local Roma NGO leaders agree that the Roma community social structure is predominantly poor, with from 80 to 90 per cent living in poverty.³⁵¹

Social and interethnic relations with non-Roma neighbouring communities seem to be generally regarded as unproblematic, but the Roma community is culturally and socially isolated. Roma NGO leaders report instances of ethnic discrimination in Shtip, including prohibited access to bars (one young Roma was denied a seat and a drink because of the owner's order not to serve Roma), a refusal to employ Roma persons, or in one case the refusal of one kindergarten nurse to work in the same shift as her colleague, a Roma nurse.³⁵²

³⁴⁸ Interviews with Shenaj Osmanov, of the NGO Centre for the Protection of Roma Rights, Shtip, 5 June 2006.

³⁴⁹ Interview with Enisa Demirova, of the NGO Cerenja, Shtip, 5 June 2006.

³⁵⁰ The NGOs Cerenja and Centre for the Protection of Roma Rights, Shtip, 5 June 2006.

³⁵¹ The NGOs Cerenja and Centre for the Protection of Roma Rights, Shtip, 5 June 2006.

³⁵² The NGOs Cerenja and Centre for the Protection of Roma Rights, Shtip, 5 June 2006.

A2.3.3 Education

School and education network

There are seven pre-schools, four primary schools, and six secondary schools in Shtip Municipality. There is also one special primary school, which enrolls 28 pupils.³⁵³

Enrolment data for the municipality are available as shown in table A12:

Table A12. Enrolment in Shtip Municipality, 2004/2005

	Pre-school	Primary education	Lower secondary
Boys	134*	1,093	1,263
Girls	125*	1,193	1,312
Total	259*	2,886	2,575

Source: MES, *Analysis of primary education 2004–2005*

* data refer to enrolled children in infant schools at primary schools

According to a representative of the NGO Cerenja in Shtip, the trends in the overall school-age population (3 to 18 years) over the past five years have seen a slight rise of some 10 per cent.³⁵⁴ There is general agreement that there is a significant improvement in the overall Roma education as a result of NGO activism and the various programmes for scholarships and other help.

The Goce Delchev primary school is located in the centre of the settlement known as Radinski Pat, which has a Roma majority population. There are several NGOs working in the school on various projects to promote better access to and quality of education.

³⁵³ SSO, in UNDP, *Data and Indicators about Macedonian Municipalities*, Reprint, 2004, pp. 215, Table 66.

³⁵⁴ Interview with Enisa Demirova, Shtip, 5 June 2006.

Table A13. Total number of enrolled students in the Goce Delchev primary school, 2005/2006

	Pre-school	Basic Education		Secondary education
		Primary education	Lower secondary	
Boys	24	160		172
Girls	25	158		199
Roma Boys	8	57		35
Roma Girls	7	58		34

While one Roma NGO leader asserted that there are two segregated Roma classes in the Goce Delcev school, this information could not be confirmed.³⁵⁵ The interviewed school staff claimed that they simply treat all children as equal and there is no special procedure for placement of Roma pupils in separate or special classes.

Enrolment and completion

No data were found to answer how many Roma children have never been enrolled in school. Most people interviewed acknowledged that Roma families do not customarily send their children to pre-school.³⁵⁶

School infrastructure

The Goce Delcev school has been recently renovated, together with a new sports hall, and all the school equipment has been refurbished. No problems with overcrowding have been reported.

Curriculum

There are no special programmes for Roma culture, and textbooks on Roma history and culture are not a part of the regular curricula. Roma pupils have no access to a bilingual curriculum. The school offers only Macedonian-language courses.

School–community relations

Parents have only limited involvement in the school's everyday work; they are invited to participate in parents' meetings when the class teacher informs them about the progress of each pupil and the problems and progress in the functioning of the school. No Roma parents are members of the school parents' council.

³⁵⁵ The NGO Centre for the Protection of Roma Rights, Shtip, 5 June 2006.

³⁵⁶ Interviewed Roma parents – Sevgjulan Shakirova, Kurtish Jasharov and Muslet Aliov, Shtip, 7 June 2006.

Discriminatory treatment

In the Goce Delcev school there is outright denial of the existence of any kind of discrimination. The Roma local councillor points out that the discrimination against the Roma pupils, in combination with the language barrier, contributes towards their poor educational achievements.³⁵⁷

Pupils did not report any discriminatory treatment from teachers, and acknowledged that they have had paid them compliments on certain occasions, but point out instead that some schoolmates call them *Cigani*, Gypsies.

³⁵⁷ Interview with Mr. Omer Demirov, who is a member of the Local Council from the Roma community in Shtip, Shtip, 16 June 2006.

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Equal access to quality education for
Roma
Montenegro

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Index of abbreviations and acronyms

MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MONSTAT	Statistical Office of the Republic of Montenegro
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Executive summary

Even before the referendum that led to its independence in 2005, the Government of Montenegro adopted several policy documents referring to the education of Roma children. The Government has made serious efforts to understand and recognise the importance of education for Roma, implementing a project designed to integrate Roma children into the education system. Despite this unique initiative, many issues affecting access to and quality of education for Roma remain unresolved and in some cases overlooked by Government policy. As a participant in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015, Montenegro is part of a larger regional initiative to address the situation of Roma, and there are valuable lessons that this small and diverse country can pass on to the other participating states. However, there are still basic obstacles to improving education for Roma in Montenegro, barriers that the Government must take steps to eliminate.

Lack of data is a critical issue in Montenegro. The most common estimate of the total number of the Roma, Egyptian, and Ashkalia (RAE) population in Montenegro puts it at 20,000 people, including some 5,000 refugees from Kosovo. A distinct discrepancy between the official data on the Roma population and the data provided through surveys, official institutional registers and research analysis exists, however – fewer than 3,000 Roma registered in the 2003 census. Almost half the number of school-age RAE children in Montenegro are refugees. Data regarding Roma participation and performance in education are very limited, and affected by the broader lack of information. This lack of reliable data that could facilitate informed decision-making with regard to Roma policies in general and education-related programmes more specifically must be urgently addressed by the Government, as it seriously calls into question the accuracy of continuous monitoring and evaluation of Roma-related programmes. For example, segregation has not officially been acknowledged in any Government documents, yet the high level of residential segregation in some areas is known to give rise to Roma-majority schools.

Roma are mentioned in a number of general policy documents, but the first policy to specifically target the issues facing Roma communities in Montenegro is the Decade Action Plan, adopted in 2005. The Roma Education Initiative (REI) was undertaken in collaboration with international and local NGOs in 2003, to enhance both access to and quality of education for Roma in three localities. The project has since been taken over by the Roma Education Fund (REF) and may serve as a model for other countries.

The language barrier is viewed as one of the reasons for dropping out among Roma children, but Romanes is not an officially recognised minority language in Montenegro, and no relevant policies yet exist that would provide systematic and obligatory pre-school programmes sensitive to the specific needs of Roma children.

There are no Roma teachers, and case study research conducted for this report suggests that many teachers are reluctant to study Romanes. A very limited number of Roma teaching assistants have been working in the classrooms as part of the REI, although there has been a lack of clarity regarding their place in the school structure. Resolving this administrative issue should be a priority, as Roma assistants can effectively help to bring Roma children into school and succeed once there. Provisions have been made to supply Roma children with textbooks, but there are no materials specifically about Roma, and no materials in Romanes. REI has paid considerable attention to teacher training, introducing pedagogical practices recognising specific features of the Roma culture and tradition, although bilingual techniques are not included in the available pre-service courses. As part of its efforts to be considered a candidate for EU membership, Montenegro has initiated a debate on anti-discrimination legislation, but at present no such law is in force.

Access to pre-school is limited by the shortage of places in available facilities. This shortfall disproportionately affects Roma children, as priority is given to families where both parents work, which is rare among Roma. The Ministry of Education and Science should take steps to revise this policy and ensure that Roma children, who could benefit greatly from the preparatory aspect of pre-school, are also among those allocated places. The costs associated with attending school are beyond what many Roma families can afford. There is no information suggesting that Roma children are placed in segregated classes in mainstream schools, although there are Roma-majority schools in areas where the population has a high proportion of Roma. Limited research has been conducted into whether Roma are overrepresented in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities, although this issue is addressed in the Decade Action Plan.

In general, schools in Montenegro suffer from poor infrastructure, but there is no information as to whether schools with a high proportion of Roma are in a worse condition. Data on Roma students' performance in school are available in the context of the REI, but they are not comprehensive. They do, however, indicate some improvements in school success among Roma. A mechanism for measuring the achievements of Roma children should be established, such as standardised testing as a part of the national testing system. Extensive reform of the curriculum is underway in Montenegro, but the impact of these changes on education for Roma is unclear. The Ministry of Education and Science should conduct monitoring to assess the extent to which reforms are improving the quality of education for Roma specifically. The REI also focuses on training teachers in differentiated techniques, which should have longer-term effects benefiting Roma and all students. A lack of real communication and cooperation between Roma communities and schools is a serious obstacle to improving education for Roma; the REI has made efforts to better involve Roma parents in the daily work of the schools, but this is also a longer-term process that should be monitored. School inspections are conducted under the auspices of several authorities as a result of the ongoing education reform process. The challenges of their new role notwithstanding, the various inspectors must provide substantive and

continuous support and feedback to the teachers engaged in the Roma-related initiatives. Furthermore, new reform institutions need to further build their capacities that will guarantee high-quality education for Roma children.

1.2 Recommendations

1.2.1 Recommendations on monitoring and evaluation

Data collection

The Government of Montenegro should do the following:

1. In collaboration with the relevant services of the European Commission, develop methods of ethnic data collection in order to monitor the effects of their policies on ethnic minorities, including Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians (RAE).
2. Work on creating reliable data collection systems, including the use of school-collected data, which are disaggregated by ethnicity.
3. Foster cross-sectoral cooperation at the governmental level in order to create a unified database including information about RAE.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

4. Take steps to improve the overall collection of data related to education, disaggregated according to ethnic group, including Roma and other ethnic minorities, to the full extent permitted by relevant EU legislation, with adequate safeguards for protecting sensitive information and the identity and privacy of individuals; make that data publicly available.
5. Work in cooperation with the National Statistical Office to perform research at the national level as to identify the number of RAE children in different age groups that are not included in the formal educational system.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Government of Montenegro should do the following:

6. Undertake regular reviews of the degree of implementation of the key policy documents addressing issues of access to high-quality education for Roma, such as the National Action Plan for the Decade (“Decade Action Plan”), Plan of Action for Children and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.
7. Allocate separate funds for the implementation of the education section of the Decade Action Plan.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

8. Regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of the education section of the Decade Action Plan, revising its priorities, measures and activities, in accordance with real achievements.
9. Develop clear indicators to monitor and evaluate the implementation of education initiatives related to RAE, especially the Roma Education Initiative, and make the evaluation of this publicly available.
10. Work on creating reliable data collection systems, and consolidate data in a central database, which would be an ongoing reliable source of information on important indicators for education for RAE.
11. Track achievements of Roma children enrolled in special schools so as to enable a prompt response in cases of incorrect placement.
12. Ensure the collection of disaggregated data within the planned national testing system.

1.2.2 Recommendations for improving access to education

Structural constraints, legal and administrative requirements, costs

The Government of the Republic of Montenegro should do the following:

14. Fulfil the measures detailed in the Decade Action Plan for education with regard to point 2.5, providing additional construction and adjustment of infrastructure inhabited by Roma (goal 7).
15. Work towards improvement of access to personal documents and health care for Roma as one of the preconditions for their successful access to education.
16. Develop policies for refugees and displaced people to gain access to education despite their not having the appropriate papers.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

17. Ensure that adequate space is available to accommodate all children in kindergarten and primary schools, through the expansion of existing facilities or the construction of new ones.
18. Develop financial and other incentives for pre-schools to enrol children from disadvantaged families, to counteract the tendency for pre-schools to give priority to families with two working parents.
19. Implement positive discrimination/affirmative action towards RAE children at the level of pre-school education, bearing in mind its importance as a first instance for addressing and subsequently overcoming language barriers.

20. Develop a policy targeting RAE who are finishing secondary school, in order to facilitate their enrolment in university, making the necessary resources available to implement this policy.
21. Enforce existing regulations regarding compulsory education, to ensure that RAE children are actually attending school.
22. Introduce a national system to provide necessary educational materials (in particular, textbooks and exercise books) free of charge to disadvantaged children in kindergartens and primary schools.

Local Education Authorities should do the following:

23. Organise stakeholders involved in RAE issues at the local level and create multi-stakeholder local teams that would develop, promote and implement policy documents, such as the National Plan of Action for Children, at the local level.

Residential segregation/Geographical isolation

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

24. Create incentives to encourage local authorities to take steps to improve the infrastructure serving RAE communities and lead to desegregation.
25. Take measures, such as providing free transportation, to allow RAE from segregated areas to attend integrated schools of their choosing.
26. Increase accountability of local institutions dealing with Roma-related issues.
27. Provide financial and other incentives for schools to establish better cooperation with Roma civil society in order to overcome barriers to the wider participation of RAE children from isolated communities in formal education.

School and class placement procedures

The Government of Montenegro should do the following:

28. Fulfil the measures detailed in the Decade Action Plan for education under point 2.1.2, developing a specific enrolment policy for Roma children, and in point 2.1.4 of transferring into regular schools of Roma children who have wrongfully been enrolled in special schools.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

29. Review any new testing procedures that the newly forming placement commissions are to use for bias and cultural appropriateness for RAE children.
30. Develop mechanisms for retesting children already placed in special schools, and provide them with adequate educational support to assist their return to mainstream schools.

31. Implement the newly introduced school placement scheme that shifts placement procedures to the local level.

Language

The Government of Montenegro should do the following:

32. Fulfil the measures detailed in the Decade Action Plan for education under point 2.4.2, incorporation of elements of Roma culture in curricula for children, and in point 2.7 (Goal 9) providing adequate human resource based for work with Roma children in their mother tongue.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

33. Ensure systematic solutions for the professional engagement of Roma teaching assistants, and find incentives and positive discrimination measures to include more RAE in the training and education necessary for this job.
34. Develop pre-school programmes that strengthen readiness for school among RAE children, by placing particular emphasis on language acquisition and bilingual techniques.
35. Support and foster in-service and pre-service teacher training courses covering language acquisition and methodologies for bilingual education.
36. Ensure that teacher training institutions have the proper curriculum and courses to prepare teachers of Romanes.

1.2.3 Recommendations for improving the quality of education

School facilities and human resources

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

37. Ensure there is synergy between the ongoing education reform and the strategies in place for the education of Roma children, such as the Decade Action Plan for education, and other strategies, and ensure that those schools with a high percentage of Roma children benefit from the reform as much as other schools.
38. Find financial resources for necessary infrastructure investments in schools enrolling a higher number of RAE children.
39. Increase the number of Roma teachers and Roma teaching assistants to be engaged in the formal educational system by implementing affirmative action measures, primarily through scholarship schemes.
40. Further build capacities of teachers to apply anti-bias and interactive techniques while working in integrated classrooms.

41. Provide necessary preconditions for Roma teaching assistants to become official members of the school community and promote them further as driving forces of change in the integration of RAE children.

Curricular standards

The Government of Montenegro should do the following:

42. Fulfil the measures detailed in the Decade Action Plan for education under Goal 6, prepare and implementation of adapted literacy programmes for the Roma population and children who have not enrolled in school on time.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

43. Ensure that extra or out-of-school support classes are adequately provided and funded to help RAE children keep abreast of strenuous curricular standards.
44. Support the production of bilingual educational materials for work with RAE children as indicated in the Decade Action Plan.
45. As part of the ongoing curricular reform, ensure the incorporation of elements of Roma culture in at least history and literature materials, and ensure that diversity and multiculturalism are adequately reflected in all curricula.

Classroom practice and pedagogy

The Government of Montenegro should do the following:

46. Fulfil the measures detailed in the Decade Action Plan for education under Goal 9, providing adequate teaching staff for work with Roma children.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

47. Ensure the continuous training of teachers, education inspectors, the Bureau for Educational Services and school managers in pre-service and in-service training, in the following: child-centred pedagogy, interactive teaching methodology, individualised approach, anti-bias education, methodologies for second language learning, multicultural education, and effective ways of involving parents and communities.
48. Promote the further engagement of Roma facilitators as mediators between the school and RAE community and provide additional training.
49. Improve the existing system of teacher accreditation to include a mentoring scheme for teachers working with RAE children.
50. Support and foster in-service and pre-service teacher training courses covering language acquisition and methodologies for bilingual education.

School–community relations

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

51. Enhance cooperation between schools and RAE civil society representatives interested and involved in initiatives relevant for the education of Roma; foster mutual dialogue on possible courses of action.
52. Support schools to find create ways to involve parents and communities in school life and the learning process.
53. Further consult Roma civil society representatives on issues important for the education of Roma children, such as promotion of education as a value among the Roma community/parents.

Discriminatory attitudes

The Government of Montenegro should do the following:

54. Fulfil the measures detailed in the Decade Action Plan for education under point 2.6.4. in the implementation of anti-discrimination measures.
55. Pass without delay comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, including in the field of education, and ensure its effective implementation.
56. Strengthen the capacities, and allocate proper financial resources to the Ombudsman office to address complaints with regard to potential discriminatory attitudes.
57. Consider the creation of another anti-discrimination body at the national level empowered with concrete responsibilities for investigating and sanctioning discrimination practices, including education.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

58. Work further towards promoting “equality in education” in practice, by means of targeted public campaigns or other available tools.
59. Pay special attention to double discrimination of Roma girls and women and develop specific programmes that would help raise awareness of the importance of education and would involve them in relevant RAE-community targeted activities.
60. Educate teaching staff, pupils and parents on their rights in education and against discrimination.

School inspections

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

61. Give appropriate authority and support to the Bureau for Educational Services to act as mentors and support to schools and teachers working with Roma children.

The Bureau for Educational Services should do the following:

62. Further develop specific quality assurance mechanisms in schools with a higher number of Roma, and support schools in achieving that level of quality.
63. Monitor integrated classrooms and offer timely and substantive feedback to teachers engaged in integrated (Roma/non-Roma) classrooms.

2. BASIC EDUCATION INDICATORS

Lack of data is a critical issue in Montenegro. The most common estimate of the total number of the Roma, Egyptian and Askhalia (RAE) population in Montenegro puts it at 20,000 people, including some 5,000 refugees from Kosovo. A distinct discrepancy between the official data on the Roma population and the data provided through surveys, official institutional registers and research analysis exists, however – fewer than 3,000 Roma registered in the 2003 census. Almost half the number of school-age RAE children in Montenegro are refugees. Data regarding Roma participation and performance in education are very limited, and affected by the broader lack of information. This lack of reliable data that could facilitate informed decision-making with regard to Roma policies in general and education-related programmes more specifically must be urgently addressed by the Government, as it seriously calls into question the accuracy of continuous monitoring and evaluation of Roma-related programmes. For example, segregation has not officially been acknowledged in any Government documents, yet the high level of residential segregation in some areas is known to give rise to Roma-majority schools.

2.1 Data collection

In Montenegro as elsewhere in the region, a certain contradiction exists between the need to have consistent data on Roma that would inform the process of defining and introducing new Roma-related policies, and the international and domestic legislative requirements that limit the State's authorities in relation to personal data collection. The contradiction lies in a generally misunderstood constraint on the part of governments with regard to collecting ethnically disaggregated data; personal data are given greater protection under international guidelines and regulations, but their collection is not forbidden outright.

The Constitution of Montenegro stipulates the following:

Freedom of thought and public expression of opinion, freedom of confession, public or private profession of religion and freedom to express national affiliation, culture and the freedom to use one's own language and alphabet shall be guaranteed and [...] no person shall be obliged to declare his opinion, confession and national affiliation.¹

No law on personal data collection exists in Montenegro, and currently the main law governing the collection of personal data in Montenegro is the Law on Statistics and the Statistical System.² This Law stipulates the principle of confidentiality, which assumes that the data collected may be used only for statistical purposes. The Law states further that it does not refer to the collection and protection of data for

¹ Constitution of the Republic of Montenegro, *Official Gazette of the Republic of Montenegro*, No. 48/92, 13 October 1992, art. 34.

² Law on Statistics and Statistical System of Montenegro, *Official Gazette*, No. 69/05, 18 November 2005.

administrative and non-statistical purposes.³ The Law on Population, Households and Housing Census in 2003 provided that census respondents are not required to give their ethnic affiliation.

Data collection in the sphere of education remains controversial. The availability of disaggregated quantitative data, however, remains a precondition for relevant national policies for the sustainable inclusion of vulnerable groups, and as such should be dealt with at the national level in order to gauge the reliability and efficacy of Roma-related strategies and policies.

2.1.1 Total Roma population

Different estimates exist for the actual number of Roma in Montenegro, depending on the source, but the most common estimate is around 20,000. The majority of Roma in Montenegro do not have Montenegrin citizenship and have origins in other parts of the former Yugoslavia – in particular Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Montenegro declared its independence from the State union of Serbia–Montenegro on 3 June 2006.⁴ Previously, Roma from Kosovo were counted as internally displaced persons (IDPs) while Roma from other countries of the former Yugoslavia were counted as refugees. Since Montenegro's independence, however, those from Kosovo must be considered refugees.

In the last census, held in 2003,⁵ out of the 620,145 inhabitants, only 2,601 declared themselves as Roma⁶ and a further 225 declared themselves as Egyptians.⁷ This was a decrease from the 3,282 Roma registered in the 1991 census.⁸ The distribution of the

³ Law on Statistics and Statistical System of Montenegro, *Official Gazette No. 69/05*, 18 November 2005, art. 3, para. 2.

⁴ Following a referendum held on 21 May 2006.

⁵ The full 2003 census results can be accessed online at the website of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Montenegro (MONSTAT). The results for national and ethnic affiliation can be found in the bilingual (English/Montenegrin) document, *Knjiga 1. Nacionalna ili etnička pripadnost – Podaci po naseljima i opstinama (Book 3. "Religion, Mother Tongue and Nationality or Ethnic Affiliation by Age and Sex at the Municipal Level")*, available at <http://www.monstat.cg.yu/Popis.htm> (accessed 12 November 2007) (hereafter, 2003 Census, *Book 1*).

⁶ According to the 2003 census, the following were the most prevalent groups, by ethnic or national affiliation: Montenegrins (43 per cent), Serbs (31.99), Bosniaks (7.77), Albanians (5.03), Muslims (3.97), Croats (1.1) and Roma (0.42).

⁷ The distinctions between Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians developed within different Balkan communities in the early 1990s. These various identities are frequently grouped under the heading "RAE" following the displacement of large Roma communities from Kosovo in 1999. In Montenegro, Ashkalia are treated as "others" in the strategy on displaced persons and are not listed separately in the list of ethnic groups of IDPs.

⁸ MONSTAT, *Statistical Yearbook 2006*, available in English at <http://www.monstat.cg.yu/EngPublikacije.htm> (accessed 12 November 2007).

Roma and Egyptian population by municipality, according to the census data, is as shown below in Table 1. More than half of all Roma in Montenegro are in Podgorica Municipality, while Nikšić and Herceg Novi Municipalities also have significant Roma populations.

Table 1. Distribution of the Roma and Egyptian populations (census data) – breakdown by municipality (2003)

Municipality	Roma		Egyptians		Total
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	
Andrijevica	0	0	0	0	0
Bar	34	22	8	0	64
Berane	18	101	0	1	120
Bijelo Polje	43	90	0	0	133
Budva	27	12	0	20	59
Cetinje	18	111	0	0	129
Danilovgrad	5	0	0	0	5
Herceg Novi	113	85	13	0	211
Kolašin	0	0	0	0	0
Kotor	11	37	5	15	68
Mojkovac	0	0	0	0	0
Nikšić	321	14	106	0	441
Plav	0	0	0	0	0
Plužine	0	0	0	0	0
Pljevlja	0	0	0	0	0
Podgorica	1,376	13	22	0	1,411
Rožaje	15	0	0	0	15
Šavnik	0	0	0	0	0
Tivat	1	19	23	12	55
Ulcinj	115	0	0	0	115
Žabljak	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2,097	504	177	48	
	2,601		225		

Source: MONSTAT, 2003 Census, Book 1, pp. 12–16.

However, the census data underestimates the total number of Roma in Montenegro. According to the Government's 2003 *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, "At present, it is estimated that in Montenegro there are around 20,000 Roma, out of which 5,000 are from Kosovo."⁹

The UNDP's 2003 *Household Survey on Roma Ashkaelia and Egyptians, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons* (hereafter, *Household Survey on RAE*) similarly cites a figure of 20,000 Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians (RAE) in Montenegro.¹⁰

The Roma Education Fund (REF) 2004 *Needs Assessment Study* cites the same figures, and provides information on the distribution of RAE in Montenegro (see Table 2 below).¹¹ Compared to the data from the census, the Needs Assessment reveals a much higher RAE population in Podgorica (mainly situated in the Roma camps Konik 1 and 2, as well as in the municipalities of Bar, Berane, Herceg Novi and Tivat.

⁹ Government of the Republic of Montenegro, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, 16 November 2003, available in English at http://www.seerecon.org/serbiamontenegro/documents/progress_report_montenegro/prsp_montenegro.pdf (accessed 21 November 2006) p. 3, point 2 (hereafter, Government, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2003*).

¹⁰ The UNDP survey was based on 838 valid replies received to a standard questionnaire. These were from Roma households, as well a control sample of non-Roma households. UNDP, *Household Survey on Roma Ashkaelia and Egyptians, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons*, Montenegro 2003, bilingual report (English/Montenegrin) available at http://www2.undp.org.yu/files/other/Household%20Survey%20ISSP_UNDP_eng.pdf (accessed 21 November 2006), p. 64 (hereafter, UNDP, *Household Survey on RAE 2003*).

¹¹ REF, *Needs Assessment Study for the Roma Education Fund, Background Paper*, Podgorica, REF (Roma Education Fund), July 2004, available in English at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTROMA/Resources/NAReportFinalMontenegro.pdf> (accessed 21 November 2006) (hereafter, REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*).

Table 2. Distribution of the RAE populations (REF Needs Assessment data) – breakdown by municipality (2004)

Municipality	Roma	
	Families	Population
Andrijevica	0	0
Bar	171	1,112
Berane	114	856
Bijelo Polje	26	132
Budva	41	277
Cetinje	23	153
Danilovgrad	2	8
Herceg Novi	149	1,240
Kolašin	0	0
Kotor	30	240
Mojkovac	0	0
Nikšić	260	1,496
Plav	0	0
Plužine	0	0
Pljevlja	9	51
Podgorica	Approx. 2,000	Approx. 12,500
Rožaje	38	235
Šavnik	0	0
Tivat	160	1,300
Ulcinj	140	870
Žabljak	0	0
Total	Approx. 3,163	Approx. 20,470

Source: REF, *Needs Assessment Study*, p. 6.

The Needs Assessment also provides a breakdown of the age distribution of the RAE population. As shown below in Table 3, this reveals that than 50 per cent are aged 19 or under.

Table 3. Age distribution of the RAE population (2004)

Age group	No	%
Under 10	6,850	33.5
11–19	4,270	20.9
19–30	3,580	17.5
31–40	2,600	12.7
41–50	1,620	7.8
51–60	730	3.6
Over 60	820	4
Total	20,470	100

Source: REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*, p. 7.

A more recent document, the Government's 2005 *Strategy for Resolving the Issues of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in Montenegro*, cites a figure of 18,047 IDPs and 8,474 refugees¹² living in Montenegro, in relation to 620,154 citizens – in total 26,521 persons, or 4.28 per cent in relation to the number of inhabitants.¹³ It states that Roma and Egyptians together constitute 26 per cent of the IDPs (4,692 persons).¹⁴ According to the Strategy, there was a significant (40 per cent) reduction in

¹² Of these, the majority came from Bosnia and Herzegovina (5,269) and Croatia (1,817). A further 26 persons came from Slovenia, while the remaining 1,083 were born in Montenegro (out of which 496 were born after their parents arrived in Montenegro as refugees). Government, *Strategy on Refugees/IDPs 2005*, p. 9.

¹³ Government of the Republic of Montenegro, *Strategy for Resolving the Issues of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in Montenegro*, Podgorica, April 2005, available in English at [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpDocuments\)/7062D4D20F0601C3802570B70059FAA0/\\$file/Strategy.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/7062D4D20F0601C3802570B70059FAA0/$file/Strategy.pdf) (accessed 21 November 2006), p. 16 (hereafter, Government, *Strategy on Refugees/IDPs, 2005*), p. 8.

¹⁴ Among the IDPs, 17.3 per cent are Roma and 8.7 per cent are Egyptians. Government, *Strategy on Refugees/IDPs 2005*, p. 15.

the number of IDPs registered in the 2003 census (18,047), as compared to the 1999 census (30,289).¹⁵

Due to the lack of reliable information, it is not possible to explain the reduction in the number of internally displaced persons settled in Montenegro. It is certain that they did not go back to Kosovo and it is presumed that a portion of them went to Serbia (in order to receive child allowance, social protection, etc.). A certain number did not register at all because they were faced with a rather large reduction in the amount of humanitarian aid that they used to receive, thus, their interest in registration declined.¹⁶

No estimate for the size of the RAE population in Montenegro can be considered fully reliable, due to the lack of data collection mechanisms. Data from international organisations perhaps point to a more realistic estimate than that of the Government.

2.1.2 Estimates of the total school-age Roma population

The size of the pre-school and school-age Roma population also cannot be calculated precisely. There are significant differences between official data and research estimates, as well as discrepancies between the various official data sources.

According to the 2003 census data, the number of Roma children of primary school age (aged 5–14 years old) is just 697 (see Table 4). The 2004 Needs Assessment Study includes IDPs/refugees, and reveals a higher number of school-age Roma children. As shown in Table 4, the number of Roma children aged 6–15 years old is 4,875.

¹⁵ Government, *Strategy on Refugees/IDPs 2005*, footnote 16, p. 14. The data are taken from the IDP registration process.

¹⁶ Government, *Strategy on Refugees/IDPs 2005*, p. 14.

Table 4. Pre-school and school-age population – breakdown by national and Roma populations, and age groups

National level			Roma population				
Census data (2003)*			Census data (2003)**			Research estimates (2004)***	
Age group	No.	%	Age group	No.	%	Age group	No.
0–4	39,671	6.39	0–4	422	0.068	0–3	2,055
5–9	42,576	6.86	5–9	379	0.061	3–6	2,055
10–14	45,214	7.29	10–14	318	0.051	6–10	2,740
15–19	49,387	7.96	15–19	307	0.049	11–15	2,135
						16–19	2,135

Sources: *MONSTAT;¹⁷ **MONSTAT;¹⁸***REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*¹⁹

2.2 Enrolment data and trends

The Government's 2004 *National Plan of Action for Children* gathers together the most comprehensive available information on current enrolment rates in pre-school, primary and secondary education – for the national population and for Roma children only (see Table 5).

¹⁷ MONSTAT, 2003 Popis, *Knjiga 2.: Pol i starost – Podaci po naseljima i opstinama* (2003 Census, Book 2: Sex and Age – Data by Settlements and Municipalities), available in Montenegrin only at <http://www.monstat.cg.yu/Popis.htm> (accessed 21 November 2006).

¹⁸ MONSTAT, 2003 Popis, *Knjiga 3.: Vjeroispovijest, maternji jezik i nacionalna ili etnicka pripadnost a prema starosti i polu – Podaci po opstinama* (2003 Census, Book 3: Religion, Mother Tongue and Nationality or Ethnic Affiliation by Age and Sex at the Municipal Level), available in Montenegrin only at <http://www.monstat.cg.yu/Popis/Popis03.zip> (accessed 5 November 2007).

¹⁹ REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*, p. 20, Table 5.

Table 5. Enrolment rates in pre-school, primary and secondary education – breakdown for the national population and for RAE children (2004)

	Indicator		Source
Pre-school Education	Proportion of children covered by pre-school education (3–6) (2002/2003)	22 per cent	Ministry of Education and Science (MoES)
	Number of RAE children covered by pre-school education (2002/2003)	50	MoES
Primary Education	Enrolment rate in primary school (total) (2002)	96.93 per cent	MONSTAT
	Number of RAE children enrolled in primary school (2003)	1,006	MoES
	Enrolment rate of RAE in primary school (2003)	25.2 per cent	ISSP
	Enrolment rate of IDPs/refugees in primary school (2003)	93.6 per cent	ISSP
	Proportion of children who complete Grade 5 (total)	99.1 per cent	MoES
	Proportion of children who complete primary school (total)	98.0 per cent	MoES
	Proportion of children who complete primary school (RAE)	18.0 per cent	MoES
Secondary Education	Enrolment rate in secondary education school	72.9 per cent	MoES
	Number of RAE children in secondary education	35	MoES

Source: Government, *National Plan of Action for Children*, March 2004²⁰

Pre-school education

The 2001 policy paper *Book of Changes of the Education System of the Republic of Montenegro* – which details the Government's policies for reforming the education

²⁰ Government of the Republic of Montenegro, *National Plan of Action for Children*, March 2004, available in English at http://www.unicef.org/scg/NPA_MN1.pdf (part 1) and http://www.unicef.org/scg/NPA_MN2.pdf (part 2) (accessed 21 November), pp. 35–37 (hereafter, Government, *National Plan of Action for Children 2004*).

system in Montenegro (see Annex 1) – recognises the low enrolment rate in pre-school education both at the national level and for Roma, specifically.²¹

At the national level, in the early 1980s only 13 per cent of eligible children (aged 3–6) were enrolled in pre-school education.²² This had risen to 22.0 per cent in the school year 2002/2003 (see Table 6), with the equivalent figure for 6–7-year-olds standing at 48.85 per cent.²³ The 2004 National Plan of Action for Children sets out the target of increasing the proportion of eligible children covered by pre-school education by 2.5 per cent annually until 2010.²⁴

Table 6. Enrolment rate in pre-schools (1999–2002)

Year	Proportion of children In pre-schools (%)	
	Age 0–6	Age 0–3
1999/2000	19.04	2.4
2000/2001	21.32	2.7
2002/2003	22.0	3.1

Source: Government, *National Plan of Action for Children 2004*²⁵

The 2004 National Plan of Action for Children includes a specific target for increasing the number of RAE children covered by pre-school education – by 10 per cent annually up to 2010, from 50 in 2002/2003.²⁶

The 2005 National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion (hereafter, Decade Action Plan) also includes a specific goal on increasing the number of Roma children in pre-schools.²⁷ The activities listed under this goal include the following: (1) Creating

²¹ Ministry of Education and Science, *The Book of Changes of the Education System of the Republic of Montenegro*, Podgorica, 2001, English version (short version), available at <http://www.gom.cg.yu/files/1065602807.pdf> (accessed 21 November 2006) (hereafter, MoES, *The Book of Changes*), p. 77.

²² Government of the Republic of Montenegro, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, unpublished first draft.

²³ Government, *National Plan of Action for Children 2004*, p. 40.

²⁴ Government, *National Plan of Action for Children 2004*, p. 36.

²⁵ Government, *National Plan of Action for Children 2004*, p. 38.

²⁶ Government, *National Plan of Action for Children 2004*, p. 36.

²⁷ Government of the Republic of Montenegro, *National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 in the Republic of Montenegro*, Podgorica, January 2005, available in English at <http://www.romadecade.org/Action%20Plans/Montenegro%20AP%20engleski.PDF> (accessed 21 November 2006), Goal 1, p. 9 (hereafter, Government, *Decade Action Plan*).

a database on the number of pre-school-age children. It will be used for drawing up and improving a detailed action plan for strategy implementation and curriculum development for pre-school-age children. (2) Scanning and analysing the present capacities and resources for improving the education of Roma pre-school-age children: data on teaching staff who work with Roma children and assessment of needs when intensive integration of children into pre-school education starts; programmes and training courses about Roma education that teachers have completed; current programmes of institutions and non-governmental organisations being implemented; institution capacities in terms of equipment available, their problems and needs.

According to MONSTAT, in recent years there has been an increase in the number of pre-school units, as well as a decrease in the total number of pupils enrolled due to a declining birth rate (see Annex 1. 1.2). There has been an increase in the total number of Roma children in pre-school education, but this was from a very low base. This total increased from 30 in 2003 to 80 in 2005, according to internal REI documentation.

This increase can mainly be attributed to the rising numbers of RAE children attending the Jelena Četković pre-school in the Konik refugee camps, on the outskirts of Podgorica. The “Kindergarten as a family centre and Roma in it” Programme has been conducted in this pre-school since 2001 (see section 3.2.1). According to the UNDP’s *Household Survey of RAE*, “The number of Roma children in attendance in the kindergarten increased by 100 per cent going from 30 children last year to 60, and additionally, 40 more Roma children were interested in attending kindergarten but the number of places was limited.”²⁸

A branch unit of the Ljubica Popović public pre-school was opened in Konik in 2005, accommodating only Roma children, and has enrolled 56 children (see section 2.4.1). The final REI report emphasises the fact that for the first time in the history of the Radmila Nedić pre-school in Berane, 8–10 Roma children were enrolled, thanks to the established good communication with the NGO Deca-Enfants, as well as their good preparation of children for the enrolment in kindergarten and the formal system of education and upbringing. This also contributed to the overall increase in the number of the pre-school Roma children at a national level. According to the final REI Evaluation report, work in kindergartens organised by the NGOs (as a form of informal education) contributed to the faster socialisation of children.²⁹ Cooperation in Nikšić between the NGO sector and the Dragan Kovačević “Sunce” pre-school unit proved to be “successful and fruitful”, according to the report.

²⁸ UNDP, *Household Survey of RAE 2003*, p. 28.

²⁹ Milka Oljača, Milja Vujacic and Borko Vulikic, *Evaluation report on the project Roma Education Initiative* Montenegro, Podgorica 2005, p. 15, available in English at <http://www.osi.hu/esp/rei/Documents/Montenegro%20PCCG-Evaluacioni%20izvestaj%20rei%20crna%20gora-eng%20Final.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2007) (hereafter, *Evaluation report on REI 2005*).

However, at present, even with the improvements in Roma pre-school attendance brought about by educational projects, the vast majority of Roma children are not able to attend pre-school. The number of Roma children included in pre-schools remains extremely low compared to the share of pre-school-age children in the Roma population, or compared to the enrolment rate for pre-school-age children in the national population. With their overburdened facilities and need to accommodate a greater number of children, pre-schools in areas with significant Roma populations are unable to accommodate more Roma children and provide the necessary conditions for their successful integration (see section 4.1).

Primary education

As shown below in Table 7, there has been a decline in the total number of children in primary education – from 82,039 in 1990/1991, to 74,859 in 2005/2006. This decrease can be partly attributed to a fall in birth rates. From 1991 to 2004, there was a more or less steady decrease in the number of live births – from 9,606 per year in 1991, to 7,352 in 2005. The annual natural increase in the population fell from 5,636 in 1991 to 1,513 in 2005.³⁰

³⁰ MONSTAT, Annual data 2005, available at <http://www.monstat.cg.yu/EngMeniGodisnjiPodaci.htm> (accessed 21 November 2006).

Table 7. Trends in total enrolment (primary and secondary education) – breakdown by national and Roma populations (1990–2005)

School Year	Primary education		Secondary education (general, professional, vocational)	
	National	Roma	National	Roma
1990/1991	82,039 ^a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1997/1998	77,958 ^a	n/a	28,537 ^d	n/a
1999/2000	78,077 ^a	n/a	31,817 ^a	
2001/2002	74,935 ^d	536 ^c	31,730 ^d	n/a
2002/2003	74,233 ^b	826 ^c	32,403 ^b	n/a
2003/2004	73,673 ^b	1,006 ^c	31,962 ^b	n/a
2004/2005	74,205 ^b	1,187 ^c	32,078 ^b	n/a
2005/2006	74,859 ^b	1,195 ^c	32,100 ^b	39

Sources: ^a UNICEF;³¹ ^b MONSTAT³²; ^c Ministry of Education and Science, Bureau of Education, e-mail communication; ^d Government of the Republic of Montenegro, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, unpublished first draft

According to the Government's 2003 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, since 1999 the number of pupils in primary schools has been decreasing by 2 per cent annually. The enrolment rate in primary schools for children aged 7 to 14 was 98.5 per cent in 1999 and 96.3 per cent in 2002.³³ However, this decline was mainly felt in schools in the north of the country, while there was a constant increase in the larger towns, which lack adequate school facilities. Girls represented 49.6 per cent of the pupils in compulsory education.³⁴

Contrary to the general decline in the numbers of children in primary education, there has been a steady rise in the number of Roma children attending primary school in the last five years. In the school year 2005/2006, according to official estimates, 1,195

³¹ UNICEF, *Comprehensive Analysis of Primary Education in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*, December 2001, available at http://www.unicef.org/serbia/ComprehensiveAnalysis_2.pdf (accessed 21 November 2006), p. 37 (hereafter, UNICEF, *Comprehensive Analysis of Primary Education*).

³² MONSTAT, *Annual Data on Education*, available in English at <http://www.monstat.cg.yu/EngMeniGodisnjiPodaci.htm> (accessed 20 November 2006) (hereafter, MONSTAT, *Annual Data on Education*).

³³ Government, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2003*, point 13, p. 50.

³⁴ Government, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2003*, point 13, p. 50.

Roma children attended primary schools, representing 1.6 per cent of all children in primary education (see Table 7).

This increase can partly be attributed to the Roma Education Initiative (see section 3.2.2). An external evaluation of the project, carried out in 2005, notes that “In 2005 there were 396 Roma children enrolled in the classrooms and included into the REI, which means that there were 12.8 per cent more Roma children enrolled as compared to the 2003/2004 school year.”³⁵ This increase occurred in the first grades of the primary school, thereby fulfilling an important goal of the REI.

However, research undertaken in 2006 by the NGO “SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence – Nikšić” revealed that 60 per cent of the population of primary school-age Roma still remain outside the formal educational system in Montenegro.³⁶ Research was based on sample interviews with 415 persons (Roma parents) living in the four Montenegrin municipalities of Podgorica, Nikšić, Berane and Rozaje. This research calls for a more effective system for monitoring the school attendance and performance of Roma pupils, which would provide a reliable source of information for all relevant stakeholders involved in Roma issues.

In 2002, RAE children attended primary schools in 12 of Montenegro’s 21 municipalities.³⁷ Table 8 below shows the representation of Roma children in the 11 municipalities where they attended primary school in the school years 2004/2005 and 2005/2006. In both years, just over half of all Roma children enrolled in primary schools attended school in Podgorica Municipality. Nikšić and Rozanje Municipalities also have important numbers of Roma children enrolled in primary education. Table 8 shows the distribution of Roma children enrolled in primary school by grade:

³⁵ Milka Oljača, Milja Vujacic and Borko Vulikic, *Evaluation Report on the Project Roma Education Initiative* Montenegro, Podgorica 2005, p. 38, available in English at <http://www.osi.hu/esp/rei/Documents/Montenegro%20PCCG-Evaluacioni%20izvestaj%20rei%20crna%20gora-eng%20Final.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2007) (hereafter, *Evaluation report on REI 2005*).

³⁶ NGO “SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence – Nikšić”, *Research on Inclusion of Roma Children in the Educational System*, Nikšić, 2006, http://www.sosnk.org/site_files/djeca.pdf, p. 26.

³⁷ Montenegro is subdivided into the following territorial divisions: 1,256 Settlements; 40 Urban Settlements; 368 Local Communities. Government, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2003*, point 12, p. 50.

Table 8. Number of Roma children enrolled in primary schools – breakdown by municipality (2004–2006)

Municipality	Number of Roma children in primary schools	
	2004/2005	2005/2006
Podgorica	599	637
Nikšić	103	100
Berane	152	135
Rozaje	40	24
B. Polje	64	39
Cetinje	25	26
Kotor	28	33
Bar	47	58
H. Novi	23	4
Ulcinj	68	84
Tivat	38	15
Total	1,178	1,195

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, Bureau of Education, e-mail communication

Table 9. Number of Roma children enrolled in primary school – breakdown by grade (2004–2006)

Grade	2004/2005		2005/2006	
	No	%	No	%
1	367	31.2	380	31.8
2	257	21.8	272	22.8
3	177	15.0	172	14.4
4	117	9.9	114	9.6
5	99	8.4	94	7.9
6	78	6.6	84	7.0
7	35	3.0	44	3.7
8	48	4.0	35	2.0
Total	1,178		1,195	

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, Bureau of Education, e-mail communication

The UNDP survey *Vulnerable Groups in Central and South East Europe*³⁸ provides other data on enrolment (see Table 10 below). The survey measures the number of children who attend school as a share of those who should attend school, broken down by age. The ages are not exactly correlated with the grades, but are closely aligned with them, in order to provide some area for comparison. The enrolment rates are calculated from data from a survey of 2,107 individuals (699 Roma, 708 IDPs/refugees and 700 from the majority population in close proximity to Roma). The following is noted:

The survey is sample-based research and cannot be as representative as a household budget survey would be. But it still provides quantitative data enabling the rough calculation of poverty lines, poverty depth, employment/unemployment rates, educational levels, educational attainment and housing conditions.³⁹

³⁸ UNDP, *Vulnerable Groups in Central and South East Europe*, Report on Montenegro, available at <http://vulnerability.undp.sk> (accessed 10 January 2007) (hereafter, UNDP, Report on Montenegro).

³⁹ UNDP, Report on Montenegro, Introduction, p. 7.

Table 10. Enrolment in primary education

Age	Enrolment rate		
	Majority population in close proximity to Roma	Roma	IDPs/Refugees
7	56	39	100
8	90	44	88
9	67	60	83
10	83	50	76
11	100	60	100
12	90	29	89
13	100	40	77
14	100	20	100

Source: UNDP, *Vulnerable Groups in Central and South East Europe*⁴⁰

The UNDP survey also provides data on the comparison between Roma enrolment rates and majority enrolment rates for primary and secondary school (see Table 11). It is interesting to note that the enrolment rates for IDPs and refugees are again much higher than for Roma. If comparisons are made between the Roma population and the majority population, however, the decrease in attendance as grades become higher is more pronounced, and the difference between the two groups at both the primary and the secondary level is drastic, as shown in Table 11:

Table 11. Enrolment rates for primary and secondary school for the majority, Roma and IDP/refugee populations

Education level	Enrolment rates (%)		
	Majority population in close proximity to Roma	Roma	IDPs/Refugees
Primary (7–15)	86	38	87
Secondary (6–19)	83	13	69

Source: UNDP, *Vulnerable Groups in Central and South East Europe*⁴¹

⁴⁰ UNDP, Report on Montenegro, Table on enrolment in primary education by age.

⁴¹ UNDP, *Vulnerable Groups in Central and South East Europe*, Table on enrolment rate, total.

Secondary education

In the school year 2001/2002, there were a total of 31,730 pupils in secondary education – 9,686 in general secondary and 22,044 in professional and vocational secondary education.⁴²

As shown above in Table 11, there has been a slight increase in the total number of children in secondary education, from 31,817 in 1999/2000 to 32,100 in 2005/2006. However, in the school year 2004/2005 there were only 35 Roma children in secondary education (see Table 5).

Since the school year 2004/2005 the Roma Scholarship Foundation NGO has continuously supported the inclusion of Roma in secondary education. An approximately 15 per cent annual increase in overall Roma enrolment in secondary schools has been noted as a result of the mentorship scheme developed and implemented by the NGO.⁴³ Site visits to schools, regular communication with the teaching staff and extensive communication with the parents of Roma secondary school students have greatly contributed to the success of the Foundation's overall endeavours. However, the financial resources necessary for the scholarships, questions about the sustainability of the mentorship, and traditions in the Roma family have restricted the Foundation's wider involvement in increasing enrolment rates at the secondary school level.

According to the information provided by the Foundation, 28 Roma students (out of 30 enrolled) successfully completed the school year 2006/2007, while two dropped out. Information reveals that the school access is average with the group of Roma students: 11 students accomplished good and 6 students poor marks, suggesting that more intensive cooperation with the Roma community and civil sector in order to recruit and support Roma children willing to attend secondary education is needed.⁴⁴

The 2004 National Plan of Action for Children includes the specific target of increasing the number of RAE children in secondary education by 0.5 per cent annually up to 2010.⁴⁵

⁴² Government of the Republic of Montenegro, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, unpublished first draft.

⁴³ "Information on the success of Roma high school students at the end of the school year 2006/2007", available at the site of the NGO "Roma Scholarship Foundation"
[http://www.fsr.cg.yu/Biblioteka/FSR%20Informacija_o_ustupjehu_ucenika_srednjih_skola_\(Sep2007\).pdf](http://www.fsr.cg.yu/Biblioteka/FSR%20Informacija_o_ustupjehu_ucenika_srednjih_skola_(Sep2007).pdf) (accessed 30 September 2007), p. 3.

⁴⁴ "Information on the success of Roma high school students at the end of the school year 2006/2007", available at the site of the NGO "Roma Scholarship Foundation"
[http://www.fsr.cg.yu/Biblioteka/FSR%20Informacija_o_ustupjehu_ucenika_srednjih_skola_\(Sep2007\).pdf](http://www.fsr.cg.yu/Biblioteka/FSR%20Informacija_o_ustupjehu_ucenika_srednjih_skola_(Sep2007).pdf) (accessed 30 September 2007), p. 3.

⁴⁵ Government, *National Plan of Action for Children 2004*, p. 36.

Informal education

According to the Government's National Plan of Action for Children, the low enrolment rate of Roma children in pre-schools can be partly attributed to a lack of facilities and space, poor programmes, difficulty in providing all-day stay, and lack of alternative programmes and poor conditions.⁴⁶

To address this, a number of NGOs have carried out informal educational activities for children in sites within Roma communities. In particular, many non-formal pre-schools have been established in recent years, to cater for Roma children outside the formal educational system. According to the REF *Needs Assessment*, 14.4 per cent of Roma children used to regularly attend some form of informal pre-school activity organised by NGOs.⁴⁷

These activities have been significantly reduced, however, over the last few years. This was partly due to systematic action with regard to desegregation – namely, the mainstreaming of Roma into the formal educational system – but also due to reductions in donor funding.

In the framework of REI four informal kindergartens were established and supported in the Roma camps Konik 1 and 2 and in Roma settlements in Nikšić and Berane, in order to enable equal access to instruction to Roma children and provide for an equal footing with their peers when they entered the first grade. Prior to REI, there were no mechanisms to provide pre-school education in the camps. There were approximately 100 children who attended these two kindergartens annually. Informal educational activities for Roma children were continued as a part of the REF-funded REI, with different modalities of implementation and reframed monitoring scheme.

Activities of the Red Cross in Podgorica and the NGOs Početak in Nikšić and Deca-Enfants in Rožaje have played a crucial role in developing and performing these informal educational activities in areas with large Roma populations. Information provided by the Red Cross suggests that out of 292 Roma children enrolled in the branch unit of the primary school Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin (covered previously by the informal pre-school activities organised by the Red Cross) in the school year 2006/2007, 258 have successfully completed their schooling, while 34 dropped out, which is a lower drop-out rate in the branch unit compared to the previous school year. This success may be attributed to the continuous activities with the pre-school-age Roma children in the Roma camps Konik 1 and 2 in Podgorica.

2.3 Retention and completion

At the national level, the majority of the population have completed either secondary (46.4 per cent) or college/university (12.6 per cent) education.

⁴⁶ Government, *National Plan of Action for Children 2004*, p. 40.

⁴⁷ REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*, p. 24.

**Table 12. School attainment/completion
– national population, aged 15 and over (2003)**

Share of population (%)	No education	Primary education			Secondary overall (general, professional, vocational)	College and university	No information
		Grades 1–3	Grades 4–7	Completed primary education			
Total	4.30	1.39	8.25	22.95	48.44	12.55	2.11
- Urban only	2.69	0.74	4.47	19.86	54	16.27	1.98
- Rural only	6.92	2.44	14.35	27.95	39.47	6.54	2.32
- Boys only	2.10	0.64	5.49	21.17	53.33	14.77	2.51
- Girls only	6.39	2.09	10.87	24.63	43.83	10.46	1.73

Source: MONSTAT, 2003 Census⁴⁸

At the national level, no official data are available as to the number of years spent in pre-school and primary education by Roma children, in comparison with the national average. However, as shown below in Table 13, research estimates reveal that the majority of Roma have either no formal education (63.1 per cent) or incomplete primary education (21.3 per cent).

Table 13. School attainment/completion – Roma population

	No formal education	Incomplete primary	Completed primary	Incomplete secondary		Completed secondary (4 grades)	Higher education
				2 grades	3 grades		
Total	63.1	21.3	9.2	1.0	2.5	2.3	0.4

Source: Government, *Plan of Action for Children*, p. 45

The UNDP survey *Vulnerable Groups in Central and South East Europe* (based on a small survey of around 2,100 individuals) offers the following indicators:

⁴⁸ MONSTAT, 2003 Popis, Knjiga 4: *Školska sprema i pismenost -Podaci po opštinama (2003 Census, Book 4: School equipment and literacy – information by municipality*, pp. 22–23.

Table 14. Share of pupils starting Grade 1 who reach Grade 5

	Share of people aged 12 and above (%)		
	Majority population in close proximity to Roma	Roma	IDPs/Refugees
At least incomplete secondary education	86	7	75
Sent more than 4 years in school	98	34	93

Source: UNDP, Vulnerable Groups in Central and South East Europe

Primary data collected for the REI Evaluation purposes, and based on a sample, shows the following in terms of educational completion:

... educational structure of Roma families is [unsatisfactory...]. The level of education of the spouse (the mother in most cases, as the questionnaire was filled out by fathers in 68 per cent of cases) is even lower: 39.4 per cent has no education at all, 47 per cent has finished four grades of primary school, and only 13.1 per cent has finished eight years of primary school.⁴⁹

Table 15. Educational structure of fathers of Roma children

Rank	Level of education	Frequency	%
1	Finished primary school (8 grades)	20	52.6
2	Finished four grades of primary school	17	44.7
3	Finished colleges (two years after high school)	1	2.6
4	No school	-	-
5	Finished high school	-	-
6	Graduated from University	-	-
Total		38	100

Source: REI, Evaluation report on REI 2005⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Evaluation report on REI 2005, p. 17.

⁵⁰ Evaluation report on REI 2005, p. 17, Table 3.

REI

The four primary schools that participated in the REI (see section 3.2) – Radomir Mitrović in Berane, Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin and M. Miljanov in Podgorica, and M. Lalatović in Nikšić – accommodate the largest number of Roma children. According to Ministry of Education and Science data, the average drop-out rate of the Roma pupils attending these schools was 17.3 per cent in the school year 2005/2006. The drop-out rate at the Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin school, which accommodates the largest number of Roma pupils (40 per cent of the pupils are Roma) was 19.93 per cent, out of which 64.66 per cent were boys.⁵¹ The drop-out rate at the branch unit of the same school, which only has Grades 1–3 and accommodates exclusively Roma pupils, was 22.3 per cent in the school year 2005/2006.⁵²

According to Ministry of Education and Science data, of all the Roma pupils who dropped out, 73 per cent did so between Grades 1 and 3 of the four primary schools involved in the REI.

An independent evaluation of the REI was carried out at the end of the academic year 2004/2005.⁵³ This indicates a slightly higher drop-out rate in Grades 1–3 for the four REI schools (see Table 16).

Table 16. Enrolment and drop-out rates, for Roma children included in the REI (2005)

Primary School Grade	Enrolled pupils		Pupils who drop out	
	No.	%	No.	%
1	144	36.3	55	36.6
2	93	23.4	39	26.0
3	61	15.4	20	13.3
4	47	11.8	12	8.0
5	51	12.8	24	16.0
Total	396	100	150	100

Source: Evaluation report on REI 2005, p. 38.

The REI Evaluation report gives other data on drop-out and/or completion rate trends, despite the project's success in enrolling and successfully retaining children in the early grades. The report states the following: "One worrying thing that can be seen [as in

⁵¹ Ministry of Education and Science, e-mail communication.

⁵² Ministry of Education and Science, e-mail communication.

⁵³ The research methodology, including sample size and instruments used, is detailed in the report. See *Evaluation report on REI 2005*.

Table 17 below] is that the percentage of children is reducing from grade to grade. So, the question is how many of the enrolled children have passed the grade and how many of them have to take a correctional exam”,⁵⁴ as Table 17 indicates:

Table 17. Comparison between the number of enrolled Roma children and the number of children who passed the grade

Primary school grade	Number of children enrolled	Number of children passed	Pass rate (%)
1	144	89	62
2	93	54	58
3	61	41	67
4	47	35	74
5	51	15	29
Total	396	234	59

Source: REI, *Evaluation report on REI 2005*⁵⁵

The report states further the following:

The comparison of data related to the number of enrolled Roma children (n = 396) and the total number of those who passed the grade they were enrolled in (n = 234) still shows an unsatisfactory result. Already in the first grade only 62.0 per cent pass the grade. With the schooling age the percentage of Roma children who pass the grade reduces further. Only 33.3 per cent of Roma children are sent to the correctional exam in the fifth grade. Research shows that sending the children to the correctional exam was not efficient, as such Roma children, without any contact with the school, are not able to prepare themselves on their own for the correctional exam. [...] The biggest percentage of Roma children who drop out of school already in the first grade, as [...], and then this number reduces up to the fifth grade, when it starts increasing again. [...] Even in the conditions when a higher percentage of Roma children enrolls into primary school, the table shows that the highest percentage of them does not finish that first grade.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ *Evaluation report on REI 2005*, p. 39.

⁵⁵ *Evaluation report on REI 2005*, p. 38, Table 30.

⁵⁶ *Evaluation report on REI 2005*, p. 38.

Data provided from the Ministry of Education and Science at the end of the 2005/2006 academic year indicate the following success in Grades 1–8, for the four primary schools participating in the REI:

Table 18. Success rates for the four primary schools participating in the REI (grades 1–8) (2005/2006)

School performance	Number of pupils
Excellent	33
Very good	54
Good	163
Poor	249
Failed	150
Dropped out	130
Total	779

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, Bureau of Education, e-mail communication

The REI Evaluation Report research data shows that those Roma children who avoid dropping out have only modest success, as indicated in Table 19.

Table 19. Success rates of Roma children in the schools participating in REI (Grades 1–5)

Grade	Total		Excellent		Very good		Good		Satisfactory	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	89	38	1	1.1	6	6.7	35	39.3	47	52.8
2	54	23	1	1.8	5	9.2	13	24	35	64.8
3	41	17.5	1	2.43	1	2.4	18	43.9	21	51.2
4	35	14.9	-	-	2	5.7	8	22.8	25	71.4
5	15	6.4	1	6.6	1	6.6	4	26.6	9	60
Total	234	100	4	1.7	15	6.4	78	33.3	137	58.5

Source: REI *Evaluation Report*, p. 39.

NGO “SOS Hotline” research

The NGO “SOS Hotline” research data indicate that 80 per cent of the Roma children quit schooling in the period from Grades 1–3.⁵⁷ Their research covers four municipalities: Berane, Nikšić, Podgorica and Rozaje. This would indicate that official figures on the number of Roma children included in the formal educational system are unreliable, as they rely mainly on school registers, which are often inaccurate. The same research states further that around 30 per cent of the Roma children covered by the research who ceased attending school did so as a result of the difficult living conditions of their families, which are often unable to procure basic provisions such as clothing, books or other school equipment.⁵⁸

No systematic monitoring of educational achievements of Roma children exists at the national level, and the existing system of monitoring, developed for the REI, needs to be further developed as to facilitate more in depth analysis of the data. A system of synchronised monitoring between the non-formal and formal education for Roma children should be developed, as this would also offer a framework for systematic and unified monitoring of achievements.

2.4 Types and extent of segregation

There are no State documents acknowledging segregation in Montenegro. Officially, there are no segregated classes for Roma children, and Roma pupils are enrolled in regular classes of mainstream schools. However, in practice segregation of Roma children in schools or classes does occur informally, due to the fact that many Roma children live in refugee camps or other in residentially segregated settings.

2.4.1 Special schools

In Montenegro, there are a total of six special primary schools for children with intellectual disabilities.⁵⁹

The 2003 *Household Survey of RAE* provides some insight into the overrepresentation of Roma in special schools. According to the Survey, nearly 80 per cent of the children enrolled in special schools are Roma. The survey finds that the incentives available to children in special schools may be one of the reasons why Roma parents may agree to their child’s enrolment in a special school:

This placement occurs based on the unsatisfactory results of the qualification tests that are taken when enrolling in primary school. Parents of these children

⁵⁷ NGO “SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence – Nikšić”, *Research on Inclusion of Roma Children in the Educational System*, Nikšić 2006, p. 15 (hereafter, NGO “SOS Hotline”, *Research*).

⁵⁸ NGO “SOS Hotline”, *Research*, p. 20.

⁵⁹ Government of the Republic of Montenegro, *Plan of Action for Children*, p. 20.

have the right to address a complaint to the Ministry of Education, but in most cases Roma parents are not familiar with this right, and therefore do not exercise it. Additionally, Roma parents may find solace in the fact that these “special schools” provide their children with books and meals free of charge.⁶⁰

However, official Ministry of Education and Science data do not find evidence of Roma children being systematically placed in special schools, stating that in the last school year, 52 Roma children attended special primary schools, while 59 attended special high schools.⁶¹ According to the Ministry representative, three Roma children were enrolled in the pre-school programme at the Institute for Deaf Children and Young People in Kotor. At the national level, 32 Roma children are enrolled in special classes of primary schools, which is 22 per cent of the overall number of children attending special classes of primary schools.

The Decade Action Plan includes the sub-goal of “Transferring into regular schools of Roma children who have wrongfully been enrolled in special schools”.⁶² The listed activities are (1) re-testing of Roma children and transferring into regular schools of those children who have wrongfully been placed in special schools, and (2) creating special short-term provisional programmes after which children will qualify for transfer into appropriate grade of regular school.⁶³

At the Ministry level a commission was in charge of placing children into special schools, but since April 2006, the jurisdiction over this matter has been transferred to the municipal level. Municipalities were obliged to nominate placement commissions by June 2006; however, few placement commissions were formed by the deadline, and the process is ongoing.⁶⁴ Placement commissions, as they are currently formed, consist of doctors (including a paediatrician), a psychologist, a special educator (“defectologist”), a pedagogue, a social worker and, *ex officio*, one representative of the Ministry of Education and Science.

2.4.2 Residential segregation

Case study research undertaken for this report in three locations provides some insight into the level of residential segregation in Montenegro. In all three municipalities studied, the Roma community is physically segregated, although administratively part of the town. The Roma communities tend to be situated at the periphery of the town,

⁶⁰ UNDP, *Household Survey on RAE 2003*, p. 28.

⁶¹ Conversation with Ms. Milijana Milidrag (Ministry of Education and Science) in charge of placement procedures, based on the information obtained from the special schools.

⁶² Government, *Decade Action Plan*, goal 2.1.4.

⁶³ Government, *Decade Action Plan*, p. 10.

⁶⁴ Conversation with Ms. Milijana Milidrag (Ministry of Education and Science) in charge of placement procedures, based on the information obtained from the special schools.

except in Podgorica, where the Roma settlement is physically totally integrated but where the population is exclusively Roma.⁶⁵

Although acknowledged as a problem in various educational projects involving the Ministry of Education and Science as a partner, the segregation of Roma in the educational system, as well as the effects of segregation on school attendance and success, is an underresearched topic in Montenegro. There is some evidence of non-Roma pupils transferring from schools with a high percentage of Roma pupils to schools with a low percentage of Roma (or without Roma) – “white flight” – according to an official with the Ministry of Education and Science.⁶⁶

Konik refugee camps

Following the large influx of Roma refugees to Montenegro after the NATO intervention in 1999, two refugee camps were established in Konik, on the outskirts of Podgorica. This is the largest Roma refugee community in the country. In Konik, there is one pre-school and one primary school that can be considered segregated.

Ljubica Popović pre-school

In 2005, a pre-school was established as a branch unit of the public Ljubica Popović pre-school, in Podgorica, following infrastructural investment by the German humanitarian organisation HELP. Being close to the refugee camp, this pre-school only accommodates Roma children, and has enrolled 56 children (46 per cent of whom are girls).

The Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin primary school

There is also a public primary school situated in the centre of the Konik refugee camps. This primary school is a separate branch unit of the Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin primary school, in Podgorica. It accommodates exclusively Roma children – 313 as of the beginning of the school year 2006/2007 (of whom 55.36 per cent are girls).⁶⁷ Initially this branch unit provided classes for Grades 1–4 only, but the Ministry of Education and Science subsequently reduced this to Grades 1–3. The children are expected to go to the main school building once they enrol in Grade 4. The main school offers a positive example of the integration of Roma pupils into mixed classes.

According to the Ministry of Education and Science, there is a plan to reduce further the number of grades represented at the branch unit. However, there is still no available evidence of any concrete actions undertaken to do so. The Ministry regards the lack of infrastructural facilities at the main primary school in Podgorica as the main reason for postponing the transfer. Also, the lack of transportation from the camp to the school, the school’s limited availability of classroom space and the lack of provision

⁶⁵ Observations from Berane, Nikšić and Podgorica case studies, November 2006.

⁶⁶ Interview with the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Education and Science, August 2006.

⁶⁷ Ministry of Education and Science, Bureau of Education.

of free meals are in general obstacles to more successful inclusion of Roma children in the formal school system. The Ministry of Education and Science has stated that these issues will be dealt with as soon as the new school building is open in the wider area of the suburb of Konik, but this will depend mainly on available international financial schemes for which the Government has applied.

Both units of this primary school (the main unit and branch unit), as well as the branch unit of the public Ljubica Popović pre-school, were included in the REI (see section 3.2). The teachers have undergone extensive training on inclusive education, interactive pedagogy and anti-bias education, performed by an expert from the Pedagogical Centre of Montenegro NGO (one of the partners in the REI). Significant infrastructural adjustments have also been made to prepare the primary school for the education reform process (see section Annex 1.1). Roma assistants have been introduced into the teaching process and Roma facilitators engaged to improve the relationship between the school and Roma parents. The teaching process is based on the official curricula.

The success of the Roma pupils in the branch unit of the Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin primary school (Grades 1–3, see Table 10) has been slightly better than that of pupils in the main school unit.

Table 20. Success rate of pupils in the branch unit of the “Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin” primary school

School performance	Number of pupils
Excellent	19
Very good	36
Good	73
Poor	56
Failed	39
Dropped out	64
Total	287

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, Bureau of Education

3. GOVERNMENT EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

Roma are mentioned in a number of general policy documents, but the first policy to specifically target the issues facing Roma communities in Montenegro is the Decade Action Plan, adopted in 2005. The Roma Education Initiative (REI) was undertaken in collaboration with international and local NGOs, to enhance both access to and quality of education for Roma in three localities. The project has since been taken over by the Roma Education Fund (REF) and may serve as a model for other countries.

The language barrier is viewed as one of the reasons for dropping out among Roma children, but Romanes is not an officially recognised minority language in Montenegro, and no relevant policies yet exist that would provide systematic and obligatory pre-school programmes sensitive to the specific needs of Roma children. There are no Roma teachers, and case study research conducted for this report suggests that many teachers are reluctant to study Romanes. A very limited number of Roma teaching assistants have been working in the classrooms as part of the REI, although there has been a lack of clarity regarding their place in the school structure. Resolving this administrative issue should be a priority, as Roma assistants can effectively help to bring Roma children into school and succeed once there. Provisions have been made to supply Roma children with textbooks, but there are no materials specifically about Roma, and no materials in Romanes. REI has paid considerable attention to teacher training, introducing pedagogical practices recognising specific features of the Roma culture and tradition, although bilingual techniques are not included in the available pre-service courses. As part of its efforts to be considered a candidate for EU membership, Montenegro has initiated a debate on anti-discrimination legislation, but at present no such law is in force.

3.1 Government policy documents

3.1.1 General policy documents

General Government documents address issues connected to the education of Roma in the context of the ongoing education reform (see section 3.2.1). These documents put forward more or less the same objectives and indicators. This implies that there is a unified approach to some of the problems related to Roma education. However, Government policies are not comprehensive and fail to address some of the key issues.

The *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* (adopted in 2003) was the first policy document to contain separate data on Roma. It recognises some of the major problems faced by the Roma community and proposes measures to address them. The Paper proposes a list of activities specifically targeting Roma over the period 2004–2006, which would require international funding to the amount of €36.59 million.⁶⁸ This includes a number of activities relating to education, totalling €6.07 million.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Government, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2003*, p. 115.

⁶⁹ Government, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2003*, p. 115.

The *Economic Reform Agenda of the Government of Montenegro 2002–2007* (adopted in 2005) details ten goals for the reform of the education system.⁷⁰ These include a specific goal to increase the number of Roma children in education.⁷¹ The Ministry of Education and Science, the Bureau for Educational Services and the Centre for Vocational Education are the institutions charged with working towards the implementation of this goal. The other education goals listed in the Agenda do not specifically mention Roma, but do address other issues related to the education reform that also indirectly concern Roma – such as the training of school directors and teachers and the improvement of school infrastructure.⁷²

3.1.2 Policy documents addressing Roma

The National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion (hereafter, Decade Action Plan), adopted in January 2005, is the most specific document targeting Roma. The Decade Action Plan emphasises the following:

The inclusion of Roma children into the education system has been marked with the problems such as: illiterate parents, parents' poverty, inappropriate legislation, scarce living space and the lack of qualified teachers and particularly their mentality and traditional lifestyle. Due to strained financial circumstances, many parents live in extreme poverty, children who live in certain settlements do not have basic conditions for keeping hygiene and for normal psycho-physical development.⁷³

The Decade Action Plan sets out ten overall goals on education. These include goals on increasing the number of Roma children enrolled at all levels of education (goals 1–4), improving school infrastructure (goal 7), providing training to teachers on Roma culture and history (goal 6), preparing handbooks on Roma culture and tradition, as well as material in Roma language and bilingually (goal 6), and providing reduced price textbooks to poor Roma students (goal 10).⁷⁴ For each goal, the Decade Action Plan details a number of activities to be implemented in the course of the Decade, with the aim of achieving that goal. The Decade Action Plan recommends total funding of

⁷⁰ Government of the Republic of Montenegro, *Economic Reform Agenda for Montenegro 2002–2007*, Podgorica, April 2005, p. 156, available in English at <http://www.gom.cg.yu/files/1126172740.pdf> (accessed 21 November 2006) (hereafter, Government, *Economic Reform Agenda 2002–2007*), pp. 149–156.

⁷¹ The specific activities under this goal are detailed in the relevant sections of this report. Government, *Economic Reform Agenda 2002–2007*, Goals 9, p. 156.

⁷² Government, *Economic Reform Agenda 2002–2007*, Goals 4 and 8, pp. 149–156.

⁷³ Government, *Decade Action Plan* p. 8.

⁷⁴ The goals are referred to in more detail in the relevant sections of this report. Government, *Decade Action Plan*, pp. 9–16.

€6.42 million to implement these activities, of which €1.31 million comes from the budget and €5.11 million from donations.⁷⁵

The Decade Working Group, established in 2004, is in charge of monitoring implementation of the Plan.⁷⁶ The Plan envisages that the Decade Working Group will “hold a monitoring process of the Action Plan implementation every three months including public informing” and “carry out an evaluation of activities every six months, by monitoring the realisation of the main goals of the Action Plan using the indicators mentioned within the framework of the four priority issues, in accordance with Government strategic documents [Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, National Plan of Action for Children]”. The indicators are outlined in Annex 2 of the Plan.

A systematic monitoring mechanism for the Decade Action Plan has not yet been established, and the conclusions of the recent roundtable on the implementation of the Decade reiterated the need to reconsider ways and measures by which implementation of the programmatic and financial commitments of the Government may be improved.⁷⁷

3.2 Government education programmes

The main general Government educational policy documents also address the status and access to education of the Roma population. They all reiterate the need to integrate more Roma into schools and improve school infrastructure in schools with an important number of Roma children.

A reform of the education system in Montenegro was launched in 2000 (see Annex 2).⁷⁸ The Government’s vision for the new educational system was articulated in the policy document *The Book of Changes of the Education System of the Republic of Montenegro*, which was adopted by the Montenegrin Parliament in November 2001.⁷⁹ This was followed by the Strategic Plan for Education Reform in 2003–2004, which was adopted by the Government in January 2003,⁸⁰ and the Strategic Plan of Education Reform for 2005–2009.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Government, *Decade Action Plan*, p. 30.

⁷⁶ Government, *Decade Action Plan*, p. 8, p. 25.

⁷⁷ Conclusions of the roundtable on the Decade of Roma Inclusion, Podgorica, 23 May 2007, available at <http://www.osim.cg.yu/index.html> (accessed 14 November 2007).

⁷⁸ MoES, *The Book of Changes*.

⁷⁹ MoES, *The Book of Changes*.

⁸⁰ MoES, *Strategic Plan for Education Reform for 2003–2004*, Podgorica 2003, available at http://www.seerecon.org/serbiamontenegro/documents/progress_report_montenegro/strategic_plan_education_montenegro.pdf (accessed 21 November).

⁸¹ Government, *Strategic Plan of Education Reform for 2005–2009*, Podgorica, 2005.

The National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC) was adopted in 2004. The NPAC sets out a number of indicators on access to high-quality education, as well as targets to be achieved by 2003.⁸² This includes targets on enrolment and completion of pre-school, primary and secondary education. There are specific targets for increasing the enrolment of RAE children at all levels of education. The Plan explicitly recognises the need to increase the enrolment of RAE children in primary education. It sets out the target of increasing the total number of RAE children enrolled in primary education by 10 per cent annually up to 2010, from 1,006 in 2003. It also aims to increase the enrolment rate of RAE children by 10 per cent annually over the same period, from 25.2 per cent in 2003.⁸³

The NPAC details current enrolment rates in pre-school, primary and secondary education, for the national population and for Roma children only (see section 2.2). These indicators are to be updated annually, while a local/municipal plan of action that would facilitate more effective implementation of the National Action Plan for Children, is currently being developed in Nikšić Municipality.

3.2.1 Other education initiatives

The “Kindergarten as a family centre and Roma in it” Programme

This programme has been running since 2001 in the Jelena Četković pre-school in the Konik refugee camps. It was developed and implemented jointly by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Pedagogical Centre of Montenegro NGO. The project was funded by the Open Society Foundation – Representative Office Montenegro (FOSI ROM),⁸⁴ based on contributions in kind from the project partners. Its main aim was to increase the enrolment of Roma children and thus also ensure their entry into primary school. It has already led to a significant increase in enrolment in this pre-school (see section 2.2). According to the UNDP’s 2003 *Household Survey of RAE*:

The program was beneficial, not only because it provided the opportunity for Roma children to attend kindergarten, but because a great deal of effort was made to explain to parents the importance of preparing their children for school. On the other hand, teachers and parents of non-Roma children were resistant to the idea of Roma and non-Roma children attending kindergarten together. The greatest problem with children refugees is their lack of medical care documentation. However, they should be experimentally involved in the program.⁸⁵

⁸² Government, *National Plan of Action for Children 2004*, pp. 35–37.

⁸³ Government, *National Plan of Action for Children 2004*, p. 36.

⁸⁴ Further information (in English) on the Open Society Institute Foundation – Representative Office Montenegro (FOSI ROM), is available on their website at <http://www.osim.cg.yu> (accessed 21 November 2006).

⁸⁵ UNDP, *Household Survey of RAE 2003*, p. 28.

This project has been main inspiration for the initiation of the project Roma Education Initiative as the main results of this project were further developed and replicated in primary education.

“Roma Education Initiative in Montenegro” (REI)

The REI has been the major driving force for the higher visibility of Roma in the formal educational system in Montenegro, and at the same time the most successful generator of change with regard to access to education for Roma in the last two years. Its main aim is to integrate Roma into pre-schools and primary schools.

The initial REI in Montenegro commenced in the school year 2003/2004 and ran for two academic years, until July 2005. It was an experimental pilot programme, aimed at testing policies designed to achieve the goals listed in the major Government policy documents. It was mainly inspired by the previously successful work done by the “Kindergarten as a family centre and Roma in it” Programme, and it was guided by the *Memorandum of Understanding on the Education of Roma*.⁸⁶ The initial REI was jointly financed by UNICEF, FOSI ROM, the OSI Network Roma Education Initiative and the Government. A total of €150,339 was invested in the project over two academic years. The implementing partners for the project were the Ministry of Education and Science, the Pedagogical Centre of Montenegro⁸⁷ and a number of subcontracted NGOs dealing with Roma issues.

The first stage of the REI focused on the development of an integrated model of education for Roma children in three selected cities. With the assistance of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Bureau for Educational Services, pilot units were established in Podgorica, Nikšić and Berane. Each of these locations has a unique set of issues to contend with, and each represents variety in the characteristics of the Roma community. In Podgorica, the project covered the Konik refugee camps, where Roma refugees have been living since the conflict in Kosovo (see section 2.4.2).

The initiative focused on the following four pre-schools and primary schools, and covered 62 per cent of the overall number of Roma pupils enrolled in primary schools in Montenegro:

- Podgorica: the Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin primary school (the main unit in Podgorica and its branch unit in Konik);

⁸⁶ MoES, *Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education and Science of the Government of Montenegro, the Foundation Open Society Institute-Representative Office Montenegro (FOSI ROM) and UNICEF*, signed in February 2003, available at http://www.osim.cg.yu/fosi_rom_en/download/roma_memorandum.rtf (accessed 21 November 2006).

⁸⁷ Further information (in English) on the NGO, Pedagogical Center of Montenegro, is available on the website of the International Step by Step Association at <http://www.issa.nl/network/montenegro/montenegro.html> (accessed 5 November 2007).

- Podgorica: the M. Miljanov primary school;
- Berane: the Radomir Mitrović primary school;
- Nikšić: the M. Lalatović primary school.

The project focused on the introduction of Roma assistants in the teaching process, and funded teacher training for non-Roma teachers and small infrastructural renovations, such as minor classroom renovations, and classroom equipment (where this was needed for the intended project activities). The report also aimed to support Roma NGOs to act as partners in the educational process.

The financial scheme of the initial REI ended in July 2005. An evaluation of the initial REI was undertaken in the second half of 2005.⁸⁸ This focused primarily on the desegregation component. It revealed that the project had a positive effect on both Roma and non-Roma children and that there were significant achievements, such as increased attendance by Roma children and greater social interaction between Roma and non-Roma children. The report stresses the importance of Roma teaching assistants, as a mean of fostering integration and improving the teaching process for Roma children. It also recognises the need to continue with teacher training, especially on non-biased and child-centred teaching techniques. It identified the need to incorporate multicultural values into the curriculum and practice of the pre-schools and primary schools.

In October 2005, following the establishment of the Roma Education Fund (REF), a new financial scheme for the REI was introduced, granting support for the next three academic years. The basic framework and methodologies of the project remain the same, but in addition to the three existing sites, two new sites have been included in the programme (Bar and Ulcinj).

The next stage of the REI foresees the enhancement of Roma education, by creating effective NGO–school partnerships, motivating schools for Roma inclusion/supplying them with extra equipment, capacity-building for teaching in a diversified environment and further involvement of the Roma assistants in the teaching and learning process.

3.2.2 Other Government programmes

The following two Government programmes have been implemented in line with the activities envisaged in the education part of the Decade Action Plan:

Programme of professional development of Roma

At the beginning of 2006 the Bureau of Employment initiated a comprehensive research project aimed at identifying the relevant target group for their planned new

⁸⁸ *Evaluation report on REI 2005.*

programme addressing the professional development of Roma.⁸⁹ This research aimed at elucidating the existing gap between the official and the *de facto* number of Roma in Montenegro, which represents the biggest obstacle for any serious programme development, and the subsequent need to identify the number of Roma adults potentially interested in gaining employment.⁹⁰ Research on “Roma visible on the labour market”, finalised in October 2006, will serve as the basis for a future professional development programme for Roma that will be conceptualised, developed and implemented by the Bureau of Employment of the Republic of Montenegro.⁹¹

Programme of basic functional literacy for adults

In general, levels of illiteracy are falling in Montenegro (see Table 21). However, for the RAE population illiteracy is a significant problem. For 10–18-year-olds, the illiteracy rate among RAE is 63 per cent, compared with the general rate of 5.9 per cent in Montenegro.⁹² The Ministry of Education and Science has recognised the need to address the high levels of illiteracy among the Roma population and, in 2005, initiated a programme of basic functional literacy for adults. Its aim is to organise catch-up courses for illiterate Roma adults, following specifically designed curricula, which include functional literacy skills and also some other social skills relevant for the more successful integration of the participants (such as health education).⁹³ Recently, the programme has been partially implemented through the “Second chance” project, which foresees programmes of functional literacy and professional development for 75 Roma from the municipalities of Nikšić and Podgorica, and would offer an opportunity for qualified access to the labour market.⁹⁴ Additional educational

⁸⁹ Employment Agency of Montenegro, *Research on the Personal Documents, Education and Interest of Roma in Employment*, Podgorica, October 2006.

⁹⁰ It is also intended to gain insight into the formal obstacles to the access to employment of Roma, such as lack of personal documents necessary for the job applications. The Bureau has created a database of unemployed Roma and their professional profile, in order to be able to offer relevant programmes for their professional upgrading, which would make them more competitive on the labour market.

⁹¹ Employment Agency of Montenegro, *Research on the Personal Documents, Education and Interest of Roma in Employment*, Podgorica, October 2006.

⁹² Government of the Republic of Montenegro, *National Plan of Action for Children*, March 2004, available in English at http://www.unicef.org/scg/NPA_MN1.pdf (part 1) and http://www.unicef.org/scg/NPA_MN2.pdf (part 2) (accessed 21 November), pp. 35–37 (hereafter, Government, *National Plan of Action for Children 2004*).

⁹³ The Programme was developed by the Centre for Vocational Education (Sector for the Education of Adults), in cooperation with the Bureau for Educational Services. The Programme was adopted on 18 April 2006 by the Council for Education of Adults, which is the highest expert body for this segment of the education (see Annex 1).

⁹⁴ See the website of the Roma Scholarship Foundation at [http://www.fsr.cg.yu/Biblioteka/FSR_\(Sept07\)_Druga_sansa_Izvjestaj_sa_trening_obuke_obrazo_vanje_odraslih_Roma.pdf](http://www.fsr.cg.yu/Biblioteka/FSR_(Sept07)_Druga_sansa_Izvjestaj_sa_trening_obuke_obrazo_vanje_odraslih_Roma.pdf) (accessed 30 October 2007).

activities in the framework of the project are focused on IT literacy and basic knowledge on entrepreneurship.

Table 21. Illiteracy rates (1981–2003)

Year	Illiterate population aged 10 and over	
	Male	Female
1971	55,400	14,405
1981	36,705	7,928
1991	25,217	5,226
2003	10,611	2,006

Source: MONSTAT⁹⁵

3.2.3 Minority language

The Law on General Education and the recently adopted Law on Minorities (2006) both stipulate the right to education of minority groups in their mother tongue.⁹⁶ However, Romanes is not an officially recognised minority language.

The Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms recognises the possibility of education in minority languages, stating that “minorities have the right to adequate representation of their language in general and vocational education, depending on the number of pupils and financial possibilities of the State”.⁹⁷ The Law states further that “this right is exercised through separate schools or separate classes in regular school institutions”.⁹⁸ It also stipulates that “the subject curricula for the purpose of education in minority languages need to contain topics related to history, art, literature, tradition and culture of relevant minority”.⁹⁹

With regard to teachers, according to the Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms, “teachers in educational institutions undertaking the teaching process at a minority level need to be a minority member or from the majority but having active fluency in the minority language in which children have been taught in the related school”¹⁰⁰ [and] the director of the school that performs the teaching process in minority

⁹⁵ MONSTAT, information available at <http://www.monstat.cg.yu/EngMeniGodisnjiPodaci.htm> (accessed 30 October 2007).

⁹⁶ Law on General Education, art. 11; Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms, art. 13.

⁹⁷ Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms, *Official Gazette*, No. 31/06, May 12, 2006, art. 13, para. 1.

⁹⁸ Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms, art. 13.

⁹⁹ Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms, art. 15.

¹⁰⁰ Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms, art. 18, para. 1.

languages needs to be appointed following the opinion of the Council for that relevant minority”.¹⁰¹

However, these legal stipulations are challenged in practice, which implies that a larger percentage of the Roma population speaks Albanian rather than Romanes, that there are no available human resources that would meet demands of education in Roma language, and that Ministry of Education and Science lacks resources needed for providing bilingual textbooks, curricula and teaching techniques in practice.

The Law on General Education also refers to the education of minorities. It states that “regardless of the national affiliation, race, gender, language, religion, and social background and of other personal characteristics, all citizens of the Republic shall be equal in the exercising of the right of education”.¹⁰² With regard to education in minority languages, the Law states the following:

In the municipalities within which the majority, or a significant part, of the population is composed of the members of national and ethnic groups, teaching shall be conducted in the language of those national, or ethnic groups. In the case that teaching is conducted in the language of the national or ethnic groups, the language that is in official use shall be a compulsory subject.¹⁰³

The school is obliged to provide adequate help to students attending lessons in a language other than their mother tongue, to help them to learn the language in which the teaching is conducted.

¹⁰¹ Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms, art. 18, para. 2.

¹⁰² Law on General Education, art. 9.

¹⁰³ Law on General Education, art. 11.

Table 22. The language of communication in Roma families

Rank	Language of communication	Frequency	%
1	Some other language – Albanian	38	100
2	Only Roma language	30	78.9
3	More often Roma than Montenegrin language	30	78.9
4	More often Roma than Serbian language	30	78.9
5	Both languages equally	15	39.4
6	Only Serbian	3	7.8
7	Only Montenegrin	–	–
Total		38	100

Source: REI, *Evaluation report on REI 2005*¹⁰⁴

Research conducted in the case study locations for this report suggest that in practice, very few teachers are willing to study Romanes to better prepare them to work with Roma children; bilingual curricula or teaching support are not available.¹⁰⁵ The Ministry of Education and Science should consider creating incentives for current teachers to gain a basic knowledge of Romanes, as well as developing programmes to encourage more Roma to enter the teaching profession.

3.3 Desegregation

There is no systematic segregation of Roma in Montenegro although a certain geographical segregation is obvious in terms of having the majority of Roma located in the suburbs and centralised in improvised communities.

The issue of segregation in education has not been specifically addressed in any Government policy documents. However, all projects related to inclusive education carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science in recent years have had a preventive desegregation-oriented element.

The Decade Action Plan includes the following specific activities aimed at addressing the segregation of Roma in the education system:¹⁰⁶

- Research on segregation in the education system and on its causes.

¹⁰⁴ *Evaluation report on REI 2005*, Table 5.

¹⁰⁵ Observations from Berane, Nikšić and Podgorica case studies, November 2006.

¹⁰⁶ Government, *Decade Action Plan*, Sub-goal 2.6.3, p. 11.

- Developing criteria for enrolment policy based on the principles of desegregation.
- Designing a programme of desegregation for schools and pre-schools that enrol only or mostly Roma children.
- Elaboration of criteria for evaluating the level of segregation in education.

The REI (see section 3.2.1) has achieved significant success in developing and promoting desegregation-based models of education for Roma. The project addressed the primary schools and pre-schools with the highest number of Roma pupils. According to the project evaluation undertaken in 2005, activities carried out in the framework of the project have contributed to an increase in the number of Roma children enrolled in pre-schools in the four selected sites (see sections 2.2, 2.3). The project also had a positive impact in terms of developing integration models for Roma children and providing an institutional framework for the accommodation of a greater number of Roma in the formal educational system.¹⁰⁷ The methodology introduced by the REI (including new teaching techniques, cooperative learning and the introduction of evaluations) has been a significant asset in fostering the participation and integration of Roma children.

3.4 Roma teachers, teaching assistants and school mediators

Both the National Plan of Action for Children and the Decade Action Plan recognise the lack of qualified teachers as a barrier to increasing the completion rate for Roma pupils at the primary education level.¹⁰⁸

Roma teachers

There is currently only one Roma teacher in Montenegro who is engaged in the teaching process. Action is needed to put a policy in place that would effectively target Roma who are finishing secondary school, in order to facilitate their enrolment in university and to pursue teaching as a career.

The Ministry of Education and Science has achieved some limited success through the “Roma Leadership Potential Development” Project, carried out in cooperation with the OSCE and the Roma Scholarship Foundation NGO. The project was initiated in 2004 and in its framework a mentorship scheme has been developed for young Roma activists, recruited from local Roma civil society and from a list of previous Roma scholarship beneficiaries. The project was based on the recognition that specific action

¹⁰⁷ *Evaluation report on REI 2005.*

¹⁰⁸ Other factors include illiteracy of Roma parents, parents’ poverty, scarce living space, mentality and traditional lifestyle. Government, *National Plan of Action for Children 2004*; Government, *Decade Action Plan.*

needs to be taken in order to recruit talented Roma high school students who have the potential to carry out their studies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Nikšić and consequently create a core of the first Roma teachers in Montenegro.¹⁰⁹

The question of the recruitment and engagement of Roma teachers remains closely linked to the need to introduce Romanes into the school curricula. However, this is currently not possible, as Romanes is not a recognised minority language (see section 3.2.3).

Roma Assistants/Moderators

As yet, there is still no legislation on the involvement of Roma assistants in schools. However, even if legal provisions guaranteeing their engagement and offering formal employment possibilities were to be introduced, there are in any case currently no trained Roma individuals with the relevant experience and education who could meet the requirements set by the REI.

Currently, few Roma attend secondary schools in Montenegro and only four Roma students currently attend the Pedagogical Faculty in Nikšić.¹¹⁰

According to the data acquired through all three research phases of the REI, Roma assistants played a very important role in the integration of Roma children into pre-schools. However, at the beginning of the REI, a major challenge was how to identify Roma assistants for the training provided through the Project and subsequently engage them successfully in the teaching process. In most cases, Roma with secondary education (and in some cases only primary education) were selected to act as Roma assistants. In the course of the school year 2004/2005, four Roma assistants were engaged in the Jelena Četković pre-school unit in Podgorica. Eight Roma assistants were engaged in four primary schools that were made part of the REI then, and the REI evaluation says that 62 per cent of them have graduated from high school, while 37 per cent have finished primary school.¹¹¹ “Although four of them have only finished primary school and one has finished high school, they fit well into the work with the councillors, and during the project they undertook more and more complex tasks and work with Roma and non-Roma children.”¹¹²

The Roma assistants involved in the REI were mainly expected to build confidence among Roma children, and act as links with the Roma community and as driving forces of long-term effects in the integration process. The evaluation of the REI carried out in 2005 noted that the majority of teachers from the schools employing Roma teaching assistants for the project (90 per cent) felt that the involvement of Roma

¹⁰⁹ A list of beneficiaries of this programme may be accessed at <http://www.fsr.cg.yu./stipendisti.php>.

¹¹⁰ Database with numbers available at <http://www.fsr.cg.yu./stipendisti.php> (accessed 15 November 2007).

¹¹¹ *Evaluation report on REI 2005*, p. 48–49.

¹¹² *Evaluation report on REI 2005*, p. 22.

assistants in the teaching process was welcome and necessary, and that extra attention should be paid to building their professional capacity.¹¹³ By providing a role model for Roma children and acting as an advocate for Roma parents inside the school community, they have primarily assisted in overcoming the language barrier, which is seen as a major obstacle to successful integration (see section 4.6).

The REI report states further the following:

RTAs had an important role in bridging the language gap between children and the school. According to the REI external evaluation, 30 per cent of children in kindergarten didn't know the language in which the dominant part of the communication in the social environment takes place: Montenegrin, Serbian, Croatian or Bosnian/Muslim (hereinafter called: Montenegrin-Serbian), and this means that they have a problem both with communication and with integration. This problem was overcome by the engagement of Roma assistants in the work with children, on one hand, and by the organization of upbringing activities with children that required communication, but not the language skills: such as drawing, modelling with various materials, and finally, by organizing joint games, and this also helped develop the sense of social security among Roma children, it reduced the social distance between children and communication became richer and more spontaneous. Roma children quickly developed a visible capacity to understand Montenegrin-Serbian language (Bosnian/Muslim or Croatian) although they were still less able to speak it.¹¹⁴

However, it seems that the assistants did not have an official position within the school management structure, and were not officially employed, as the school did not have any direct responsibility with regard to their engagement. The ways in which their official engagement can be legally guaranteed are currently being investigated in the framework of the REF-funded REI. Under the REI as currently implemented, the Roma assistants received modest compensation from the Ministry of Education and Science, through the Project funding, that amounted to far less than the average salary.

The structure of the Project was slightly changed in the next stage of the project (from 2005). In the future, the Roma teaching assistants will be more involved in the teaching process: for example, assisting the teacher in the course of regular classes, assisting Roma children with their homework, and participating in remedial classes. Necessary communication with Roma parents and the school–community relationship has been made part of the facilitators' responsibilities (see also section 5.4). Facilitators were introduced in order to foster this cooperation and to prevent the Roma assistants from becoming sidetracked from their teaching process-related responsibilities. Five Roma facilitators were engaged in the course of the school year 2005/2006, in order to educate Roma parents and Roma children included in the REI following specifically

¹¹³ *Evaluation report on REI 2005*, p. 45.

¹¹⁴ *Evaluation report on REI 2005*, p. 13.

designed guidebooks for parents. These books have been developed as a part of the ongoing education reform process and are supported by FOSI ROM.

According to a school inspector, the Roma teaching assistants are very useful for the educational process of Roma children. However, the inspector noted that the assistants should come from the Roma community's own elite. In addition, the inspector recommended that Roma assistants should be permanently employed by the schools, not financed on a project-by-project basis by the Ministry of Education and Science.¹¹⁵

The status and mandate of the Roma assistant are constantly reconsidered and developed by the REI partners (under REF funding) in order to ensure systematic solutions for the professional engagement of Roma teaching assistants as this becomes one of the major challenges of the project implementation in the forthcoming period.

3.5 Educational materials and curriculum policy

Efforts have been made in recent years to reform the system for publishing school textbooks, with the aim of producing higher-quality textbooks in terms of content, design and pedagogic approach, and in line with the principles of democracy and multiculturalism promoted by the strategy of the education reform process. Currently, textbooks in minority languages are produced in the Montenegrin and Albanian languages. Also, a university programme for Albanian teachers was initiated in October 2004 in Montenegro as a result of the joint efforts of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights Protection, Podgorica Municipality and the University of Montenegro.

However, there is no explicit reference to the Roma minority in the compulsory curricula for literature and history in primary schools. No official textbooks in Roma language have ever been published, for the previously stated reasons, although in 2002 the Ministry of Education and Science did support a bilingual (Roma–Montenegrin) spelling book as a single initiative in this regard. There are no schools with a bilingual Romanes curriculum in Montenegro.

Given the language barrier for a significant proportion of Roma children (see section 4.5), the high drop-out rates of Roma children, and their specific cultural heritage, the Decade Action Plan includes the goal of supporting the development of the cultural identity of Roma children and young people.¹¹⁶ The listed activities under this goal include the incorporation of elements of Roma culture as a part of the ongoing curricular reform (see Annex 1 1.1), the design of specific training programmes for teachers on Roma culture and history and the development of handbooks on Roma culture and tradition. Another foreseen activity is the initiation of and support for publishing literature relevant for education in Romanes and bilingually. The Ministry

¹¹⁵ Interview with Nermin Hajderpasić, school inspector, August 2006.

¹¹⁶ Government, *Decade Action Plan*, goal 6, pp. 12–13.

of Education and Science has already supported the preparation and printing of a bilingual magazine for children in Romanes that is being widely distributed to Roma children in selected primary schools.

According to the Law on General Education, public schools should receive funding from the State Budget “for (among other things) the subsidy of textbooks of small circulation, as well as those for the education of national or ethnic groups”.¹¹⁷ However, in practice, a lack of funds seems to prevent the implementation of this provision.

The importance of Roma children having access to course textbooks is recognised in the *Economic Reform Agenda of the Government of Montenegro* (2005), which puts forward the goal of increasing the number of Roma children included in the education system, including through provision by the Ministry of Education and Science of free textbooks for Roma children enrolled in Grade 1 of primary school.¹¹⁸ Similarly, the 2005 Decade Action Plan includes the goal of providing reduced-price textbooks for poor Roma students.¹¹⁹

The Ministry of Education and Science has committed itself to providing textbooks for Roma primary school pupils, in order to stimulate enrolment and prevent dropping out. Under the “All together to school” initiative, the Ministry of Education and Science has provided free textbooks for Grade 1 Roma pupils. This initiative has been running for three academic years since 2003/2004. In the course of the school year 2004/2005, the initiative was partially enabled by funding from donors. In the school year 2005/2006, the Ministry of Education and Science provided textbooks for 380 Grade 1 Roma students. However, this initiative is dependent on available funds and changing priorities, which serve as the basis for the yearly allocation of the education-related budget. Starting from the school year 2005/2006, this assistance has been reduced, to only cover Roma children coming from the families that are beneficiaries of the social assistance scheme. This has significantly reduced the overall number of beneficiaries, as the number of Roma families that receive social assistance is significantly smaller than the targeted population of Roma families that send children to school.¹²⁰ There are also plans to develop a lending scheme that would allow other Roma pupils to benefit from the textbooks provided and enable refugee Roma children to become its beneficiaries.

¹¹⁷ Law on General Education, *Official Gazette*, No. 64/02, 28 November 2002, art. 136.

¹¹⁸ Government, *Economic Reform Agenda 2002–2007*, Goal 9, p. 156.

¹¹⁹ Government, *Decade Action Plan*, Goal 10, p. 16.

¹²⁰ According to research estimates from the FOSI sponsored project carried out by the Roma NGO “Roma –Početak” from Nikšić, only 25 per cent of Roma children attending primary schools are beneficiaries of the social assistance scheme. Database available at http://www.fsr.cg.yu./aktivnosti_basadannideci.php (accessed 15 November 2007).

3.6 Teacher training and support

Extensive teacher training has been carried out in recent years as part of the ongoing education reform's teacher training segment.

Teacher training and professional development were also major components of the REI. Much of this training involved topics such as multiculturalism and tolerance. As one of the partners in the REI, the Pedagogical Centre of Montenegro NGO delivered the majority of teacher training sessions that have been carried out. Also in the framework of the REI, school improvement and anti-bias teacher training packages have been delivered to all teachers involved in pre-school and primary schools, and extensive training is still delivered to all pre-school and primary school sites that have been included in the REI.

Significant efforts were invested (in the framework of the REI and wider) in order to deliver training in the "Step by Step" methodology, which promotes active learning (as a concept developed by UNICEF) and child-centred teaching techniques.¹²¹ A number of other teacher training packages have also been carried out. This includes active learning, which, together with the "Step by Step" training, is the only externally evaluated training undertaken in the framework of the education reform process.

The specifics of Roma culture and tradition have been made an integral part of the official in-service teacher training scheme provided by the Pedagogical Centre of Montenegro as a partner in the REI, as provided by the Decade Action Plan.¹²² To date, there are no pre-service training courses in bilingual techniques for teachers.

The REF Needs Assessment states the following:

There is a lack of cooperation with the University of Montenegro – Faculty of Philosophy on issues related to strategy documents and to education and sensibilization of students (future caregivers, teachers and subject teachers) toward RAE children education, acquaintance with the specifics of RAE culture and tradition, anti-bias, possible introduction of the special teaching subject called "Pedagogical work with special categories of children".¹²³

¹²¹ The "Step by Step" methodology is based on child-centred methods, in which special attention is devoted to the whole child's development, equal access to education, in individually and culturally appropriate environments and approaches. See the International Step by Step Association website at <http://www.issa.nl/index.html> (accessed 30 October 2007).

¹²² Government, *Decade Action Plan*: sub-goal 2.4.2. Incorporation of elements of Roma culture in curricula for children.

¹²³ REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*, p. 40.

At the end of the document there is a long list of recommendations for improving teacher education, including “Ongoing professional development and training in child-centred pedagogical methods, anti-bias training, and school improvement training”.¹²⁴

3.7 Discrimination-monitoring mechanisms

There is no anti-discrimination legislation currently in force in Montenegro. Efforts are currently being undertaken to adopt a Law on Anti-discrimination, which has been called for by the relevant EU accession requirements. No specific anti-discrimination body exists at the national level either, with concrete responsibilities for investigating and sanctioning discrimination practices as such. An Ombudsman’s Office exists, but it faces certain challenges due to limited financial and human resources.

In terms of addressing any discriminatory practices, Roma parents can directly address school officials. Their primary addressee is their child’s teacher, and the next instance is the school pedagogue and subsequently the school director.

However, there are no official data on the number of complaints that have been lodged by Roma parents, for example, in the course of the last academic year or at the level of individual schools.

The REF Needs Assessment recommends supporting Ministry of Education and Science activities “in a direction to ensure that national legislation includes provisions banning racial segregation and discrimination in education and provides effective remedies for violations of such legislation”.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*, p. 48.

¹²⁵ REF, *Needs Assessment Study 2004*, p. 49.

4. CONSTRAINTS ON ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Access to pre-school is limited by the shortage of places in available facilities. This shortfall disproportionately affects Roma children, as priority is given to families where both parents work, which is rare among Roma. The Ministry of Education and Science should take steps to revise this policy and ensure that Roma children, who could benefit greatly from the preparatory aspect of pre-school, are also among those allocated places. The costs associated with attending school are also beyond what many Roma families can afford. There is no information suggesting that Roma children are placed in segregated classes in mainstream schools, although there are Roma-majority schools in areas where the population has a high proportion of Roma. Limited research has been conducted into whether Roma are overrepresented in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities, although this issue is addressed in the Decade Action Plan.

4.1 Structural constraints

The shortage of places in pre-schools is a major structural constraint on the access of Roma children to pre-school education. Additional infrastructure investments will also be required in primary schools, if an increased enrolment of Roma children is to be accommodated.

This is recognised by the Decade Action Plan, which includes the goal of “additional construction and infrastructure inhabited by Roma”.¹²⁶ The listed activities include developing the necessary space in schools and kindergartens needed to cope with the increased number of enrolled children.

The 2003 *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* states that “including the RAE children into pre-school programmes has to be provided through building facilities in appropriate places, near to the RAE population, which will be an important precondition for their further inclusion in primary education”.¹²⁷

As early as 2001, the *Book of Changes of the Education System of the Republic of Montenegro* recognised the low enrolment rate in pre-school education both at the national level and for Roma specifically.¹²⁸ It acknowledges the lack of facilities to accommodate additional children, given that there was an average of 175 pupils in each pre-school unit at this time.¹²⁹

Since 2001, there has been an increase in pre-school capacity. In 2004, there were 79 pre-school units (in 18 pre-schools),¹³⁰ rising to 87 pre-school units in 2005.¹³¹ In

¹²⁶ Government, *Decade Action Plan*, Goal 7, p. 13.

¹²⁷ Government, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2003*.

¹²⁸ MoES, *The Book of Changes*, p. 79.

¹²⁹ MoES, *The Book of Changes*, p. 78.

¹³⁰ Government, *Decision on the Network of Public Educational Institutions*, 22 January 2004.

¹³¹ MONSTAT, *Annual Data on Education*, available in English at <http://www.monstat.cg.yu/EngMeniGodisnjiPodaci.htm> (accessed 20 November 2006) (hereafter, MONSTAT, *Annual Data on Education*).

2005/2006, there were a total of 11,845 children in pre-schools¹³² (of whom 80 were Roma¹³³), meaning that there was an average of 136 children in each pre-school unit.

There is no evidence that funding has been actually allocated to improve pre-school capacity and infrastructure, in line with these documents and the Decade Action Plan, however.

The Decade Action Plan also calls for additional infrastructure investments in primary school education, as the Ministry of Education and Science deems the lack of places/space to be a major barrier to primary school enrolment, particularly in areas with a predominantly Roma population.

4.2 Legal and administrative requirements

4.2.1 Enrolment procedures

Pre-schools

The enrolment procedures in public pre-schools are defined in the individual pre-school's statutes. Generally, the documents requested for completion of the enrolment procedure are the child's birth certificate, proof of child immunisation and evidence of parents' employment.

For many Roma parents, the enrolment procedures can be difficult. Many lack proper identification documents or evidence of employment. A lack of identification documents (primarily in the case of the refugee Roma population) also means a lack of access to the health services that would allow for regular immunisation.

A more significant barrier to enrolment for Roma may be the fact that children of working parents are given priority.¹³⁴ The high rate of unemployment among Roma communities means that few Roma children will be among those given priority, even where their need for the additional preparation pre-school offers is critical. Given the limited number of pre-school places (see section 4.1), children who are not prioritised may not be able to attend. The Ministry of Education and Science should reconsider the enrolment regulations to give Roma children equal priority with the children of working parents.

Primary education

By the end of each February, each municipality must establish a list of all children in its area who will be eligible to be enrolled in primary school by the end of that calendar

¹³² MONSTAT, *Annual Data on Education*.

¹³³ Based on internal REI information.

¹³⁴ Interview with Dževad Djurković, pedagogue at the B. V. Podgoričanin school, August 2006, case study Podgorica.

year.¹³⁵ School enrolment is conditional on residence in the school district, but there is no evidence that any school has ever rejected the request of parents who wanted to enrol their child in a school other than the one nearest to their place of residence.

The enrolment procedure for primary schools is simpler than the one for pre-schools. Parents must complete and submit a request (on a standardised template) to the school management, as well as the child's birth certificate and a certificate of the child's health condition.

The medical certificate is obtained from the relevant health unit certifying that the child is psychologically and physically prepared for school. According to the Law on General Education,¹³⁶ preliminary testing for entry into primary school is organised. The relevant commission to perform testing is set by the statute of the school and usually involves a school psychologist. Children with preliminary diagnosis of intellectual disabilities, reached by the health institution in charge of issuing medical certificates, are consequently directed to the relevant placement commissions.

No research data are available on the number of Roma children excluded from primary schools due to lack of personal documentation, and no evidence suggests that the schools reject Roma pupils due to a lack of documentation. The issue of the lack of documentation may be more visible among the refugee and IDP Roma population, however, who must follow somewhat different procedures in order to acquire the relevant personal certificates requested for the enrolment of their children in the formal school system.

The Decade Action Plan recognises the need for a specific enrolment policy for Roma, given the particular environment in which they live.¹³⁷ A number of activities are listed under this goal, including the following:

- Standardisation or developing instruments to appropriately assess school-age children, with special attention to the particular needs of Roma;
- Enrolment of all Roma children except those with serious developmental problems in the first grade of primary school;
- Double or postponed school entrance exams (one in April, the other in August) for Roma children along with an intervention programme (an intensive programme during the summer for preparing children for school) for children who have failed at the tests in April.

¹³⁵ Law on Primary Education, art. 35.

¹³⁶ Law on General Education, art. 33.

¹³⁷ Government, *Decade Action Plan*, Developing a specific enrolment policy for Roma children, under goals 2, 3, 4, p. 10.

Secondary education

The Decade Action Plan calls for the principle of affirmative action to be applied when it comes to enrolment in secondary and higher education.¹³⁸ The Plan endorses affirmative action only when it comes to secondary and higher education, due to the extremely low number of Roma students at this level of education.

4.3 Costs

The UNDP's 2003 *Household Survey of RAE* "confirmed the previous assumptions of the stunted educational status of the majority of the RAE population".¹³⁹ Among RAE survey respondents aged at least 6 years old, 63.1 per cent had no education and 21.3 per cent had only an incomplete primary school education. The most common reason given for not going to school was a lack of the material resources necessary for covering education costs (37.6 per cent of respondents).¹⁴⁰

According to the latest household survey by MONSTAT for 2005, at the national level an average of 1.68 per cent of household budget expenditure is spent on education (or €7.89).¹⁴¹ No data exists on the average spending on education among Roma households. However, the *Household Survey of RAE* found that 80.7 per cent of Roma households "think that providing food for their households in the long term is a huge problem".¹⁴² This suggests that education may not be an immediate priority in Roma family budgets.

Pre-schools

There are both public and private pre-schools in Montenegro, both of which charge attendance fees. In public pre-schools, parents are required to contribute to the costs of their child's school meals. The costs are decided at the beginning of each school year, by the management of the pre-school institution or network of institutions.

The average fee for public pre-schools is €30 per month. By comparison, the average salary in Montenegro (as of September 2006) is only €248.34.¹⁴³ Given the high

¹³⁸ Government, *Decade Action Plan*, p. 7.

¹³⁹ UNDP, *Household Survey of RAE 2003*, p. 27.

¹⁴⁰ Other cited reasons were a basic lack of motivation (30.9 per cent), tradition (7 per cent) and the need to earn money (6.9 per cent). UNDP, *Household Survey of Roma 2003*, p. 27.

¹⁴¹ MONSTAT, *Household Budget Survey 2005*, available in English at <http://www.monstat.cg.yu/EngMeniGodisnjiPodaci.htm> (accessed 21 November 2006).

¹⁴² UNDP, *Household Survey on RAE 2003*, p. 24.

¹⁴³ This is the average wage without fees and contributions. MONSTAT, *Average Wages by Sector*, available in English at <http://www.monstat.cg.yu/EngMeniGodisnjiPodaci.htm> (accessed 16 November 2006).

unemployment rate among the Roma population,¹⁴⁴ and the fact that the majority are in a difficult economic situation, being unemployed and relying on social benefits, it can be concluded that these costs are a barrier to Roma enrolment.

Recognising this problem, the Ministry of Education and Science has worked towards waiving entirely the compulsory fees required for entry into pre-school for Roma children whose parents receive social benefits. According to the National Plan of Action for Children, in 2003, 650 children benefited from subsidised meals in pre-schools. (These are children whose parents are beneficiaries of the social security scheme and children without parental care.) The subsidy was for 50 per cent of the pre-school accommodation fee. Refugees and IDPs were, however, excluded from this subsidy, so that many Roma in this position are unable to take advantage of this benefit.

In the school year 2003/2004, the Ministry of Education and Science also provided transportation expenses for transferring approximately 30 Roma children from their community to the Jelena Četković pre-school unit in Podgorica.

However, even when subsidies of this kind are available, they are dependent on available budgetary resources and the majority of parents cannot benefit from these subsidies.

There is no evidence of any corruption with regard to the enrolment of children in well-regarded public pre-schools.

There are 12 private pre-schools in Montenegro. Their average monthly fees vary from €90 to €130 per month, which means that they are accessible mainly for well-off families.

Primary schools

All tuition is free in public schools, but there are some costs that parents are expected to cover.

Parents' expenditure on textbooks, notebooks and other materials needed for a student to attend school is rather high. The costs of textbooks range from about €60 for Grade 1 to about €115 for the eighth grade of primary school.¹⁴⁵ Programmes to cover these costs have been developed, however (see section 3.5).

¹⁴⁴ For example, recent research found that 69 per cent of Roma have never applied for a job. Employment Agency of Montenegro, *Research on the Personal Documents, Education and Interest of Roma in Employment*, Podgorica, October 2006, p. 16.

¹⁴⁵ Nitza Escalera (Teachers College, Columbia University), Brandon Hall (Teachers College, Columbia University), Maja Kovačević, Foundation Open Society Institute, Representative Office Montenegro, Dženana Trbić, Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Structural Analysis of Education Sector: Bosnia/Herzegovina and Montenegro*, October 2004.

4.4 Residential segregation/Geographical isolation

According to the 2003 census results, 80.6 per cent of Roma (2,097 people) live in urban areas and the rest (504) live in rural areas (rural meaning primarily suburbs of the larger towns).

The census underestimates the total number of Roma in Montenegro (see section 2.1). However, the UNDP *Household Survey on RAE*, which assumes a total population of around 20,000 Roma, comes up with similar figures on their geographical distribution, stating that 88.6 per cent of Roma live in urban areas and 11.4 per cent in rural areas.¹⁴⁶ It also finds that “the majority of the RAE population live in Central Montenegro (68.7 per cent), 24.8 per cent live in the coastal area, while 6.5 per cent live in the Northern part of the Republic”. The survey notes the following:

In Montenegro, most RAE live in suburbs’ settlements such as: Konik, Brlja, Komanski most, Vrela ibnicka, etc. They have chosen to settle in the Central and Seaside portions of Montenegro, since these spots would lend themselves to a greater acceptance of their handicrafts and trade than would the Northern municipalities. Furthermore, temperatures in Northern Montenegro are very low and would not suit their way of life.¹⁴⁷

However, both rural and urban Roma populations in Montenegro tend to have a similar quality of life. Most RAE houses are made of durable material such as brick (50.2 per cent) and an additional 42.8 per cent live in wooden structures, while 4.5 per cent live in structures made of mixed materials, and 1.2 per cent in structures made of earth/soil and recycled materials. Many RAE households are also living in areas unsuitable for habitation: 47.5 per cent of RAE households live in close proximity to a dump, 22.3 per cent live in settlements where waste waters flood, 17 per cent live in areas where the air is polluted, and 12.8 per cent have problems with mud.¹⁴⁸

The same research states the following:

37.2 per cent of RAE households live in settlements where only RAE people live and [...] an additional 32.7 per cent live in settlements where other nationalities live as well, but RAE are the majority, confirming the idea of creating ethnically homogenous and very poor settlements with little chance for any changes. Just one of five RAE households (19 per cent) reside in settlements in which RAE people are the minority.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ UNDP, *Household Survey on RAE 2003*, p. 17.

¹⁴⁷ UNDP, *Household Survey on RAE 2003*, pp. 17–18.

¹⁴⁸ UNDP, *Household Survey on RAE 2003*, p. 22.

¹⁴⁹ UNDP, *Household Survey on RAE 2003*, p. 20.

Konik refugee camps

Following the first influx of Roma refugees from Kosovo, two refugee camps (Konik 1 and Konik 2) were created in the Konik suburb of Podgorica, under the auspices of the UNHCR. The nearest primary school to the camps, Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin (in Podgorica), was not able to accommodate all the Roma children from refugee families. Roma parents were also unwilling to send their children to this school, which is located approximately two to three kilometres away from the camps.

To address this situation, a separate branch unit of the Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin primary school was opened in the second camp (see section 2.4). A new pre-school unit was opened in Konik in 2005, as a branch unit of the public Ljubica Popović pre-school (in Podgorica). This pre-school unit is situated near to the two camps, and is approximately 3–4 km away from the nearest public pre-school unit, Jelena Četković, which is also situated in the Konik suburb. The number of the Roma children represented in this kindergarten has significantly dropped with the opening of a separate NGO-sponsored building in the nearest vicinity of the Konik camps.

4.5 School and class placement procedures

The Law on Pre-school Education regulates the size of classes, depending on the age range of the children.¹⁵⁰ The Law does not regulate the overall number of children that may be accommodated in one pre-school unit.

Mainstream schools

There are no segregated Roma classes reported in mainstream schools. Roma children are placed in classes according to the usual placement scheme, which is based on several criteria involving gender, ethnicity and the children's abilities. The consent of parents is irrelevant in class formation, and in schools having a larger number of Roma children, Roma are placed in mixed Roma/non-Roma classes.

Procedures for transferring from one mainstream school to another are straightforward, following a request made by parents to the school management. Decisions on transfer between classes in the same school depend primarily on the nature of and reasoning for such a request. Apart from a few sporadic cases of requests for transfer submitted by non-Roma parents at the Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin school in Podgorica (which enrolls 40 per cent Roma pupils), there have been no specific indications of the transfer of non-Roma children from majority Roma schools ("white flight") in practice. These transfers represent the exception rather than the rule.

Schools are obliged to organise remedial teaching for pupils who lag behind.¹⁵¹ Placement in these "catch-up" classes is mainly based on the teachers' assessment of the

¹⁵⁰ Law on Pre-school Education, *Official Gazette*, No. 64/02, 28 November 2002, art. 24.

¹⁵¹ Law on Primary Education, art. 15, para. 1.

child's abilities. As the schools accommodating the highest number of Roma at a national level are involved in the REI, special attention is paid, and the process must be continuously monitored, to ensure that these "catch-up" classes are as mixed as possible. No special remedial classes accommodating only Roma children have been reported.

Special schools

Children with special needs are either integrated into the formal school system or placed in special schools. According to legal provisions¹⁵² the placement procedure should be carried out by the local government body in charge of education, following the recommendation of the national level Commission for the Placement of Children with Special Needs. This Commission involves professionals such as paediatricians and other categories of specialist doctors, psychologists, pedagogues, special educators and social workers.

Parents have the right to appeal to the Ministry of Education and Science against the decision of the Placement Commission. In order to reassess the decision of the Placement Commission, the Ministry will form a second-instance Commission, this time consisting of a paediatrician and other categories of specialist doctors, psychologists, pedagogues, special educators, social workers and teachers/educators. On the basis of the recommendation offered to the Ministry by the second-instance Commission, the Ministry reaches a final decision on the placement of a child with special needs.¹⁵³ Criteria for the placement are set out by the Ministry of Education and Science in agreement with the Ministry of Health. In practice, the placement procedure is somewhat different, as the categorisation responsibilities still have not been transferred from the level of the Ministry of Education and Science to the local government level. It is expected that the commissions to be formed in municipalities will be active as of January 2007, implementing the aforementioned procedure as such.

The Decade Action Plan includes a specific sub-goal of "Transferring into regular schools of Roma children who have wrongfully been enrolled in special schools". The listed activities are (1) re-testing of Roma children and transferring into regular schools of those children who have wrongfully been placed in special schools, and (2) creating special short-term provisional programmes after which children will qualify for transfer into the appropriate grade of regular school.¹⁵⁴ According to the Ministry of Education and Science officials,¹⁵⁵ however, there were no significant transfers made over the last

¹⁵² Law on Education of Children with Special Needs, *Official Gazette*, No. 80/04, 29 December 2004, art. 18. Available in English on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science at <http://www.mpin.vlada.cg.yu/vijesti.php?akcija=vijesti&id=10055> (accessed 25 September 2007).

¹⁵³ Law on the Education of Children with Special Needs, *Official Gazette*, No. 80/04, 29 December 2004, art. 18–25.

¹⁵⁴ Government, *Decade Action Plan*, p. 10.

¹⁵⁵ Conversation with Ms. Milijana Milidrag (Ministry of Education and Science) in charge of placement procedures, based on the information obtained from the special schools.

few years from a special school to a mainstream school, and all requests for transfer have been for children with special needs to be transferred from mainstream schools to special schools. No official data on these transfers are available, however.

4.6 Language

Of all Roma children enrolled in primary schools, 49 per cent are refugees and displaced persons.¹⁵⁶ It has been recognised that action is required even at the pre-school level to overcome the language barriers faced by these children, and to facilitate their successful integration into primary school. All the families speak Albanian, but most also speak Romanes (78.9 per cent). One noteworthy and positive observation is that while families continue to use Romanes as their main language of communication, they also introduce the language of the community – Montenegrin or Serbian – and in 39 per cent of the families they use both languages equally; thus those families are actively preparing the children to enter the school system and to overcome language barriers more easily – so that they learn well the language in which they will engage in the educational process.¹⁵⁷

There are currently no Roma assistants or teachers speaking Romanes, conducting the teaching process in Romanes, or using bilingual techniques (see section 3.4). The engagement of Roma assistants in REI was specifically designed to prevent the language gap, as they were exposed to specific training techniques that focused on anti-bias and community work aspects as well. RTAs engaged in the first stages of the REI have gained significant knowledge and experience, recognised in the follow-up phase – the REF-funded REI.

According to the UNDP's *Household Survey on RAE 2003*:

One third of RAE families (33.1 per cent) use only the Roma language and an additional one-third use both Roma and Montenegrin languages equally (33.1 per cent), while 14.1 per cent speak Albanian language, 7.4 per cent speak only Montenegrin, and 2.6 per cent of respondents use Roma in combination with some other language (usually Albanian).¹⁵⁸

The issue of language is critical among the younger population (aged less than 10 years), which also makes it harder for them to become a part of the regular education system.¹⁵⁹

One of the biggest challenges to the teachers who work in the Konik camp school and in the Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin school seems to be dealing with the language barrier

¹⁵⁶ Government of the Republic of Montenegro, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, unpublished first draft.

¹⁵⁷ REI *Evaluation Report*, p. 19.

¹⁵⁸ UNDP, *Household Survey on RAE 2003*, p. 20.

¹⁵⁹ UNDP, *Household Survey on RAE 2003*, p. 17.

between Albanian-speaking refugee children and the Montenegrin language school environment. Not surprisingly, this barrier is one of the most significant reasons for a lack of school success –in terms of both learning outcomes and school retention. The REI external evaluation revealed that in integrated classroom settings, Roma assistants used alternative communication methods such as art projects and games, which noticeably improved the children’s capacity to understand the Montenegrin language.¹⁶⁰

UNICEF’s 2001 *Comprehensive Analysis of Primary Education*¹⁶¹ also indicates that Roma children enter school socially and educationally unprepared, “without basic knowledge of the language of instruction”. Given that so few Roma children are able to attend pre-school preparatory programmes, the document also calls for the “inclusion of Roma children, whenever possible and as early as possible, in pre-school institutions and diversified pre-school programmes adapted to the cultural specificities of that population”.

No evidence is available on the possible misdiagnosis of Roma children and their placement in special schools due to their insufficient knowledge of the majority language at the time of examination. However, insufficient proficiency in the majority language might be perceived as one of the elements that result in their dropping out of school early.

The REI evaluation report states the following:

There were also some problems related to the communication with children of pre-school age and children of primary school age, who only speak Roma language. Through the engagement of the Roma assistants these problems were a little bit reduced, but it is exactly this fact that represents the barrier for integration of children into the upbringing groups and classrooms, as well as for the educational influence on their development. Not knowing the language in which the educational and upbringing work takes place requires a longer-term and careful process of introduction of children and more thorough educational strategies to keep such children in the system of education and upbringing.¹⁶²

The first problem that Roma children are faced with is the fact that 30 per cent of them don’t know the language in which the dominant part of the communication in the social environment takes place [...], and this means that they have a problem both with communication and with integration. [...] From the limited knowledge of the language, characteristic short sentences and quiet speech, they developed full, spontaneously formed sentences, free of shyness and participating in more complete forms of communication.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ *Evaluation report on REI 2005*, p. 15.

¹⁶¹ UNICEF, *Comprehensive Analysis of Primary Education*, p. 93.

¹⁶² *Evaluation report on REI 2005*, p. 12.

¹⁶³ *Evaluation report on REI 2005*, p. 13.

5. BARRIERS TO QUALITY EDUCATION

In general, schools in Montenegro suffer from poor infrastructure, but there is no information as to whether schools with a high proportion of Roma are in a worse condition. Data on Roma students' performance in school are available in the context of the REI, but they are not comprehensive. They do, however, indicate some improvements in school success among Roma. A mechanism for measuring the achievements of Roma children should be established, such as standardised testing as a part of the national testing system. Extensive reform of the curriculum is underway in Montenegro, but the impact of these changes on education for Roma is unclear. The Ministry of Education and Science should conduct monitoring to assess the extent to which reforms are improving the quality of education for Roma specifically. The REI also focuses on training teachers in differentiated techniques, which should have longer-term effects benefiting Roma and all students. A lack of real communication and cooperation between Roma communities and schools is a serious obstacle to improving education for Roma; the REI has made efforts to better involve Roma parents in the daily work of the schools, but this is also a longer-term process that should be monitored. School inspections have gained somewhat different authorities as a result of the ongoing education reform process. The challenges of their new role notwithstanding, they need to provide substantive and continuous support and feedback to the teachers engaged in the Roma-related initiatives. Furthermore, new reform institutions need to further build further their capacities to guarantee high-quality education for Roma children.

5.1 School facilities and human resources

5.1.1 School infrastructure

Information on the school infrastructure is available at the national level, but there is no comprehensive research to evaluate or compare between the infrastructures of majority Roma schools and those of other schools in Montenegro.

In the framework of the ongoing education reform, comprehensive efforts are being undertaken to improve the existing network of schools, in order to make them more responsive to the demands of the reformed teaching process. The main infrastructure needs are articulated in the 2003 Ministry of Education and Science document *School Infrastructure and Necessary Investments*. This indicates that poor roof construction, the poor state of doors and windows, bad heating, plumbing and drainage systems are the major infrastructure deficiencies of the current school system. It also states that the costs for the necessary investments in school infrastructure amount to €8 million.

However, this document does not contain any specific reference to schools with a high proportion of Roma pupils.

5.1.2 Human resources

There does not appear to be a shortage of teachers in predominantly Roma schools, nor a problem of staff turnover. In the past three years, various efforts have been made to give teachers in schools with a high proportion of Roma the skills to become more responsive to the specific needs of Roma children. Almost all of the teachers have

undergone some of the training provided in the framework of both the education reform process (active learning, inclusive education, Step by Step) and the REI (on school improvement, anti-bias, critical thinking).

5.2 School results

In terms of the continuous monitoring of students' achievements, in 2006 a national level examination was conducted covering the achievements of students who have finished the third grade of primary school, in language and mathematics. This examination of children aged 9–10 was aimed at measuring their knowledge and skills, primarily to compare achievements in the “old” and reformed primary education system. 24 schools and 1,749 pupils (including 200 pupils attending schools where they are taught in Albanian) were included in the examination. However, there are no details on the percentage of Roma pupils included in this examination, or on their achievements.

Data available from the evaluation of the REI in 2005 indicate that 52 per cent of Roma children included in the project were rated as “sufficient” in Grade 1 of primary school, and that this percentage stayed the same at the end of the fifth grade.¹⁶⁴ One third of Roma children achieved results rated as “good” in the course of the project implementation. 6.4 per cent of Roma pupils were rated as “very good” in Grade 1, and 9 per cent in the second grade. Finally, 2 per cent of those participating in the research were rated as “excellent”. The evaluation report has shown that the school performance of Roma is lower than that of non-Roma. The report states the following:

The average general success of Roma children in the first research was 2.67 [where 5 is the highest mark], and of the non-Roma children 4.01. However, what is especially important is the information that there have been some positive changes in the general success among both Roma and non-Roma children. In the second survey it can be seen from the table that the average success among Roma children increased to 2.97, and among non-Roma children to 4.18. The increase in success is a bit bigger among Roma children and this can be expressed as an average increase for a little bit less than half a grade in the general success of each Roma child.¹⁶⁵

The reasons for this disparity may lie primarily with the language barrier and with the problem of poverty, which is prevalent among Roma families and which can lead to an environment that gives priority to activities other than those related to education and school performance.

No official data exist on the participation of Roma pupils in national level competitions in different subjects and no information on the percentage of functional

¹⁶⁴ *Evaluation report on REI 2005*, p. 39.

¹⁶⁵ *Evaluation report on REI 2005*, p. 39–40.

illiteracy in Grade 4 among Roma pupils. Preliminary PISA testing was conducted from March to April 2005 in five primary schools and 35 secondary schools in Montenegro. However, this did not refer to any specific sample of Roma students. The main testing was finalised in April 2006, but the results have not yet been made available.

The UNDP survey and publication *Faces of Poverty, Faces of Hope* shows that 73 per cent of Roma between the ages of 15 and 24 are literate, 25–43 61 per cent, 35–44 52 per cent and over 45 years of age 45 per cent.¹⁶⁶

5.3 Curricular standards

There is a unified national curriculum in Montenegro. Functional literacy is expected to be in place by grade 4 of primary school.

Curricular reform is currently ongoing, in the framework of the education reform process (see Annex 1.3). The curricular reform has adopted the concept of the so-called “open curriculum”, in that it has introduced the opportunity for the school to participate in defining up to 20 per cent of the curriculum, and adjust it to the needs of the specific school environment. This remains, however, a possibility yet to be tested in practice, especially with regard to schools with a significant number of Roma pupils, where the teaching process in those schools remains a challenge.

Experience from the REI implies that teachers need to adjust their pedagogy to the cultural specificity of the Roma children, to organise additional classes, to stimulate children in assisting each other and to introduce individualised teaching. This kind of pedagogical adjustment, however, is not useful for Roma children only, but for all children, and reflects a change in the pedagogical paradigm. The quality of the cooperation between teachers and the Roma assistants (see section 3.4) seems to be an important element in schools with high numbers of Roma pupils. Further efforts therefore need to be invested towards both upgrading teachers’ performance in work with Roma children, and in capacity-building of the Roma assistants.

Research in the three case study locations has revealed that the curriculum’s demands generally require children to study outside class. Many Roma children, living in poverty and deprived conditions, lack a suitable home environment for study; given the low rate of education among adult Roma, there is frequently no adult in a position to offer support and assistance for studying at home.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ UNDP, *Faces of Poverty, Faces of Hope*, February 2005, available in English at <http://europeandcis.undp.org/poverty/show/62BFE488-F203-1EE9-BA01C0FAE5A9E819> (accessed 15 November 2007), p. 71.

¹⁶⁷ Observations from Berane, Nikšić and Podgorica case studies, November 2006.

5.4 Classroom practice and pedagogy

Different forms of pre-service and in-service teacher training, promoting a child-centred approach and interactive pedagogy, have been continuously offered since the introduction of the new curricula (Step by Step, Active Learning, Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking), introducing modern trends in educational pedagogy. However, as no assessment/evaluation of the training has been undertaken, the Bureau for Educational Services recently undertook research (under the auspices of the World Bank)¹⁶⁸ aimed at pointing out the tendencies in classroom practice and ways in which it may be improved.

The study underlines general satisfaction with the forms and extent of the teacher training that was offered in the framework of the reform efforts. Nevertheless, cooperation with parents in the educational process, work with the children with special needs and a better correlation/connection between the pre-service and the in-service training of teachers remain some of the challenges in the shift from the content-based to an objectives-based curriculum as initiated by the reform process.

Experience from the REI shows a significant level of commitment and understanding for the need to use specific learning and teaching techniques in work with Roma children. The shift from traditional teaching methods to an interactive approach and openness towards new concepts of pedagogical work is more likely to occur in integrated classrooms combining Roma and non-Roma pupils. However, the quality of cooperation with parents, limited financial resources and the questionable sustainability of the Roma-related initiatives often pose a threat to the successful implementation of Roma-related policies, even at the classroom level. Differentiated instruction is applied in REI schools as a concept to an extent greater than in schools that are not involved in the REI. Although individualisation of the educational practice and focusing on children's needs and interests ought to take place as a part of differentiated instruction, its application depends on the enthusiasm of teachers and their willingness to accept new practices.

Mentorship schemes do exist as a follow-up to the education reform, but regulations governing the system of mentorship support have never been respected. There is no systematic mentorship scheme that would offer special guidance to teachers working with Roma specifically but also to teachers in general. In the framework of the REI, mentoring has been provided in terms of site visits, classroom observations and knowledge exchange among teachers involved in the project implementation. However, these were restricted by the limited financial resources and the fact that the issue of mentorship has not been properly resolved in existing regulations governing the hierarchy of educational staff.

¹⁶⁸ "Analysis of the training of primary school teachers for the implementation of new curricula/Answers to numerous doubts", *Journal "Prosvjetni rad"* No. 11–12, September 6, 2007 at <http://www.prosvjetnirad.cg.yu> (accessed 12 November 2007).

5.5 School–community relations

5.5.1 School–parent relations

In principle, Roma parents have equal access to the school management structures. However, there is a lack of participation of Roma parents, which is, among other reasons, due to a lack of trust in schools, a scarcity of Roma households' resources, which makes investment in education unlikely, and a lack of social opportunities after finishing school. This is often due to Roma parents' lower level of education and their general lack of awareness of the ways in which they can get involved. The Association of Parents, an NGO created in the framework of the ongoing education reform project, has a responsibility to work on the promotion of all parents' participation in the educational process.

In recognition of the lack of education among Roma parents and its correlation with their understanding of the importance of education of their children, the Ministry of Education and Science has developed a programme of adapted primary education for adults, which is carried out in adult education centres as well as primary schools.

The external evaluation of the REI assessed teachers' impressions from their cooperation with the parents of the Roma children attending schools that participated in the initial REI.¹⁶⁹ Teachers were not satisfied with the quality and extent of that cooperation, as fewer than 2 per cent of the parents attended meetings organised in their school. This very weak cooperation (expressed by 90.4 per cent of the interviewed teachers) referred to a poor exchange of information with the parents of the Roma children about the behaviour of their children, health problems, the need for regular attendance in school, material problems of the children, working conditions and the relations between parents and children. The impression of the teachers was that it is necessary to intensify communications between parents and the school, and to provide support to Roma parents. This was mainly due to language barriers and possibly also a certain level of distrust on the part of Roma parents towards the school. From 2005, five Roma facilitators have been engaged, in order to educate Roma parents and Roma children included in the REI (see also section 3.4). The facilitators, with the responsibility to improve school–community communication, might be good mediators between parents and teachers, provided that they are supported by adequate training schemes.¹⁷⁰

In contrast, the research of the NGO “SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence – Nikšić” on the education of Roma children calls for schools to do the following:

Take over full responsibility in accordance with the laws and regulations, as they did not exhaust all the resources necessary to secure the timely inclusion of

¹⁶⁹ *Evaluation report on REI 2005*, p. 45.

¹⁷⁰ *Evaluation report on REI 2005*, p. 21.

Roma children in the school system (when they accomplish 6–7 years) and to make schools a warm and welcome place.¹⁷¹

It calls for the additional empowerment of Roma parents generally, and Roma mothers more specifically, in order to achieve consistent enrolment and, more importantly, regular monitoring of school attendance, as a precondition of school success and subsequent integration.

5.5.2 School Management Boards

Schools are managed by the School Management Boards, which are on average composed of nine members. The Board's composition is usually defined by the statute of the school and should include two representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, one representative of the municipality, four teachers/employees, two representatives of parents, two representatives of students and two representatives of social partners.¹⁷²

The main competencies of the Board are as follows:¹⁷³

- adoption of the annual work plan and reporting on its implementation;
- analysis of the extracurricular programmes and their results;
- adoption of the school statutes, documents on internal organisation and on the systematisation of working posts;
- adoption of the annual financial plan and of periodical/annual account statements;
- decisions on any change to the school's name and seat, on the basis of the founder's approval;
- decisions on the rights of employees, students or other service users, as the second instance authority and in accordance with the law.

The findings of the research conducted by the "SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence – Nikšić", indicate that 68.5 per cent of interviewed Roma parents deem cooperation with the school that their child attends to be "good", 22.6 per cent "bad", and 8.9 per cent "average". This research also found that 68.8 per cent of the

¹⁷¹ NGO "SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence – Nikšić", *Research on Inclusion of Roma Children in the Educational System*, Nikšić 2006, p. 25.

¹⁷² Law on General Education, art. 73.

¹⁷³ Law on General Education, art. 73.

Roma parents regularly visit the school to check the school performance of their children, while 31.2 per cent do not.¹⁷⁴

5.6 Discriminatory attitudes

Research conducted at the local level for this report found that parents, teachers and children generally found Roma and non-Roma children were treated equally in the classroom. According to the Law on General Education, school directors may be dismissed on the grounds of spreading national or religious intolerance.¹⁷⁵

A Roma parent in Nikšić confirmed that in Mileva Lajović school, teachers treat Roma children in the same way as they do non-Roma children, and added that teachers behave very pleasantly towards Roma pupils; there was an example of discrimination, but after the interviewed mother complained, the teacher's behaviour changed.¹⁷⁶ Another parent at the same school reported that there was discrimination against her daughter by a teacher, but after a few complaints, the teacher changed such behaviour.¹⁷⁷

A fourth-grade Roma pupil in Nikšić also reported feeling seriously offended by a teacher who told him and his two other Roma classmates "You Gypsy, and you Gypsy, and you Gypsy girl, come to an additional class this Saturday at 5 pm."¹⁷⁸

In Podgorica, a Roma parent with two children enrolled in the Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin school said that whenever she visited the school, the staff "accepted me so nicely; they weren't rude or impolite, like teachers in [another local school]".¹⁷⁹ Several other Roma parents praised the school, and indicated that they had no complaints.¹⁸⁰

5.7 School inspections

Inspectorate for Education

The ongoing reform of the education system calls for the separation of administrative control and inspections, and for the establishment of an independent Inspectorate for Education. This body would have a smaller number of employees and would be the independent administrative body in charge of monitoring the implementation of the national curricula.

¹⁷⁴ NGO "SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence – Nikšić", *Research on Inclusion of Roma Children in the Educational System*, Nikšić 2006, pp.68–69.

¹⁷⁵ Law on General Education, art. 111, para. 10.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Delija Minira, a parent, case study Nikšić.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Berisha Nerdjivana, a parent, case study Nikšić.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with a Roma pupil at the Milena Lajović school, case study Nikšić.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Nusreta Omeričić, parent, August 2006, case study Podgorica.

¹⁸⁰ Interviews with Roma parents, August 2006, case study Podgorica.

The Inspectorate is in charge of the control of the implementation of the laws, other regulations and administrative acts and financing of educational institutions, to ensure that the rights of pupils and students and other participants in education are exercised. The Inspectorate is a unit of the Ministry of Education and Science. Its work is managed by the Chief Inspector, while its activities and tasks are performed by the school inspectors.

The Inspectorate does not have the same significance as it did before the education reform. It now shares the monitoring of the teaching process with the Bureau for Educational Services, which has a developmental role in the quality assurance process.

Bureau for Educational Services

Since 1995, the Bureau for Educational Services has been under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Science. Currently, the Bureau monitors Roma students' achievements, primarily with regard to the implementation of the REI, and works towards the creation of a comprehensive database on the educational achievements of Roma pupils. The Bureau is also in charge of identifying the modalities of the improvement of the teaching process in schools accommodating Roma children. A major part of the information obtained for the purpose of this report has been provided by the Bureau for Educational Services.

Centre for Vocational Education

The reform has also introduced external certification and quality assurance as a responsibility of the Bureau for Educational Services and the Centre for Vocational Education (see Annex 1.3), as the institutions in charge of assessing the quality of the standards achieved in the different levels of the educational system.

Examination Centre

The Examination Centre of Montenegro is also one of the institutions formed in the framework of the education reform process. It is in charge of conducting external knowledge examinations, through administering national tests, national research and national examinations. National tests are standardised forms of evaluating knowledge, skills and competences from selected subjects at the end of the third and fourth grades of primary school. National examinations are also given to evaluate individual pupils' achievements from selected subjects at the end of primary and secondary school. The Examination Centre is also responsible for training the authors of tests and administering exams. Results of the examinations that are in the jurisdiction of the Examination Centre are primarily aimed at informing the policy-makers, fine-tuning the existing educational policy and bringing necessary changes into the educational system. The first national examination for the reformed primary school pupils will be undertaken in 2010, while pilot tests are due in 2007. The Examination Centre is intended to act as an important driving force of improvements in the quality of education, once it upgrades its available capacities and become recognised as a reference point in defining educational strategies.

ANNEX 1. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

A1.1 Structure and organisation

A1.1.1 Reform of the education system

A reform of the education system in Montenegro was launched in 2000. The reforms are detailed in the following policy documents:

- *The Book of Changes of the Education System of the Republic of Montenegro* (adopted in November 2001);¹⁸¹
- *The Strategic Plan for Education Reform in 2003–2004* (adopted in January 2003);¹⁸²
- *The Strategic Plan of Education Reform for 2005–2009*.¹⁸³

The legislation adopted to implement the strategy of reform of the education system has promoted a new concept of education in Montenegro:

- Law on General Education;
- Law on Pre-school Education;
- Law on Primary Education;
- Law on High Schools;
- Law on Vocational Education;
- Law on Adult Education.

The reform of the education system was aimed at introducing new models of high-quality education. Its underlying principles were as follows: decentralisation, equal opportunities, making choices according to individual abilities, introducing European standards, application of a quality system, development of human resources, lifelong learning, flexibility, possibilities for transfer within school programmes, compatibility of the curricula with the level of education, and the gradual introduction of changes.¹⁸⁴

In practice, the principles introduced under the education reform have led to the following:

¹⁸¹ MoES, *The Book of Changes*.

¹⁸² Ministry of Education and Science, *Strategic Plan for Education Reform in 2003/04*, Podgorica, January 2003.

¹⁸³ Government, *Strategic Plan of Education Reform for 2005–2009*.

¹⁸⁴ MoES, *The Book of Changes*, pp. 14–18.

- Devolution of certain functions from the Ministry of Education and Science to some newly established institutions, including the Bureau for Educational Services and the Centre for Vocational Education and Examination Centre;
- Increased involvement and support of parents and the local community in the work of schools;
- Introduction of quality indicators and standards for the first time in the history of Montenegrin education;
- Introduction of open and flexible curricula;
- Introduction of elective subjects in both primary and secondary schools;
- Production of textbooks free of ideological, religious and other biases;
- Promotion of a child-centred approach to teaching.

A1.1.2 Levels of education

Under the 2002 Law on General Education, the Montenegrin educational system consists of pre-school education, primary education, high school education, vocational education and adult education.¹⁸⁵ As shown below in Table A1, the reform of the education system introduced changes to the levels of education and the grades.

¹⁸⁵ Law on General Education, art. 1.

Table A1. The Levels of Education in Montenegro

The Levels of Education (ISCED 1997)		Levels of Education	
0	Pre-school education	Pre-school education: Ages: 0–5/6	
1	Primary education (Stage 1 of basic school)	<i>Before the education reforms:</i>	<i>Reformed primary education system:</i>
		Lower primary school: Grades 1–4, Ages: 7–10	Stage 1 of primary school: Cycles 1 and 2, Grades 1–6, Ages: 6–11
2	Lower secondary education (Stage 2 of basic school)	Upper primary school: Grades 5–8, Ages: 11–14	Stage 2 of primary school: Cycle 3, Grades 7–9, Ages: 12–14
3	Upper secondary education	Secondary school: Grades 1–3/4, Ages: 15–17/18	
4	Post-secondary, non-certified education	Post-secondary, non-tertiary education (duration 2 years)	
5	Stage 1 of tertiary education	Higher education, Faculties and Art Academies, (BA studies, duration 3/4 years, and MA studies, 2 years)	
6	Stage 2 of tertiary education	PhD studies (duration 3 years)	

Source: Structural Analysis of Education Sector: Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, October 2004, p. 6.

The official statistics office, MONSTAT, provides details of the number of students and educational establishments in Montenegro. As of 1 September 2006, the number of pupils in pre-schools and primary and secondary education was 118,804 (see Table A2). The network of schools consisted of 87 pre-school units, 457 primary school units and 47 secondary school units (see Table A3).

Table A2. Number of pupils in pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools (2002–2005)

Type of school	Number of pupils			
	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006
Pre-schools	12,173	11,534	11,761	11,845
Mainstream primary schools	74,233	73,673	74,205	74,859
Mainstream secondary schools	32,403	31,962	32,078	32,100
Total	118,809	117,169	118,044	118,804

Source: MONSTAT, Annual Data on Education

Table A3. Number of pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools (2002–2005)

Number of school units	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006
Pre-schools	75	78	82	87
Mainstream primary schools	475	469	457	457
Secondary schools	44	45	47	47

Source: MONSTAT, Annual Data on Education

Pre-school education

Pre-school education is provided in pre-schools and nurseries (for children aged 0–3 years old) and kindergartens (for children aged 3–6 years old). Pre-school education can be carried out in full-day, half-day or three-hour educational programmes (see Table A4).

According to the Law on Primary Education, children with special needs (learning difficulties) should be integrated into both pre-school and primary school education “provided that the relevant commission has approved their integration”.

Primary education

Primary education is conducted in public or private primary schools; parents or guardians are entitled to select the form of education for their children.¹⁸⁶ Primary education is compulsory for all children aged 6 to 15 years old, and the duration of compulsory education is nine years.¹⁸⁷ The education reforms extended the age for starting primary education one year downwards; children who turn 6 years of age in the course of the calendar year in which the school year begins must now be enrolled in a primary school. There are no legal provisions on the maximum age for entering Grade 1. However, the primary education of children older than 15 must be carried out in separate sections of the primary school or in schools for adult education.¹⁸⁸

Following the education reforms, there are nine grades of primary education (see Table A1). Primary education is now divided into three cycles: cycle 1 (Grades 1–3), cycle 2 (Grades 4–6) and cycle 3 (Grades 7–9). Each cycle requires a different kind of educational process and different class norm requirements. Primary education is also arranged into two stages: stage 1 corresponds to cycles 1 and 2 (ages 6–11) and stage 2 to cycle 3 (ages 12–14).

¹⁸⁶ Law on Primary Education, art. 3.

¹⁸⁷ Law on Primary Education, art. 4.

¹⁸⁸ Law on Primary Education, art. 7.

In 2002, of the 478 primary schools in Montenegro (168 main schools with 309 satellite units in rural areas), 22 per cent had fewer than 60 pupils (in total, fewer than 2 per cent of all pupils in primary schools).¹⁸⁹

Pupils in each grade are divided in classes. Class sizes in mainstream primary schools are limited to at most 30 pupils (or exceptionally 33).¹⁹⁰

Secondary schools

Secondary schools can be established as high schools (gymnasiums), art schools¹⁹¹ or vocational schools.

In 2003/2004 there were 81 high schools accommodating 9,918 students.¹⁹² High schools provide general education in natural and social sciences, as the basis for further education. The schooling lasts four years. High schools accept children who have completed primary education and who are not older than 17 years old, in accordance with criteria defined by the Law on High Schools.¹⁹³ An external ‘matura’ examination is taken in both compulsory and optional subjects at the end of secondary school.

Vocational education offers three degrees of education: lower vocational education (lasting two years), general vocational education (lasting three or four years, depending on the programme) and higher vocational education.¹⁹⁴

General secondary schools are open to children who have completed primary education and are not older than age 17. In some circumstances a child older than 18 years may be enrolled, based on the approval of the panel of teachers. Enrolment is the responsibility of the Enrolment Commission, which is formed by the professional body defined by the statute of the school. Preliminary examination is not compulsory but can be undertaken in cases where the school has capacities and facilities for such an examination.¹⁹⁵

Special schools

According to the Law on Primary Education, children with special needs *may* be integrated into mainstream primary school schools “on the basis of the decision of the

¹⁸⁹ 280 schools have fewer than 30 pupils, 145 fewer than 10 pupils, and in 10 schools there is only one pupil. Government, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2003*, point 13, p. 50.

¹⁹⁰ Law on Primary Education, art. 23.

¹⁹¹ *Art school* provides the 4th degree specialist’s qualifications in fine arts, music and ballet. The schooling lasts for four years.

¹⁹² MONSTAT, *Statistical Yearbook 2005*, p. 181.

¹⁹³ Law on High Schools, *Official Gazette*, No. 64/02, 28 November 2002, art. 13.

¹⁹⁴ MONSTAT, *Statistical Yearbook 2005*, p. 179.

¹⁹⁵ Law on Primary Education, art. 33.

competent Commission that they may be included in regular teaching”(see Section 2.4.1.).¹⁹⁶ The same article goes on to state the following:

The children with deficiencies in their growth, who need the adjusted delivery of the compulsory educational curricula along with the additional professional assistance, or who need the special educational curriculum, shall accomplish the primary education in line with [the Law on Primary Education] and with other regulations.

The education of children with learning difficulties will be carried out in the manner that the school shall adjust the methods and the forms of work, and enable the learning through remedial teaching and other forms of individual and group help.

Table A4. Special schools (2004/2005)

Type of school	Schools	Class units	Pupils	
			All	females
Special primary school	12	47	261	127
Special secondary school	3	24	136	58

Source: MONSTAT, *Statistical Yearbook 2005*, p. 180.

A1.2 National structures dealing with minority education

A1.2.1 Legislation

Article 67 of the Constitution of the Republic of Montenegro (hereafter, Constitution),¹⁹⁷ guarantees the “protection of the national, ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of the members of national and ethnic groups”, which should be “exercised in accordance with the international protection of human and civic rights”. Article 68 guarantees the members of national and ethnic groups “the right to the free use of their mother tongue and alphabet, the right to education, and the right to information in their mother tongue”, and stipulates that the curricula of educational institutions shall cover both the history and culture of the national and ethnic groups.

The Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms (2006) goes further in defining more precisely the rights of minorities in education. It states that minorities and their representatives “have the right to education in their language and have the right to adequate representation of their language in general and vocational education,

¹⁹⁶ Law on Primary Education, art. 9.

¹⁹⁷ Constitution of the Republic of Montenegro (hereafter, Constitution), art. 67.

depending on the number of pupils and financial capacities of the Republic”.¹⁹⁸ It also stipulates that this right is exercised at all levels of education, as well as in special schools and special classes in mainstream schools, and that the curricula for subjects taught in minority languages must include topics on the history, art, literature, tradition and culture of the respective minority.¹⁹⁹

The Law also mandates the formation of Minority Councils, which have the responsibility to issue opinions to the relevant bodies in charge of the adoption of curricula, on the curricula for subjects taught in minority languages.

A1.2.2 Education bodies

Several bodies exist in Montenegro that deal specifically with issues relating to the access to education of Roma. This reflects the need to improve the overall status of Roma in Montenegro, and recognises education as the main tool for their successful integration. These bodies have different roles; some are more policy-oriented, while others have very concrete mandates and responsibilities with regard to the education of minorities.

Ministry of Education and Science

The Ministry is divided into eight departments, including the Department for the Education of National and Ethnic Groups (see section 1.2).²⁰⁰

Since 1995, the Bureau for Educational Services has been under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Science.²⁰¹

In 2003, the Ministry of Education and Science appointed a Deputy Minister in charge of the education of national and ethnic groups.²⁰² This was in recognition of the need to contribute to the improvement of the overall access to education for Roma, following a conference inaugurating the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The Deputy Minister is responsible for all aspects of the inclusion of Roma children into the formal educational system, especially the introduction and implementation of the “Roma Education Initiative” (see section 3.2) and all other aspects of implementation of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

¹⁹⁸ Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms *Official Gazette*, No. 31/06, 12 May 2006, art. 13.

¹⁹⁹ Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms, art. 15.

²⁰⁰ The other Departments are as follows: Department for Education; Department for Pre-school; Department for Primary Education; Department for General Secondary Education; Department for Secondary Vocational Education; Department for the Education of Children with Special Needs; Department for Adult Education. MoES, *The Book of Changes*, p. 20.

²⁰¹ Internet site of the Bureau for Education in Montenegro:
<http://www.zavodzaskolstvo.org> (accessed 15 November 2007).

²⁰² The Deputy Minister is also in charge of the introduction of ICT (Information Communication Technology) and of international cooperation.

However, the Deputy Minister has limited available human and financial capacities, and depends heavily on the Bureau for Educational Services – the body in charge of quality assessment and assurance with regard to programmes related to Roma education. The Deputy Minister has no special budget, other than the MoES’s general budget, available for the activities falling under his responsibility, despite the scope of these activities and the jurisdiction with regard to minority education.

Other bodies working in the sphere of education include the following:

The Republican Council for the Protection of the Rights of National and Ethnic Groups: in accordance with Article 76 of the Constitution, the Council was established “for the purpose of the preservation and protection of the national, ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national and ethnic groups and for the exercise of their rights prescribed by the Constitution”. It is headed by the President of the Republic and has more of a policy role.

The Parliamentary Council on Human Rights and Freedoms: this is in charge of thematic legislation-related debates and suggestions on issues and legislative interventions relevant for human rights and minorities.

*The National Forum “Education for all”:*²⁰³ this is attached to the MoES. It aims to contribute to the full implementation of the so-called six Dakar goals. One of these goals refers to the need to ensure the expansion and improvement of comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. It is more of a policy body, however, and does not have any concrete activities with regard to the education of minorities, and specifically Roma.

A1.3 Legal roles and decision-making

The Ministry of Education and Science decides and implements national educational policy. The Ministry is responsible for the structure and financing of the education system, and the establishment and management of State educational institutions, as well as drafting relevant legislation, recommending amendments and implementing adopted legislation.

Following the educational reforms, however, a significant level of responsibilities and authority has been devolved from the Ministry of Education and Science to three newly formed professional bodies, representing the different stages of education:

- The Council on General Education;
- The Council for Vocational Education;

²⁰³ The National forum “Education for All” was established in Montenegro following the “Education for all” conference, held under the auspices of UNESCO in Dakar in 2000, which introduced the “Education for all project”.

- The Council for the Adult Education.

The three Councils are founded by the Government, for a period of six years.²⁰⁴ The composition of each Council is defined under the Law on General Education.²⁰⁵

The Council of General Education is responsible to nominate the Sub Commission for the Education of National and Ethnic Groups. It has important responsibilities with regard to curricula (see below). The other main responsibilities of the Council are as follows:²⁰⁶

The Council for General Education:

1. shall pass: subject and examination catalogues (standards) of knowledge in the area of primary and secondary general education, as well as for the general educational subjects within the area of vocational education; the schedules of work for professional associates; the standards of knowledge for primary and secondary education; the methodology for the preparation of textbooks for pre-school education, primary education, secondary general education, as well as for the general educational subjects in the area of vocational education and for the children and youngsters with special needs;
2. shall establish: training programme for principal training; the full validity and the equal value of the private institution educational curricula in the area of pre-school education, primary education and in the area of secondary general education compared to the appropriate publicly valid educational curricula;
3. shall propose: the standards of school space, teaching aids and equipment for the work of institutions within which the general education is delivered; norms and standards for the out-of-teaching-process staff; the profile and professional qualifications for teachers;
4. shall approve: textbooks and teaching aids for pre-school education, primary education, secondary general education, as well as for the general subjects for the vocational education and for the children and the youngsters with special needs;
5. shall give the opinions on: general issues relating to education; compatibility of our education system with the education systems of developed democratic countries; the status and development of education and training;
6. it performs also other jobs and tasks in line with the law and with the document on foundation of the Council.

²⁰⁴ Law on General Education, art. 29.

²⁰⁵ Law on General Education, art. 32–34.

²⁰⁶ Law on General Education, art. 35.

A1.3.1 Curricula

The national curricula for all of the school levels consist of two parts: a general part and a specific part. The general parts of the curricula are set out by the Council for General Education. The specific parts are set out and proposed to the Ministry by one of the three competent councils in charge of the specific segment of the educational system:

- The Council for General Education: for the curricula for pre-school and primary school education, general high school education;
- The Council for Vocational Education: for the curricula for vocational education;
- The Council for Adult Education: for the curricula for adult education.

The curricula for vocational schools are adopted in accordance with the standards for particular professions which are set out jointly by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Union of Employers.

The curricula are proposed by the relevant Council and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.

A1.3.2 Quality control

The quality of educational work in institutions is assessed and ensured by the Bureau for Educational Services (for general education) and the Centre for Vocational Education (in the case of vocational education).

External certification and quality assurance are the responsibility of the Bureau for Educational Services and the Centre for Vocational Education, which are the institutions in charge of assessing the quality of the standards achieved in the different levels of the educational system.

Different certification exams are required for different levels of vocational education.²⁰⁷

The Bureau for Educational Services is also in charge of the development, advisory, research and professional activities relating to all levels of education. Following amendments to the Law on General Education in 2005, a Montenegrin Examination Centre has also been established, in order to carry out external examinations of students' achievements.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Law on Vocational Education, *Official Gazette*, No. 64/02, 28 November 2002, art. 80–83.

²⁰⁸ Law on Amendments to the General Law on Education, *Official Gazette*, No. 31/05, 18 May 2005, art. 12.

A1.3.3 School founders

Public educational institutions may be founded in accordance with the requirements of the approved network of public education institutions, which are set out by the Government on the basis of certain standards and criteria.

Public educational institutions may be founded by the State or by the local government, a national or a foreign legal or natural entity. In the case that the State or a local authority is the founder, it will be in charge of passing the document on the foundation (or the cessation) of the public institution founded under its auspices.

In theory, schools have a certain autonomy with regard to questions relating to human resources and curricula. In line with the main concept of the education reform process and the introduced principle of decentralisation, schools are able to decide on 20 per cent of the overall school subject curricula and enjoy full freedom of choice among the different actors who might be identified to perform that portion of the curriculum.

School principals are appointed and removed by the founder of the school (the State or local government), and teachers are hired on the decision of the school principal, in both cases following a public job announcement. Decisions relating to human resources at the school level are based on the act on internal organisation of the school concerned.

A1.4 School Funding

By law, educational institutions may be financed from the following sources:

- public revenues (from the State Budget or the municipality);
- funds from the founder;
- tuition fees in private institutions;
- parents' fees;
- revenue from property (rents);
- profits from the sale of services and products;
- donations, sponsorships, legacies and other sources.²⁰⁹

However, public education is mainly financed from the central State Budget.

The proportion of the country's GDP that is allocated for education increased from 5.6 per cent in GDP in 2001, to 7.2 per cent in 2003; however, over this period, the

²⁰⁹ Law on General Education, art. 135.

proportion of the State Budget allocated to education fell from 30.6 per cent (in 2001) to 22.8 per cent (in 2003).²¹⁰

In 2003, of the total amount in the State Budget allocated for education, 55.6 per cent was allocated for primary and pre-school education. The average annual per-pupil cost in compulsory (primary) education was €492 for 2001/2002 and €601 for 2002/2003. The average annual per-pupil cost in secondary education was €684 in 2001 and €630 for 2003.²¹¹

The General Law on Education stipulates the main purposes of the funds allocated to public educational institutions.²¹² Budget funds for education are allocated to educational institutions according to the number of employees, which corresponds to the number of pupils, teachers' scope of work, legal framework and other demands, level of education, network of educational institutions and other conditions.²¹³

The Ministry of Education and Science plans education expenses according to the gross salaries of employees (76 per cent of the total), material expenses, funds for investment and reconstruction of facilities, and funds for financing the programmes and equipment of the University of Montenegro.²¹⁴

Legal regulations in the previous period defined a centralised way of financing education and did not oblige local communities to participate in expenses for education. In spite of changes in legislation that have occurred in the mean time, promoting a new decentralised concept of financing, implementation remains modest, due to the fact that participation in financing costs of education remains at the discretion of municipal authorities.

No disaggregated data exist at the level of the Ministry of Education and Science on per-pupil spending with regard to minorities, or specifically Roma. The "Roma Education Initiative" (REI) Project (see section 3.2) does have a database specifically on the Roma pupils in the pre-schools and primary schools covered by the Project. This database is held by the Bureau for Educational Services. However, this project was only carried out in three municipalities and does not provide data on the national level.

Institutions that are financed completely from public revenues may not request students to participate in covering of educational costs. Funds are allocated to the relevant institutions on the basis of a *scale of norms and standards*, adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science following the recommendation of the relevant Council.

²¹⁰ Government, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2003*, p. 49, point 9.

²¹¹ Government, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2003*, p. 49, point 11.

²¹² General Law on Education, art. 136.

²¹³ Government, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2003*, p. 49, point 10.

²¹⁴ Government, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2003*, p. 49, point 8.

The obligations of teachers and associates, the criteria for the founding of an advisory service, library, administrative and accounting and technical service, the criteria for the formation of classes and groups for the purpose of the assessment of material costs, plus the standards for space and equipment, are also regulated by the *scale of norms and standards*. This represents the initial basis for the adoption of internal acts of educational institutions that define their systematisation of working posts. Based on the *scale of norms and standards*, a local government may provide part of the funds allocated for the current investment maintenance, investments for institutions or material/energy-related expenses of the public educational institutions founded by the Republic.

Decentralisation

The 2005 Law on General Education²¹⁵ introduced the participation of municipal authorities as a means to promote local community participation in the financing and management of educational institutions. The transferral of financial commitments to the municipal authorities was established as a goal of the education reform, in the section on decentralisation of the Ministry of Education and Science's *Strategic Plan for the Education Reform 2005–2009*.²¹⁶ However, this has not happened so far in practice and the financing of the education sector remains centralised. Practice implies that local governments do offer free concession of grounds for the public educational institutions to be built at the municipal level. This, however, remains at the discretion of municipal authorities, as it depends on available resources.

²¹⁵ Law on General Education, art. 5.

²¹⁶ Ministry of Education and Science, *Strategic Plan for the Education Reform 2005–2009*, Podgorica 2005, p. 12.

ANNEX 2. CASE STUDIES

A2.1 Case Study: Berane

A2.1.1 Administrative Unit

Berane Municipality has 35,068 inhabitants, which is 5.7 per cent of the total number of people living in Montenegro. Out of these inhabitants, 11,776 live in Berane itself,²¹⁷ which is about 150 kilometres north-east of the capital city of Podgorica. Berane Municipality consists of 27 local communities and 51 inhabited settlements. This municipality is one of the poorest in Montenegro, since industrial production has gradually decreased over the last ten years.²¹⁸

The ethnic distribution of the population is shown in Table A5 (on the basis of self-identification):²¹⁹

²¹⁷ The full 2003 census, Statistical Office of the Republic of Montenegro (MONSTAT). The results for national and ethnic affiliation can be found in the bilingual (English/Montenegrin) document, *Knjiga 1. Nacionalna ili etnicka pripadnost – Podaci po naseljima i opstinama (Book 1. “National or ethnic Affiliation – Data by Settlements and Municipalities”)*, available at <http://www.monstat.cg.yu/Popis.htm> (hereafter, 2003 Census, *Book 1*), pp. 12–16. (accessed 12 November 2007).

²¹⁸ The northern region of Montenegro in general is multiethnic, while on the other hand the majority of the population, Serbs, supported the continued unity of the Republic of Serbia and Montenegro, which consequently produced tensions between the political centre (Podgorica) and Berane.

²¹⁹ Profile of the municipality of Berane, Regional Business Centre Berane, available at <http://www.nasme.cg.yu/projekti/ipodraska/profil%20optine%20RO.pdf> (accessed 7 July 2007).

Table A5. Ethnic distribution of the population in Berane Municipality

Ethnic group	Percentage of total population	Number of inhabitants
Montenegrin	25.52	8,950
Serb	46.51	16,309
Bosniak	16.15	5,662
Muslim	6.56	2,301
Roma	0.34	119
Others ²²⁰	0.76	268
Undeclared	3.39	1,188
Unknown	0.77	271
TOTAL	100.00	35,068

Source: Regional Business Centre Berane website, available at http://www.nasme.cg.yu/projekti/ipodrska/PROFIL_OPSTINE_BERANE-PDF.pdf (accessed 14 November 2007)

As presented in Table A5, the official figures show that 119 Roma live in Berane Municipality, but according to research done for this report, a discrepancy exists between the official numbers and the estimated numbers of Roma who live in this area, due to the number of unregistered refugees, and Roma who do not identify themselves as such.²²¹ A representative of the Domiciled Residents' NGO "AZRA" observed the following:

There are not that many domiciled residents in Berane. There are 318 Egyptians and Roma, as I pulled out from the computer, but this is not completely accurate since some of them are registered here, and some of them live in Germany or some other international locations. Here in Berane, there are currently 20 domiciled families... also, about 15 people live here who are not registered.²²²

²²⁰ Others include Yugoslavs, Albanians, Egyptians, Italians, Macedonians, Hungarians, Germans, Russians, Slovenes, Croats and so on.

²²¹ Refugees from Kosovo, Bosnia and Croatia are often unregistered; other Roma may declare themselves as "REA"; or some other ethnicity.

²²² Interview with Aco Rizvanović from NGO AZRA, informal leader of the Roma settlement of Talum, Berane, August 2006.

A2.1.2 Roma and the Community

In Berane, the Roma community is physically segregated. According to the Roma assistant in the Berane kindergarten, who is also involved in some NGO activities, there are two Roma settlements,²²³ Riverside (200 mainly refugees)²²⁴ and Talum (318 refugees and domiciled inhabitants).²²⁵ The Roma settlements are suburbs, but administratively part of the town of Berane. According to the Representative of the Collective Centre Riverside, there are 200 Roma and Egyptian residents in Riverside.

According to the Roma leaders and Roma assistant, no funding from the local budget is allocated for the Roma community. There were only some helpful efforts of the Centre for Social Work, collecting books and clothes for Roma families.²²⁶

There are no Roma representatives in local councils or institutional mechanisms to ensure the participation of Roma in local governance, according to the Roma leaders interviewed. According to one representative:

I was promoted as the first Roma in Montenegro to work in the local municipality, but I wasn't ever accepted even though I am still trying. [...] They don't want to accept me and they keep blaming my level of education for that.²²⁷

Finally, he said that instead of him, the municipality has since hired a non-Roma worker.

The number of Roma that are enrolled in the school is increasing, due to refugees from Kosovo, and a high birth rate.²²⁸

According to one Roma leader, about 90 per cent of the Roma children speak Romanes.²²⁹ The Roma assistant teacher stated that one half of the Roma speak Albanian and other half speak Romanes.²³⁰ The local Roma leader in Riverside

²²³ Interview with Zena Dubović, assistant in Berane kindergarten, Berane, August 2006.

²²⁴ Interview with Saljaj Sadri, representative of the Collective Centre Riverside, Berane, August 2006.

²²⁵ Interview with Aco Rizvanović, from NGO AZRA, informal leader of the Roma settlement of Talum, Berane, August 2006.

²²⁶ Interviews with Saljaj Sadri, Aco Rizvanović and Zena Dubović, Berane, August 2006.

²²⁷ Interview with Aco Rizvanović, Berane, August 2006.

²²⁸ Interviews with Saljaj Sadri, Aco Rizvanović, Zena Dubović, Kosa Guberinic and Svetlana Pesic, Berane, August 2006.

²²⁹ Interview with Aco Rizvanović, Berane, August 2006.

²³⁰ Interview with Zena Dubović, Berane, August 2006.

observed that the mother tongue of most people there is Albanian, but still half of them are able to understand Romanes.²³¹

Physical conditions for the Roma community are poor. According to one resident:

There is no running water in Riverside, and the river that runs through is used for laundering. In Talum, some of the houses are decent, some of them are very bad. Because of the extremely bad conditions, Roma families in these settlements are forced to migrate all the time.²³²

One of the local representatives added that just recently they got electricity.²³³ The road in Riverside is very bad and dangerous for children. The medical clinic is about 500 metres from the settlements, and the primary school is between one and three kilometres from the settlements. All parents must collect their children at the school, since there is no transportation.²³⁴

Most of the Roma have seasonal jobs. Most of the families' income sources are paper recycling, begging, collection of rough materials, and channel digging. An average household budget of a typical Roma family (five to six persons) is about €60–70 a month; a six-member family may also be eligible to receive €135 in social benefits. Out of season, incomes are lower (about €15–20 a month). In Berane, all Roma are extremely poor, but 10–15 families are better off. There are no wealthy families at all.²³⁵

Relations between Roma and non-Roma in Berane are viewed as limited and official. The only places where there is an opportunity for interaction are at the medical clinic or on the streets, and contacts, if they exist at all, are mere greetings.²³⁶ Sometimes non-Roma families are invited to funerals by Roma families. From personal experience, one resident said that discrimination exists, especially in public institutions, based on “the difference in the skin colouration”.²³⁷

²³¹ The discrepancy between estimates given by the three interviewed Roma leaders is due to their lack of knowledge about another Roma community where a particular Roma leader does not reside, or due to random assumptions and guessing by interviewed Roma leaders.

²³² Interview with Zena Dubović, Berane, August 2006.

²³³ Interview with Saljaj Sadri, Berane, August 2006.

²³⁴ Interviews with Aco Rizvanović, Saljaj Sadri and Zena Dubović, Berane, August 2006.

²³⁵ Estimated incomes are based on the personal opinions of the two interviewed Roma leaders and Roma assistant, Berane, August 2006.

²³⁶ Statements of the interviewed Roma leaders, Aco Rizvanović and Saljaj Sadri, Berane, August 2006.

²³⁷ Interview with Zena Dubović, Berane, August 2006.

A2.1.3 Education

School and education network

In Berane Municipality, there is one pre-school, 13 elementary schools, and 4 high schools; there are no higher education institutions.²³⁸ According to teachers, a total of 108 Roma pupils are enrolled in the Radomir Mitrović primary school in Berane. Out of these 108 pupils, 80 pupils are in grades 1–4, and 28 in grades 5–8.²³⁹

Decision-making and school funding

The school's autonomy with regard to the curriculum and human resources policy in the Radomir Mitrović primary school is limited. Salaries of the employed and all other main issues are set at the state level, and monitored by the Ministry of Education and Science. Only the process of hiring is responsibility of the school board. The school is entirely financed by the Ministry of Education and Science.²⁴⁰

School and class placement procedures

There are specific school enrolment regulations related to a child's place of residence. However, in Berane, the Roma population is encouraged to send their children to the Radomir Mitrović primary school, according to the school's director:

Even though parents are allowed to pick a school where they want their child to be enrolled, the whole Roma population is encouraged to get their children enrolled in this school [Radomir Mitrović]. This school is set by the Ministry of Education to be one of the centres in Montenegro (together with Nikšić and Podgorica) that will implement the Roma Educational Initiative.²⁴¹

According to the pedagogue at the Radomir Mitrović school, the number of Roma students in the grades 1–8 is as shown in Table A6:

²³⁸ Profile of the municipality of Berane, Regional Business Centre Berane, available at http://www.nasme.cg.yu/projekti/ipodraska/PROFIL_OPSTINE_BERANE-PDF.pdf (accessed 14 November 2007).

²³⁹ Interviews with Kosa Guberinic and Svetlana Pesic, teachers at the Radomir Mitrović primary school Berane, August 2006.

²⁴⁰ Interview with Sato Hajderpasić, director of the Radomir Mitrović primary school, Berane, August 2006.

²⁴¹ Interview with Sato Hajderpasić, Berane, August 2006.

Table A6. Roma students in grades 1–8 in the Radomir Mitrović primary school

Grade	Number of Roma students
1	33
2	21
3	11
4	15
5	7
6	11
7	5
8	5
TOTAL	108

Source: Interview with Milutin Scekcic, Berane, August 2006.

There are a few different criteria for allocating children and forming classes. As the director of the school mentioned, those criteria include random selection, parents' and students' preferences, and the student's GPA.

Costs

The director of the Radomir Mitrović school estimated the costs incurred by the participation in this school as being €10–15 a month, at least. The school's pedagogue of the same school estimated these expenses to be €200 for the first month of the school, and €50 a month for the rest of the school year.²⁴²

The director noted that “books are free to some extent only for the students in reformed²⁴³ classes that are under social help. Thus, this financial help for books is available only in reformed schools”.²⁴⁴ A parent stated “I never paid for books, or any other school accessories”.²⁴⁵

²⁴² Estimate regarding the costs of the school by the director, Sato Hajderpasić, and pedagogue, Milutin Scekcic, Berane, 2006.

²⁴³ Reformed schools were introduced in 2005. In reformed schools education lasts 9 years (grades 1–9) while in the old school system education lasts 8 years (grades 1–8).

²⁴⁴ Interview with Sato Hajderpasić, Berane, 2006.

²⁴⁵ Interview with a parent, Berane, 2006.

Academic achievement

National examinations or tests for exit/entry into critical points in the system are usually given in grades 5, 8 and 12. According to the director of the Radomir Mitrović school:

Usually, full-time students finish grades successfully with help of the teachers. However, in a case of a longer absence, those students are treated as drop-outs. Also, some of those [long-time absent students] receive an incomplete status in their classes, which automatically means they didn't finish the grade. The number of these cases is small, while the percentage of people that finish fourth grade is much bigger and it is higher than 90 per cent.²⁴⁶

The percentage of grade repetition for Roma pupils is about 5 per cent. There are no Roma representatives from this school in any kind of educational competition,²⁴⁷ which is attributed to the difficult living conditions of Roma children.²⁴⁸ However, some Roma pupils are successfully involved in sport competitions organised by schools.²⁴⁹

Literacy among Roma pupils in the fourth and eighth grades is decent, and on a par with non-Roma pupils, the director noted. Most of the Roma pupils are able to read and write by the third grade, the school pedagogue reported.²⁵⁰

School–community relations

Two parents' representatives sit on the Radomir Mitrović school board. According to the school pedagogue and two teachers, Roma parents are involved in the school activities through the Parents' Assembly. However, Roma parents rarely respond to the invitations sent by the school, regarding parents' involvement in the school activities, problems, and parents' meetings.²⁵¹ While some Roma parents indicated that they were not at all involved in school activities, one parent said "I am only invited to come to the parents' meetings, and I always go."²⁵²

Patterns of segregation

Integration is generally accepted as an important value in Berane, as a way to overcome social and cultural differences.²⁵³ According to the school staff, there is no segregation

²⁴⁶ Interview with Sato Hajderpasić, Berane, 2006.

²⁴⁷ Interview with Sato Hajderpasić, Berane, 2006.

²⁴⁸ Interview with Milutin Scekic, pedagogue at Radovan Mitrović school, Berane, 2006.

²⁴⁹ Interview with Milutin Scekic, Berane, 2006.

²⁵⁰ Interview with Milutin Scekic, Berane, 2006.

²⁵¹ Interviews with staff of the Radovan Mitrović school, Berane, 2006.

²⁵² Interview with a Roma parent, Berane, 2006.

²⁵³ A list of Interviewed Participants is attached at the end of this document.

of Roma children in the Radomir Mitrović school, and even if there were more Roma pupils per class segregation would be avoided.

Local Roma leaders agree that it is better for Roma children to stay in the mainstream school with other non-Roma children, because integration improves Roma children's proficiency. The Roma leaders and Roma assistant teacher confirmed that there is no segregation in the Radomir Mitrović school.²⁵⁴ Roma children themselves reported that they were not treated differently from their non-Roma classmates, and indicated that they would not want to attend classes of Roma children only. The chance to study in a mixed environment has helped them to feel part of the whole without any inequalities.²⁵⁵

Roma teaching assistants/school mediators

There is one Roma assistant in the school, a refugee from Kosovo who holds a high school diploma. According to the school director, the assistant "went through a few seminars in order to be able to help us with implementation and the integration of Roma children into our school".²⁵⁶

There are no textbooks on Roma history and culture at the school,²⁵⁷ and nor is there a bilingual curriculum. However, the school pedagogue said that he would be more than glad to participate if there was one, so that he can help out and make education easier for Roma pupils.²⁵⁸

Teacher training and support

According to the school director there have been a number of seminars for teachers concerning the execution of the programme in newly reformed schools. The goal of the seminars is to help school and faculty staff better understand the objectives of the school reformation, so that they can be helpful during the successful implementation. The school's pedagogue also mentioned a seminar organised for teachers working with Roma pupils.²⁵⁹

The director reported that there were no workshops for the teachers related to learning Romanes, and furthermore the teachers themselves indicated that they are not willing to participate in any tutorial of this kind even if there were one: "I can't do any more; I am already too tired from everything".²⁶⁰

²⁵⁴ Statements of the three Roma leaders, Berane, August 2006.

²⁵⁵ According to two Roma children (the girl finished fourth grade and the boy finished eighth grade), Berane, August 2006.

²⁵⁶ Interview with Sato Hajderpasić, Berane, 2006.

²⁵⁷ Interview with Sato Hajderpasić, Berane, 2006.

²⁵⁸ Interview with Milutin Scekic, Berane, 2006.

²⁵⁹ Interview with Milutin Scekic, Berane, 2006.

²⁶⁰ Interviews with teachers Kosa Guberinic and Svetlana Pesic, Berane, 2006.

Enrolment, retention and completion

According to the Roma teaching assistant, annually, five to ten children are not enrolled in the first grade: “This year, out of 35 kids that were supposed to get into the first grade, five kids didn’t get enrolled.”²⁶¹ A Roma representative from Riverside stated “Except one family, all the other kids from Riverside go to school.”²⁶² However, another representative said “More than half of the kids don’t get enrolled in the school”.²⁶³

There is only one formal kindergarten (with 14 Roma children) in Berane. In total, 15 children are not enrolled in any kindergarten but are supposed to be, 45 children are in the “informal” NGO Deca-Enfant kindergarten, and 14 children are in the formal kindergarten. There are three Roma children enrolled in special school.²⁶⁴

According to the Roma assistant, the average number of years that Roma children spend in pre-school is about one year, or at most two. Girls usually stay until the fourth or fifth grade and then leave, since parents think that girls of that age are ready to get married. Only a small number of children finish eighth grade, according to the assistant: “I hope that half of this year’s enrolled class will finish.”²⁶⁵

According to the school director, there was a 5 per cent drop-out rate in the school year 2005/2006.²⁶⁶ However, according to Roma leaders and the Roma teaching assistant, the actual number of drop-outs is higher.²⁶⁷

Structural constraints on access

The exact percentage of Roma children in community who cannot comply with the local procedures for enrolment in kindergarten or school due to lack of documents or other barriers is not available. However, according to the school’s director and pedagogue, there are many children who are refugees and whose parents have problems in providing the required documentation in order to enrol their children in the school. However, thanks to NGO Deca-Enfants in Rozaje, and the flexible enrolment policy in the Radomir Mitrović school itself, this barrier has been overcome to some extent.

Language

According to the school pedagogue, there is a Roma translator available during the required enrolment testing. He also stated that the level of language proficiency that

²⁶¹ Interview with Zena Dubović, Berane, 2006.

²⁶² Interview with Saljaj Sadri, Berane, 2006.

²⁶³ Interview with Aco Rizvanović, Berane, August 2006.

²⁶⁴ Interview with Zena Dubović, Berane, 2006.

²⁶⁵ Interview with Zena Dubović, Berane, 2006.

²⁶⁶ Interview with Sato Hajderpasić, Berane, 2006.

²⁶⁷ There is no any closer or more accurate estimate available concerning this issue.

Roma children have in the language of instruction at the enrolment in kindergarten and school where this is not their mother tongue is decent: “They know language well enough, and if they have trouble in understanding something, the translator is there to help. They also have a chance to speak with other non-Roma children.”²⁶⁸

A2.2 Case Study: Nikšić

A2.2.1 Administrative Unit

The city of Nikšić is located on the Nikšić plain, at the foot of Mount Trebjes. It is the centre of Nikšić Municipality (population 75,282), which is the largest municipality in Montenegro by area. Nikšić is the second-largest city in Montenegro, with a population of 58,212, and is an important industrial, cultural and educational centre. The local steel mill (*Nikšićka Željezara*), bauxite mine, brewery (*Nikšićka Pivara*) and many other enterprises are concentrated in this city. These major industries struggled to survive the collapse of the socialist economy, but have since recovered, and most are either already privatised or in the process of becoming so.

Nikšić is the administrative centre of Nikšić Municipality, which incorporates a densely populated fertile plain called Župa, and has a population of 75,282.²⁶⁹ Nikšić itself has 58,212 citizens. The ethnicity distribution is shown in Table A7:²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Interview with Milutin Scekić, Berane, 2006.

²⁶⁹ According to the 2003 Census.

²⁷⁰ Data regarding Municipality of Nikšić available at <http://visit-montenegro.com> (accessed 17 July 2007)

Table A7. Ethnicity Distribution

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
Montenegrin	47,154	62.64
Serb	20,129	26.74
Muslim	695	0.92
Roma	335	0.44
Yugoslav	267	0.35
Bosniak	148	0.20
Croat	132	0.18
Other	436	0.58
Not declared	5,214 ^{2/1}	6.93
No data	772	1.03
TOTAL	75,282	100

Source: Website of the official tourism website for Montenegro, available at <http://www.visit-montenegro.com/cities-Nikšić.htm> (accessed 12 November 2007)

A2.2.2 Roma and the Community

In Nikšić there are 131 Roma families (both domiciled and Roma refugees from Kosovo, Croatia and Bosnia), living in the following homogenous Roma settlements:

- Budo Tomović I: 11 Roma families;
- Budo Tomović II: 33 Roma families;
- Željezara: 7 Roma families;
- Settlement Under Trebjes: 42 Roma families;
- Brlja: 31 Roma families.

Seven Roma families live in mixed settlements with non-Roma families.²⁷² However, according to one Roma leader, 300 Roma families live in the settlement Under Trebjes,²⁷³ while another Roma leader indicated that a total of 700 Roma live in the

²⁷¹ One of the reasons for the discrepancy that exists between official figures and unofficial estimates of number of Roma people that live in Nikšić.

²⁷² Website of SOS Phone of Nikšić, available at <http://www.sosnk.org> (accessed 4 July 2007)

²⁷³ Interview with Beriša Azem, from NGO “Union of Roma under Trebjes”, Nikšić, 2006.

Budo Tomović Željezara settlements.²⁷⁴ According to a third Roma leader, “In 2000 research was done, and according to that research there were 1,268 Roma in Nikšić. However, that number varies and now is about 1,000, because a lot of Roma migrated from this area.”²⁷⁵

Estimates of the number of registered households also vary – one Roma leader reported 70 registered Roma households, while another put the number of registered households at 180–200.²⁷⁶

According to the three Roma leaders interviewed, none of the local budget is allocated for the Roma community. There are no Roma representatives in local councils or institutional mechanisms to ensure the participation of Roma in local governance, according to the interviewed Roma leaders.

The official website for Nikšić stated that according to official school registers, in the school year 2005/2006 there were 121 RAE (Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian) children in mainstream primary schools, while 79 RAE children were educated according to the programme for adults. There are only three RAE students in high school.²⁷⁷ According to one Roma leader, there are 400–450 Roma children in the area of Nikšić between the ages of 0 and 18.²⁷⁸ Another Roma leader provided the distribution of Roma pre-school and school-age population as shown in Table A8:

Table A8. Pre-school and school-age population

3–6 years	40–50
7–10 years	30
11–14 years	50
15–18 years	30
TOTAL	150–160

Source: Interview with Beriša Lazem, Nikšić, 2006

²⁷⁴ Interview with Hajrušaj Tahir from NGO “Union of Roma Buda Tomović” and leader of the Roma settlement of Željezara, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁷⁵ Interview with Beganaj Veselj from NGO “Početak” and leader of the Roma community of Brlja, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁷⁶ It is unclear whether the latter estimate is intended to refer to Nikšić Municipality or to the City of Nikšić. Interviews with Hajrušaj Tahir and Beganaj Veselj, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁷⁷ Local Plan for Children, Municipality of Nikšić, May 2007, available at http://www.Nikšić.cg.yu/LokalnaUprava/drustvene_djelatnosti/obavjestenja/20070517_lpa.doc (accessed 17 July 2007).

²⁷⁸ Interview with Beganaj Veseli, Nikšić, 2006.

The leaders of the Roma settlements Under Trebjes and Brlja indicated that 40 per cent of Roma children speak Romanes and Albanian in these settlements.²⁷⁹ The leader of the Željezara settlement reported that “the Roma language is the native language in this community and more often we use Romanes at home. About 70–80 per cent of Roma kids use their own [Romani] language.”²⁸⁰

Conditions of the community infrastructure (roads, access to the sewage system, gas, electricity and transportation) vary among Roma communities. In Under Trebjes, the infrastructure is reasonably good.²⁸¹ However, according to the local leader, the infrastructure in Željezara is very poor: some families lack access to the sewage system, and access to transportation is limited.²⁸² In Brlja the infrastructure is “decent”. The roads are accessible, and while homes have electricity and running water, they do not have access to the sewage system.²⁸³ The distances between these Roma communities and public institutions such as schools, the hospital or health centre is significant – between one to three kilometres²⁸⁴ – and the lack of local transportation makes the situation worse.

The three Roma leaders gave significantly different estimates of the proportion of Roma who are formally employed. According to the leader of the settlement Under Trebjes, 80 per cent of Roma that live there have full-time jobs, and in his estimate, in Nikšić as a whole, 65 per cent of Roma have full-time jobs.²⁸⁵ According to the Roma leader of Željezara, “There are not that many Roma without full-time jobs. Maybe only ten Roma have seasonal jobs.”²⁸⁶ The leader of Brlja in contrast, reported that “About 100 Roma have full-time jobs. A very small number of Roma women are employed. There are only a few Roma who work under contract.”²⁸⁷ Those who are employed usually work for the City Sanitation department, or in the local steel mill, with income supplemented by recycling materials. According to one representative, money sent from relatives abroad is an important source of income for most families.²⁸⁸ The average household budget of a typical Roma family (5 to 6 persons) is between €200 and €250.

²⁷⁹ Interviews with Beriša Azem and Beganaj Veselj, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁸⁰ Interview with Hajrušaj Tahir, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁸¹ Interview with Beriša Azem, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁸² Interview with Hajrušaj Tahir, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁸³ Interview with Beganaj Veselj, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁸⁴ Interview with Beganaj Veselj, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁸⁵ Interview with Beriša Azem, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁸⁶ Interview with Hajrušaj Tahir, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁸⁷ Interview with Beganaj Veselj, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁸⁸ Interview with Beganaj Veselj, Nikšić, 2006.

Most of the Roma in Nikšić live in poverty, and their living conditions can be described as “survival level”. According to the leader of the settlement Under Trebjes, “25 per cent have nothing; their only money source is bottle collecting. The rest of the residents live on the edge. Maybe only five families are financially a little more prosperous.”²⁸⁹ In Željezara, according to the leader of this community, “There are a lot of poor families, more than 40 percent. The rest of the residents work, and somehow they find ways to survive.”²⁹⁰ The leader of Brlja stated that “99.5 per cent [of residents] are poor. Half a per cent are middle class and they, let us say, live decently. Only four or five families have their own houses.”²⁹¹

In Nikšić, according to all three Roma leaders, social and interethnic relations between Roma and non-Roma neighbouring communities are good. Roma and non-Roma neighbours work together, help each other and visit each other, especially during the funerals, weddings and other spiritual celebrations.²⁹²

A2.2.3 Education

School and education network

In Nikšić Municipality there are 22 primary schools, four high schools, one school for Music Education, and an unknown number of pre-schools. There are no special schools for children with special needs, except for one workshop “Igračkoteka” Nikšić.²⁹³ In the municipality there are 6,441 children (both Roma and non-Roma) between the ages of 0 and 6, 7,833 between the ages of 7 and 14, making a total of 14,274 children under the age of 15. Additionally, there are 3,041 children (Roma and non-Roma) between the ages of 15 and 18, bringing the total of school-age children in the municipality to 17,315.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁹ Interview with Beriša Azem, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁹⁰ Interview with HajrušajTahir, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁹¹ Interview with Beganaj Veselj, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁹² Interviews with Beriša Azem, HajrušajTahir and Beganaj Veselj, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁹³ According to the Official Site of Nikšić, there are 25–40 children (Roma and non-Roma) in this workshop. The local municipality does not provide this workshop with any budget. However, the Union for Children with Special Needs financially supports the existence of the workshop. Also, there are numerous donations for the workshop on behalf of different international projects.

²⁹⁴ Local Plan for Children, Municipality of Nikšić, May 2007, available at http://www.niksic.cg.yu/LokalnaUprava/drustvene_djelatnosti/obavjestenja/20070517_lpa.doc (accessed 17 July 2007).

Table A9. Basic school enrolment, Nikšić Municipality, 2006

	Pre-school	Primary education
Per cent – Boys	48.55	51.51
Per cent – Girls	51.45	48.49
Number of Boys	502	4,402
Number of Girls	536	4,144
Total number	1,038	8,546

Source: Local Plan for Children, Nikšić Municipality, May 2007, available at http://www.niksic.cg.yu/LokalnaUprava/drustvene_djelatnosti/obavjestenja/20070517_lpa.doc (accessed 14 November 2007).

Estimates as to the number of Roma children who have never been enrolled in school vary among Roma leaders, based on the knowledge that they have about their own community. According to the leader of the settlement Under Trebjes, about 15–20 per cent of Roma children have never been enrolled in any school. Some of those Roma children are not even registered yet in the local municipality.²⁹⁵ The leader of Željezara stated that he is not quite sure how many Roma children have never been to school, but in his opinion that number is about 100.²⁹⁶ The representative of the Brlja settlement reported that “The number of those children [who have never been enrolled] is big. There are about 200 kids who are too old now, but they have never been enrolled in any school.”²⁹⁷

Approximately 50 Roma children are reportedly enrolled in informal pre-schools, operated by NGOs.²⁹⁸ There are no special schools in Nikšić, and the Roma leaders interviewed did not know of any Roma children who attended a special school.

The number of Roma that are enrolled in the Mileva Lajović primary school is increasing. According to a Roma leader, “In 1997–1998 there were eight [Roma] kids in the regular educational system. Today, there are 100–200 in primary schools, three in high school, and three in college. The progress has been made in the last five or six years. The annual increase in population is 15–20 per cent.”²⁹⁹ The director of the school reported that in 2005/2006 78 Roma pupils were enrolled in the school. In the

²⁹⁵ Interview with Beriša Azem, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁹⁶ Interview with HajrušajTahir, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁹⁷ Interview with Beganaj Veselj, Nikšić, 2006.

²⁹⁸ The statements given by two Roma leaders.

²⁹⁹ Interview with Beganaj Veselj, Nikšić, 2006.

first grade there were 25 Roma pupils, in Grades 1–4 there were 59 Roma children in total, and in Grades 5–8 there were 19 Roma children.³⁰⁰

Table A10. Enrolment in the Mileva Lajović school, Nikšić

	Primary education	Lower secondary
Boys	Total 1,334	694
Girls		640
Number of Roma Children	66	17

Source: Interview with Željko Drinčić, director of the Mileva Lajović school, Nikšić, 2006

The Mileva Lajović school is one of the three schools in the country implementing the programme “Roma Education Initiative in Montenegro”. This programme has included a workshop for RAE parents to improve their awareness of the importance of education, as well as additional classes and lectures for Roma children, aimed at improving their performance in school.

School and class placement procedures

There is a certain informality for enrolment in pre-school in the Mileva Lajović school, according to the director:

There is no kindergarten; however, we gave one classroom to be used for the kids that belong to our local community, and the kids who will later be enrolled in our school. The procedure for enrolment in this improvised kindergarten is regulated by the central kindergarten [...] the kids are usually distributed according to their residence. At the beginning of March, we receive a list of children who belong to our school according to their residence and according to the local community that those kids belong to. Then, at the beginning of April, the children go through the required testing.³⁰¹

The director added that over the last few years, the school has prioritised children’s and parents’ preferences for school placement, rather than local residency.

According to the director, the only criterion for allocating children in the Mileva Lajović school is an aspiration towards having balanced classes with regard to the gender and social status of the enrolled children.³⁰²

³⁰⁰ Interview with Željko Drinčić, director of the Mileva Lajović school, Nikšić, 2006.

³⁰¹ Interview with Željko Drinčić, Nikšić, 2006.

³⁰² Interview with Željko Drinčić, 2006.

Academic achievement

According to the school director, until 2003 Roma pupils generally stopped their education at the fourth grade; since then, many Roma pupils have passed from the fourth to the fifth grade.³⁰³ A teacher at the school confirmed that there is no repetition of grades, except for those Roma pupils who miss exams.³⁰⁴ “There is no difference in performance between Roma and non-Roma students,” according to the teacher.³⁰⁵

The director reported that about three to five Roma pupils repeat a grade annually, and those are usually students enrolled in Grades 5–8. “At the end of the school year 2005/2006, about 84 per cent of Roma pupils passed their grades,” according to the director.³⁰⁶

The average number of years that Roma children spend in school is between four and six years according to two Roma representatives,³⁰⁷ while according to another representative, Roma children usually spend no more than eight years in school.³⁰⁸

School–community relations

A teacher indicated that all parents are invited to come to parents’ meetings, and according to the teacher, Roma parents visit the school on a regular basis, and they cooperate with the school pedagogue, director, teachers and speech therapist.³⁰⁹ Several Roma parents confirmed that they attend meetings organised by the school, as well as additional meetings organised by the NGO Save the Children.³¹⁰

Roma teaching assistants/school mediators

There was no Roma teaching assistant, or mediator working in the school during the reporting period, but according to the director there were two assistants during the school year 2004/2005 assigned by the Ministry of Education and Science. These assistants acted as mediators between Roma parents and the faculty, helped to collect proper documentation for Roma children’s enrolment, and helped to promote the

³⁰³ Interview with Željko Drinčić, Nikšić, 2006.

³⁰⁴ Interview with Marina Lonsović, teacher at the Mileva Lajović school, Nikšić, 2006.

³⁰⁵ Interview with Marina Lonsović, Nikšić, 2006.

³⁰⁶ Interview with Željko Drinčić, 2006.

³⁰⁷ Interviews with Beriša Azem and Beganaj Veselj, Nikšić, 2006.

³⁰⁸ Interview with Hajrušaj Tahir, Nikšić, 2006.

³⁰⁹ Interview with Marina Lonsović, Nikšić, 2006.

³¹⁰ Interviews with Delija Minira, Hajruši Camil and Beriša Nerdjivana, Roma parents, Nikšić, 2006.

regular attendance of Roma pupils, according to the school director.³¹¹ No explanation was offered as to why the assistants were no longer working at the school.

Educational materials

The school director reported that the school received some free books, half of which were immediately given to Roma pupils, while the other half were put in the school library. The Roma pupils were allowed to use those books and handed them back in after the school year was over. However, no free books were received in 2006, except for the Roma children who receive social help.³¹² Through a local Roma leader, the school received a few books for the library, which include stories and fairytales written by Roma.

Teacher training and support

There were a few different kinds of training programmes for teachers in the Mileva Lajović school, including training in preparation of faculty for work in nine-year schools, a seminar about inclusion, and some other projects regarding personnel. There was no evaluation of the faculty, but the school was visited by an inspector who was there to evaluate the whole organisation of the school.³¹³

There are no training programmes in bilingual education, or any kind of provisions for bilingual education training programmes in the school.

Language

Roma children refugees who have just arrived in Nikšić³¹⁴ have difficulty expressing themselves in the language used for instruction. Nevertheless, there is no programme of bilingual education available at the school.

A2.3 Case study: Podgorica

A2.3.1 Administrative Unit

Podgorica is the capital and largest city of the Republic of Montenegro. A census in 2003 showed that there are 169,132 inhabitants in Podgorica Municipality, out of which 136,473 live in the urban area. The Podgorica Municipality accounts for 10.4 per cent of Montenegro's territory and 27.3 per cent of its population. Besides being an administrative centre of Montenegro, Podgorica is also its economic, cultural and educational focal point. The ethnic composition of the municipality is shown in Table A11:

³¹¹ Interview with Željko Drinčić, 2006.

³¹² Interview with Željko Drinčić, 2006.

³¹³ Interview with Željko Drinčić, Nikšić, 2006.

³¹⁴ Roma who are refugees from Kosovo, Bosnia and Croatia, or Roma who declare themselves as REA.

Table A11. Ethnic composition, Podgorica, 2003

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
Montenegrin	96,343	56.96
Serb	44,423	26.26
Albanian	9,296	5.49
Muslim	4,399	2.60
Bosniak	2,307	1.36
Roma	1,389	0.82
Croat	709	0.42
Not declared ³¹⁵	6,978	4.12
Other	1,834	1.08
No data	1,233	0.73
TOTAL	169,132	100

Source: Official website of Podgorica, available at <http://www.podgorica.cg.yu/Prva1.htm> (accessed 17 July 2007)

In Podgorica, some parts of the Roma community are physically separated, while at some points they form blocs within the city.³¹⁶ Local Roma leaders estimated the population of various Roma settlements (communities) as follows:

- Camp 1: inhabited only by Roma refugees, it has 300 residents;
- Camp 2: only Roma refugees, with about 320 residents (i.e. 56 families);
- German House: a building built by the HELP foundation; in this building there are only Roma refugees (22 families);
- Vrela Ribnicka: with domiciled Roma, the settlement is mostly inhabited by Roma, but by a significant number of non-Roma as well;
- Konik: the settlement is mostly inhabited by Roma, but by a significant number of non-Roma as well;
- Doljani: a non-Roma settlement, where nine Roma families also reside.³¹⁷

³¹⁵ The number of Not Declared has a big influence on the existing discrepancy with regard to the number of Roma that live in Podgorica.

³¹⁶ This happens when a city population grows and therefore the city area grows. The areas that used to be suburbs are now counted as close to the city centre. This is the way in which Roma settlements became blocs within the city.

Official statistics show that there are 1,389 Roma in Podgorica. However, according to NGO representatives, this figure is not accurate. A representative of the organisations Roma Time and Union of Roma Reporters in Montenegro indicated that since the word “Roma” is used as shorthand for the more diverse RAE population (Roma, Ashkalia, Egyptians), this leads to confusion in gathering data. The representative mentioned his own experience; although he and his family identify themselves as Roma, “When I was asked to fill out a survey, the interviewer said ‘Should I write you down as Montenegrins?’ Just because he said it that way, I simply said ‘Yes, write us down as Montenegrins.’”³¹⁸ A representative of the NGO Roma Women’s Union of Roma and Kovaca Woman’s Heart, who works as a teaching assistant in the B. V. Podgoričanin school in Konik and at the Foundation for Roma scholarships, reported that according to the last registration of Roma, there were 2,240 Roma, but many of these have since returned to Kosovo without deregistering.³¹⁹

Estimates as to the number of registered Roma households also vary; according to one representative, the proportion of unregistered families could be as high as 40 per cent.³²⁰

According to all three Roma leaders interviewed, there is no representative of the Roma population in the local council, or any institutional mechanisms that will ensure the participation of Roma in local governance. Nevertheless, a Roma leader added that there are some initiatives for having a Roma representative in each local community³²¹ in Podgorica.³²²

There is no local budget allocation for the Roma community according to one Roma leader,³²³ while another representative alleged that some funds have been distributed, but that the money goes to the “wrong” people.³²⁴

³¹⁷ Interviews with Behija Ramović, Hadi Kabasi and Darko Sejdović, Roma representatives, Podgorica, August 2006.

³¹⁸ Interview with Darko Sejdović, representative of the NGOs Roma Time and Union of Roma Reporters in Montenegro, Podgorica, August 2006.

³¹⁹ Interview with Behija Ramović, teaching assistant in the B. V. Podgoričanin school in Konik and at the Foundation for Roma scholarships, representative of the NGO Roma Women’s Union of Roma and Kovaca Woman’s Heart, Podgorica, August 2006.

³²⁰ Interview with Darko Sejdović, Podgorica, August 2006.

³²¹ The local community is the smaller administrative unit inside each municipality.

³²² Interview with Behija Ramović, Podgorica, August 2006.

³²³ Interview with Hadi Kabasi, Podgorica, August 2006.

³²⁴ Interview with Behija Ramović, Podgorica, August 2006.

A2.3.2 Roma and the Community

According to one Roma leader, not many Roma in the area are able to speak Romanes: “Maybe about 10 per cent of the REA population speak Romanes. All Ashkalia and Egyptians speak Albanian, while all Roma speak Romanes.”³²⁵ However, another Roma leader believes that 70 per cent of Roma children speak Romanes, while children who are refugees from Kosovo speak Albanian as their mother tongue.³²⁶ A third Roma leader confirmed that the Egyptians’ native language is Albanian. In the camps most of the residents speak Albanian and Romanes (70 per cent of that population speak Romanes, while 65–70 per cent speak Albanian).³²⁷

Infrastructure such as roads, access to the sewage network, gas, electricity and transportation conditions are the worst in the two camps. A Roma leader explained: “The road to German House is good, but it is dangerous since everybody drives really fast and the road is unlit. With regard to the camps, I am not satisfied. Very often the sewage gets blocked, and then there is real chaos! Since women usually do the laundry nearby, the contamination of the population with some disease is possible. The problem is also irregular trash disposal, which causes serious trash accumulation. The road to Camp 1 and Camp 2 is also very bad. The settlements are unlit. The problem is even greater since the special classroom from the Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin school is located in Camp 2.”³²⁸

The distances between Roma communities and public institutions such as schools, hospitals, or health centres are quite large, “but not of crucial importance for Roma people”, said a Roma leader, Darko Sejdović. However, another Roma leader noted that “From Camp 1 and 2 school is three to four kilometres away”, and in her opinion “There must be some kind of transportation for kids from these Roma settlements.” From city Roma communities, school is seven to eight kilometres away.³²⁹

According to Roma representatives, the main occupation of employed Roma is working for the City Sanitation. The main income sources for those Roma who do not have regular jobs are collecting secondary material, begging on the streets, and recycling. Some Roma have seasonal or honorary jobs in where they work in the fields. Estimates for the average household budget of a Roma family ranged from €100 or less for a family dependent on social welfare, to €400 or more.³³⁰

³²⁵ Interview with Darko Sejdović, Podgorica, August 2006.

³²⁶ Interview with Behija Ramović, Podgorica, August 2006.

³²⁷ Interview with Hađi Kabasi, Podgorica, August 2006.

³²⁸ Interview with Hađi Kabasi, Podgorica, August 2006.

³²⁹ Interview with Behija Ramović, Podgorica, August 2006.

³³⁰ Interviews with Behija Ramović, Hađi Kabasi and Darko Sejdović, Podgorica, August 2006.

While Roma representatives agreed that there are both wealthy and impoverished Roma families in Podgorica, opinions were divided as to the proportions of these income groups. According to one Roma leader, “The extremely poor Roma are mostly residents of Camp 1 and 2, Roma refugees. Most of the domiciled Roma live decently, and some of them (about 70 families) even have two or three-storey houses. Their family members live abroad (in Italy or Germany). Domiciled Roma do not respect Roma refugees. Usually, domiciled Roma call other Roma ‘trash’ and ‘dirty’. The rest of the domiciled Roma live well enough, and those who have really nothing, at least, receive Social Help monthly.”³³¹ However, another representative reported that “Out of ten Roma families, three live extremely poorly, while the rest of them are one half rich while the other half live reasonably well.”³³²

There are no tensions reported between the Roma and non-Roma communities. They meet each other in public places such as streets, local transportation, hospitals and so on. Non-Roma people usually come to Roma celebrations, since the celebrations are interesting. Sometimes non-Roma invite Roma to their celebrations, but not that often. The only problems observed have been between some domiciled Roma and Roma refugees, where domiciled Roma have been hostile towards Roma refugees.³³³

A2.3.3 Education

School and education network

Most of the Montenegrin higher education establishments are located in Podgorica. It is the home of the University of Montenegro, The Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts is also located in Podgorica, as is the DANU cultural organisation. In recent years, a number of private institutions for higher education have emerged, further expanding the educational opportunities in Podgorica. Podgorica Municipality has 34 elementary schools and 10 secondary schools, including one gymnasium. The Radosav Ljumović National Library is considered to be the most comprehensive library in Montenegro.³³⁴

There is no systematic tracking of the number of Roma children enrolled in Podgorica schools; local Roma leaders were not able to confirm even if the number is increasing or declining.³³⁵

Estimates of the number of Roma children who have never been enrolled in school vary among Roma leaders interviewed, since their assumptions are based on the knowledge that they have about their own Roma settlements. Therefore, according to

³³¹ Interview with Hadi Kabasi, Podgorica, August 2006.

³³² Interview with Darko Sejdović, Podgorica, August 2006.

³³³ Interviews with Hadi Kabasi and Behija Ramović, Podgorica, 2006.

³³⁴ Podgorica Official WebSite available at <http://www.podgorica.cg.yu> (accessed 17 July 2007).

³³⁵ Interviews with Hadi Kabasi, Darko Selimović and Behija Ramović, Podgorica, August 2006.

one Roma leader, up to 55 per cent of Roma children have never been enrolled, and Roma girls are especially likely to remain outside school.³³⁶ Another representative indicated that 20 per cent of Roma children have never been enrolled in school, while a third stated that all Roma children get enrolled, but after a few months about 20–30 per cent drop out.³³⁷

Furthermore, regarding Roma children who attend “informal” kindergartens operated by NGOs and not recognised by the state as formal education, again estimates vary. Therefore, according to interviewed Roma leader Darko Sejdović, about 30 per cent of Roma children are enrolled in “informal” kindergarten. According to interviewed Roma leader Behija Ramović, in the kindergarten where she works there were 30 Roma children. She believes that 5 per cent of Roma children are enrolled in “informal” kindergartens. Finally, interviewed Roma leader Hađi Kabasi gave the following information: “The kindergarten in Camp 2 (74 kids enrolled) is led by the Red Cross, while in Camp 1 there are 100 Roma kids enrolled. I believe that there are about 300 Roma kids (age 3–6) in both camps that are not enrolled in this informal kindergarten.”³³⁸

The B. V. Podgoričanin school is a mainstream school with one segregated Roma branch, which is located in the Camp 2 Roma settlement. Roma children from Camp 1 and Camp 2, German House and private housing are enrolled in the school; the segregated branch has nine classes where RAE refugee children (grades 1–4) are enrolled. In the future, there will be also a fourth grade, because of the poor road conditions and a concern that the children will find it difficult to adjust to the mainstream school. At present, after RAE children finish the third grade of the branch school in Camp 2, they are able to continue their education in the main school, according to the school inspector.³³⁹

The school director provided some enrolment data for the school:

³³⁶ Interview with Darko Sejdović, Podgorica, August 2006.

³³⁷ Interview with Hađi Kabasi, Podgorica, August 2006.

³³⁸ Interview with Hađi Kabasi, Podgorica, August 2006.

³³⁹ Interview with Nermin Hajderpasić, school inspector, Podgorica, August 2006.

Table A12. Enrolment in the B. V. Podgoričanin school, Podgorica

	Pre-school	Primary education
(%) – Boys	55	50
(%) – Girls	45	50
(%) – Roma Boys	55	65
(%) – Roma Girls	45	35

Source: Interview with Zoran Kalezić, director of the B. V. Podgoričanin school, Podgorica, August 2006

Academic achievement

According to the school director, “All Roma children who want to get enrolled in the first grade are accepted; 70–80 per cent of Roma pupils finish the fourth grade, while 10–20 per cent of enrolled Roma pupils finish the eighth grade.”³⁴⁰ Some 10–20 Roma students repeat a grade each year.³⁴¹

According to the school pedagogue, language proficiency among Roma children is very poor at the time of enrolment;³⁴² however, by the fourth grade Roma pupils are reading and writing proficiently, the director noted.³⁴³

School–community relations

Roma parents are involved through the Parents’ Council, and are invited to parents’ meetings that are organised by the school. According to one teacher, even though Roma parents are invited to come to parents’ meetings, not many of them actually attend those meetings.³⁴⁴ In another teacher’s experience, however, Roma parents attend every parents’ meeting.³⁴⁵ A parent, whose three children are enrolled in the segregated Camp 2 branch of the school, said that he was invited to the school every week, and also he was informed about his children’s results every week.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁰ Interview with Zoran Kalezić, director of the B. V. Podgoričanin school, Podgorica, August 2006.

³⁴¹ Interview with Zoran Kalezić, Podgorica, August 2006.

³⁴² Interview with Dževad Đurković, pedagogue at the B. V. Podgoričanin school, Podgorica, August 2006.

³⁴³ Interview with Zoran Kalezić, August 2006.

³⁴⁴ Interview with Jasminka Krgović, teacher at the B. V. Pogoričanin school, Podgorica, August 2006.

³⁴⁵ Interview with Tamara Nedović, Podgorica, August 2006.

³⁴⁶ Interview with Muharem Bajazitaj, Podgorica, August 2006.

Patterns of segregation

According to one Roma leader, 260 Roma children are enrolled in the segregated Roma school (first, second and third grade), while 170 Roma children are segregated in the Roma kindergarten.³⁴⁷ According to this estimate, more than half of the Roma refugees up to the sixth grade are enrolled in the segregated Roma school.

Some irregularities in the enrolment in special schools have been reported, where Roma children are enrolled in special schools only because they cannot speak Montenegrin,³⁴⁸ or, as one Roma leader mentioned, “One Roma boy was sent to a special school just because he was wearing glasses.”³⁴⁹ She added that about 10 per cent of Roma children are enrolled in special schools, which is not unrealistic.³⁵⁰

According to the director, some non-Roma pupils transferred out of the B. V. Podgoričanin school because of the high number of Roma students there.³⁵¹ The pedagogue of the school, Mr. Dževad Đurković, said that there were some transfers of Roma students from a remedial class to a mainstream one, but only before the classes started. After the classes start there are no more transfers, explained Mr. Đurković.

The school director indicated that it would be much better for Roma refugee pupils to remain in segregated classes where the approach can be specialised for their needs, since their language proficiency is extremely bad. According to one interviewed Roma mother, teachers do not make any distinction among pupils in the school, however.³⁵²

Roma teaching assistants/school mediators

There are two Roma assistants in the B. V. Podgoričanin school, but they are not full-time employees. Their work is paid for by the Ministry of Education and Science. The two Roma assistants are responsible for translation, relations between the school and Roma parents and other problems regarding communication. There was a case when, after Roma assistants insisted, a Roma child who had dropped out was re-enrolled in school.³⁵³

Educational materials and curriculum policy

In 2005/2006, the school received free books for the Roma population, and in the following year some of those books that were returned were being used by a second

³⁴⁷ Interview with Hađi Kabasi, Podgorica, August 2006.

³⁴⁸ Interview with Darko Sejdović, Podgorica, August 2006.

³⁴⁹ Interview with Behija Ramović, Podgorica, August 2006.

³⁵⁰ Interview with Behija Ramović, Podgorica, August 2006.

³⁵¹ Interview with Zoran Kalezić, Podgorica, August 2006.

³⁵² Interview with Ms. Bajazitaj, a parent, Podgorica, August 2006.

³⁵³ Interview with Zoran Kalezić, Podgorica, August 2006.

year's students. Unfortunately, according to the director, there are not enough books for all Roma pupils.³⁵⁴

Roma pupils have no access to textbooks on Roma history and culture, since there are none of these books available in the school. There is no bilingual curriculum available.

Teacher training and support

An educational seminar for teachers "Step by Step" was held in the school, by an outside organiser.³⁵⁵ The school pedagogue said that he was involved in one seminar regarding integration of the Roma population, but never received any bilingual training.³⁵⁶ The pedagogue suggested that bilingual seminars are unnecessary, since the Roma population is trying to integrate with the non-Roma population.³⁵⁷

According to the school director, there is only one teacher who speaks Romanes; while some school staff expressed reluctance to try to "learn a new language", other teachers indicated that they would be willing to study Romanes.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁴ Interview with Zoran Kalezić, Podgorica, August 2006.

³⁵⁵ Interview with Zoran Kalezić, August 2006.

³⁵⁶ Interview with Dževad Đurković, Podgorica, August 2006.

³⁵⁷ Interview with Dževad Đurković Podgorica, August 2006.

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Roma
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1. Executive Summary and Recommendations

1.1 Executive summary

In recent years, Slovakia has emerged as one of Central Europe's fastest-growing economies. At the same time, it has come under criticism for its failure to significantly improve the situation of its Roma minority. Slovakia has joined the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015, and a number of programmes have been initiated to address the problems facing the Roma community. Even so, critical issues in education have been overlooked in policy preparation and implementation, and the Government must re-evaluate efforts in this area to ensure that they meet the needs of Roma children. Slovakia's growing prosperity cannot be sustained if a significant proportion of its children do not receive the quality education to which they are entitled, while Slovak society as a whole will see the benefits of an accessible, inclusive education system for all.

Official data on ethnicity in Slovakia are based on individual self-identification. There are indications that many Roma in Slovakia do not identify themselves as such in official surveys, and in general school statistics substitute data on “children from disadvantaged backgrounds” as a partial proxy for Roma children. While substantial independent research on the situation of Roma has also been carried out, such data are necessarily incomplete and fragmented. As a first step towards developing a clear picture of Roma participation and performance in education, the Government of Slovakia should analyse the information that has been collected on the subject, which, taken together, could provide a valuable policy development tool. Studies indicate that many Roma children in Slovakia live in residentially segregated settings where the education infrastructure is often inadequate. The proportion of Roma among school-age children is increasing, even as the total population in that age group is on the decline, a fact that needs to be reflected in the educational system and ongoing reorganisation of school networks. A tiny fraction of Roma children attend pre-school, just over 4 per cent of the relevant age group, which makes their integration into primary school more difficult. There is a serious problem with tracking drop-out rates, as details only become available if and when a person with an incomplete education registers with an employment office, and assessments of education levels are therefore incomplete. The Government should enact measures to ensure that this important indicator can be more effectively monitored.

Segregation in Slovakia is not officially recognised, but there are ample data to demonstrate that the separation of Roma children, particularly in special schools and classes for children with intellectual disabilities, is widespread. Research has shown that Roma are 28 times more likely to be transferred to a special school than a non-Roma pupil is. The introduction of an extra year of pre-school for disadvantaged children, while aimed at giving extra preparation for primary school, also serves to separate Roma from their peers and often falls short of quality expectations.

The Government of Slovakia has adopted a number of programmes targeting the specific problems of Roma communities, including an education strategy in 2003. In 2004, the Government elaborated its Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion (hereafter, Decade Action Plan), but like earlier policies, the Decade Action Plan fails to address the problem of segregation in special schools and classes, a major shortcoming that should be corrected. A number of subsidies for disadvantaged families exist, but one specifically aimed at keeping children in school requires that the child maintains good marks, which may encourage parents to enrol their children in special schools that are considered to be easier for children. At present, the financial normative offered to special schools is at almost the same level as that for integration into mainstream schools, which sends an ambiguous message as to the Government's commitment to integration as a policy.

Teaching assistants are working in some schools, but as there is no requirement that these assistants come from the Roma community, they may not meet the needs of Roma children in the classroom. Many do not speak Romanes; there is no information about the number of teachers who may be proficient in this language, and only limited efforts have been made to introduce Roma language and literature teaching on a small scale. Some teacher training initiatives have been developed, but the impact of their presence in the classroom should be monitored and assessed more carefully, to ensure that they are effective in practice. Slovakia has adopted comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, and a number of bodies exist to address claims of discrimination and to promote equality; however, these mechanisms have not yet proven sufficient to effectively combat discrimination against Roma. The Government should assess the capacity and mandate of these institutions, as well as their accessibility to Roma communities, with a view towards developing a more robust anti-discrimination framework to protect Roma.

The number of pre-school places in Slovakia as a whole is sufficient, but distribution of these facilities is extremely uneven, and areas where Roma form a majority have the fewest pre-schools. Additionally, even minor costs associated with pre-school have the effect of deterring parents from putting their children in pre-school. The Ministry of Education and local authorities need to do more to ensure that Roma parents are adequately informed about the value of pre-school participation and enrolment procedures for school, particularly as many Roma communities are isolated and have only limited means of communication. Serious concerns about the placement process for special schools have been raised, despite revised procedures that are intended to address the overrepresentation of Roma in these schools. Due to the declining numbers of school-age children, schools compete to enrol sufficient numbers of pupils, and reportedly in some cases special schools may encourage Roma parents to send their children there even when no disability has been diagnosed. Language barriers are a significant issue in Slovakia, and while there have been some efforts to introduce Romanes as a separate subject, true bilingual educational methods are rarely used with Roma children to help them adjust to the Slovak language environment.

Inadequate school infrastructure appears to be an increasing problem, as schools are consolidated and smaller schools are closed. Facilities at special schools are reported to be particularly poor. Rural schools, particularly those serving majority-Roma communities, suffer most from a shortage of qualified staff, and may employ teachers without appropriate qualifications. Few data about the school results of Roma are available, although some standardised testing is conducted. The Ministry of Education should disaggregate data by ethnicity from existing tests, to better assess the impact of educational policies on Roma achievement. Teachers do have access to a variety of relevant training opportunities, but these tend to be short-term, and with little in the way of follow-up, there is little support for implementing new methodologies in the classroom. A lack of differentiated instruction techniques and underdeveloped skills among teachers both cause particular problems for children integrated into mainstream classrooms from special classes or schools.

The relationships between schools and Roma communities are generally limited, except in areas where civil society outreach projects have been implemented. The Ministry of Education and local authorities should examine successful NGO practices as possible models for further policy in this area. A number of surveys examining teachers' attitudes towards Roma have been carried out, indicating that teachers working with Roma generally expressed more positive views towards Roma children than those who did not work with Roma. However, case study research conducted for this report suggests that some school staff working with Roma harbour strongly negative perceptions, which may carry over into their teaching. The system for school inspections does investigate the quality of teaching, and some reports have flagged the issue of segregation as a problem. However, as no action appears to have followed these reports, the system should be reinforced to ensure that inspections serve a real purpose in supporting equal access to high-quality education for Roma.

1.2 Recommendations

1.2.1 Recommendations on monitoring and evaluation

Data collection

The Government of the Slovak Republic should do the following:

1. In collaboration with the relevant services of the European Commission, develop methods of ethnic data collection in order to monitor the effects of their policies on ethnic minorities, including Roma.
2. Review and amend regulations to ensure that, to the full extent permitted by the relevant EU legislation, data collected be made available disaggregated by ethnicity, colour, religion, language, gender, age, location and nationality.
3. Take steps to improve the overall collection of data related to education, in collaboration with local authorities and the Roma Education Centre (ROCEPO), disaggregated according to ethnic group, including Roma and

other ethnic minorities, with adequate safeguards for protecting sensitive information and the identity and privacy of individuals.

The Ministry of Education should do the following:

4. Undertake an analysis of existing data on Roma children, including data on “children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds”, to draw together a more complete picture of Roma participation and performance in education.
5. Support independent qualitative minority education research, such as action research to feed into data collection and handling and policy-making, and provide funding for field research and training to this end.
6. More clearly define the term “drop-out” in line with international usage, and develop a system to track school completion rates.
7. Create conditions for and raise awareness of opportunities for “second chance education” aimed at people who have not completed their education.

1.2.2 Recommendations for improving access to education

Structural constraints, legal and administrative requirements, costs

The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development, should do the following:

8. Offer financial support to rural municipalities, particularly those with large numbers of Roma, to establish and maintain pre-schools.

The Ministry of Education should do the following:

9. Require local education authorities and pre-schools to allow the enrolment of Roma children into pre-school regardless of when they register.
10. Consult with NGOs that have developed successful pre-school programmes, to share good practices and potentially scale up small-scale initiatives.

Local education authorities should do the following:

11. Make proactive efforts to ensure that the parents in marginalised communities situated on the outskirts of municipalities are adequately informed of the required procedures for school enrolment.
12. Develop financial and other incentives for schools and local self-governments, with the active participation of Roma NGOs and organisations, to actively identify local Roma children and ensure their timely enrolment.

Geographical Isolation and Segregation

The Ministry of Education should do the following:

13. Adopt the necessary legal or administrative measures to prevent and sanction all forms of segregation with the explicit aim and appropriate means of implementing desegregation through the distribution of Roma pupils from segregated Roma communities into ethnically mixed classes and schools and develop programmes targeting “white flight”.

School and class placement procedures

The Government of the Slovak Republic should do the following:

14. Fulfil goal 4 detailed in the Decade Action Plan to eliminate the incorrect diagnosis of Roma children placing them in special institutions, and to reduce the number of Roma children placed in these schools by 15 per cent.

The Ministry of Education should do the following:

15. Undertake a comprehensive study of the number of Roma children enrolled in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities.
16. In support of parents’ duty to enrol their children in school and support their education and development, develop outreach programmes towards Roma parents, raising awareness about the choice of schools and the long-term benefits of education in a mainstream school.
17. Ensure that enrolment procedures and tests strictly follow new culturally sensitive diagnostic tools, and ensure that enrolment procedures for the zero year involve a member of the child’s community when Roma children are assessed.
18. Revise and evaluate the effects of the available normative funding for special schools and integration to support integration into mainstream schools, to deter incorrect placement in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities.
19. Create legal mechanisms regulating the transfer of children from transitional to standard classes (as well as from special schools to transitory classes).

Language

The Government of the Slovak Republic should do the following:

20. Fulfil the obligations set out in the Strategy of the Slovak Republic to Resolve Problems of the Roma Ethnic Minority and system of measures for its implementation with regard to the teaching of the Roma language or teaching in the Roma language being made possible.

The Ministry of Education should do the following:

21. Commission a comprehensive survey evaluating Roma children's proficiency in Slovak upon entering school, to determine the scope of the language barrier as an obstacle to education.
22. Make available the resources and training developed in the "Effective Teaching and Learning for Minority-Language Children in Pre-school" EU-funded project for use by pre- and in-service teaching institutions.

1.2.3 Recommendations for improving the quality of education

School facilities and human resources

The Ministry of Education should do the following:

23. Develop a systematic, transparent and ongoing financing scheme to ensure that schools are not deterred from hiring Roma teaching assistants due to the cost.
24. Require a minimum level of teachers' qualifications for teaching in schools, and find incentives to recruit people into the teaching profession.
25. Develop incentives encouraging students to train as teachers in science and technology, to reduce the number of unqualified teachers currently working in schools.
26. Increase the salary for teachers, including bonuses for those working in rural or disadvantaged areas.

Curricular standards

The Ministry of Education should do the following:

27. Take seriously the need to address the diversification of curricula, by reviewing the educational philosophy and common set of principles and norms for all schooling in pre-tertiary education with regard to diversity and the multicultural nature of Slovakia, and make necessary changes to integrate cultural and ethnic diversity issues.
28. Ensure that the criteria for textbook development, creation and selection include ethnic diversity issues for all school levels, and that elements of national cultures (including Roma) are included in mandatory teaching materials.
29. Introduce information about Roma history and culture into the main school curriculum, to positively portray the contribution of this ethnic group to the national heritage.

The National Institute of Education should do the following:

30. Delay no further the content analysis of current textbooks and other school materials, with a special focus on tolerance and human rights issues, making the methodology used, and the results, public.

Classroom practice and pedagogy

The Ministry of Education should do the following:

31. Strongly support a certification system, tied to salary increases, to encourage teachers to complete additional training in minority and intercultural education.
32. Commission a study to learn more about the impact and effectiveness of training provided by the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre (MPC) in Prešov, at the Roma Education Centre (ROCEPO) and by other NGOs, such as the Wide Open School Foundation, which conduct training for teachers to prepare them to work with Roma children, and disseminate good practices to other pre- and in-service teacher training institutions.
33. Approach in-service training of teachers with a more integrated view, and coordinate and link various training programmes to include elements of each other, such as by including language issues in diversity and multicultural teacher training.
34. Provide extra support to train teachers in differentiated instruction, especially those teachers who will work with children to be integrated into mainstream schools and classrooms from special schools and classrooms.

School–community Relations

The Ministry of Education should do the following:

35. Examine NGO initiatives to involve Roma communities in the day-to-day life of the school, to develop guidelines enhancing Roma parents' interaction with schools.
36. Work with regional and local education authorities and well as teacher training bodies to raise awareness of the benefits of close cooperation

Discriminatory attitudes

The Government of the Slovak Republic should do the following:

37. Ensure the adequate functioning of judicial and extrajudicial mechanisms designed to protect individual citizens' rights.
38. Strengthen anti-discrimination and anti-bias measures, including both legislation and social policies, to reduce discrimination against Roma in all spheres and improve public perception.

39. Provide training to the Protection against Discrimination Commission in order to enhance its capacity to deal with discrimination in education.

The Ministry of Education and the State School Inspectorate should do the following:

40. Create effective mechanisms for preventing and counteracting racism, particularly inside schools that integrate Roma pupils, by designing and financially supporting programmes promoting interethnic tolerance and cooperation, and combating bias and prejudice in education.

Universities, and pre-service and in-service teacher training institutions, should do the following:

41. Introduce in their teacher training courses specific training modules on intercultural, anti-bias and anti-racism training.

School inspections

The Ministry of Education should do the following:

42. Mandate the State School Inspectorate to conduct inspections evaluating classroom practice, particularly the use of differentiated instruction.
43. Provide greater authority to the Inspectorates in issuing sanctions relating to segregation.

2. ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Official data on ethnicity in Slovakia are based on individual self-identification. There are indications that many Roma in Slovakia do not identify themselves as such in official surveys, and in general school statistics substitute data on “children from disadvantaged backgrounds” as a partial proxy for Roma children. While substantial independent research on the situation of Roma has also been carried out, such data are necessarily incomplete and fragmented. As a first step towards developing a clear picture of Roma participation and performance in education, the Government of Slovakia should analyse the information that has been collected on the subject, which, taken together, could provide a valuable policy development tool. Studies indicate that many Roma children in Slovakia live in residentially segregated settings where the education infrastructure is often inadequate. The proportion of Roma among school-age children is increasing, even as the total population in that age group is on the decline, a fact that needs to be reflected in the educational system and ongoing reorganisation of school networks. A tiny fraction of Roma children attend pre-school, just over 4 per cent of the relevant age group, which makes their integration into primary school more difficult. There is a serious problem with tracking drop-out rates, as details only become available if and when a person with an incomplete education registers with an employment office, and assessments of education levels are therefore incomplete. The Government should enact measures to ensure that this important indicator can be more effectively monitored.

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2.1 Data collection

Coherent monitoring of Roma participation and performance in education is not possible in Slovakia based on the existing statistics. Given the legal limitations imposed on the collection of ethnic statistical data, all official data only reflect the characteristics of a limited group of persons who identify themselves as Roma. Law No. 428/2002 Z. z. on the protection of personal data stipulates that “to process personal data that will reveal racial or ethnic background, political view, religion, membership in political parties and movements, data regarding health and sexual life is forbidden”.¹ However, such processing is permitted if the institution handling the data has the permission of the subject.² In spite of this exception, there is a widespread understanding in Slovakia that it is impermissible to collect data on ethnicity.

¹ Law No. 428/2002 Z. z. protection of personal data, art. 8.

² Law No. 428/2002 Z. z. protection of personal data, art. 7.

The lack of accurate general statistical data influences the availability and quality of educational statistics in particular. As ethnic statistics are based on self-identification, they present a high risk of being insufficiently representative. Some use may be made of educational statistics using the category of “children from a socially disadvantaged background”, which has indirectly replaced the ethnic category of Roma children. There is, however, no detailed analysis suggesting a total overlap of these categories.³ For instance, the Institute of Information and Prognoses on Education at the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic only collects official data on the number of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds who failed to complete a grade, but not the total number of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.⁴

Other available data come from surveys and research undertaken by governmental bodies, academics or non-governmental organisations. Due to limited sample sizes and the varied (often questionable) methodologies used, it is not possible to use these data as an appropriate substitute for a national database. Due to the varied nature of this research, direct comparisons between surveys are impossible.⁵

Alternative data, for *pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds*, have been used to make up for missing ethnic data – however, in spite of these data being used by official institutions such as the Ministry of Education or the State School Inspectorate, it cannot be taken for granted that they are fully representative of all Roma children, and nor can it be said that there is a universally adopted definition of this term. Moreover, such data are only collected for a certain number of selected indicators only (such as truancy rates), which makes it difficult to construct a more comprehensive data-grounded picture of the reality.

2.2 Enrolment data and trends

2.2.1 National data

According to national census data from 2001, the total population of Slovakia at that time was 5,379,455.⁶ The same census results stated the Roma population to be 89,920, which accounts for 1.7 per cent, while 99,448 respondents stated their mother tongue to be Romanes, while self-identifying as different ethnicities. Census data are based on the respondents’ self-identification. As in several neighbouring countries, there are several reasons why many Roma in Slovakia do not officially adhere to the Roma ethnicity. Official demographic data, as well as data specifically related to education, are therefore of little relevance to the monitoring of Government policies or to new policy-making.

³ Andrej Salner (ed.), *Roma Children in the Slovak Education System*, Bratislava: SGI, 2004.

⁴ Personal email communication, 22 June 2007.

⁵ In this report, the sample size of individual surveys as compared to more representative national data is noted in footnotes.

⁶ National Census data 2001.

Other sets of data have been used since 2001 to provide a more accurate account of the size and characteristics of the Roma population. The Office of the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities estimates the Roma population at 320,000, based on official demographic assessments and its own data from a project entitled the *Sociographical Mapping of Roma Communities Conducted in 2003–2004*.⁷

According to another assessment, the last relevant official data on the Roma population were collected in 1980.⁸ According to a model based on these data, the Roma population in 2002 could be calculated at some 390,000 people, or 7.3 per cent of the total population.

The recent OSI/Education Support Program study *Monitoring Education for Roma 2006: A Statistical Baseline for Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe* gives an unofficial calculation for Roma in Slovakia ranging from between 480,000 and 520,000, and accounting for 9.26 per cent of the population.⁹

Table 1 presents official data on the composition of the general population by age group.

⁷ M. Jurásková, E. Kriglerová and J. Rybová, *Atlas of Roma Communities in Slovakia 2004*, Bratislava: Office of the Government, 2004 (hereafter, Jurásková *et al.*, *Atlas of Roma Communities*). This contains the results of the *Sociographical Mapping of Roma Communities Conducted in 2003–2004*, which was conducted jointly by the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities of the Slovak Republic, the Institute for Public Affairs, the Social Policy Analysis Centre and the Regional Centre for Roma Issues. Information about the project is available at http://www.ivo.sk/projekty_nm_en.htm#7 (accessed 20 November 2007) and http://www.government.gov.sk/romovia/list_faktov.php (accessed 3 October 2006).

⁸ Established by B. Vaňo, using data collected by INFOSTAT – VDC. B. Vaňo, “The Demographics of Roma Children,” in Andrej Salner (ed.), *Roma Children in the Slovak Education System*.

⁹ Education Support Program, *Monitoring Education for Roma 2006: A Statistical Baseline for Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe*, Budapest: OSI 2006.

Table 1. Population age structure disaggregated by gender – 31 December 2005

Age	Men	Women	Total
Total population	2,615,872	2,773,308	5,389,180
3–6	108,008	102,866	210,874
3–6 (%)	4.13	3.71	3.91
7–10	120,737	114,609	235,346
7–10 (%)	4.62	4.13	4.37
11–14	147,700	141,539	289,239
11–14 (%)	5.65	5.10	5.37
15–18	164,481	157,649	322,130
15–18 (%)	6.29	5.68	5.98

Source: Slovak Statistics Office

As estimates for the overall Roma population vary, so do estimates for the school-age population. According to the Government's *Concept for the Integrated Education of Roma Children and Young People, Including Development of Secondary and University Education* (hereafter, *Roma Education Concept*), of an estimated 380,000 Roma in Slovakia, the share of school-age Roma children up to 14 years old is 43.6 per cent.¹⁰

Research has also been conducted on residential patterns among Roma. A study published in 2004 reported that there were 132,000 Roma children aged 0–14 in 2002, accounting for 33.8 per cent of the Roma population. Of this total, those living in segregated settlements accounted for up to 40 per cent, meaning some 50,000 children, and those from partially integrated communities represented 33 per cent, meaning some 65,000. The ratio of children to adults living in communities described as integrated (some 15,000 children) is lower and approaches that of the majority population.¹¹

¹⁰ Ministry of Education, *Koncepcia integrovaného vzdelávania rómskych detí a mládeže, vrátane rozvoja stredoškolského a vysokoškolského vzdelávania* (Concept for the Integrated Education of Roma Children and Young People, Including Development of Secondary and University Education), 2004, available at http://www.government.gov.sk/dokumenty/conception_of_Roma_children_and_young_%20people.doc (accessed 19 October 2006) (hereafter, MoE, *Roma Education Concept*).

¹¹ B. Vaňo, "The Demographics of Roma Children," in Andrej Salner (ed.), *Roma Children in the Slovak Education System*, Bratislava: SGI, 2004, p. 27.

The variation in children's population size depending on type of dwelling was confirmed in a recent UNDP survey,¹² where children (aged 0–14) constituted 39.4 per cent of the total sample. In segregated localities, children constituted 43.6 per cent of the population, in separated parts of towns and villages the figure was 38.6 per cent, and those children living in integrated housing accounted for 35.2 per cent. In all three groups, the ratio of girls to boys approached 50 per cent. Of the total of children aged 0–14 in the sample, children aged 0–5 accounted for 39 per cent and those aged 6–14 constituted 48.3 per cent. This implies that there is a higher density of school-age Roma children in segregated settings.

One of the key Government documents, the 2001 *Concept for Educational Development in the Slovak Republic for the Next 15–20 Years*,¹³ based on data from 2000, states that there are 1,231,000 children and pupils, 23 per cent of the total population of Slovakia.¹⁴ Of this group, some 13.1 per cent are enrolled in pre-school, 54.6 per cent in primary schools, 22.6 per cent in secondary schools, 2.5 per cent in special schools of all levels, and finally 7.2 per cent in higher education institutions.¹⁵

In the long term, the overall national population of children in pre-school has been in decline: in 1990, children in pre-school represented 4.85 per cent of the total population. At the time that the study was published in 2000, the prediction for that year was that the proportion would drop to 3.35 per cent and will further decrease to 3 per cent by 2010.¹⁶

According to a 2002 report on primary schools, there has been a decrease of 6.71 per cent (from 671,706 to 626,645) in the number of children enrolled in primary education between the years 1999 and 2001.¹⁷

¹² United Nations Development Programme, *Report on the Living Conditions of Roma in Slovakia, 2006*, Bratislava, 2007 (hereafter, UNDP, *Report on the Living Conditions of Roma in Slovakia*). Note: this survey was based on a total sample size of 3,769 Roma. Locations were selected on the basis of a typology established by the sociological mapping of Roma communities. Each one of the three settlement types was represented by 30 localities, in each of which 8 households were interviewed for the survey.

¹³ Ministry of Education, *Koncepcia rozvoja výchovy a vzdelávania v v Slovenskej republike na najbližších 15–20 rokov (projekt "MILÉNIUM")* (Concept for Educational Development in the Slovak Republic for the Next 15–20 Years (Millennium Project)), 2001, p. 4, available in Slovakian at <http://www.fns.uniba.sk/~cps/dokumenty/MILENIUM.pdf> (hereafter, MoE, *Concept for Educational Development*).

¹⁴ These figures include higher education.

¹⁵ MoE, *Concept for Educational Development*, p. 4.

¹⁶ Institute of Information and Prognoses on Education (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva, hereafter, ÚIPŠ), *Medziokresné porovnanie vývoja vybraných ukazovateľov o materských školách v Slovenskej republike v rokoch 1991–2000* (Selected Indicators for Pre-schools 1991–2000), 2000, available at <http://www.uips.sk/rs/index.html> (accessed 5 June 2007).

¹⁷ ÚIPŠ, *Analýza vývoja siete základných škôl v SR v období rokov 1998–2001*.

Secondary education accounted for 16.8 per cent of enrolment in 2001, where 37.5 per cent of students attended general high schools (*gymasia*), 44.0 per cent technical secondary schools (SOŠ), 44.0 per cent vocational secondary schools (SOU), and 1.8 per cent special secondary schools (ŠZŠ).¹⁸

2.2.2 Roma children

The authors of a 2002 survey report commissioned by the Government and undertaken by the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre in Prešov (hereafter, MPC Prešov) state that there was an average increase in the number of Roma children enrolled in primary education of 6 per cent between 1996 and 2000. In 1996 the proportion of Roma children enrolled in their first year of compulsory schooling was 11.12 per cent. The proportion of Roma children enrolled in their ninth year of compulsory education in the school year 2000/2001 was 6.83 per cent.¹⁹

The estimated number of children enrolled in compulsory education at the end of 2002 was 732,300 children, of whom 99,400 (13.6 per cent) were Roma.²⁰ Research suggests that by 2025 the proportion of Roma children will rise from 14 per cent (in 2002) to 17 per cent.²¹

¹⁸ MoE, *Concept for Educational Development*.

¹⁹ Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, *Vyhodnotenie prieskumu o postavení rómskeho dieťaťa a žiaka vo výchovno-vzdelávacom systéme SR* (Evaluation of the Survey on the State of the Roma Child and Pupils in the Educational System), 2002 (hereafter, Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, *Evaluation of the Survey on the State of the Roma Child and Pupils in the Educational System*). Note: survey data are from 2000–2001. The aim of the survey was to establish the number of Roma children enrolled in pre-schools and primary schools in Slovakia in 2000–2001, to establish the number of Roma children enrolled in secondary schools in the Prešov and Košice regions, to collect data on the composition of pupils in schools, school results, attendance, behaviour, and the conclusion of compulsory schooling, and to collect data on the personal capacity of schools, teacher competence and further education of teachers. Quantitative data was obtained from responses from 73 out of the contacted 79 municipalities. Further qualitative and quantitative data for key education indicators were collected in fewer schools, via questionnaires answered by staff (pre-school, primary and secondary school) from schools with varying concentrations of Roma children in the Prešov and Košice regions. The selection of these schools was random, and the sample characterised by a varying proportion of Roma pupils was established by the municipal education officers.

²⁰ B. Vaňo, “The Demographics of Roma Children,” in Andrej Salner (ed.), *Roma Children in the Slovak Education System*, Bratislava: SGI, 2004

²¹ B. Vaňo, “The Demographics of Roma Children,” in Andrej Salner (ed.), *Roma Children in the Slovak Education System*, Bratislava: SGI, 2004.

Roma children in pre-school

The majority of children enrolled in pre-school are aged three to five. The highest enrolment is for children aged five from 72 per cent in 1995 to 84.1 per cent in 2002.²²

Table 2. Enrolment rate in pre-school (national) in 2002

Age	3 –	3	4	5	6 +
2002 %	17.7	57.5	70.0	84.1	37.0
2005 %		58.48	71.7	83.85	

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses on Education of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva, hereafter ÚIPŠ)

While there are no comparative data available for Roma children, existing data suggest that Roma children enrolling in pre-school tend to be older, mainly five and six years old.

The following table shows the distribution of Roma children in pre-school disaggregated by age for several regions in eastern Slovakia:²³

Table 3. Share of Roma children enrolled in pre-school according to age

Age	3 –	3	4	5	6	6 +	Deferred enrolment
Number of children	9	45	121	299	166	34	100
%	1.16	5.81	15.63	38.63	21.45	4.39	12.92

Source: MPC Prešov 2002

Slovakia attains an overall average of 90 per cent pre-school enrolment (GER).²⁴ The 2007 “Draft Concept of Pre-school Education”²⁵ states that the 2005 enrolment of 5-

²² ÚIPŠ, *Kvanitatívna prognóza školstva (do roku 2025)* (A Quantitative Prognosis of Schooling (up to the Year 2025)), 2003 (hereafter, ÚIPŠ, *A Quantitative Prognosis of Schooling*).

²³ Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, 2002 survey report. Note: the survey analysed data from the school year 2000/2001. The sample size of children enrolled in pre-school was 2,490; for Roma children it was 774 or 31.08 per cent.

²⁴ MoE, *Concept for Educational Development*.

²⁵ Ministry of Education, *Návrh Konceptie v oblasti predškolskej výchovy v nadväznosti na prípravu detí na vstup do základnej školy* (Draft Proposal for a Concept of Pre-school Education with Relation to Enrolment in Primary Schools), 2007 (hereafter, MoE, *Concept of Pre-school Education*).

year-old children in their last year of pre-school was 91.11 per cent, specifying that lower enrolment rates such as 72.26 per cent to 84.86 per cent were found for certain regions in central and eastern Slovakia.²⁶

Table 4. National net enrolment rate in pre-school, 2005

Total	Boys	Girls
0.73	0.73	0.73

Source: Calculation based on data from ÚIPŠ and the Slovak Statistics Office (NER – children aged 3–5 enrolled in pre-school / total of children aged 3–5)

Enrolment of Roma children in pre-school varies by location and is generally considered to be low. The 2003 report of the Ministry of Education on “The Current State of Schooling of Roma Children and Students” (hereafter, Ministry of Education, 2003 Report) stated that there was a 25 per cent enrolment of Roma children aged 3–5.²⁷

According to the 2002 MPC Prešov report, of the total of 128,918 children enrolled in pre-school, Roma children represented only 3.41 per cent (4,391 children).²⁸ The rate of Roma children enrolled in the final year of pre-school (before enrolling in primary education) was 5.35 per cent. The report acknowledges that this rate is highly unsatisfactory when compared to the proportion of Roma in the first year of primary school, when 11.12 per cent children enrolled.

Poor enrolment of Roma children is often attributed to Roma parents’ low commitment to education, although other reporting has demonstrated that financial constraints may be another factor inhibiting access to and enrolment in pre-school education.²⁹ The regional education office in Košice included an appeal to school officials to raise public awareness of – and parents’ interest in – pre-school, “at least about its final year and at least for half-day”, among parents whose children would

²⁶ The regions of Banská Bystrica, Prešov and Košice, which – as stated in the 2003 document published by the Ministry of Education *The Current State of Schooling of Roma Children and Students* (preliminary information) – are also locations with a high concentration of primary school Roma children.

²⁷ Ministry of Education, *Súčasný stav vo výchove a vzdelávaní rómskych detí a mládeže* (The Current State of Schooling of Roma Children and Students), Bratislava, 2003 (hereafter, MoE, *Current State of Schooling*).

Note: uses data from Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, 2002 survey report.

²⁸ According to official educational statistics collected by ÚIPŠ, there were 15,4270 children enrolled in pre-school in the school year 2000/2001.

²⁹ See Section 4 of this report, and the study on pre-school education in Slovakia in Education Support Program, *Experiences of the Roma Education Initiative: Documentation Studies Highlighting the Comprehensive Approach*, Budapest: Education Support Program (ESP) of the Open Society Institute (OSI), 2007.

qualify as children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.³⁰ Institutional barriers to Roma enrolment in pre-school include, among other things, the lack of available places or schools, as well as the costs associated with schooling (see Section 4).

Because pre-schools are funded by municipal budgets, in disadvantaged areas there may be less interest in establishing pre-schools, and less capacity to do so. It has been recognised that municipalities are reluctant to set up pre-schools without financial contribution from the parents. In such cases it is of little importance that school directors are allowed to officially lower or waive fees for children in the final pre-school preparatory class.

Roma children in primary school

Given the overall long-term population decrease, the annual number of children enrolling in the first grade of primary school has also been declining. Between 1989 and 2003, there has been a decrease of 33 per cent.

The national average age of enrolment in the first grade of primary school is six, seven for children with deferred enrolment (deferment may be due to a birthday falling between September and December or due to them being assessed as not having reached the necessary required maturity). According to the Ministry of Education 2003 report, Roma children account for 48.16 per cent of all deferrals of enrolment in primary schools,³¹ meaning that it is not uncommon for Roma children to enrol one year later than the official age. The report also states that very few deferrals are made for Roma children who attended pre-school. A limited survey of the zero year showed that in the school year 2000/2001 there were 759 Roma children aged six, 247 aged seven, and 51 over the age of seven.³²

The figure of 8.28 per cent, proposed in the 2002 MPC Prešov report, is widely cited as representative of the proportion of Roma children enrolled in primary schools.³³

³⁰ Education Office of the Košice region, *Pedagogicko-organizačné pokyny pre školy, školské zariadenia a ich zriaďovateľov v zriaďovateľskej a územnej pôsobnosti Krajského školského úradu v Košiciach na školský rok 2005–2006* (Pedagogical-Organisational Guidelines for Schools for the School Year 2005–2006).

³¹ Deferrals are granted based on a written request made by the parents or the advisory pedagogical centre. The school director advises the parents to enrol the child in pre-school. Based on Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education and School Self-governance and on the change and supplement to some acts (zákon NR SR č. 596/2003 Z. z. o štátnej správe v školstve a školskej samospráve a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov), Art. 5, para. 3, line b/.

³² Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, 2002 survey report.

³³ Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, 2002 survey report, data for the school year 2000/2001. The figure is also quoted in the 2003 Ministry of Education report *The Current State of Schooling of Roma Children and Students*. The 8.28 per cent represents 47,701 Roma children out of a total of 576,331 children enrolled in primary schools. According to official educational statistics collected by ÚIPŠ, there were a total of 651,273 children enrolled in primary schools in Slovakia in 2000–2001.

The 2006 MPC Prešov follow-up survey stated that there was a much higher proportion of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in primary school: the total share of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds³⁴ in Grades 0–4 is 20.58 per cent, while the share is even higher for regions in eastern Slovakia: in Košice it is 32.23 per cent, in Prešov 26.18 per cent, and in Banská Bystrica 24.37 per cent.³⁵ The share of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds between the fifth and the ninth grade is 11.68 per cent. This compares to a share of 19.02 per cent across the Košice region, 14.99 per cent in the Banská Bystrica region, and 13.76 per cent in the Prešov region. The national share of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in the preparatory Grade 0 is 86.56 per cent.

The following table shows the proportion of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in Grades 0–9 from the total number of children in Grades 0–9:³⁶

Table 5. Percentage of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in Grades 0–9, from the total number of children in Grades 0–9

Grade	0	1	2	3	4	0–4	5	6	7	8	9	5–9	Total
%	86.56	23.67	19.46	18.16	17.07	20.58	16.09	13.62	11.78	9.92	6.92	11.68	15.49

Source: MPC 2006

³⁴ Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, Správa o výsledkoch prieskumu o postavení dieťaťa a žiaka zo sociálne znevýhodneného prostredia v školskom systéme v Slovenskej republike (Report on the Results of the Survey on the State of a School and Pupils from Socially Disadvantaged Backgrounds in the Slovak Educational System), 2006. In the 2006 report, Roma children were referred to as pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. They were identified by school directors and teachers. The MoE Roma Education Concept defines pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds according to 5 criteria: a) at least one parent takes up social benefits; b) at least one parent is unemployed; c) the highest attained level of education of at least one parent is primary education; d) substandard living and hygienic conditions (e.g. lack of space for home learning, lack of own bed, no electricity); e) the mother tongue of the child is different from the official teaching language. Pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds fulfil at least three of the above criteria.

³⁵ Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, 2006 survey report. Of the total sample for this survey, children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds formed 15.49 per cent, that is 36,754 individuals. The total survey sample was 237,229 enrolled children, which is 42.72 per cent from the total number of children enrolled in the school year 2004/2005 (official data by ÚIPŠ). Within Grades 1–4 the representation of the survey sample was 43.73 per cent and within Grades 5–9 it was 41.99 per cent. The representation (compared to official ÚIPŠ data) of this sample was higher for the Prešov and Košice regions, where it was 68.94 per cent.

³⁶ The disproportion in the share of children from socially disadvantaged background between the grades of primary education and the grades corresponding to the lower secondary school level may be, to a great extent, caused by the high rates of Roma children enrolled in the zero year (Grade 0).

The highest concentration of primary school pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is in eastern and central Slovakia in the Košice, Prešov and Banská Bystrica regions, accounting for 85.86 per cent of the total of all socially disadvantaged pupils represented in the survey. In eastern Slovakia alone, the share is 73.54 per cent. While there are no education statistics disaggregated by urban and rural environments, it may be noted that the above regions remain largely rural, with the exception of a few cities.

Roma children in secondary schools

There are no representative official data to assess the real enrolment of Roma children in secondary schools. A survey undertaken by the State School Inspectorate in 2002–2003 in primary schools with considerable proportions of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds concluded that not one continued to study at a general high school, and only fewer than 20 per cent proceeded to vocational schools. As for special schools, about half of these pupils proceeded to special secondary schools.³⁷

Table 6. Gross enrolment rates, national, 2005

			Primary				Secondary					
2005	Pre-school	GER	lower primary	GER	lower secondary	GER	Secondary overall (general, professional, vocational)	GER	Secondary general (general)	GER	Secondary professional and vocational	GER
Age group	3–5	3–5	6–10	6–10	11–14	11–14	14–17	14–17	14–17	14–17	14–17	14–17
SR	141,814	91	226,964	78	307,183	106	318,864	110	99,758	31	219,106	69
Urban	81,462	52	127,074	44	192,385	67	308,479	97	98,719	31	209,760	66
Rural	60,352	39	99,890	34	114,798	40	10,389	3	1,039	33	9,346	3
Boys	73,343	92	116,328	78	157,658	107	159,400	98	41,557	26	117,843	73
Girls	68,471	91	110,636	78	149,525	106	159,464	103	58,201	38	101,263	65
Note: GER urban and rural areas is calculated as N enrolled (age group) / total (age group); GER for girls/boys is calculated as N girls/boys enrolled (age group) / total of girls/boys (age group)												

Source: Calculated using combined data from ÚIPŠ and SU

There are no available data to establish the share of Roma children who have never attended school. As pointed out in the REF report, it can be expected that some

³⁷ Roma Education Fund, *Needs Assessment Study for the Roma Education Fund, Background Paper Slovak Republic*, November 2004, available at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTROMA/Resources/NAReportFinalSlovakia.pdf> (accessed 9 November 2007) (hereafter, REF, *Needs Assessment*).

children's enrolment has been disrupted time and again by the migration of their families.³⁸

No information on the number of Roma children enrolled in "informal" or NGO-operated pre-schools is available.

2.3 Retention and completion

The national average number of years spent in pre-school is two to three (age 3–5). Table 7 shows that children aged 3–5 account for the highest rate of enrolment:

Table 7. Percentage of children enrolled in pre-school out of the total population in the relevant age group, 1993–2006

Age/year	2	3	4	5	6	7	3–5
1993 (2)	13.91	49.43	64.31	75.03	30.26 (3)	.	63.1
1994 (2)	12.48	47.41	61.68	74.24	28.41 (3)	.	61.11
1995 (2)	11.59	43.52	55.63	71.83	28.66 (3)	.	57.21
1996 (2)	11.81	46.41	59.74	74.01	32.03 (3)	.	60.36
1997 (2)	11.54	50.22	64.14	78.53	31.48 (3)	.	64.83
1998 (2)	12.38	52.72	67.23	81.17	33.35 (3)	.	67.89
1999 (2)	14.03	54.25	68.46	83.38	33.7 (3)	.	69.18
2000	14.45	53.95	67.9	83.29	34.47	0.55	68.56
2001	16.12	55.59	67.94	81.26	34.78	0.7	68.53
2002	17.65	57.06	69.39	83.25	35.78	0.87	70.07
2003	18.61	59.83	71.07	83.84	36.4	0.82	71.76
2004	20.26	59.83	72.88	83.86	36.46	0.88	72.56
2005	16.14	58.48	71.7	83.85	35.73	0.83	71.62
2006 (5)	14.73	59.98	72	82.26	36.2	0.8	71.37
(2) – excluding special schools; (3) – % of 6-year olds and older children enrolled in pre-school out of the total population aged 6; (4) – % of 7-year olds and older children enrolled in pre-school out of the total population aged 7; (5) – preliminary data							

Source: ÚIPŠ

Given the low enrolment of Roma children in pre-school in general, it is possible to assume that the average number of years in pre-school for Roma who attend pre-school (if at all) is one to two years maximum.

³⁸ REF, *Needs Assessment*.

Compulsory education in Slovakia lasts 10 years (age 6–16).³⁹ For children who do not have to repeat a grade within the 1–9 grade system of primary and lower secondary schools, this implies at least one year of studies at an upper secondary school level.

With regard to Roma children, a concern is frequently voiced that a great proportion conclude their compulsory education period without ever completing Grades 5–9, and for some not even Grade 5. Table 8 shows the percentage of Roma children in primary schools, based on the number of years in compulsory education, in the school year 2000/2001. At least 62.44 per cent of Roma children end their compulsory education reaching no higher than Grades 1–9 of primary school.⁴⁰ The 2006 MPC report states that out of a sample of Roma students who, in 2001, concluded the ninth grade,⁴¹ some 45 per cent continued their studies at the secondary school level.

Table 8. Children in Grades 0–9 in 2001, disaggregated by the number of years spent in education

Year of compulsory education spent in primary school	Total	Roma	% of Roma
First	54,834	6,095	11.12
Second	56,814	5,614	9.88
Third	57,118	5,343	9.35
Fourth	60,435	4,955	8.20
Fifth	55,152	4,636	8.41
Sixth	56,397	4,625	8.20
Seventh	57,500	4,618	8.03
Eighth	59,029	4,489	7.60
Ninth	60,174	4,108	6.83
Tenth	3,086	1,927	62.44
Total	576,331	47 701	8.28

Source: MPC Prešov 2002 survey report

³⁹ Defined by Zákon č. 29/1984 o sústave základných a stredných škôl (Act No. 29/1984 Coll. on the System of Primary and Secondary Schools), last amended in 2004 (The Education Act). It lasts 10 years, 9 in lower primary school and lower secondary school and 1 at the upper secondary level.

⁴⁰ Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, *Evaluation of the Survey on the State of the Roma Child and Pupils in the Educational System*. Note: this table does not show a correlation with Grades 1–9 of primary school.

⁴¹ 25.52 per cent of the total of those who concluded their primary school studies.

According to the 2006 UNDP study, only 12.8 per cent of Roma above the age of 15 were identified as “with ongoing education”. The extent of residential integration appeared to have little effect on this proportion.⁴²

As discussed in a recent report of the Center for Education Policy entitled *School Drop-outs*, there are a number of difficulties with the term *drop-outs* when studying this phenomenon in Slovakia.⁴³ The meaning of the word is broader in Slovakia, and does not comply with the strict definitions used internationally. Consequently, detailed data on pupils leaving compulsory education without attaining full primary education are available only at a much later stage, after people have registered with employment offices. This shortcoming is at the core of long-term negligence of the problem of dropping out, and increases the difficulty of developing a prevention mechanism.

Data provided by the Slovak Statistics Office state that in 2002 early leavers accounted for only 5.6 per cent of the total population aged 18–24 (compared to 19.4 per cent in the EU). According to the National Reform Programme (*Národný program reforiem*), the ratio of early leavers between 2002 and 2005 attained values between 4.9 and 7.1 (compared to 15.7 to 16.6 in the EU).⁴⁴

Although there is no data with regard to Roma and drop-outs in Slovakia, the survey undertaken by the OSI Policy Center’s study concludes the following:

The socio-economic background of children is a relevant factor behind dropping out: 63 per cent of drop-out children in the sample came from large families with four or more children, and the monthly net income of 97 per cent of these families is low, around 20,000 SKK (€500). The educational background of parents has also proven to be a factor: parents of drop-outs have typically spent 8 years in school, with 6 per cent of fathers and 10 per cent of mothers with less than 8 years; only 1 per cent attended school for 16 years. Family support toward education is also an important indicator: 12 per cent of the parents of drop-out children agree with their child dropping out; only half of the parents of drop-outs believe that education guarantees a better future for their children, and 30 per cent do not care at all about the education of their children.⁴⁵

Seeing as a large percentage of Slovakia’s Roma are socio-economically deprived, some conclusions may be derived from this information.

⁴² UNDP, Report on the Living Conditions of Roma in Slovakia

⁴³ Center for Education Policy, *School Drop-outs – Reasons and Consequences: Monitoring of the OSI-Related Centres for Education Policy. National Report*, Bratislava, 2005.

⁴⁴ Ministry of Education, Ex ante *Evaluation of the Operational Programme Education*. 2006. Available at <http://www.minedu.sk> (accessed 20 November 2007). These figures refer to the percentage of 18–24-year-olds who have attained only the lowest possible education, meaning that they spent 8 years in school and concluded some part of the 9 grades.

⁴⁵ Education Support Program, *Monitoring School Drop-outs: Albania, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Mongolia, Slovakia, and Tajikistan*, Budapest: OSI, 2007, p. 171.

Grade repetition may be used to provide a picture of the risk of concluding the ten years of compulsory education without concluding the ninth grade.

According to the Ministry of Education, in the long term, some 2.5 per cent of the total of pupils in Slovakia repeat one or more grade and are thus likely to be 16 years old when they attend the ninth grade.⁴⁶ The following table illustrates the average rate of grade repetition in individual grades.

Table 9. Average rates of grade repetition

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Average (%) for the years 1990–2002	3.98	1.79	1.31	1.39	2.75	2.04	1.56	0.60	0.23

Source: Quantitative educational prognosis, ÚIPŠ 2003

Sources on Roma pupils provide a wide range of data on grade repetition, but all confirm it to be a significantly greater problem for them than it is for the national average. The Ministry of Education 2003 report states that the national rate of class repetition in 2001 in primary schools was 2.44 per cent, out of which 59.01 per cent was attributed to pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.⁴⁷

A survey by the State School Inspectorate using data from 2002–2003 from schools with pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds states that about 22 per cent of primary school pupils in the total sample and some 8 per cent of special school pupils repeated a grade.⁴⁸

The 2002 MPC Prešov survey found that some 6.87 per cent of primary school pupils repeated a grade. While Roma children accounted for 35.39 per cent of all children in the sample, some 17.56 per cent of them repeated a grade, which represented 93.63 per cent of the total of all children repeating a grade.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ MoE, *Current State of Schooling*.

⁴⁷ MoE, *Current State of Schooling* (preliminary information).

⁴⁸ REF, *Needs Assessment*.

⁴⁹ Note: this Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, 2002 survey report used data based on questionnaires from 78 primary schools in the Košice and Prešov regions, where Roma children accounted for 35.39 per cent of primary school children (9,790 out of 26,724). According to data from ÚIPŠ, the total of all students in 2001 was 626,645. School teachers filling in the questionnaires were asked to identify Roma children based on a thorough knowledge of the community and the child's family background.

Table 10. Proportion of Roma pupils repeating a grade, 2001

	Total	Repeating a grade	% Repeating a grade
Total sample	26,724	1,836	6.87
Roma in the sample	9,790	1,719	17.56
per cent	35.39	93.63	-

Source: MPC Prešov 2002

In 2005, MPC Prešov carried out a follow-up survey analysing a more representative sample and found that pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds accounted for 16.36 per cent of the 4.10 per cent of all pupils repeating a grade.⁵⁰ The data from this study are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Proportion of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds repeating a grade, 2005

Year 2005	Total	Repeating a grade	% Repeating a grade
Total sample	123,724	5,055	4.10
Children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds (PfDB)	27,028	4,421	16.36
per cent	21.90	87.46	-

Source: MPC Prešov 2006

However, given the lack of continuity of the two surveys caused by the inconsistency in sample size, results in the national as well as Roma children's school performance cannot be effectively compared. A source published by the Institute of Information and Prognoses on Education, comparing school performance from 1999 to 2004, suggests that there is a growing trend of pupils repeating a grade, as shown in Table 12.

⁵⁰ The Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, 2006 survey report used data from 1,030 primary schools, a total of 237,229 pupils, of which 36,754 (15.49 per cent) were pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The highest return of questionnaires was from the Prešov, Košice and Banská Bystrica regions, which are expected to have the highest concentration of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

Table 12. “Pupils from socially disadvantaged environments” repeating a grade

School year	National total	National drop-outs %	Roma drop-outs	Roma drop-outs %
1999/2000	16,203	2.42	8,948	55.22
2000/2001	15,924	2.45	9,397	59.01
2001/2002	15,017	2.4	8,633	57.49
2002/2003	15,597	2.6	9,144	58.63
2003/2004	14,813	2.57	9,811	66.23
2004/2005	14,916	2.69	9,758	65.42

Source: ÚIPŠ 2006⁵¹

Grades 1 and 5 are known to present greater pressure on pupils and are most frequently failed by Roma children.⁵² In 2006, 5.25 per cent of all children enrolled in Grade 1 repeated the grade.⁵³ For Roma children, reasons for failing these levels include low enrolment in pre-school, high numbers of absences,⁵⁴ new expectations and requirements, and adjustment to the school environment (particularly in rural areas).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that parents have asked teachers to fail their children in their last year of primary school in order to avoid compulsory enrolment in the first year of secondary education. This is due to the higher costs that parents would endure for their child to pursue higher education.⁵⁵

Table 13, based on data from 2005, shows the proportion of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds (PfSDB) repeating the first, fifth and sixth grade. The table also includes regional data.

⁵¹ M. Lipská, *Štatistické údaje k Správe o výchove a vzdelávaní rómskych detí a mládeže* (Statistical Data for the Report on the Education of Roma Children and Young People), Bratislava: ÚIPŠ, 2006.

⁵² Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, 2006 survey report.

⁵³ MoE, *Concept of Pre-school Education*.

⁵⁴ Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, 2006 survey report. Note: the report analyses the share of classes missed by children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds thus: first grade: 32.83 per cent; fifth grade: 27.77 per cent; second grade: 27.27 per cent. Total of missed classes: 23.50 per cent. Share of missed classes not excused by parents: 69.62 per cent. A number of policies were implemented to decrease truancy rates and improve pupils' attainment (see subsection 3.2).

⁵⁵ Milan Šimečka Foundation, “Desegregácia – za akú cenu? Možnosti desegregácie slovenského školstva vo vzťahu k rómskym žiakom” (Desegregation – at What Price? The Possibilities of Desegregation of the Slovak Educational System with Regard to Roma Pupils), *Interface* No. 3, 2007.

Table 13. Grade repetition among children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds

Grade	Failing to complete, national %	Failing to complete, PfSDB-1 %	Failing to complete, PfSDB-2 %	Failing to complete, PfSDB-2 % regional
1	6.65	24.71	87.95	91.45
5	3.74	18.28	78.68	84.81
6	2.9	15.98	75.19	84.48
PfSDB 1 = share of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds failing a grade / total of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.				
PfSDB 2 = share of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds failing a grade / total of children failing a grade (national).				
PfSDB 2 Regional: share of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds failing a grade in the Prešov and Košice regions / total of children failing in the Prešov and Košice regions (data for these regions are 70 per cent representative).				

Source: MPC Prešov 2006

The number of repetitions of a grade increases the risk of children concluding their tenth year of compulsory education without completing the final ninth grade of primary school. The following table provides completion data for the total of pupils concluding their primary education studies.

Table 14. Pupils who concluded primary education (Grades 1–9)

	In grades lower than 8/9	In Grades 8/9	Total of ending pupils
2001	7,963	71,799	79,762
2002	7,612	70,172	77,784

Source: ÚIPS⁵⁶

⁵⁶ ÚIPS, *A Quantitative Prognosis of Schooling*.

The following data from 2000–2001 represent the rate of completion of compulsory education at different grade levels:⁵⁷

Table 15. Pupils ending compulsory education in Grades 1–9

Number of schools	Grade	Pupils		10th year of comp. ed.	
		Total	Roma	Total	Roma
63	0	1,047	985	0	0
1,373	1	40,069	7,429	0	0
1,367	2	40,038	5,870	0	0
1,356	3	40,250	5,565	3	3
1,292	4	42,303	5,348	27	27
833	5	39,320	5,399	181	168
832	6	39,431	4,884	293	275
825	7	39,469	4,050	454	402
815	8	39,082	3,153	593	467
818	9	39,013	2,002	1,214	575

Source: Ministry of Education report 2003

Based on Table 15, which was presented in the 2003 report by the Ministry of Education, it is possible to state a number of conclusions (see above on sample size and adequate representation of the MPC Prešov 2002 survey, which provided data for the Ministry report).⁵⁸ Using these data, it can be concluded that Roma children accounted for 18.54 per cent of children in the first grade and for 13.73 per cent in the fifth grade, which is caused by many of them failing and repeating these grades. Roma children accounted for only 8.07 per cent of children in the eighth grade and only 5.13 per cent for children in the ninth grade.

Roma children accounted for 86.26 per cent of all children concluding their education between Grade 5 and Grade 8, but only 47.36 per cent of those concluding their compulsory education in Grade 9.

Of all the pupils concluding their tenth year of compulsory education before passing Grade 9, some 67 per cent were Roma. More than a quarter of Roma in Grade 9

⁵⁷ According to the Slovak Statistics Office, the number of total students enrolled in 2000 was 650,966, which means that the table provides account of some 55.3 per cent of all pupils enrolled.

⁵⁸ MoE, *Current State of Schooling*. Note: the 2003 Ministry of Education uses data from the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, 2002 survey report.

repeated the class. Some 14 per cent of Roma in Grade 8 repeated the class. Another 3.11 per cent of Roma in Grade 5 repeated the class. Almost 30 per cent of all Roma in their tenth and last year of compulsory education were in Grade 9, 24 per cent were in Grade 8, 21 per cent were in Grade 7 and 14.34 were in Grade 6. Up to 8.76 per cent were in Grade 5.

While the share of Roma children in the early grades of primary school is generally high, the higher percentage in Grades 1 and 5 can be associated with more children repeating these grades. A low proportion of Roma children attain Grades 7, 8 and 9 and conclude their compulsory education in these grades. A report from Save the Children stated that the phenomenon of early leavers among Roma children is so pronounced that only some 1 per cent of them finish secondary education.⁵⁹ There are no detailed data that would allow for a comparison of drop-out rates in segregated Roma settings with those in non-segregated settings.

Attainment levels

According to the 2001 official census data, the following are the levels of attainment for the Slovak population aged over 25: primary education (including incomplete) 24.65 per cent; secondary ISCED 3c education 32.17 per cent; ISCED 3a (general) 3.58 per cent; ISCED 3a (specialised) 25.69 per cent; higher education 10.69 per cent; no education 0.21 per cent.

In 1991, based on the 1991 official census data, a large majority of Roma, 76.68 per cent, had attained primary education, and 8.07 per cent completed apprenticeship/vocation education. Those who completed higher secondary or tertiary education accounted for fewer than 2 per cent.

The 2002 UNDP report “Avoiding the Dependency Trap” stated that 11 per cent of Roma interviewed in Slovakia claimed to have incomplete primary education; 36.8 per cent reported having completed primary education; 11.3 per cent have an incomplete apprenticeship and 31 per cent have completed an apprenticeship; 1.6 per cent have incomplete secondary education, while 6.5 per cent have completed their secondary education. Only some 0.6 per cent have higher education.⁶⁰

According to data calculated in the OSI report *Monitoring Education for Roma*, 76.8 per cent of Roma have completed primary education, which, depending on whether that is calculated using official or unofficial numbers for the Roma population, comes out as a range of between 44,025 and 244,800 people, whereas those figures for secondary education were much lower, between 8,599 and 47,813 or 15.0 per cent.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Conclusion of a Save the Children study cited in the Centre for Education Policy study *School Drop-outs – Reasons and Consequences*.

⁶⁰ UNDP, *Avoiding the Dependency Trap*, Bratislava, UNDP 2002.

⁶¹ Education Support Program, *Monitoring Education for Roma 2006*.

A more recent UNDP survey in 2006 found much lower attainment rates.⁶² Some 35 per cent of the sample (2,104 people) reported having incomplete primary education; 36.6 per cent claimed to have completed primary education. Only a third had pursued secondary education. The report suggests that educational attainment correlates with the settlement type – the degree of residential segregation. According to the report, the rate of incomplete education among people aged 15–29 is critically high, at 25.8 per cent. With regard to differences between education levels attained by men as compared to women, the report states that the educational attainment of Roma women is lower than that of Roma men. Details are presented in the tables below.

Table 16. Roma aged 15+ by level of education and settlement type

Level of education/settlement type	Segregated (%)	Separated (%)	Mixed (%)	Total (%)
Incomplete primary	44.2	37.4	23.5	35.0
Primary	36.7	31.5	41.5	36.6
Incomplete secondary	6.5	9.4	10.8	8.9
Secondary	8.5	18.1	19.1	15.2

Source: UNDP 2006 (sample size 2,104)

According to the 2001 official census data (based on self-identification), some 4.3 per cent of Roma women and 3.1 per cent of Roma men have not attended school, at least for some period.⁶³ The following table shows completion rates for Roma men and women based on data collected in the 2006 UNDP study.

⁶² UNDP, *Report on the Living Conditions of Roma in Slovakia*.

⁶³ REF, *Needs Assessment*.

Table 17. Roma aged 15+ disaggregated by level of education attained and sex

Level of education	Men (%)	Women (%)	Total (%)
Incomplete primary education	32.2	37.7	35.0
Completed primary education	33.8	39.3	36.6
Incomplete secondary education	10.4	7.5	8.9
Completed secondary education	19.2	11.4	15.2
Higher education	0.3	0.1	0.2
Special schools	4.1	3.8	3.9
Unknown	0.1	0.3	0.2
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: UNDP 2006⁶⁴

2.4 Types and extent of segregation

There are no comprehensive data available on the number of Roma segregated school or classrooms. Segregation of Roma children takes numerous forms, depending on the institution, region and local community. In many regions, special schools are viewed as Roma-only schools, and so are many mainstream schools in the vicinity of Roma settlements or in areas with a larger Roma population. Equally, classes for Roma children are established in mainstream schools, as a result either of the director's decision or even of group integration initiatives. Segregation also takes place in daily activities such as meals, when Roma children eat in separate rooms using designated plates and cutlery. There were rumours that this type of segregation has taken place in one of the locations selected as a case study for this report: at some schools in Prešov, segregation appears in the school canteen. According to Roma parents interviewed, in one primary school their children sit at separated tables. The mother of a pupil mentioned a case when a non-Roma parent came to complain that his son was "eating from a Gypsy plate".⁶⁵ This was not true, because the canteen does not have separate

⁶⁴ UNDP, *Report on the Living Conditions of Roma in Slovakia*. Sample size 2,104.

⁶⁵ Interview with a parent, 19 June 2007, case study Prešov. For each country report in this series of EUMAP reports on "Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma", three case studies were carried out to supplement and corroborate data gathered from other sources. Information from the case studies is integrated throughout the body of each country report. Annex 2 includes additional details from each of the case study sites. In Slovakia the three sites are Lučenec, Zborov and Prešov.

plates for Roma and non-Roma children. However, it was alleged that the school considered providing takeaway lunches for Roma pupils.

2.4.1 Segregated pre-schools and schools

According to the MPC Prešov 2002 survey, from a total of 154,232 children who were part of the survey and enrolled in pre-school, some 3.41 per cent (4,391 children) were Roma. The share of Roma children in 82 pre-schools varies from 50 to 100 per cent.⁶⁶ The report found that there were 31 exclusively Roma pre-schools.⁶⁷

The same survey found that, out of 576,331 pupils in the primary schools studied, some 8.28 per cent were Roma. In 178 primary schools, Roma children accounted for 50–100 per cent of all pupils.⁶⁸ There are 44 Roma-only segregated schools; 11 schools with Hungarian as the official language of instruction are also exclusively Roma.⁶⁹

Recent changes in the school network, resulting from a demographic decline and rationalisation of municipal expenditures, have brought about mergers of two or more schools into single administrative units. This situation has created further conditions for segregated schooling. Schools that formally claimed to have an ethnically diverse student body preserve separate classes or buildings with Roma children. In some instances, merging has led to significant increases in the number of Roma students within newly formed schools, which prompts parents of non-Roma students to withdraw their children.⁷⁰

While parents have the right to appeal against segregationist practices, in cases when segregated Roma classes are formed, many Roma parents may not object to this decision (as a Roma child in a segregated class may be subject to less harassment and less stress, and may have better academic results), may not be consulted or may not pay attention to the consequences of this procedure.⁷¹

⁶⁶ According to the data provided by ÚIPŠ, there were a total of 3,267 pre-schools in 2000–2001, catering for 154,270 children.

⁶⁷ Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, 2002 survey.

⁶⁸ Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, 2002 survey, p. 31.

⁶⁹ Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, 2002 survey.

⁷⁰ European Roma Rights Center, *The Impact of Legislation and Policies on School Segregation of Romani Children: A Study of Anti-Discrimination Law and Government Measures to Eliminate Segregation in Education in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia*, Budapest, 2007 (hereafter, ERRC, *Study of Anti-Discrimination Law*).

⁷¹ In 2006 the Slovak Governance Institute (SGI) published a booklet for parents entitled *Ako sa Branit* (How to Defend Oneself: Discrimination in Education), which provides case studies and tips for parents, teachers and civic activists on how to identify and act against discrimination of children (primarily children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds).

Segregated classes within schools

Research conducted for this report in several case study locations identified practices that result in *de facto* segregation of Roma children, as a result of personal choice by families and pupils. One school in Lučenec is divided into three classes, based on the children's choice. A-classes specialise in sports, B-classes specialise in language and C-classes are for the others. Usually, as Roma pupils do not choose a speciality, they enter the C-classes, which accordingly always have a higher concentration of Roma and sometimes are "Roma only". A mother reported, "When children brought [to the community centre] photos of their classes, I looked at them and asked 'Are all your classmates in the photo?'. I did not understand why there are no non-Roma children."⁷² The deputy director denied that there is any link to racial or ethnic segregation,⁷³ and no one interviewed expressed any concerns over segregation during free time or after school.

In another case study location, Zborov, classes are also divided, but the effect is more clearly to segregate Roma. There are one or two classes per grade at the primary school. The A-class is a non-Roma class; the B-class is a Roma class. In some grades they have C-classes, which are special classes for children with disabilities and are exclusively attended by Roma. If there is a non-Roma pupil with a learning disability, the child is put into the A-class and is individually integrated. Only rarely are Roma pupils placed in non-Roma classes – mainly if they attended pre-school. In such cases there have been protests from non-Roma parents, who do not want their children to sit with Roma.⁷⁴

There are differences in the curriculum between the Roma and non-Roma classes, according to the deputy director in Zborov. In Roma classes they reduce the curriculum by 30 per cent, which is the extent to which the curriculum may be modified. An NGO representative noted that the difference is rooted in the teacher's approach, which tends to focus only on those Roma children who are good students.⁷⁵

According to the representative of an NGO in Zborov, there is also segregation in extracurricular activities: "When there are too many children interested in some courses, they create two groups – one of them Roma and one of them non-Roma."⁷⁶ The deputy director of the primary school explained this as placing children into groups according to the classes that they attend, but she also said that there are mixed courses.

⁷² Interview with a parent, 7 June 2007, case study Lučenec.

⁷³ Interview with the deputy director for second-level classes, the primary school on Kubíniyho Street, 7 June 2007, case study Lučenec.

⁷⁴ Interviews with parents, 12 June 2007, and the deputy director of the Zborov primary school, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

⁷⁵ Interview with an NGO representative, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

⁷⁶ Interview with an NGO representative, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

2.4.2 Special schools

Overall, Roma children are 28 times more likely than non-Roma to be transferred to special schools, and recent estimates show about 3,176 Roma children enrolled in primary-level special schools.⁷⁷ The inconsistency of the data makes it difficult to determine the exact proportion of Roma children enrolled in primary-level special needs schools (out of the total Roma primary school enrolment).⁷⁸ Nevertheless, this appears significant given the low number of total Roma enrolment in primary education.

There is reason to believe that there are deficiencies in the special pedagogy diagnosis of children at the entry level, due to the high number of Roma children represented in these types of schools. Critics have stated that testing procedures disregard the specific situation of the Roma, including a language barrier, with tests measuring the command of the Slovakian language, vocabulary and communication skills. Others have asserted that countries in the region lack national definitions of disability, or relate it to the socio-cultural background of the child, thus contributing to discriminatory practices.⁷⁹ The combination of factors such as geographical segregation and low pre-primary enrolment has often resulted in Roma children being assessed as not fulfilling the “mental capacity” criterion when tested and so being placed in special schools (see Section 4.5).

According to the Government’s 2001 *Millennium Concept* (see Section 3.2), some 30,472 children, that is, 3.7 per cent of all children aged 6–16, attended special schools. In 2005, there were a total of 30,566 children (12,778 girls) placed in special schools at different levels; of this number 761 (304 girls) were in pre-school; 24,349 (10,198 girls) were in primary schools, 5,456 (2,276 girls) were in secondary schools.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ M. Vašečka, M. Jurásková and T. Nicholson (eds.), *A Global Report on Roma in Slovakia*, Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava: IVO, 2003.

⁷⁸ There are discrepancies between the official and unofficial estimates of the Roma population.

⁷⁹ UNICEF, Innocenti Research Centre, *Innocenti Insight Children and Disability in Transition in CEE/CIS and the Baltic States and OECD*, Paris, 2005, Centre for educational research and innovation, available at <http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/Disability-eng.pdf> (accessed 19 November 2007).

⁸⁰ ÚIPŠ, *Statistical Yearbook 2005–2006*, available at <http://www.uips.sk/statis/index.html> (accessed 19 November 2007).

Table 18. Special schools for children with special educational needs (SEN) in 2006–2007

	Number of schools	Number of pupils		
		Total	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Pre-school	41	814	60.32	39.68
Primary and special primary	233	25.106	58.00	42.00
Secondary overall (general, technical, technical vocational, vocational, practical)	102	5470	58.35	41.65

Source: ÚIPŠ, unofficial, most recent data for 2006–2007

While the number of children in mainstream schools is declining, that of special schools is on the increase. A great majority of special schools are located in the Prešov region, correlating with the density of the Roma population as well as the density of informal Roma settlements. Placement of Roma children in special schools has been identified as the most common segregating practice and was widely criticised as institutional racism.⁸¹ According to data by ÚIPŠ, in 2001 some 62.4 per cent of the population of Roma children attended special schools, as compared to 3.1 per cent of the national total of school-age children.⁸² Some sources claim that up to 80 per cent of all children in special schools are Roma.⁸³

A UNDP 2006 survey confirmed the growing number of Roma children placed in special schools as well as a higher share of children living in segregated localities being placed in special schools.⁸⁴ Table 19 shows an increase in the rate of children (up to 15 years old) placed in special schools compared to the older generations. The distinction between “segregated” and “separated” schools is drawn from the typology established in the *Sociographical Mapping of Roma Communities* study.

⁸¹ See the European Roma Rights Center, *Stigmata: Segregated Schooling of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, a Survey of Patterns of Segregated Education of Roma in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia*, Budapest, 2005, available at <http://www.errc.org/db/00/04/m00000004.pdf> (accessed 7 November 2007) (hereafter, ERRC, *Stigmata*).

⁸² ÚIPŠ data quoted in J. Tomatová, *Na vedľajšej koľaji. Je proces zaraďovania rómskych detí do špeciálnych základných škôl znevýhodňujúcim činiteľom?* (Sidetracked: Is the Process of Placing Roma Children in Special Primary Schools a Disadvantaging Factor?), Bratislava: SGI, 2004 (hereafter, Tomatová, *Sidetracked*).

⁸³ REF, *Needs Assessment*.

⁸⁴ UNDP, *Report on the Living Conditions of Roma in Slovakia*.

Table 19. Increase in the share of children placed in special schools

	Segregated (%)	Separated (%)	Mixed (%)
Roma, aged up to 15 enrolled in special schools (a/)	14.8	11.4	8.7
B/ Aged 15 to 29 who attended special schools (b/)	8.1	6.3	8.0
Aged 30 to 49 who attended special schools (c/)	0.7	1.4	3.5
Aged 50 + (d/)	1.0	0.7	1.4

Source: UNDP 2006 (sample size for a/ – 1,665; for b/+c/+d/ – 2,104)

For many Roma parents, special schools present an acceptable option. For many, there are more decisive factors than the status of education gained by their child: these include greater proximity of special schools to their place of residence, likeliness of enrolment of other members of the family and community in the same school, a generally correct expectation that children will score better in special schools, anticipation of a friendlier environment and smaller classes. It has been documented that many Roma parents are also likely to rely upon the alleged expert opinions of the school psychologist who recommends placement in a special school, or that of a special school representative whose interest it is to increase the number of students in the school in question.⁸⁵

According to a recent report by the European Roma Rights Center, the normative funding for a child in a remedial school is at least as attractive as for that being integrated into a mainstream school, and therefore there is a greater incentive for special schools to retain their students and equally, less power on behalf of Roma families to insist their children enter mainstream schools. In the absence of systematic targeted measures to integrate Roma children from the special schools into mainstream schools, the current legislative and financial provisions are unlikely to have any significant impact on the patterns of school segregation of Roma in special schools.⁸⁶

2.4.3 Zero year

From January 2003, the zero year can also be viewed as a specific form of catch-up class. These classes are generally created for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds who, given the social and linguistic environment, are judged to be unable to successfully participate and pass Grade 1 in one year.⁸⁷ The establishment of these

⁸⁵ ERRC, *Study of Anti-Discrimination Law*. Background report on Slovakia by Peter Draľ.

⁸⁶ ERRC, *Study of Anti-Discrimination Law*.

⁸⁷ MoE, *Current State of Schooling*.

classes is within the discretion of each school. As of January 2006 the normative funding for a pupil in Grade 0 is 170 per cent of the standard per-pupil funding.⁸⁸ While the impact of these classes is widely viewed as positive (see subsection 3.2), the fact that most zero year classes are primarily or exclusively Roma raised questions about this approach to integration.

In Zborov, one of the case study locations analysed for this report, most Roma children are placed in the zero year, although exceptionally one or two Roma children who have attended pre-school go directly to the first grade. According to the deputy director of the Zborov primary school, most Roma children come to school unprepared: “They do not even know how to hold a pencil.”⁸⁹ The deputy director mentioned the importance of the zero year as a very useful tool for acclimatising Roma children to the school environment, because “the first-grade curriculum is divided into two years, and children gain communication skills and Slovak-language skills, which they do not know at the enrolment”.⁹⁰

2.4.4 Segregated classes in mainstream schools

It has been shown that segregated classes in mainstream schools may result from initiatives to integrate children with special educational needs.⁹¹ Integration of such children into mainstream schools is carried out by instruction according to individual study plans and an adapted curriculum, and takes place in mainstream or separate classes within the mainstream schools (group integration). Integration of children from special schools is supported financially by integration normative funding; in 2007 the normative funding for integrated children identified under behavioural disability was lowered from 250 per cent to 170 per cent.⁹²

The Slovak schooling system allows for a number of types of remedial classes: catch-up classes for underperforming children, and integration of children with special educational needs (SEN) either individually or into special classes within standard schools and in zero years.

⁸⁸ Government decree No. 2/2004 Coll. on the financial allocation from the State budget to primary, secondary, vocational and primary art schools and school facilities (Nariadenie vlády SR č. 2/2004 Z.z., ktorým sa ustanovujú podrobnosti rozpisu finančných prostriedkov zo štátneho rozpočtu pre základné školy, stredné školy, strediská praktického vyučovania, základné umelecké školy a školské zariadenia v znení nariadenia vlády SR č. 758/2004 Z.z. a nariadenia vlády SR č. 662/2005 Z. z.)

⁸⁹ Interview with the deputy director of the Zborov primary school, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

⁹⁰ Interview with the deputy director of the Zborov primary school, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

⁹¹ ERRC, Study of Anti-Discrimination Law.

⁹² Ministry of Education, <http://www.minedu.sk> (accessed 20 November 2007).

The creation of specialised classes in Grades 1–4 for underperforming pupils is possible upon the suggestion of the head teacher, the decision of the Pedagogical-Psychological Advisory Centres (PPACs) and upon a consultation with the legal representative of the child. Placement of children in such classes is temporary. Upon the suggestion of teachers and at the discretion of the director, children who fall behind in certain subjects may also be temporarily assigned to subject-specific catch-up study groups; this form is, however, rarely used by schools. As of January 2007, specialised transition classes can also be formed for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (see subsection 2.4.5).

In everyday practice, students in higher grades may also be reshuffled according to their performance to create more accelerated classes or, conversely, to balance out the performance of a class.

2.4.5 Transitional classes

As of January 2007 the creation of specialised classes has become an option for primary schools.⁹³ These classes are meant for children who, upon completion of the zero year, do not exhibit sufficient prerequisites for a successful continuation in the first grade, children who fail to succeed in the first grade, and children transferred from special schools where no intellectual disability has been diagnosed. No explicit statement, however, suggests the temporary nature of this arrangement. The document does not mention children placed in special classes in mainstream schools. Enforcement of this regulation was seen as a way to sustain specialised classes, called transitional classes in this context, established by the 2002 Phare project “Further Integration of Roma Children in the Educational Field and Improved Living Conditions” implemented in the period 2005–2006. Some 20 pilot transitional classes were established within 20 special schools (in partnership with 19 special schools) in which a total of 162 Roma children were taught according to a modified curriculum.⁹⁴ At the end of the project, only a few Roma children from these transitional classes were properly transferred to mainstream classes.

According to a survey by the SGI based on interviews with the schools concerned, the initiative is highly valued. Nevertheless, it is perceived that the standard teaching system is inadequate with regard to Roma children transferred from special schools,

⁹³ The creation of specialised classes is governed by Regulation No. 11/2006-R, Smernica Ministerstva školstva č. 11/2006-R.

⁹⁴ Phare 2002/000.610-03, “Further Integration of Roma Children in the Educational Field and Improved Living Conditions” implemented in the period 2005–2006 (Ďalšia integrácia rómskych detí v oblasti vzdelávania a zlepšenie životných podmienok); project name: Integration of Roma Children in Standard Primary Schools (Integrácia rómskych detí do štandardných základných škôl) also referred to as Reintegration of Children from a Socially Disadvantaged Background into Standard Primary Schools (*Reintegrácia detí zo sociálne znevýhodneného prostredia zo špeciálnych škôl do bežných základných škôl*).

which may hinder the sustainability of this specific project, or the creation of new similar initiatives: extensive curricular requirements, the high numbers of children per classroom and a lack of individual tutoring, a low number of teaching assistants and special pedagogues and low support on the part of the children's families are stated as the most challenging issues to cope with.⁹⁵

In July 2006, the Ministry of Education commissioned an experimental test project "Transition Classes in Primary Schools", running from August 2006 to August 2008.⁹⁶ The project uses diagnostic material elaborated in the Phare 2002 project and is led by the Research Institute for Child Psychology and Psychopathology.

⁹⁵ Slovak Governance Institute (SGI), "Tranzitívne triedy ako možnosť prestupu zo špeciálnych na bežné základné školy" (Transition Classes as an Option for Transfer from Special to Standard Primary Schools), *Interface* No. 2, 2006.

⁹⁶ The Slovak name of the project is "Tranzitívne triedy v základných školách".

3. GOVERNMENT EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

The Government of Slovakia has adopted a number of programmes targeting the specific problems of Roma communities, including an education strategy in 2003. In 2004, the Government elaborated its Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion (hereafter, Decade Action Plan), but like earlier policies, the Decade Action Plan fails to address the problem of segregation in special schools and classes, a major shortcoming that should be corrected. A number of subsidies for disadvantaged families exist, but one specifically aimed at keeping children in school requires that the child maintains good marks, which may encourage parents to enrol their children in special schools that are considered to be easier for children. At present, the financial normative offered to special schools is at almost the same level as that for integration into mainstream schools, which sends an ambiguous message as to the Government's commitment to integration as a policy.

Teaching assistants are working in some schools, but as there is no requirement that these assistants come from the Roma community, they may not meet the needs of Roma children in the classroom. Many do not speak Romanes; there is no information about the number of teachers who may be proficient in this language, and only limited efforts have been made to introduce Roma language and literature teaching on a small scale. Some teacher training initiatives have been developed, but the impact of their presence in the classroom should be monitored and assessed more carefully, to ensure that they are effective in practice. Slovakia has adopted comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, and a number of bodies exist to address claims of discrimination and to promote equality; however, these mechanisms have not yet proven sufficient to effectively combat discrimination against Roma. The Government should assess the capacity and mandate of these institutions, as well as their accessibility to Roma communities, with a view towards developing a more robust anti-discrimination framework to protect Roma.

3.1 Government policy documents

Slovakia adopted a number of policies aimed at improving the situation of Roma, particularly as part of the lead-up to EU membership.⁹⁷ Most recently, the Government approved the *Basic Principles of the Slovak Government's Policy to Integrate Roma Communities*⁹⁸ (hereafter, *Basic Principles*) in April 2003. This document is based on the position that the basic problem with regard to education is not the lack of access of Roma to mother-tongue education, but rather their unequal access to education *per*

⁹⁷ For an analysis of some of the earlier strategies, see EUMAP, *Monitoring the EU Accession Process: Minority Protection, Slovakia*, Budapest: OSI, 2002, available at http://www.eumap.org/topics/minority/reports/minority01-02/minority02/international/sections/slovakia/2002_m_slovakia.pdf (accessed 7 November 2007).

⁹⁸ Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, *Základné tézy koncepcie politiky vlády SR v integrácii rómskych komunit* (Basic Principles of the Slovak Government's Policy to Integrate Roma Communities), 2003, available at http://www.vlada.gov.sk/orgovanova/dokumenty/4zakladne_tezy.rtf (accessed 14 June 2006) (hereafter, Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, *Basic Principles*).

se. The document advocates the use of temporary equalising measures to improve Roma children's access to education, but does not propose any concrete measures. The document acknowledges the need to fulfil Roma children's right to education in their mother tongue, although it conceded that this would be a long-term and gradual process.

The *Basic Principles* document served as the foundation for several specific policies, including the provision of sufficient funding and capacity for Roma teaching assistants and the introduction of scholarships for socially disadvantaged children, including Roma children. It is important to note here that due to anti-discrimination policies in Slovakia, it is not possible to introduce any kind of measure, such as scholarships, targeting only Roma children.⁹⁹

In 2004, the Ministry of Education followed the Principles document with an official governmental strategy document, the Concept for the Integrated Education of Roma Children and Young People, Including Development of Secondary and University Education)¹⁰⁰ (hereafter, the Roma Education Concept). The Roma Education Concept defines its target group as follows:

Those children and juveniles of Roma origin who are perceived as having problems in terms of learning and attitudes, which evolved from dysfunctional social conditions that had stemmed from social exclusion (i.e. poverty, insufficient education of parents, substandard housing and hygienic conditions...), i.e. those who are referred to as socially disadvantaged.¹⁰¹

The main objective of the *Roma Education Concept* is to increase this target group's educational status and achievement, and thereby subsequently its standard of living. It defines strategic goals focused on changing the existing education system and its curricula, so that schools and their teaching staff can accommodate the educational process to their pupils' needs, including matters with regard to their linguistic, social and cultural backgrounds.

No official evaluation of this concept has been adopted yet.

⁹⁹ Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, *Vyhodnotenie Základných téz koncepcie politiky vlády v integrácii rómskych komunit za rok 2003 a Priority vlády SR v integrácii rómskych komunit na rok 2004* (Evaluation of the Basic Principles of the Slovak Government's Policy to Integrate Roma Communities for 2003 and Priorities of the Slovak Government with Regard to Integration of Roma Communities for 2004), 2004, available at [http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/EB53B6A8FC8B67DCC1256E890041057A/\\$FILE/Zdroj.html](http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/EB53B6A8FC8B67DCC1256E890041057A/$FILE/Zdroj.html) (accessed 14 June 2006).

¹⁰⁰ MoE, *Roma Education Concept*.

¹⁰¹ MoE, *Roma Education Concept*, p. 2.

The main goals defined by the *Roma Education Concept* are as follows:

- to reform the management of the educational process, such that local social and cultural conditions can be respected, by creating and implementing a school curriculum (school decentralisation);
- to prepare teachers to be a decisive factor in the implementation of the Strategy, by enabling them to gain expert/technical qualifications that would enable them to use appropriate methodologies and pedagogies within the context of the educational needs of particular individuals in the target group;
- to create an attractive educational environment for the target group, which respects their social, cultural and language particularities, in such a way as to contribute to the improvement of their school attendance;
- to carry out curriculum transformation, such that schools are given the opportunity of creating the school curricula, to better suit the educational needs of a given group of pupils;
- to change the attitudes of the majority with regard to minorities and *vice versa*, through intensive school and out-of-school education (leisure time activities for youth, campaigns etc.);
- to support the ongoing process of decentralisation;
- to provide the appropriate conditions for research, as a prerequisite for the building of an effective educational system;
- to act more effectively for the Roma minority, by promoting positive examples of Roma pupils and students in the field of education.¹⁰²

The *Roma Education Concept* defines a number of concrete measures to be adopted at all levels of the education system (pre-schools, primary schools, secondary schools and universities), in order to attain the defined objectives. The *Roma Education Concept* does not specifically identify the reasons behind Roma children's disadvantaged access to education, but it acknowledges that they are often victims of practices of segregation and excessive transfers into special schools.

The main goals defined by the *Roma Education Concept* on pre-school education as follows:¹⁰³

- to adapt upbringing and education to each child;
- to give children the opportunity to choose what to learn and how;

¹⁰² MoE, *Roma Education Concept*, p. 4.

¹⁰³ MoE, *Roma Education Concept*, p. 9.

- to establish good relations with families and to support their involvement in the education of their child;
- to arrange the application of a framework programme according to the particular conditions of a school and children (school curriculum).

The main goals defined by the *Roma Education Concept* on primary education are as follows:¹⁰⁴

- to preserve and support the existence of (i) zero years of primary schools, for 6-year-old children who have not reached school maturity, and (ii) the profession of a teaching assistant;
- to create a system of equalisation measures for children from different economic, social and cultural environments in primary schools. This would focus on practical skills, such as providing an alternative curriculum, with the aim of reducing the number of pupils per class, for the purpose of providing an individualised approach to them;
- to solve issues of juvenile mothers' school attendance through legislation;
- to help to eliminate the causes of any pupil's non-fulfilment of compulsory school attendance, by working in cooperation with the teaching assistant, a social and field worker and an expert worker from the municipality office, as well as with church institutions and NGOs;
- to establish Roma language teaching, either as a mother tongue or a supporting language, in accordance with the requirements of the pupil's legal guardians and the pupil's needs.

The main goals defined by the *Roma Education Concept* on secondary education are as follows:

- to innovate study programmes in secondary pedagogical schools with the aim of enabling pupils' preparation for performing profession of a teaching assistant;
- to innovate study and teaching subjects/specialisation in secondary vocational schools – output from the Phare programme 2000 – Improvement of Conditions for the Roma in the Education System, activity 4.2.3;
- in municipalities with a high concentration of Roma to establish allocated classes of secondary vocational schools or secondary technical schools in cooperation with responsible self-government counties and county school offices according to the needs and potentials;

¹⁰⁴ MoE, *Roma Education Concept*, p. 10.

- to support establishment of associated secondary schools (boarding) on the basis of integrative tendencies and cohabitation of minorities and majorities;
- to support a project of a class opening with teaching of Roma language, literature and history at the bilingual Grammar School of J. Hronec in Bratislava;
- to support the Gandhi school project – an eight-year grammar school orientated towards information technology and foreign languages;
- to negotiate employment possibilities, especially for graduates of teaching subjects/specialisation with two-year special adapted curricula, with the Association of Employer’s Unions and Corporations of the Slovak Republic, the Slovak Trade and Business Union and the Slovak Trade and Business Chamber in business-associated entities.¹⁰⁵

The latest Government strategy is closely interconnected with the Decade of Roma Inclusion.¹⁰⁶ The National Action Plan of the Slovak Republic Regarding the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 (hereafter, Decade Action Plan) continues with the objectives and aims defined in the *Roma Education Concept*, and the goals set out in both are nearly the same, namely:

- to improve the education-related achievements of the Roma population;
- to improve the training and readiness of Roma children;
- to increase the number of Roma students attending secondary schools;
- to decrease the number of Roma children attending special primary schools;
- to promote lifelong learning for Roma with incomplete education, with the aim of enhancing their competitiveness on the labour market (including career counselling).¹⁰⁷

A major element that seems to be missing from the Government framework aimed at improving education for Roma is the overrepresentation of Roma children in special schools. One measure that could partially help to avoid that problem is the introduction of the zero year. However, it has become internationally recognised that the assessments used for placement of children in such institutions, and the procedures

¹⁰⁵ MoE, *Roma Education Concept*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁶ The “Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015”, an initiative supported by the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the World Bank, is an international effort to combat discrimination and ensure that Roma have equal access to education, housing, employment and health care. Launched in February 2005 and endorsed by nine Central and Eastern European countries, the Decade is also supported by the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Program. For further details, see the Decade website (<http://www.romadecade.org>).

¹⁰⁷ *Decade Action Plan*, p. 5.

they use, are problematic. It is a weakness in the Government's approach not to have addressed this particular problem in detail in their *Roma Education Concept* or Decade Action Plan. The Decade Action Plan outlines goals and objectives within the Decade, but does not describe any actions that will be taken to achieve those goals. It is these actions, and their implementation, that will be important to follow.

3.2 Government educational programmes

The principal strategic documents of the Ministry of Education are as follows:

- the *Concept for Educational Development in the Slovak Republic for the Next 15–20 Years* (the *Millennium Project*, 2001);¹⁰⁸
- the *National Programme of Education in the Slovak Republic* (2001).¹⁰⁹

Both documents discuss the problems of education in the Slovak Republic in rather general terms, without specifically addressing developments in the field of minority education. The *Concept for Educational Development* is a very important starting point for initiating discussion about the necessity of curricular reform. It is well known that the current educational system is not adequately prepared for providing quality education for Roma children. Curricular reform is particularly important for initiating changes in the education system that would improve the access of Roman children to quality education.

In 2002, the Government approved the *Policy Statement of the Government of the Slovak Republic*, which contained the following important statement of political will:

The Government sees the resolution of the Roma issue as a matter of priority and will continue to support specific development programmes and provide appropriate funding to ensure that the situation and integration of Roma into the society improve. The Government will continue to implement successful projects in the field of education, culture, housing and infrastructure, as well as in the social area, while paying attention to the aspects of harmonic coexistence between Roma and non-Roma citizens.¹¹⁰

The basic background material for governmental strategies targeting the education of Roma children is the Ministry of Education's 2004 analysis, *The Current State of*

¹⁰⁸ MoE, *Concept for Educational Development*.

¹⁰⁹ Ministry of Education, *National Programme of Education in the Slovak Republic*, 2001, available at <http://www.minedu.sk/DaA/2004/ZVaVzdel/VaVSR/vvasr.htm> (accessed 8 March 2007).

¹¹⁰ Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, *Policy Statement*, November 2002, available at http://www.vlada.gov.sk/dokumenty/programove_vyhlasenie_vlady-20021104_eng.rtf (accessed 15 November 2006).

Schooling of Roma Children and Young People.¹¹¹ This describes the main problems for the education of Roma children, especially the insufficient number of Roma children in pre-school education, the comparatively low educational attainment of Roma children, and their poor achievement in the early grades of primary schools, including repeating grades and high drop-out rates. The most important issues mentioned in the document are the overrepresentation of Roma children in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities. It also describes several governmental and non-governmental projects aimed at improving the situation in these areas. The publication also provided the first quantitative data on the education of Roma children, based on research conducted by the Ministry of Education in 2002. This document recommended the creation of a concept on integrated education of Roma children and youth, including the development of secondary and university education.¹¹² One of the recommended measures was to create a database providing information on projects realised by the Ministry, primary and secondary schools.¹¹³

The main government policies designed to improve the participation of Roma in education are as follows:

- subsidies for children of poorer families;
- scholarships for children of poorer families;
- the “Mother and Child” initiative, for pre-school education;
- increasing the number of zero years.

Subsidies for children of poorer families

While education in primary and secondary schools is free of charge, some costs related to attendance in pre-school must be borne by parents (see Section 4.3). The fees can be a barrier to the enrolment of Roma children in pre-schools and in mainstream primary schools.

In April 2004, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MLSAF), introduced subsidies for school meals and school aids (such as exercise books, pens and pencils), for children in pre-school, mainstream primary schools and special schools for handicapped children (in 2004–2005 not for pupils in special schools for children with mental disabilities), whose parents are in social need (receiving social benefits from the State). These contributions are given by the municipality or other school founder,

¹¹¹ Ministry of Education, *Súčasný stav vo výchove a vzdelávaní rómskych detí a mládeže* (The Current State of Schooling of Roma Children and Young People), 2004, available at http://www.minedu.sk/RS/OVaVRK/DOC/STAVVaVR/stav_vychova_vzdelavanie_romskych_deti_ziakov.rtf (accessed 3 October 2006) (hereafter, MoE, *The Current State of Schooling of Roma Children*).

¹¹² MoE, *The Current State of Schooling of Roma Children*.

¹¹³ MoE, *The Current State of Schooling of Roma Children*.

directly to the school. For school meals, the subsidy is 25 SKK per child per day (Slovakian Crowns, approximately €0.75¹¹⁴), and there is a minor required co-payment of 1–5 SKK per day by the parent. If over 50 per cent of pupils in any school are eligible for the subsidy, the subsidy is extended to cover all pupils within the school.¹¹⁵

As yet, no comprehensive and representative analysis of the impact of this measure has been elaborated. However, based on interviews with head teachers carried out for this report, as well as drawing from the conclusions advanced by the 2006 MCP Report, it would seem that this measure has had a positive impact on school attendance and school results.

Case study research conducted for this report in Lučenec, however, raises concerns about the ways in which these benefits are administered. These measures support many Roma pupils, and therefore are often considered as Roma-specific measures rather than as something helping people in material need in general. Representatives of schools say that these measures contribute to a higher attendance of children at school, but they see some deficits: “If only it would be somehow specified that if a pupil goes to school regularly, then he/she will be given the benefits. In the beginning the number of missed lessons was tracked, but now whether or not he/she comes, they get the benefits.”¹¹⁶ “I do not want to be too critical or unjust, but I think that very often the benefits go to the people, and this makes me angry, who are *sophisticatedly* in material need, those who do not deserve it. [...] When a child comes to school with 100 SKK (€3) for sweets and goes for lunch for 4 SKK (€0.12) because she/he is in material need and then when I see a mother of three children who works and therefore is not in material need...”¹¹⁷

Interviews in another case study location, Zborov, also suggest that such benefits generate strong negative feelings in the community. As elsewhere, measures enacted to help families in material need are perceived as support for Roma. The deputy director of the primary school in Zborov said that in some cases these measures are “provocation and arrogance towards white children”, because Roma children do not value things they are given for free and destroy them quickly.¹¹⁸ The consequences of these measures are harmful, according to her, because they “teach Roma that they will

¹¹⁴ The exchange is calculated at €1 = 34.6 SKK.

¹¹⁵ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Decree No. 3749/2005-II/1 on Granting Subsidies within the Powers of the Ministry (hereafter, MLSAF Decree No. 3749/2005-II/1 on Granting Subsidies).

¹¹⁶ Interview with the deputy director for second-level classes, the primary school on Kubíniyhó Street, 7 June 2007, case study, Lučenec.

¹¹⁷ Interview with the deputy director for first-level classes, the primary school on Vajanského Street, 8 June 2007, case study Lučenec.

¹¹⁸ Interview with the deputy director of the Zborov primary school, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

be given everything and do not have to do anything”.¹¹⁹ She cited the fact that many parents do not pay even 1 SKK (€0.03) for lunch as an example; in fact, a parent reported that a teacher had insulted his son by asking him if he likes his lunch for 1 crown.¹²⁰ According to the representatives of the school, these measures have not helped to reduce absenteeism, although with the additional stipends many children have necessary supplies for school, which they would not have otherwise.

Another important measure provides subsidies for children in social need to cover pre-school fees (in public pre-schools). If parents are able to prove that the family is in social need (receiving social benefits), and is therefore not able to cover all the required contributions, the pre-school head must exempt the child from the payment of fees.¹²¹ This provision is extremely important, as it potentially enables all children to attend pre-school. But again, no formal evaluation of the impact on the numbers attending pre-school has yet been published.

At the time of writing, two new policies, the *2007 Concept for Education of Roma Communities* and the *Concept for Minority Education*, are awaiting discussion by the Government.

Scholarships for poorer children

Another new measure introduced by the MLSAF is scholarships for primary school students whose family receive social benefits in 2004. The scholarship can be used to cover expenses connected with school attendance, including school meal costs, accommodation or transport from home to school and back.¹²²

The size of the scholarship depends on the achievement of the pupil in school. If the child receives an average grade of 1.5 or better (1 being excellent and 5 poor; awarded twice a year (in January and in June), she or he receives 500 SKK per month (approximately €15); for a grade of between 1.5 and 2.5, 300 SKK per month, and for pupils who raise their GPA by 0.5 with regard to the previous year, the scholarship is 200 SKK per month. To be eligible, children must not repeat the grade or show worsening behaviour (as evaluated by the teachers every school year) during the year.¹²³

The media and the Government itself have reported positive effects of these measures (especially meals, but school aids as well). In many primary schools the number of Roma children eating in school cafeterias has begun to rise, which has had a positive

¹¹⁹ Interview with the deputy director of the Zborov primary school, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

¹²⁰ Interview with a parent, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

¹²¹ Ministry of Education, Regulation No. 353/1994 on Pre-school Facilities, as amended.

¹²² Andrej Salner (ed.), *Roma Children in the Slovak Education System*, pp. 72–73.

¹²³ Information from the MLSAF website, at <http://www.employment.gov.sk/mpsvrst/internet/home/page.php?id=1752&slID=6714785664ed3a2aab285d97d3ae5f01> (accessed 23 May 2006).

effect on their school performance.¹²⁴ The positive impact of these measures was also noted in MLSAF information material.¹²⁵

Until 2006, children attending special schools for children with mental disabilities were not eligible for scholarships.¹²⁶ However, in January 2006, scholarships were extended to also include pupils from special schools. Although this appears to have removed a discriminatory element in the policy, according to primary school head teachers, the change is problematic: grades achieved in special schools are usually higher than they are in ordinary primary schools, so the linking of scholarships to grades increases the incentive for parents of Roma children to enrol their child in a special school. It appears that the only way to prevent the overenrolment of Roma children in special schools for financial reasons is to ensure the correct assessment of children prior to school enrolment, to avoid the wrong placement of children in special schools.

Increasing the number of zero years

Due to the level of difficulty of the existing curricula and the general situation in primary education, most Roma children from socially disadvantaged environments are unable to enter the educational process without additional assistance.¹²⁷ This was one of the main reasons behind the decision to introduce so-called zero years. They were first tried in the school year 1992/1993, and have since become viewed as one of the principal tools for improving the education of Roma children.

In 2002, zero years were officially enacted in an amendment to the Education Act.¹²⁸ As amended, the Act does not bind school heads to create a zero year in every school. It only creates the necessary conditions for schools that want to create a zero year. There is no obligation for the school to create such a class, even if it has a high percentage of Roma children. Zero years as defined by legislation can be created only in primary schools.

¹²⁴ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, *Informácia o dosahu a účinku zmien sociálneho systému na rómske komunity žijúce vo vybraných osadách* (Information on the Impact and Effects of the Social System Changes on Roma Communities in Selected Settlements), 24 November 2004, available at <http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/57EE8D12D5367134C1256F4E0033B6A3?OpenDocument> (accessed 9 October 2006) (hereafter, MLSAF, *Information on Impact and Effects of the Social System Changes*).

¹²⁵ MLSAF, *Information on Impact and Effects of the Social System Changes*.

¹²⁶ MLSAF, Decree No. 3749/2005-II/1 on Granting Subsidies.

¹²⁷ Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, *Prípravný – nulý ročník v základnej škole pre šesťročné deti nepripravené pre úspešný vstup do školy* (Preparatory (Zero) Grades of Primary Schools for Six-Year-Old Children Unprepared for Primary Education), an unpublished document.

¹²⁸ Education Act, 2002 amendment, Part 2, art. 6.

A positive aspect of this scheme is the fact that attending the zero year of primary school, unlike the attendance of pre-school, is obligatory, which may encourage Roma children's school attendance. If there is no zero year in school, children usually start the first grade of primary education. However, due to the fact that they often cannot catch up with other children, they often have to repeat this first grade or are placed in special schools.

However, as the zero year counts as a part of compulsory school attendance, a potential drawback is the fact that if a child later fails at least one grade, she or he will complete compulsory school attendance before entering the ninth grade of primary school. This means that the pupil will not be able to complete primary education, as pupils have to leave primary school after reaching the age of 16 or if they have attended the primary school for ten years (see also Annex 1). Importantly, completed primary education is the basic precondition for enrolling in regular secondary school.

As shown below in Table 20, in the school year 2005/2006 some 1,059¹²⁹ pupils were enrolled in 160 zero years in primary schools. It is thought that the majority of children in zero years are of Roma origin, and zero years are usually created in schools with a high percentage of Roma pupils.

Table 20. Numbers of zero year classes and pupils in zero year (2002–2005)

Year	Number of zero years	Number of pupils in zero years
2002/2003	76	970
2003/2004	155	1,780
2004/2005	166	1,999
2005/2006	160	1,059

Source: Ministry of Education¹³⁰

Prior to January 2006, schools had been obliged to ask the Ministry of Education for special financial resources if they wanted to create a zero year. Since January 2006, however, a new system of financing for zero years has been introduced, whereby schools receive funds for zero years on a per-pupil basis. This is a key change, as previously a lack of funding was one of the main reasons for the low number of zero years. In addition, the Ministry provides funds for each zero year pupil, which are equivalent to 170 per cent of the funds per pupil in other grades. It is therefore

¹²⁹ Statistics of the Ministry of Education, available at http://www.minedu.sk/FaR/FINRS/2006/WEB_2006_DATA_V3.xls (accessed 14 June 2006).

¹³⁰ Ministry of Education, internal material (based on an interview with Ms. Ondrasova, head of the Ministry's Department of Education of Roma Communities, on 8 June 2006).

expected that the number of zero years will increase rapidly in the school year 2006/2007.

Another programme, entitled “the Second Chance School”, was designed to allow drop-outs to finish their primary education. The programme has not yet been fully evaluated, but awareness of the programme is reportedly low, mainly through projects related to the employment policies of the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, even though schools themselves can implement this option with direct funding from the Ministry of Education.¹³¹

Minority Language Education

The use of minority languages in Slovakia is regulated by the Constitution and several other laws, as well as by several international conventions to which Slovakia has acceded.

The Constitution states the following:

Citizens of national minorities or ethnic groups in the Slovak Republic shall be guaranteed their full development, particularly the rights to promote their cultural heritage with other citizens of the same national minority or ethnic group, receive and disseminate information in their mother tongues, form associations, and create and maintain educational and cultural institutions. Details thereof shall be fixed by law.¹³²

Citizens of national minorities or ethnic groups shall, under provisions fixed by law, also be guaranteed the right to be educated in a minority language, the right to use a minority language in official communications, the right to participate in decision-making in matters affecting national minorities and ethnic groups.¹³³

The use of minority languages in education is regulated by the Education Act.¹³⁴ This Act establishes the right of members of ethnic minorities to receive education in their own language, to the extent necessary for their national development, at all levels and types of schools and school facilities. However, the text of the Act grants this right

¹³¹ Comment received on a draft version of this report, September 2007. Explanatory note: a draft version of this report was circulated to invite critique of the present report in draft form. Comments were received from Government offices, schools, and NGOs.

¹³² Constitution of the Slovak Republic, 3 September 1992, last amended by Constitution Law No. 323/2004 Z. z., available in English at http://www.government.gov.sk/VLADA/USTAVA/en_vlada_ustava.shtml (accessed 14 June 2006) (hereafter, the Constitution).

¹³³ The Constitution, Part II – Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, Chapter Four: The Rights of National Minorities and Ethnic Groups, art. 33 and 34.

¹³⁴ Education Act, subsection I, para. 3.

specifically only to members of the Czech, Hungarian, German, Polish, Ukrainian and Ruthenian minorities.¹³⁵

Depending on the minority language concerned, the following forms of school education are currently applied:

- Schools or classes using a minority language as the sole language of instruction – mainly for the Hungarian minority;
- Schools with a combined education, in which some subjects are taught in the native language, some subjects are taught both in native and Slovakian languages, and some in the Slovakian language;
- Schools using a minority language as the language of instruction for some subjects, with other subjects being taught in the Slovakian language – these are mainly schools/classes that include Ukrainian, Ruthenian or German language.¹³⁶

The 1998 Programme Declaration of the Slovak Government stated the following in the section on education: “The government will create conditions for the learning in the mother tongue also for the Ruthenian and Roma minority, while also increasing the quality of teaching of the State language.”

The 1999 Government-approved Strategy of the Slovak Republic to Resolve Problems of the Roma Ethnic Minority and system of measures for its implementation, first stage, states that “In accordance with demand and interest, the Roma language will be implemented as an auxiliary language or supporting language in teaching, and the teaching of the Roma language or teaching in the Roma language will be made possible (in accordance with the approved 1993 Teaching Plan of the Ministry of Education).” Teaching plans for primary schools officially approved by the Ministry of Education for the school year 2003/2004 are as follows: “The strategy for teaching Roma language, literature, culture and history, being prepared by the State Pedagogical Institute, anticipates broader introduction of the teaching of Roma language and literature in primary schools only in the year 2007. The teaching plans presented here only anticipate the introduction of teaching plan alternatives with the teaching of the Roma language.”

¹³⁵ Paragraph 3, subsection 1 of the Education Act governs the education of minorities. It states the following: “Education is conducted in the State language. 1) The right of citizens of Czech, Hungarian, German, Polish and Ukrainian (Ruthenian) (ethnicity) to education in their language shall be guaranteed to the extent corresponding to the needs of their national development.”

¹³⁶ ÚIPŠ, *The Educational System in the Slovak Republic*, Bratislava, 2005, pp. 13, 26, available in English at http://www.uips.sk/download/rs/Educational_system_in_Slovak_Republic.pdf (accessed 15 June 2006) (hereafter, ÚIPŠ, *The Educational System*).

Whether the new 2007 Concept *for Education of Roma Communities* and the new *Concept for Minority Education* will change the current situation is to be seen.¹³⁷

Among the many relevant international documents ratified by the Slovak Republic in this area, the Council of Europe's European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages¹³⁸ is the most important. The Slovak Republic acceded to the Charter on 20 February 2001, but applied a differentiated approach to ratifying particular articles of the Charter, which means that different ethnic minorities in Slovakia were guaranteed different scopes of protection.¹³⁹ Hence, minority languages in the Slovak Republic are divided into three categories:¹⁴⁰

1. Hungarian;
2. Ukrainian and Ruthenian;
3. Bulgarian, Czech, Croatian, Polish, German and Romanes.

In the field of education, the categorisation of minority languages means unequal opportunities for members of various ethnic minorities to be educated in their mother tongue. In particular, members of the Hungarian minority are guaranteed the right to use their mother tongue throughout the entire education system, while members of ethnic minorities whose languages are in the third category, including speakers of Romanes, are guaranteed the right to learn their mother tongue only if they show "due interest". Members of the Hungarian minority therefore enjoy the broadest scope of the right to use their mother tongue.¹⁴¹

Many experts in the Slovak Republic believe that the laws adopted by the Government are not sufficient, especially regarding education in Romanes. One report on the implementation of the Charter notes that, although the Constitutional provision guaranteeing all members of ethnic minorities the right to education in their mother tongue applies to all ethnic minorities, including Roma, the Education Act does not explicitly mention Roma among the minorities whose members have the right to be

¹³⁷ *Koncepcia vzdelávania rómskych komunit* (Concept for Education of Roma Communities) and *Koncepcia vzdelávania národnostných menšín* (Concept for Minority Education), yet to be discussed by the Government.

¹³⁸ Council of Europe, European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages, available at <http://conventions.coe.int> (accessed 20 November 2007); <http://www.culture.gov.sk/main/index.php3?id=1577> (accessed 15 June 2006).

¹³⁹ Centre for Legal Analyses – Kalligram Foundation, *Implementácia Európskej charty regionálnych alebo menšinových jazykov v Slovenskej republike* (Implementation of the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages in the Slovak Republic), 2003, available at <http://kbdesign.sk/cla/> (accessed 20 November 2007) (hereafter, Centre for Legal Analyses – Kalligram Foundation, *Implementation of the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages in the Slovak Republic*).

¹⁴⁰ Act No. 588/2001 Coll. on the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages.

¹⁴¹ Centre for Legal Analyses – Kalligram Foundation, *Implementation of the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages in the Slovak Republic*.

educated in their own language. The report also states the following: “There is no network of public primary or secondary schools that could provide education in Romanes. The main reasons for this *status quo* include general doubts over the usefulness of education in Romanes and uncertainty surrounding codification of the Romanes language.”¹⁴²

3.3 Desegregation

Segregation of Roma children in education is a phenomenon that is not mentioned explicitly in any of the aforementioned Government documents and strategies. These do describe many issues that can be regarded as segregationist practices and suggest necessary steps for the integration of Roma children into primary schools,¹⁴³ but desegregation as a specific policy does not exist in Slovakia.

A number of measures that are expected to contribute to the desegregation of Roma children within the education system are already being implemented. The most important of these is the zero year. The zero year contributes to desegregation in that it prepares children to enter first grade and to be able to achieve success, at least in theory, on a par with their peers, therefore, dropping out and staying behind would be avoided. This is a vertical approach to desegregation, rather than a horizontal one, which is physical bussing and integration.

For example, the REF *Needs Assessment* notes the following:¹⁴⁴

Given the current state of primary schools in Slovakia a portion of Roma children from disadvantaged backgrounds are unable to partake in primary education without some form of remedial assistance. This has been recognised by the creation of the so-called zero year education. The zero year is made legal by the amendment to the Law on Schools and a Decree of the Ministry of Education of 2002.

Both the pre-school education initiative “Mother and Child” (see Section 5.5) and the employment of Roma teaching assistants (see Section 3.4) also form part of the Government’s policy, and their positive impact on the education of Roma children is already perceptible from the media.

¹⁴² Centre for Legal Analyses – Kalligram Foundation, *Implementation of the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages in the Slovak Republic*.

¹⁴³ The main documents mentioned in subsection 6.1 (The Current Situation in Education of Roma Children and Pupils; Basic Principles of the Slovak Government’s Policy to Integrate Roma Communities; National Action Plan of Social Inclusion for 2004–2006; The Strategy of Integrated Education of Roma Children and Young People, Including Development of Secondary and University Education) use the term “integration” of Roma children into mainstream education. However, we could not find any strong statements that call for, specifically, “desegregation” of the Roma minority.

¹⁴⁴ REF, *Needs Assessment*, p. 35.

Policies/measures enacted to desegregate Roma children from special schools.

Slovak legislation allows for the total or partial integration of children with intellectual disabilities into mainstream education. On an individual basis, students with SEN may be integrated into mainstream schools either in regular classes (full integration), or in special classes (partial integration) with the assistance of support teachers.¹⁴⁵ However, most children with intellectual disabilities are still relegated to segregated special schools.

This philosophy of integration is still relatively new in Slovakia, and more time is needed to determine the effects and outcomes of integration policy. One analysis of the legislation has critiqued it as being weak and vague, due to the semantics of the legislation itself. Although education and special needs support are guaranteed rights under this legislation, special needs students are still differentiated from those in mainstream schools, and although it does not exclude special needs students from mainstream schools it does not fully transfer responsibility for instruction to mainstream schools, either. Therefore, “This inherent categorisation of special needs students as being distinct acts as a hurdle towards integration.”¹⁴⁶ According to this analysis, moreover, the legislation may permit wide interpretation. It stipulates the integration of pupils with SEN, but requires official medical, academic and/or family approval. In addition, support for pupils with SEN is based on their “abilities by special forms and methods responding to their disability as well as those that pertain to integration”, a clause that does not clearly articulate the extent of support that special needs pupils receive. Furthermore, there are no specific provisions that direct for adjustment of instruction and syllabi and/or design of individual curriculum for a special needs pupil.¹⁴⁷

In 2005, new activities were initiated under the Phare project, *Further Integration of Roma Children in the Field of Education and the Improvement of Living Conditions*¹⁴⁸ and are still ongoing.¹⁴⁹ Activity 1 of the Project was “Reintegration of Children from a

¹⁴⁵ The integration of pupils with special educational needs into regular primary and secondary schools is stipulated by Decree No. 212/1991 on special schools, as amended by subsequent regulations (as amended by Decree of ME SR No. 49/2004). Eurybase, Slovakia, Section 10.5.1.

¹⁴⁶ P. Kim, K. Koubekova and K. Staronova, *Education Sub-Sector Review: Special Needs Education in Slovakia*, ESP, 2005.

¹⁴⁷ P. Kim, K. Koubekova and K. Staronova, *Education Sub-Sector Review: Special Needs Education in Slovakia*.

¹⁴⁸ Phare Project 2002/000.610-03 on “The Reintegration of Children from a Socially Disadvantaged Environment from Special Schools into Regular Primary Schools”. The project was co-financed by the Slovak State budget; the budget for the project was €350,000. General information about the project is available in English at <http://www-8.mensiny.vlada.gov.sk/data/files/2160.doc> (accessed 10 October 2006).

¹⁴⁹ The project was carried out by the European Consultants Organisation, in cooperation with the Wide Open School Foundation and the Forum Institute. See <http://www.eco3.be> (accessed 20 November 2007); <http://www.skoladokoran.sk> (accessed 20 November 2007); <http://www.foruminst.sk> (accessed 20 November 2007).

Socially Disadvantaged Environment from Special Schools into Regular Primary Schools”. The aim of this activity was to increase the number of pupils reintegrated from special schools into mainstream primary schools, by establishing so-called transitional classes in the special primary schools. The target group is children who have been incorrectly diagnosed as having mental disabilities. Good practices from previous projects were used to ensure that pupils from special primary schools who successfully passed the education module and diagnostic tests, and so fulfilled the criteria for standard education, were integrated into the standard primary school. The transitional classes were established in municipalities with a high proportion of Roma population, and the reintegration of the Roma children was based on the use of suitable and culturally relevant diagnostic tests.

There were 20 special primary schools¹⁵⁰ and 19 partner standard primary schools involved in the project. Within the project, 162 pupils were involved. The cooperation of both types of schools enabled the reintegration of pupils into the standard primary school (preferably near to the child’s place of residence). The schools involved in the project were equipped with teaching aids and other relevant equipment. The Ministry of Education has committed itself to ensuring the sustainability of the programme in the future.

The League of Human Rights has also received a grant in April 2006 from the Roma Education Fund (REF) to implement the Project “Integration of Roma Children from Special Schools and Classes into Mainstream Schools and Classes in Trnava Region”. The goal of this project is to consult and negotiate with school authorities and to identify potential beneficiaries to address Roma school segregation in special schools. Another grant in 2006 was provided to an NGO on advocacy for desegregation of Roma from special schools in Slovakia.

The REF’s *Needs Assessment* also mentions the actual abolition of special schools altogether as a possible policy remedy (or more precisely, special schools for children with mild intellectual disabilities). It is recognised, however, that this would require a gradual approach. The REF *Needs Assessment* also mentions a less radical approach, which would consist of redefining the status of special schools, so as to allow special school pupils and graduates a simple and effective way of gaining primary school equivalency.¹⁵¹ The REF document also mentions the use of financing – both normative and various forms of State and non-governmental grant financing – to desegregate as a possible policy, and for mandatory and incentive-driven placement testing and retesting for special schools. Current Government policy, however, does not outline actions in line with either of these approaches.

¹⁵⁰ The following special schools were involved in the project: special primary schools in Hnúšťa, Markušovce, Lučenec, Veľké Kapušany, Pavlovce nad Úhom, Toporec, Hanušovce nad Topľou, Zborov, Lipany, Stará Ľubovňa, Jarovnice, Piešťany, Jelšava, Prešov, Chminianske Jakubovany, three special primary schools in Košice, and two special primary schools in Trebišov.

¹⁵¹ REF, *Needs Assessment*.

It is interesting to note that the REF-funded projects dealing with desegregation are not implemented in cooperation with the Government. According to the *Roma Education Concept* and the Decade Action Plan, there is no mention or recognition of segregation as a problem to be addressed, which is also clearly not in alignment with issues raised in the REF *Needs Assessment*.

Financial Instruments

An important instrument for the schooling of Roma children, and for potential desegregation, is the higher (formula-based) per-student normative funding allocated for students with special educational needs (SEN)¹⁵² – although this was not especially targeted at Roma pupils.

For children with SEN who are in mainstream schools, this can be up to 250 per cent of the standard per-student normative funding including both the operational and salary components (see also Section 1.3). This is a recent change – since 2006. There are also special subsidies for school founders (of mainstream schools) for the schooling of students with special educational needs.¹⁵³ These measures create the possibility to integrate into mainstream schools children who would otherwise have been placed in special schools for children with mental disabilities.

However, the current problem is the fact that the difference in per-pupil normative funding between that for pupils in special schools for children with mental disabilities and that for pupils with special educational needs who are integrated into mainstream primary schools is not high enough to deter placement in special schools.

Finally, the “integration” of children into mainstream schools does not mean an end to segregation. The problem of separating Roma children into special classes within mainstream schools also persists in Slovakia, thus often negating its real purpose, that of enabling the creation of conditions for a better quality of education.

3.4 Roma teaching assistants/school mediators

In the past, possibilities of employing Roma teaching assistants were limited, due to the non-existence of legislation that would legitimise their status. Therefore, they initially operated mostly through independent projects or experiments, implemented mainly by NGOs. Roma teaching assistants were first placed in a few schools in the early 1990s in an experimental project of the Wide Open School Foundation. The project examined

¹⁵² Children with special educational needs are defined as children with any mental or physical disabilities, children with communication disabilities, children with autism, and children with learning difficulties. Education Act, Part 1, art. 3.

¹⁵³ Ministry of Education Regulation 2/2004 from 17 December 2003. This details the breakdown of funds from the State budget for primary schools, secondary schools, centres of practical training, basic schools of art and school facilities, available at http://www.minedu.sk/DIEN/SVS/20060530_GR_2004_2.rtf (accessed 14 June 2006).

the impact of Roma teaching assistants on the ability of Roma children to adapt to the school's environment, overcome the language barrier, and improve their study results and the general atmosphere at the school.¹⁵⁴

In a key step in 2002, the Ministry of Education adopted law No. 408/2002 Coll., amending the Education Act and a subsequent regulation (Methodological Guidelines¹⁵⁵) allowing the creation of the post of teaching assistant for pupils with special educational needs, although there was no mention of a specific nationality. The Methodological Guidelines stipulate that teaching assistants may be employed at any school, regardless of the number of children with special educational needs. The regulation included a clause enabling schools to employ teaching assistants who have not completed secondary or university education (this clause expires in 2010).

According to the Methodological Guidelines, teaching assistants must be at least 18 years of age, have a pedagogical qualification (unless the exception described above is applied), be competent in the Slovak language and show good health.¹⁵⁶

The responsibilities of teaching assistants are as follows:

- to cooperate with teachers during lessons;
- to help children from socially disadvantaged environments to adapt to the school environment and to eliminate language and cultural and social barriers;
- to organise “open classes” for parents, in which parents can attend classes and see how the educational process is being realised in practice;
- to guide children outside school;
- to organise leisure time activities for the children;
- to organise extracurricular activities;
- to visit the communities and families of children from socially disadvantaged environments;

¹⁵⁴ M. Jurásková and E. Kriglerová, “Rómovia” (The Roma) (hereafter, Jurásková and Kriglerová, “The Roma”), in Miroslav Kollár and Grigorij Mesežnikov (eds.), *Slovensko 2003. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti* (Slovakia 2003. A Global Report on the State of Society), Institute for Public Affairs, 2003 (hereafter, Kollár and Mesežnikov (eds.), *Slovakia 2003. A Global Report on the State of Society*), p. 182.

¹⁵⁵ Ministry of Education, *Metodický pokyn k zavedeniu profesie asistent učiteľa v predškolských zariadeniach, v základnej škole a v špeciálnej základnej škole* (Methodological Guidelines on the Introduction of Teaching Assistants in Pre-school Facilities, Primary Schools and Special Primary Schools). č. 1631/2002-sekr. vydaný ministerstvom školstva SR dňa 26.8.2002 (hereafter, MoE, *Methodological Guidelines*).

¹⁵⁶ See the website of the Roma Education Initiative at http://www.osi.hu/esp/rei/RTAs_Slovak%20Republic.html#jobdescription.

- to cooperate with parents and community leaders.

Decisions on the number of assistants in a school are taken jointly by the head teacher and the school founder (usually the municipality). According to the Methodological Guidelines, the optimal number of children in class with a teaching assistant is 20.¹⁵⁷ Teaching assistants are used in zero year classrooms, as well as in kindergarten and primary school classrooms, in regular mainstream schools and in special schools as well.

According to information from the Open Society Institute's Roma Education Initiative website,¹⁵⁸ there were also other documents that identified RTAs as important, and legitimised the position:

- *The Concept of Pedagogical Approaches and Education of Roma Children and Pupils*, approved by the *ad hoc* working meeting of the Minister of Education on 19 March 2001.
- *The National Programme of Development of Pedagogical Approaches and Education in the Slovak Republic for the Next 15–20 Years, the Millennium Project* (Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 1193 from 19 December 2001 and the Committee of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on Education, Science, Youth and Physical Education (Resolution No. 368 from 7 May 2002).
- Priorities of the Government of the Slovak Republic in relation to Roma communities for the year 2002, Complex developmental Program of Roma settlements and programme of social field workers (Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 357/2002).
- The Phare 2000 programme, improving the situation of Roma in the Slovak Republic, educational part: Improvement of conditions of self-sufficiency of Roma in the educational system and Phare 2001 – Support of the Roma minority in the area of education.

There is no information available about the actual number of Roma teaching assistants. For the school year 2003/2004, the Ministry of Education allocated 40 million SKK (approximately €1.16 million) to cover the wages of teaching assistants; in 2006 this had risen to 130 million SKK (€3.76 million). This means that the number of teaching assistants is increasing each year. According to the Head of the Ministry of Education's Department of Education of Roma Communities,¹⁵⁹ the annual increase in the number of teaching assistants is 310.

¹⁵⁷ MoE, *Methodological Guidelines*.

¹⁵⁸ See http://www.osi.hu/esp/rei/RTAs_Slovak%20Republic.html#jobdescription (accessed 20 November 2007).

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Ms. Ondrasova, Ministry of Education, Department of Education of Roma Communities, on 7 June 2006 at the Ministry of Education, Stromová 1, Bratislava.

Table 21. Number of schools with teaching assistants

	Kindergartens	Private kindergartens	Primary schools	Special primary schools
Number of schools	35	4	484	109
Number of teaching assistants	44	6	729	194

Source: Ministry of Education

In 2002, the Association of Young Roma initiated an extensive project to train 200 Roma teaching assistants across Slovakia. The candidates were selected by the Association and attended retraining courses administered by the Wide Open School Foundation. The teachers were subsequently employed at 153 schools, in 34 districts of Slovakia, operating within the framework of *pro bono* works financed by the National Labour Office.¹⁶⁰

The normative financing scheme does not account for teaching assistants. Therefore, there is no mechanism to cover costs other than wages, which reportedly creates a significant disincentive to schools to hire assistants more widely.¹⁶¹ Another problem is the fact that the assistants are employed by the schools, but the financial resources flow from the Ministry of Education to the regional school offices. Primary schools have to ask regional offices for financial resources to cover the wages of teaching assistants. Sometimes it is very complicated, because regional offices are not always willing to allocate money to the schools. It is absolutely under their competency to decide “if” and “how” they use funds provided by the Ministry of Education. This is a very serious problem in Slovakia, and the Ministry of Education is currently trying to find a solution to this problem.

As there has been no in-depth analysis of the work done by these teaching assistants, it is unclear whether their role is meeting the needs of Roma children in the classroom. While the introduction of this position is a positive step supported by the Government, such assistants must work in a pedagogically appropriate way to avoid reinforcing negative trends and examples, and to fully realise the potential of their role. Case study research conducted for this report in Zborov suggests that the role of the teaching assistants is still somewhat unclear, even to those working within the programme. According to the director of the primary school in the town, schools do not take a teaching assistant’s ethnicity or language skills into account at the selection process, but focus on individual qualifications. The school experienced pressure from the community to employ Roma in the position, but according to the deputy director of the primary school, “A non-Roma does the work better; with Roma there are

¹⁶⁰ National Labour Office (<http://www.upsvar.sk/>) (accessed 20 November 2007).

¹⁶¹ REF, *Needs Assessment*.

problems with attitude to work, and they also steal.”¹⁶² The director further added that Roma assistants often act primarily as a translator and slow down the process of learning Slovak for the children.¹⁶³ Currently there are assistants working in the zero year class and in special classes where there is the “biggest language barrier and children lack social skills”.¹⁶⁴

There is no specific mention of teaching assistants in the Decade Action Plan. However, the systemic support of the position of teaching assistant could be viewed in alignment with the goal of the *Roma Education Concept*: “To create an attractive educational environment for the target group, which respects their social, cultural and language particularities, in such a way as to contribute to the improvement of their school attendance”, and specifically with the goal for primary education “To preserve and support the existence of: (i) preliminary years of primary school, for 6-year-old children who have not reached school maturity, and (ii) the profession of a teaching assistant”.¹⁶⁵

3.5 Romanes teachers

No information is available about the number of teachers able to teach in Romanes. In fact, many of the teaching assistants (see Section 3.4) do not speak Romanes, which can complicate communication with children and parents.

In 2004, the National Institute for Education started a new project, which aimed to evaluate the possibilities of teaching Roma language and literature (see Section 3.6). In 2004, the National Institute for Education started a new project for the training of educators teaching in Romanes (see Section 3.7).

In its recommendations for pre-school, the *Roma Education Concept* does include provisions for the training of teachers in Romanes: “With regard to the need to manage a broader spectrum of expert special and pedagogical and social abilities/competencies, to provide finances for running education and specialised innovation study for teachers working with Roma children, including learning Roma language basics (as an auxiliary language of instruction).”¹⁶⁶

In this vein, one EU-funded project entitled *Effective Teaching and Learning for Minority-Language Children in Pre-school*, funded by the European Union’s Socrates Programme, was a joint initiative of Nadacia Skola Dokoran (Slovakia) with partners

¹⁶² Interview with the deputy director of the Zborov primary school, Zborov, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

¹⁶³ Interview with the director of the Zborov primary school, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

¹⁶⁴ Interviews with the director of the primary school, 12 June 2007, and the representative of an NGO, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

¹⁶⁵ MoE, *Roma Education Concept*, p. 4 and p. 7.

¹⁶⁶ MoE, *Roma Education Concept*, p. 7.

the International Step by Step Association and Hea Aligus (Estonia), COSPE (Italy) and Sardes (the Netherlands). During this two-year project a replicable teacher training module and learning materials were developed that fit the needs of early learners from minority language communities (Roma in Slovakia). The project had three rationales and aims:

- Learning the “State language” as a second language is most efficient if done in continuous, meaningful and interesting activities and in interaction with peers.
- Language learning as an integrated approach: new concepts and constructs used in different contexts.
- Appraisal of the mother tongue and home culture. Teachers’ beliefs may be even more important than specific skills/techniques.

Through the initiative, interactive training for pre-school teachers and supporting manuals were developed. Materials promote the use of children’s home language as a way to facilitate their acquisition of the national State language in which their future education will be conducted.

However, the Decade Action Plan does not address the issue of Romanes as a mother tongue as a barrier to high-quality education, and therefore no measures are explicitly outlined to address this issue, despite the fact that language is also raised in the REF *Needs Assessment*.

3.6 Educational materials and curriculum policy

Schools must lend textbooks to pupils free of charge for subjects that are *obligatory*.¹⁶⁷ However, Romanes is not among these subjects.

Multicultural issues do not occupy a significant position in the Slovak school curriculum. Slovak textbooks cannot be viewed as culturally sensitive, because no special focus is given to ethnic minorities in “mainstream curricula”, which are in fact culturally biased. In textbooks for some subjects, such as history, ethics or civic education, there are some references to the ethnic composition of the Slovak Republic, but these are not sufficient for education on tolerance. These books do mention Roma as a minority in Slovakia, but again, this is not enough for multicultural education.¹⁶⁸

Some ethnic minorities (especially Hungarians) have elaborated special handbooks or working papers, in which they describe the situation of the ethnic minority and its cultural specificities (such as a hymn, the language, history and famous people). Teachers can use these handbooks as complementary instruments. However, an

¹⁶⁷ Education Act, subsection I, para. 4.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Ms. Viera Sandorová, research fellow of the Department of Education of Minority Schooling, National Institute for Education, 13 June 2006.

important barrier to multicultural education is the fact that the school curricula is set strictly by the Ministry of Education, and teachers cannot change its content by focusing on multicultural issues. Curricular reform is expected, but has not been realised as yet. Teachers can only use some human rights and multicultural approaches in their teaching.

According to the REF *Needs Assessment*:

There has been little to no reform in the format and content of primary school curricula since the Communist era. There exists a fairly broad consensus articulated in the Government's Millennium document that the education system has an excessive focus on memorisation and overload children at primary school age. In addition, the pace of teaching often does not allow for individual attention and thus sidelines children with special needs.¹⁶⁹

Regarding the Roma minority, two textbooks have been published. *Roma History*,¹⁷⁰ published in 2001, was the first attempt to describe and explain the history and culture of Roma in Slovakia. (The author, Arne Mann, although not Roma himself, is one of the most prominent historians dealing with Roma history and culture in Slovakia.) The second textbook, *People from the Roma Family (Manuša andar e Familia Roma)*¹⁷¹ was published by the National Institute for Education (NIE) in 2002, and has been approved by the Ministry of Education as a complementary handbook (for history) for Grades 7 and 8 of primary school. However, according to a NIE employee,¹⁷² these textbooks are not widely distributed to primary schools, because schools have not requested them.

As part of the National Plan of Upbringing towards Human Rights for the Period 2005–2014 (Národný plán výchovy k ľudským právam na roky 2005–2015, see Section 3.7), the NIE will conduct a content analysis of current textbooks and other school materials, with a special focus on tolerance and human rights issues.

In 2003, the NIE started the project, *Experimental Verification of Romani Language and Literature Curricula in Primary and Secondary Schools*. Two primary and one secondary school were engaged in this project. In 2004, the project continued with the opening of two new types of schools. The first was the Ghandi High School in Zvolen; an eight-year secondary boarding school. The second is a class at the bilingual Slovakian–English Juraj Hronec High School in Bratislava, where Roma studies and public administration topics are taught.¹⁷³ The purpose of this experiment is to verify the

¹⁶⁹ REF, *Needs Assessment*, p. 40.

¹⁷⁰ Arne B. Mann, *Rómsky dejepis* (Roma History), Bratislava: Kalligram, 2001.

¹⁷¹ Jan Cangár, *Eudia z rodiny Rómov – Manuša Andar e Familia Roma* (People from the Roma Family), Nové Zámky: Crokus, 2002.

¹⁷² Interview with Ms. Viera Sandorova, 13 June 2006.

¹⁷³ Jurásková and Kriglerová, "The Roma," p. 200.

possibilities of teaching Roma language and literature. However, as yet there are still no officially published results of the experiment.

Case study research reflects on the lack of adaptability in the curriculum as a problem for Roma children. According to parents in Lučenec, the curriculum at schools is too difficult and puts children off. Rather than spending more time explaining a subject the children do not understand, teachers simply move forward, ignoring the pupils' needs.¹⁷⁴ In Zborov, there is also general agreement among school staff that the curriculum is too inflexible. According to the primary school director, there will be no mathematician among Roma children and therefore it would be better to give them a practical education – so that they can “go into the workplace and work”.¹⁷⁵ Parents in Zborov agreed that the curriculum is not practical enough and there should be much more information from daily life, such as discussions with police.¹⁷⁶

Research conducted for this report in Prešov revealed a number of findings related to the implementation of the curriculum in schools with a high percentage of Roma. According to the director of the State primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, the inflexibility of the curriculum is a problem: “For many Roma children the primary school thus becomes impassable; they repeat classes and end schooling in seventh grade.”¹⁷⁷ In mainstream classes they tried to create specialisations – an “A-variant” aimed at teaching languages and a “B-variant” aimed at technical education. Parents were given the opportunity to choose and, according to the director, they all chose the “A-variant”.¹⁷⁸

In special classes the mainstream curriculum is adjusted. The extent of this adjustment is specified by the type of learning disabilities of the children, such as cases of dysgraphia, where spelling is not taken into consideration, and these children are also approached differently in learning foreign languages.

Regarding special approaches to educating Roma children, the State primary school on Matica Slovenská Street in Prešov has tried to implement several innovations and special pedagogical approaches. During their education children work with horses, and for several years they tried to implement a therapeutic approach that included work with dogs. In special classes and Roma classes in lower grades they use special pedagogical aids including three-dimensional exercise books to develop optical discrimination, and wooden toys to develop the counting imagination. The management of the school initiated several attempts to implement Romanes in

¹⁷⁴ Interview with a parent, 7 June 2007, case study Lučenec.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with the director of the Zborov primary school, 12 June 2007, case study Zborov.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with parents, 12 June 2007, case study Zborov.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, 19 June 2007, case study Prešov.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, 19 June 2007, case study Prešov.

education. One of the former pedagogues had qualifications to teach the language, but efforts to educate children in Romanes were met by resistance on behalf of Roma parents. Currently they are trying to use a Roma syllabary and read fairytales in Romanes to children. However, according to the director, children often do not understand, and find the dialect in which the texts are written to be a foreign language.¹⁷⁹ There are no other publications and teaching materials about Roma history or literature at school.

According to the director of the St. Gorazd Catholic primary school, also in Prešov, their teaching must adhere to the curriculum taught at other schools, too: “The only difference is that at our school, religious education is obligatory.”¹⁸⁰

Regarding mentions of Roma in schoolbooks the director of the Catholic school reported that there is some information in the first level (Grades 1–4) reading lessons, and then at the second level (Grades 5–9) in lessons on religion and history. The director indicated that they also have some additional publications and books that they use during the lessons.

At the special school, issues concerning the Roma minority are incorporated into the curriculum of several subjects: history, civil education and music education. According to the deputy director, they tried to use bilingual techniques, however, as they met the resistance of parents, the school has decided not to implement them any more. For those children who have a problem with the language barrier, Roma teaching assistants provide support.

The Decade Action Plan includes the following two points with regard to education in Slovakia in the framework of improvement for the Roma minority:¹⁸¹

- preparation of students’ books, teachers’ methodological manuals, provision of educational tools and other materials necessary for the didactical and educational processes and for the information of parents;
- transformation of unilateral orientation on material education to formal education in order to transmit as much knowledge as possible to pupils, the purpose of which is the complex development of a pupil’s personality, accepting his/her individuality and needs, and focusing on the development of his/her basic competence.

The *Roma Education Concept* also addresses the need to address the diversification of curricula in two of its goals (interestingly, although these are listed in the guiding

¹⁷⁹ Interview with the director of the special school, 19 June 2007, case study Prešov.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with the director of the St. Gorazd Catholic primary school, 19 June 2007, case study Prešov.

¹⁸¹ *Decade Action Plan*, Section 1.2 (before the education matrix).

policy documents, there do not appear to be any concrete actions or measures taken to actually address this problem):¹⁸²

- to reform the management of the educational process, such that local social and cultural conditions can be respected, by creating and implementing a school curriculum;
- to carry out curriculum transformation, such that schools are given the opportunity of creating the school curricula, to better suit the educational needs of a given group of pupils.

3.7 Teacher training and support

Training of teachers on issues of multicultural education has been minimal in the past. In 2005, the National Institute of Education elaborated the *National Plan of Upbringing towards Human Rights for the Period 2005–2014*.¹⁸³

Within the framework of this Plan, the Ministry of Education has approved a series of activities to be implemented in the future to improve teacher training. It is envisioned that a number of organisations will participate in these activities.¹⁸⁴ Several publications are envisaged, in particular:

- The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, in cooperation with the Slovak Committee for UNICEF has published a methodological handbook for teachers, *Every Child Counts*.
- The National Institute for Education will publish a methodological handbook for teachers, *Human Rights and Techniques of Their Fulfilment in Education*.
- The Methodological-Pedagogical Centre in Prešov has published *Let's Prevent Intolerance through Education towards Human Rights*, as part of a broader project being realised in cooperation with other institutions and NGOs. The main objective of this project is to train teachers in regions and schools with a high proportion of Roma children.

Currently, there are many teacher training courses offered by methodological-pedagogical centres and pedagogical departments at universities in the Slovak Republic.

¹⁸² MoE, *Roma Education Concept*, p. 4.

¹⁸³ National Institute for Education, *Národný Plán Výchovy k Ľudským Právam na roky 2005–2014* (National Plan of Upbringing towards Human Rights for the Period 2005–2014), February 2005, available at http://www.minedu.sk/RS/OVaVRK/DOC/2005/20050407_narodny_plan_vychovy_2005_2014.pdf (accessed 14 June 2006) (hereafter, National Institute for Education, *National Plan*).

¹⁸⁴ The National Institute for Education, the State School Inspectorate, the Methodological-Pedagogical Centres, the Institute of Information and Prognoses on Education, as well as several NGOs. National Institute for Education, *National Plan*.

Teachers from primary and secondary schools have many opportunities to attend these kinds of courses, but little evaluation of the courses' impact has been done.

The Pedagogical Faculty of Comenius University in Bratislava conducted a "Training of Teachers for Roma Children – Specialisation Innovation Study", financed by the Government. In 2003–2004, some 30 teachers went through the training and 40 applications were received for the following year. The training consists of 200 hours and is carried out mainly by teaching experts and experts on Roma issues.

In 2004, the National Institute for Education started a new project called *Temporary Levelling Provisions for Training of Sufficient Number of Educators Teaching in the Romani Language*.¹⁸⁵ Within this project, two pilot courses have been introduced:

(1) *Training of Roma language and literature teachers of primary and secondary schools I*

This course is organised by the National Institute for Education with experts from Charles University in Prague and elsewhere. The course trains graduates of the Roma Culture Department of the Faculty of Social Science at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra.¹⁸⁶ The first 25 teachers of Romani language and literature were accredited in 2005 and are teaching at primary and secondary schools and universities. At the first primary school stage (Grades 1–4) they use Romanes to communicate with Roma students. In the second stage (Grades 5–9) and in secondary schools they will work as assistants. It is planned that the Romanes language will become an optional subject in secondary schools;¹⁸⁷ pupils can decide whether they want to study this language or not.

(2) *Training of Roma language and literature teachers of primary and secondary schools II*

The objective of this course is to prepare sufficient lecturers to train future teachers of Roma language and literature. The course lasts 6–7 semesters, and the completion of the pilot course is expected in 2007.¹⁸⁸

The bulk of teacher training in schools with a high percentage of Roma children is carried out by the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre in Prešov, at the Roma Education Centre (ROCEPO), which is part of the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre. This centre is located in the eastern part of the Slovak Republic, the region with the highest percentage of Roma population.

¹⁸⁵ This is the official English title of the project – provided by the State Pedagogical Institute

¹⁸⁶ Ministry of Education and National Institute for Education, *Temporary Levelling Provisions for Training of Sufficient Number of Educators Teaching in the Romani Language*, 2003, pp. 7–9 (hereafter, MoE and NIE, *Temporary Levelling*).

¹⁸⁷ Jurásková and Kriglerová, "The Roma," p. 183.

¹⁸⁸ MoE, *Temporary Levelling*, pp. 7–9.

According to information provided by ROCEPO to the Ministry of Education, in 2004–2005, 47 projects were realised, with the aim of improving the education of Roma children. The projects covered 80 groups of teachers, and the total number of participants at teacher training courses was 4,212. No further information about these projects is available.

ROCEPO also organises courses of *Specialised Qualifying Study for Teaching Assistants*.¹⁸⁹ In 2005, 33 teaching assistants completed this course and in 2007 67 teaching assistants did so.

The Ministry of Education also supports (through a grant from the REF in June 2006) the Project “Let’s Go to School Together – Concept of Integrated Education for Roma Students in Slovakia – Support for Implementation”.¹⁹⁰ This project will pilot an approach that combines teachers’ training, support for children in the classroom and outreach to parents in eight schools, with a target group of 150 Roma children. It also includes the preparation of a curriculum for training for teachers in eight kindergartens and eight schools in the pilot area.

The *Roma Education Concept* contains goals that correspond to teacher training, and are as follows:

- to prepare teachers to be a decisive factor in the implementation of the Strategy, by enabling them to gain expert/technical qualifications that would enable them to implement determined designs within the context of the educational needs of particular individuals in the target group;
- to change the attitudes of the majority with regard to minorities and *vice versa*, through intensive school and out-of-school education.

With regard to pre-school education:

- with regard to the need to manage a broader spectrum of expert special and pedagogical and social abilities/competencies, to provide finances for running education and specialised innovation study for teachers working with Roma children, including learning Roma language basics (as an auxiliary language of instruction).

Because these goals are rather vague, however, it does not specify in what material or domain teachers should be trained. The Decade Action Plan, moreover, does not mention teacher training at all, and actions are not outlined there as such.

The main problem with the training courses currently provided is a lack of coordination of similar activities and the low visibility, and lack of publicity for, these

¹⁸⁹ *Špecializačné kvalifikačné štúdium asistent učiteľa.*

¹⁹⁰ This is the only project funded by the REF endorsed by the Ministry of Education. All of the projects are NGO-implemented.

activities. Although many universities provide teacher training, there is no umbrella organisation to gather and provide information about training opportunities. In addition, no external specific evaluation of these projects has been realised and therefore we cannot judge the quality of courses and impact on teachers and schools.

Although it is commendable that the NSI has made efforts to promote human rights education in the system of Slovakia, human rights taught as a subject alone will not improve the situation for Roma. Human rights must be embraced by and integrated into education systems, and that entails providing supports to teachers in training them to improve their methodologies and skills and in incorporating elements of Roma culture and history into their everyday classrooms; human rights is not only a subject to be studied, but a philosophical approach that the system must ensure, and that distinction must be made. It is also important that the NSI has begun training teachers of Roma language and literature, and that the Ministry of Education has initiated the project, “Let’s Go to School Together”, which appears to be the Ministry of Education’s attempt at actualising at least a portion of its *Roma Education Concept* goals. It will be important to watch the progress of these projects, and to learn how these resource teachers are working once they complete their studies. In terms of the language courses, it would behove the Government to link and integrate these courses, with the instruction that is provided to early childhood education providers (pre-school teachers, nursery care providers), and Roma teaching assistants to also learn about language and concrete bilingual techniques that they can use in the classroom.

3.8 Discrimination-monitoring mechanisms

3.8.1 Anti-discrimination legislation

In May 2004, the Slovak Parliament passed the Act on Equal Treatment in Certain Areas and Protection against Discrimination¹⁹¹ (hereafter, Anti-discrimination Act), after a sustained pressure from the EU institutions and resistance of the part of the Slovak ruling coalition. With the passage of the Anti-discrimination Act, the present legislative framework against discrimination in Slovakia is fully compatible with EU standards.¹⁹² Slovakia is also a party to international agreements, and discrimination is banned under the Constitution.

The Anti-discrimination Act also amended the Education Act. The major changes were brought under Article 32 of the Education Act, which identifies the school integration of pupils with special needs and its forms in primary and secondary schools. In this Article, the rights and duties of participants of integration are stated. It also states the process of integration, whereas the power of decision lies with the parent, who decides about the integration of a pupil into a primary school based on a written statement of

¹⁹¹ Act No. 365/2004 on Equal Treatment and Combating Discrimination (hereafter, The Anti-discrimination Act).

¹⁹² See, for example, REF, *Needs Assessment*, p. 51.

the advisory centre for special pedagogy. This act also states the duty of the school to create an accommodated environment and the necessary tools for a pupil to be integrated. Article 32 also commits the director to consult the integration with future pedagogues of an integrated child. The director decides upon the enrolment of the child in the school.¹⁹³

This measure is particularly important for Roma children. The Anti-discrimination Act is fully compatible with EU standards, and created institutional measures for the protection of ethnic and national minorities. Formally, therefore, members of ethnic minorities have been protected from any type of discrimination since its adoption.

The main question now is to ensure implementation of the Anti-discrimination Act. The REF *Needs Assessment* notes, for example, that “There have been very few legal challenges to potentially discriminatory practices in the education system, such as placement of Roma children in special schools based primarily on ethnicity, rejection of Roma children in certain schools, segregation practices, etc.”¹⁹⁴

3.8.2 Institutions monitoring discrimination

The situation with public anti-discrimination bodies and their visibility is changing slowly. However, reports published in Slovakia in previous years have been critical of their work:

Although Slovakia has successfully created a robust legal foundation for the protection of human rights, its implementation continues to fall short of the legislative standards. Domestic and international organisations have observed the inadequate function of judicial and extrajudicial mechanisms designed to protect individual citizens’ rights.¹⁹⁵

Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (SNCHR)

The SNCHR was established in 1994.¹⁹⁶ It is an organisation *sui generis* and is regarded as a national statutory “specialised body”, which has the purpose of promoting equal treatment and combating all forms of discrimination. The Anti-discrimination Act expanded the Centre’s tasks to include the monitoring and assessment of the observance of the principle of equal treatment according to the Act, and in accordance with Art. 13 of the EU Race Directive.¹⁹⁷ The Centre provides legal

¹⁹³ Education Act, 2004 amendment, art. 32

¹⁹⁴ See, for example, REF, *Needs Assessment*, p. 51.

¹⁹⁵ Zuzana Fialová, “Human Rights,” in Kollár and Mesežnikov (eds.), *Slovakia 2003. A Global Report on the State of Society*, p. 150.

¹⁹⁶ Act No. 308/1993 Coll. on the Establishment of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights.

¹⁹⁷ EU Council Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin.

counselling, elaborates legal positions on cases already referred to the courts and represents people who have become victims of discriminatory practices in courts.

Several complaints were collected by the Office of the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities and remitted to the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights in 2004 and 2005.¹⁹⁸

The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (hereafter, the Centre) was established in 1994.¹⁹⁹ The Anti-discrimination Act expanded the Centre's tasks to include the monitoring and assessment of the observance of the principle of equal treatment according to this Act. The Centre is regarded as a national "specialised body"²⁰⁰ with the purpose of promoting equal treatment and combating all forms of discrimination.²⁰¹ The Centre is an independent legal person that performs tasks in the area of human rights and basic freedoms, including the rights of children. In this regard, the Centre monitors and assesses the observance of human rights and the observance of the principle of equal treatment according to a separate law, gathers information and carries out research on relevant issues, and ensures legal aid for victims of discrimination.²⁰²

Public Defender of Rights – Ombudsman

The Institute of the Public Defender of Rights (Ombudsman)²⁰³ was established in 2002.²⁰⁴ The scope of the Ombudsman's responsibilities includes primarily the observance of human rights by the organs of State administration; namely, whether the State administration or local self-government administration is proceeding in accordance with the law, in its dealings with citizens). Thus institute is engaged in monitoring cases in which there is reasonable suspicion that an organ of public administration has acted incorrectly; the institute also provides legal counselling upon

¹⁹⁸ Information provided by the Office of the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities via telephone on 15 June 2006.

¹⁹⁹ The Centre was established by Act No. 308/1993 Coll. on the Establishment of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, which entered into force on 1 January 1994.

²⁰⁰ In accordance with Article 13 of EU Council Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, and EU Council Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general network for equal treatment in employment and occupation.

²⁰¹ See the website of the Centre at http://www.snslp.sk/rs/snslp_rs.nsf/vdb_Homepage/homepage_E?OpenDocument (accessed 15 November 2007).

²⁰² See the website of the Centre at http://www.snslp.sk/rs/snslp_rs.nsf/vdb_Homepage/homepage_E?OpenDocument (accessed 15 November 2007).

²⁰³ See the website of the Institute of the Public Defender of Rights (Ombudsman) at <http://www.vop.sk/> (accessed 15 November 2007).

²⁰⁴ Act No. 564/2001 on the Public Defender of Rights.

request. Unfortunately, however, the Ombudsman's office has not been proactive in monitoring discrimination against Roma in education. In fact, although the average number of complaints received annually by the Ombudsman's Office is 2,500, since the institution was established, no single case of discrimination has been identified by the Ombudsman's office.²⁰⁵

3.8.3 Non-governmental organisations

The League of Human Rights Advocates

The League of Human Rights Advocates provides free legal representation to victims of human rights abuse, indigent detainees and those whose rights are prone to violation (particularly the Roma population, migrants, women, children and asylum seekers) at the national administrative level, in domestic courts of law and in front of intergovernmental human rights institutions, including with regard to discrimination in education.

The League of Human Rights Activists has tackled three cases of violations of Roma children's right to education:²⁰⁶

- Teachers' unlawful treatment of Roma pupils that often includes corporal punishment or aggressiveness. This particular case was tackled in cooperation with the State School Inspectorate.
- Segregated education of Roma and non-Roma pupils in one primary school. The school wanted to avoid accusations of segregation by placing two Roma pupils in a "non-Roma" class and two non-Roma pupils in a "Roma" class. This case was delegated to the SNCHR and is currently still under investigation.
- Segregated catering for Roma and non-Roma pupils in one primary school. The school refectory first served meals to non-Roma children and only then to Roma children; meals served to the latter were allegedly from the day before. This case was also delegated to the SNCHR.

Slovak National Human Rights Centre

The Slovak National Human Rights Centre, a public body, elaborates and publishes annual reports examining the protection and implementation of human rights in Slovakia.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Fialová, "Human Rights."

²⁰⁶ Information provided by the League of Human Rights Activists via telephone, 14 September 2006.

²⁰⁷ In compliance with Article 1, Paragraph 4 of Law No. 308/1993. (The report for the previous calendar year must be published by January 31 of the next calendar year.)

In January 2006, the Centre published the *Report on Protection and Implementation of Human Rights in the Slovak Republic in 2005*.²⁰⁸ The principal source of data for the report was monitoring on the protection and implementation of fundamental rights and freedoms, the rights of the child and the equal treatment principle stipulated in the Anti-discrimination Act. The monitoring was carried out by the Centre, either on its own or in cooperation with State administration and self-governance organs, NGOs specialising in human rights and other institutions.

For the first time, the report features a separate section dedicated to the protection and implementation of the rights of the child. It is based on extensive monitoring conducted throughout 2005. The monitoring examined primarily four areas, including the placement of children in special schools, with a special emphasis on children from Roma communities.²⁰⁹ It focused especially on the individual integration of primary school pupils.²¹⁰

The report highlighted several failures in the process of children's individual integration. The integration process does not always comply with the legislation (for example, individual educational plans for integrated pupils are often missing) and is overly complicated (children must go through two counselling facilities, which is burdensome for children as well as their parents).²¹¹ However, there is no information in the report regarding complaints or cases brought to the court.

²⁰⁸ Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, *Správa o dodržiavani ľudských práv v Slovenskej republike v roku 2005* (Report on Protection and Implementation of Human Rights in the Slovak Republic in 2005), 2006, available at <http://www.snslp.sk> (accessed 10 October 2006) (hereafter, Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, *Report*).

²⁰⁹ The remaining three areas of monitoring included the following: mediating substitution family care for children who have been placed in pre-adoption care or have been adopted in compliance with the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation with Regard to Inter-country Adoptions; performing educational measures and special educational measures in re-education homes for children and young people; performing mandatory vaccination of children with regard to the ongoing medical care reform with a special emphasis on vaccination of children from Roma communities.

²¹⁰ Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, *Report*, p. 79.

²¹¹ Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, *Report*, pp. 79–81.

4. CONSTRAINTS ON ACCESS TO EDUCATION

The number of pre-school places in Slovakia as a whole is sufficient, but distribution of these facilities is extremely uneven, and areas where Roma form a majority have the fewest pre-schools. Additionally, even minor costs associated with pre-school have the effect of deterring parents from putting their children in pre-school. The Ministry of Education and local authorities need to do more to ensure that Roma parents are adequately informed about the value of pre-school participation and enrolment procedures for school, particularly as many Roma communities are isolated and have only limited means of communication. Serious concerns about the placement process for special schools have been raised, despite revised procedures that are intended to address the overrepresentation of Roma in these schools. Due to the declining numbers of school-age children, schools compete to enrol sufficient numbers of pupils, and reportedly in some cases special schools may encourage Roma parents to send their children there even when no disability has been diagnosed. Language barriers are a significant issue in Slovakia, and while there have been some efforts to introduce Romanes as a separate subject, true bilingual educational methods are rarely used with Roma children to help them to adjust to the Slovak-language environment.

4.1 Structural constraints

Pre-school education

Before 1989, parents were actively encouraged to place children in pre-school (in the so-called preparatory year to prepare them for the transition to primary education). This situation changed in the early 1990s, when parents were given more choice as to whether to send their children to pre-school or not. Enrolment gradually fell, as costs rose and the number of available places dropped.²¹²

From 1990 to 1994, the number of pre-schools (i.e. kindergartens and special kindergartens) decreased from 4,052 to 3,343.²¹³ Enrolment rates in pre-primary education also decreased over this period. The GER (general enrolment rate) fell from 92.3 per cent in 1989 to 70.8 per cent in 1995,²¹⁴ although in 1999 it increased to 87.1 per cent.²¹⁵ The main reasons for this the decrease, and for the closure of many pre-schools during this period, were as follows:

- a decrease in birth rates;
- the introduction of fees for pre-schools (see also Section 4.3);
- an increase in the fees for school meals (see also Section 4.3);

²¹² REF, *Needs Assessment*, p. 31.

²¹³ ÚIPŠ.

²¹⁴ M. Hrabinska, *Slovakia. Development of Education*, Bratislava: ÚIPŠ, 1996, presented at the International Conference on Education, 45th session, Geneva.

²¹⁵ UNESCO, *Regional Framework for Action: Europe and North America*, 2000.

- a high unemployment rate (particularly affecting women and low-qualified workers, who, as a result of societal change, were the first to be laid off), with consequent financial problems for families.

The number of pre-schools in Slovakia continues to decrease. As shown below in Table 22, in the school year 2005/2006 there were 2,945 State and private (including religious) pre-schools, with 141,814 pupils enrolled. However, the number of pre-schools has been falling steadily over recent years. The main reason for this is the falling number of children of pre-school age. A second very important reason is that, after 2004, the municipalities became the founders of the majority of pre-schools (pre-schools can also be founded by churches, a private person or by another legal entity), and can decide to open or close them. In many cases, the funding for pre-schools provided by the Ministry of Education has been insufficient, resulting in closures.

There is also evidence of great regional variation in the number of children enrolled in pre-school education. For example, in central Slovakia in 1995, enrolment was estimated at 64.5 per cent, whereas in 1993, the Bratislava region had a total enrolment of over 100 per cent. The most evident decrease in enrolment was in 1992–1995 in two regions: the central Slovakian region (from 73.5 per cent to 64.5 per cent) and in eastern Slovakia (from 76.5 per cent to 67.4 per cent).²¹⁶ Although this is not directly related to the enrolment rate of Roma, conclusions may nevertheless be drawn, taking into consideration where the majority of Roma live in Slovakia.

Table 22. Numbers of pre-schools (2001–2006)

School Year	Number of pre-schools			Total	Number of pupils
	State	Private	Church		
2001/2002	3,217	12	14	3,243	150,587
2002/2003	3,206	12	17	3,235	151,125
2003/2004	3,180	11	19	3,210	150,718
2004/2005	3,000	16	30	3,046	149,232
2005/2006	2,887	24	34	2,945	141,814

Source: ÚIPŠ, Statistical Yearbook, available at <http://www.ÚIPŠ.sk> (accessed 15 May 2006)

²¹⁶ UNESCO, *Education for All Report*, 2000.

The average number of children per class was 20.8 in the school year 2005/2006,²¹⁷ but there are variations by locality. The pre-schools in cities and larger villages are usually more crowded than those in small municipalities.

The official figures provided by the Slovak Statistics Office²¹⁸ show that the number of children of pre-school age (aged 3–5 years old) was 155,011 as of 31 December 2005. The maximum number of children that could be accommodated by existing kindergartens is approximately 163,000,²¹⁹ meaning that around 20,000 more children could be enrolled than is currently the case. However, although this means that the actual capacity of kindergartens is sufficient, the capacity of pre-schools is also influenced by wide disparities in the numbers of children in different regions, and between urban and rural areas. According to the Institute of Information and Prognoses on Education (ÚIPS), in 2001–2002 almost 3,000 children were still unable to attend pre-schools due to a lack of available spaces.²²⁰

The number of Roma children enrolled in pre-schools is very low. According to a survey carried out by the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre in Prešov (MPC) in 2000, only 5.35 per cent of the pupils who attended pre-schools prior to beginning their compulsory school attendance were Roma, while 11.12 per cent of first-graders in primary schools were Roma children.

However, as shown below in Table 23, another estimate of the share of Roma children in pre-schools is even lower – only 1.02 per cent in the school year 2003/2004.

²¹⁷ ÚIPS, *Statistical Yearbook 2005–2006*, available in Slovak at <http://www.uips.sk/statis/index.html> (accessed 11 August 2006).

²¹⁸ Information provided by Slovak Statistics Office via e-mail on 29 September 2006.

²¹⁹ It is difficult to state a precise number, because of the different class size requirements in different age groups.

²²⁰ Slovak Statistics Office, *Basic Data on Schools and School Establishments in the Slovak Republic in the School Year 2001/2002*, Bratislava, 2002, p. 12.

Table 23. Roma children in pre-schools (2003–2004)

Type of pre-school	Number of pre-schools	Number of classes	Number of children	Number of Roma children*	Share of Roma children (%)
State-run	2,887	6,683	139,516	1,323	0.9
Private	24	45	777	79	10.1
Religious	34	67	1,521	56	3.6
Total	2,945	6,795	141,814	1,458	1.02

Source: ÚIPŠ²²¹

*these figures show only the number of Roma children officially registered as being “of Roma nationality”; the actual figures may be higher.

The main reasons why for many Roma children pre-schools are inaccessible are as follows:

- the insufficient financial resources of many Roma parents;
- the low number of pre-schools located near Roma settlements;
- the long distances from Roma settlements to the nearest pre-schools;
- the unwillingness of heads of kindergartens to enrol Roma children;
- a lack of awareness among Roma parents about the importance of pre-school education.

The Ministry of Education has been making efforts to increase the actual number of children in kindergartens. It has recognised that pre-school education – for at least one year, before the start of mandatory school attendance – is a very important tool for the school success of children. In 2004, the Ministry elaborated a Methodological Directive²²² that defined the roles of pre-school directors, primary school advisory centres and municipal governments, respectively, in the process of increasing enrolment in pre-schools.

Moreover, the Decade Action Plan lists as one of its objectives in education “(2.) to improve training and readiness of Roma children”, of which the specific goal is to

²²¹ ÚIPŠ, *Statistical Yearbook 2005–2006*, available in Slovak at <http://www.uips.sk> (accessed 19 October 2006).

²²² Ministry of Education, *Metodické usmernenie Ministerstva školstva ok zvyšeníu zaškolenosti detí v predškolských zariadeniach* (Methodological Directive on Increasing the Enrolment Rate of Children in Pre-school Facilities, from 22 January 2004), available at http://www.minedu.sk/RS/ZVaPV/MPaU/usm/mu_zaskolenosti_deti_MS_KSU.rtf (accessed 14 June 2006).

ensure that “all Roma boys and girls take part in training courses for elementary school in a pre-school facility”. The indicator to measure achievement of this goal is listed as an increase in the proportion of children who have completed pre-school training.²²³

In the past, the shortage of places in pre-schools had an impact on the opportunities of Roma children to attend pre-school. This may change, as the reform of public administration in 2004²²⁴ introduced a new system for financing pre-schools.

Since 2004, the funding received by pre-schools has depended on the number of children enrolled. Pre-school education is not financed by a normative system of funding, but comes from the package for financing of “original competencies”, which represents 40 per cent of collected personal income tax. In addition, subsidies were introduced to cover the costs of school meals for children in pre-schools whose parents are in social need (see Section 4.4). As yet, it is too early to assess the impact of these measures, however, as no evaluation has been published to date on the effects of these changes in financing on the actual number of Roma children enrolled in pre-schools.

While the total number of children of pre-school age is decreasing, the number of Roma children of pre-school age remains the same or is increasing – especially in segregated Roma settlements in the eastern part of Slovakia.²²⁵ This could motivate municipalities and pre-school heads to enrol more Roma children. However, the impact of these changes depends on the size of a municipality and the number of children at pre-school age. While the towns and larger villages have been motivated to create kindergartens (or at least not to close them), smaller villages, with low numbers of children of pre-school age, struggle with the problem of insufficient financial resources. This situation has led to the closure of some pre-schools.

In 2007, a new Concept of Pre-school Education (*Koncepcia v oblasti predškolskej výchovy v nadväznosti na prípravu detí na vstup do základnej školy*) was adopted. It is too early to assess what impact this new approach may have.²²⁶

4.2 Legal and administrative requirements

Enrolment in pre-schools

By law, if parents want to enrol their child in a pre-school, they must submit a written application form and provide a medical certificate for the child. The usual deadline for registration is March, for the school year beginning the following September. The pre-

²²³ *Decade Action Plan*.

²²⁴ Act No. 597/2003 on Financing Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and School Facilities as amended by Act No. 564/2004.

²²⁵ B. Vaňo, “The Demographics of Roma Children,” in Andrej Salner (ed.), *Roma Children in the Slovak Education System*, Bratislava: SGI, 2004, pp. 29–30.

²²⁶ MoE, *Concept of Pre-school Education*.

school head must display the date and place of registration on the school building in February.²²⁷

In addition to these documents, pre-school heads often require additional documents, such as the child's birth certificate, the parent's identity card or a proof of residency. However, in most cases Roma parents can meet all the requirements regarding the enrolment of their child in pre-school. The majority of Roma parents are unemployed and/or have low incomes, so therefore require similar documents for registration at employment offices or to receive social benefits.

However, there are also cases when Roma parents do not enrol their children at the designated time for enrolment, and when September arrives, and they would like to place their child in pre-school, they are refused. Regulation No. 353/1994 on Pre-school Facilities does not state the measures in cases of late enrolment. This Regulation deals only with the situation where the number of applicants is higher than the pre-school capacity; in this case, the first to be enrolled are children with postponed compulsory school attendance and children who have reached their fifth year.²²⁸

Enrolment in primary schools

Children usually attend primary school in the school district of their place of residence. Each municipality may be divided into several school districts. The municipality is responsible for determining the school district for each primary school established by the municipality, in accordance with its generally binding provisions.²²⁹

However, parents, who have the primary duty to enrol their children, have the right to enrol them at any other primary school in the municipality or in the country. The director of the school where the pupil is enrolled is obliged to inform the director of the school in the school district to which the pupil belongs and also the founder of the school in which the pupil is enrolled. The founder (usually the municipal office) must then inform the municipal office where the pupil has permanent residency that the child will attend a primary school in a different district (whether within the municipality or elsewhere in the country).²³⁰

Parents are obliged to enrol a child of compulsory school age (see Annex 1.1) in school.²³¹ Enrolment takes place from 15 January to 15 February every year, at a time

²²⁷ Ministry of Education, Regulation No. 353/1994 on Pre-school Facilities, as amended, para. 7.

²²⁸ Ministry of Education, Regulation No. 353/1994 on Pre-school Facilities, as amended, para. 7.

²²⁹ The school district of a primary school is constituted by the territory of the municipality or its part. If the municipality is the founder of several primary schools, it shall determine the school districts for the individual primary schools, in accordance with its generally binding provisions. Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education, PART III, Section 8.

²³⁰ Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education, para. 8, art. 3 and 4.

²³¹ In accordance with the Education Act.

and place specified by the head of each primary school.²³² As with pre-schools, information about the date and place of enrolment procedure is publicised in the building of the primary school or/and another public place (for example, at a municipal office building, bus stops, or shop). Some schools publish the information on their websites, or cooperate with pre-schools to directly inform the parents of children enrolled there. However, often, the traditionally employed communication channels result in measures that do not reach illiterate Roma living in isolated communities.

In each municipality, the Registry Office gathers demographic data about the school-age population for each school year.²³³ The mayors or other local government officials then distribute the lists of children among the primary schools in the municipality. If there is more than one primary school in the municipality, the primary school heads provide the municipal offices with information about the number of children enrolled in their school. This process is intended to contribute to making sure that all school-age children are enrolled in primary schools; school heads have a list of all school-age children in their areas, so can make efforts to contact them and provide them with information about the registration process.

In order to enrol a child in the first grade of primary school, parents must provide the identity card of at least one parent, the child's birth certificate, and proof of any physical disability that the child has (i.e. a medical certificate). Entry into primary education is not subject to any examination, but new entrants are expected to have a good command of the Slovak language (or the official language used in the school) and have basic skills (such as drawing, counting, and distinguishing colours) (see Section 3.3).

The enrolment of Roma children in primary schools is often problematic, because Roma parents often simply bring their children directly to school in September without going through the formal enrolment procedure in January and February. It is questionable whether they can obtain information about the date and place of enrolment, particularly in the case of segregated Roma settlements. Administratively, these settlements belong to the municipality, but geographically they are situated outside the village/town. In order to ensure that the parents in such communities are adequately informed of the required procedures, the municipalities must make stronger efforts to provide information directly to parents.

4.3 Costs

Pre-school education

The Regulation on Pre-school Facilities²³⁴ defines the amount of the financial contributions to be paid by parents. According to this regulation, the minimum fee for

²³² Ministry of Education, Regulation No. 143/1984 on Primary Schools, as amended.

²³³ Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education.

²³⁴ Ministry of Education, Regulation No. 353/1994 on Pre-school Facilities, as amended.

material provisions is 50 SKK (per month) (approximately €1.23). The maximum must not exceed 7.5 per cent of the legally defined subsistence level; for the school year 2005/2006, this was 4,370 SKK (€126.25). The maximum fee is 354 SKK per month²³⁵ (€10.23). If the child receives school meals, parents must pay an additional fee for this, as determined by the founder of the kindergarten – usually around 25 SKK per day (€0.72).²³⁶ However, the subsidy introduced in April 2004 for school meals and school aids (such as exercise books, pens and pencils) for children whose parents are in social need (see Section 3.3) also covers children in pre-schools.

According to expert estimates, the average monthly cost paid by parents for a child placed in kindergarten is approximately 500–800 SKK (€14.45–€17.33) – a fee of 150–250 SKK, plus the 25 SKK per day contribution to the cost of meals.²³⁷ However, the introduction of subsidies for school meals in 2004 has reduced this cost by 20–25 SKK per day, and pre-school directors may exempt the children of poorer parents from paying fees (see Section 3.2). Parents in social need pay only 1–5 SKK per day for meals.

The number of private pre-schools is very low: around 20 for the whole country. The average costs for private pre-schools are unknown, but usually they are too high even for children from the non-Roma population. It is not exceptional that fees for private kindergartens in Bratislava reach 10,000 SKK per month (€288.90). By comparison, the average yearly nominal salary in the Slovak Republic in 2006 was 18,761 SKK (€542) for the year.²³⁸

Case study research conducted for this report in Lučenec indicates that costs are a significant barrier for Roma families, even though some costs are waived for low-income families. According to one pre-school director, “If Roma children attend pre-school, this is often only in the last year before they go to school. This is usually enough for them to see the difference after they start schooling, but as I say, only a few of them come to pre-school, although they do not have to pay if they are in material need.”²³⁹

With regard to the low attendance of Roma children in pre-school, parents whose children did/do not complete pre-school education say that the reason is that the pre-

²³⁵ Ministry of Education, Regulation No. 353/1994 on Pre-school Facilities, as amended, para. 14.

²³⁶ Ministry of Education, Regulation No. 121/1994 on the Foundation and Operation of Refectory Facilities, as amended.

²³⁷ REF, *Needs Assessment*, p. 31.

²³⁸ Slovak Statistics Office, *Indicators of Economic Development*, available at <http://portal.statistics.sk/showdoc.do?docid=3013> (accessed 19 November 2007).

²³⁹ Material need is a specific legal condition when the income of a person and persons considered together with him/her (family) is under the living minimum and the person and persons considered together with him/her cannot raise their income by their own activity (work or using their own property). *Act 599/2003 about the Help in Material Need, Legal Code*. Interview with the director of the Rúbanisko II/2 pre-school, 8 June 2007, case study Lučenec.

schools are too expensive.²⁴⁰ But on the other hand those Roma parents whose children do attend pre-school say that as they are in material need, they do not have to pay as much they would have to otherwise.²⁴¹

One of the interviewed parents in Lučenec noted that there might be also some other problems apart from material obstacles: “One of my friends had this experience that she had her child at pre-school and she was the only Roma girl there. She was told that other kids and their parents mind having a Roma girl at their pre-school and that it would be better if she stops attending.”²⁴²

Primary education

While education itself is free by law in public schools, the Ministry of Education also provides subsidies for extracurricular activities (to be matched by funds from the municipality and/or the parents).²⁴³ The founder of the school (usually the municipality), in cooperation with the heads of schools, makes decisions on the size of the parents’ contributions. However, contributions to school clubs and leisure-time centres (where pupils can spend their leisure time after the end of official school lessons), cannot be less than 50 SKK (€1.23) or exceed 350 SKK (€8.61). If a family is in social need (receiving social benefits), these fees are not mandatory, but parents must present a confirmation of their status (see subsection 3.3).

Regarding school meals, the conditions for primary schools are the same as those for pre-schools: parents pay approximately 25 SKK per day (€0.62) for school meals, with subsidies since 2004 introduced for children whose parents are receiving social welfare payments.

Primary schools may also collect so-called “voluntary fees” (to cover different school activities, such as travel expenses for presentations of schools, contributions to school trips or cultural events, or some class facilities, such as CD players or computers).²⁴⁴ The amount of these fees is assessed by the school board (see Annex 1) and may vary from 150 to 2,000 SKK per year (€3.69 to €49.20).

Average expenditures of families on education

The Slovak Statistics Office does not collect data on costs incurred by families on pre-school education, education in primary schools and special primary schools,

²⁴⁰ Interviews with Roma parents, 7 June 2007, case study Lučenec.

²⁴¹ Interviews with Roma parents, 7 June 2007, case study Lučenec.

²⁴² Interview with a parent, 7 June 2007, case study Lučenec.

²⁴³ Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education, Part X, art. 35.

²⁴⁴ Information from the “moderaskola” website, a website for parents, providing information about the school system, available at <http://www.modernaskola.sk/site/index.php?Tpl=rs&m=text&Itemid=24> (accessed 9 March 2007).

respectively. However, Table 24, below, shows the total spent by households on education (and other commodities) per person/per year. This table shows that households spend very little money on education, in comparison with other commodities.

Table 24. Expenses of households on different commodities and services (in 2005)

Expenditures (per household / per year/ per person)	Average for households in Slovakia (SKK)	Household size			
		2 adults and (some) children of school age	1 child	2 children	3 and more children
Overall expenditures	102,790	87,237	98,423	77,125	64,587
Groceries and non- alcoholic beverages	24,194	18,826	21,086	17,709	15,430
Alcohol and tobacco	2,727	2,071	2,512	1,836	1,342
Clothes and footwear	5,127	5,149	5,710	4,729	3,644
Water, electricity, gas, housing	22,553	15,038	18,365	13,874	11,435
Furniture and maintenance of housing	4,232	2,994	3,999	2,414	2,609
Health services	3,057	1,856	2,124	1,672	1,487
Transport	6,915	8,755	10,224	6,081	5,216
Postal services and telecommunication	4,127	3,631	4,295	3,267	2,432
Culture and recreation	5,798	5,653	5,799	5,145	4,005
Education	751	823	675	960	607
Hotel and restaurant services	3,856	4,257	4,377	3,982	3,314
Different commodities and services	8,126	7,921	8,767	6,949	4,732
Others	7,814	7,759	8,024	6,200	6,075

Source: Slovak Statistics Office, information provided via email, 19 October 2006.

The Slovak Statistics Office does not provide data based on the ethnicity or “nationality” of household members, so it is not possible to describe the situation of Roma families. However, looking at the last column of Table 24, information is

provided about families with three and more children, many of which are Roma. Households with three or more than three children spend only 607 SKK (per year/per person) on education (€17.54), which is under the national average, and under that for households with one or two children.

4.4 Residential segregation/Geographical isolation

According to the findings of the *Sociographical Mapping of Roma Communities Conducted in 2003–2004*, half of the Roma population live integrated and dispersed among the majority population.²⁴⁵ As shown below in Table 25, the other half live in urban or municipal concentrations, settlements localised on the margin of the village/town or in settlements that are further away from the village/town or separated by a natural or artificial barrier. These categories combine two characteristics: the distance of the settlement from the majority population and the density of the Roma population.²⁴⁶

Table 25. Localisation of Roma settlements (2004)

Localisation of settlement	Share of respondents (%)
Further away from the town/village	11
On the margins of the town/village	18
Concentrated in the village/town	22
Dispersed	49

Source: M. Jurásková, E. Kriglerová and J. Rybová, *Atlas of Roma Communities in Slovakia 2004*, Bratislava: Office of the Government 2004 (This contains the results of the *Sociographical Mapping of the Roma Communities Conducted in 2003–2004*)

Figures from the study show that the majority of segregated settlements are situated in rural areas (villages). The number of urban segregated settlements is 30. However, the category of rural segregated settlements describes only geographical segregation, and it does not mean that all of these settlements are without access to infrastructure or services. Only 79 settlements are situated more than 1 kilometre from a village or town.²⁴⁷

The sociographical mapping did not provide any information on the number of segregated Roma pre-schools in Slovakia; the mapping did not focus on this issue and no other research or study exists about this issue.

²⁴⁵ *The Sociographical Mapping of Roma Communities Conducted in 2003–2004*.

²⁴⁶ Jurásková *et al.*, *Atlas of Roma Communities*, p. 13.

²⁴⁷ Jurásková *et al.*, *Atlas of Roma Communities*.

Case study research in Zborov shows a trend that is reportedly repeated elsewhere in the country.²⁴⁸ According to a municipal representative, “[In Zborov] there are about 50 uninhabited houses left by people who went away for a job. [...] The families [moving here] are usually, but not always, Roma families who sell their flat in Bardejov²⁴⁹ and then buy an old house here. They sell the flat for 400 [thousand SKK], buy a house here for 250 [thousand SKK], and thus earn 150 [thousand SKK].”²⁵⁰

Regarding the integration of local Roma, the municipal representative noted the following: “There is a settlement, but it is not really separated. It is separated, because there is water, there is a brook, but there... only a specific group of inhabitants live there. Many of them live in these bought houses; also we have built flats in the centre of the village and also they [Roma] live in these flats. So we cannot say that they are concentrated only in one place.”²⁵¹

According to a representative of the NGO sector, the situation is quite different: most Roma in Zborov live concentrated in four localities – two settlements (with both shacks and brick houses) and two localities with tenant houses. Several families live among the non-Roma. These have lived among the non-Roma for a long time (10 to 20 years).²⁵² The non-Roma population have made efforts to isolate the Roma and prevent their integration into the village. An NGO representative described two cases when Roma families wanted to buy a house in the village in a private transaction; these were followed by a wave of protest, mainly from neighbours (who in one case threatened the Roma family and the owner with physical violence). The cases were solved by the municipality representatives by buying the house for the municipality.²⁵³ Currently the house is uninhabited.

In Lučenec, another of the case study locations analysed for this report, a majority-Roma settlement is located some 2 kilometres from the town. The growth of this area, which is in very poor condition, is in part due to a local policy. Many of the residents have been relocated to the settlement for non-payment of rent: people who are not able to pay rent in the town are provided with substitute housing here, and almost never succeed in moving away again.

Similarly, in Prešov, the town built “social housing for people unable to pay rent”, which soon took on an ethnic character. Currently the neighbourhood – named Stará Tehelňa – is inhabited exclusively by Roma and has all the characteristics of a ghetto. According to a representative of the municipality, “The town invested there, but [the

²⁴⁸ Comments received on a draft version of this report, October 2007.

²⁴⁹ The district centre.

²⁵⁰ Interview with the chair of the Zborov Municipality Office, 11 June 2007., case study Zborov.

²⁵¹ Interview with the chair of the Zborov Municipality Office, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

²⁵² Interview with an NGO representative, Zborov, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

²⁵³ Interview with an NGO representative, Zborov, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

Roma] did not appreciate that they got something new.”²⁵⁴ It appears that there have also been several cases of legally unclear relocation of Roma families from flats in the centre of the town to Stará Tehelňa. In this regard several interviewed persons pointed at a different approach to Roma rent-dodgers compared to non-Roma rent-dodgers.²⁵⁵

4.5 School and class placement procedures

It is a parent’s right to place a child in any school of their choice. The child is enrolled upon the approval by the director of the newly chosen school.²⁵⁶ Placement of children in classes is at the discretion of the school director and may take a random form.²⁵⁷

Placement in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities

Children are examined upon registration at a primary school. Younger children may be examined when enrolling in pre-school. Children attending special pre-school generally continue their education in special schools. Due to the lack of human resources of the centres, compounded by racial prejudice, there are reasons to expect that not all of them are subjected to re-diagnosis when reaching school age.²⁵⁸

Under the Slovak legal system, placement of children who have not been diagnosed with a mental disability in special schools is illegal.²⁵⁹ According to the most comprehensive study of the problematic issues surrounding the placement of Roma children in special schools, published by the Slovak Governance Institute (SGI), despite the fact that team work is officially required for the assessment of a child, it is the psychologists from the Pedagogical-Psychological Advisory Centres (PPACs) and directors of primary schools who constitute the key institutional and expert framework in the decision-making over the enrolment of children in different types of schools.²⁶⁰ A psychological assessment is the key element in this process. From 1991, enrolment in a special school is only possible with the parent’s consent.

It is common knowledge that Roma children in the past were sent to special schools on the basis of faulty diagnoses, meant to assess the suitability of children for education in

²⁵⁴ Interview with a representative of Prešov Municipality, 19 June 2007, case study Prešov.

²⁵⁵ Confirmed also by the representative of head of the Prešov regional office of the Office of the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, interviewed on 19 June 2007.

²⁵⁶ Para. 8 of Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education and School Self-governance

²⁵⁷ Ministry of Education, Directive No. 7496/1985-20 on Primary Schools as amended by the Directive No. 8119/1989-20, Directive No. 1074/2000-41 and Directive No. 11/2006-R. (Smernica Ministerstva školstva Slovenskej socialistickej republiky z 5.júla 1985 č.7496/1985-20 o základnej škole v znení smernice MŠMaTV SSR z 28. augusta 1989 č.8119/1989-20, smernice MŠ SR z 13. júla 2000 č.1074/2000-41 a smernice MŠ SR č. 11/2006-R z 25. mája 2006).

²⁵⁸ ERRC, *Study of Anti-Discrimination Law*. Background report on Slovakia by Peter Drál.

²⁵⁹ Act No. 229/2000, para. 29; Ministry of Education Regulation No. 63/2000, para. 14.

²⁶⁰ Tomatová, *Sidetracked*.

mainstream primary schools. A key measure in this regard is a Methodological Guide adopted by the Ministry of Education in 2005 (the *Metodické usmernenie MŠ SR č. 12/2005-R z 20. júla 2005, ktorým sa upravuje postup pedagogicko-psychologických poradní pri posudzovaní školskej spôsobilosti detí zo sociálne znevýhodneného prostredia pri prijímaní do 1. ročníka základnej školy*), which defines the role of the PPACs in the diagnosis of disability and the placement of children in special schools for children with mental disabilities. According to the Methodological Guide, special schools must not enrol children who have not been diagnosed with mental disabilities.²⁶¹ This regulation is potentially very important, because there are many cases of the enrolment of Roma children without mental disabilities in special schools.²⁶²

The process of testing begins at enrolment, which serves to study whether a child is ready to enter the education system – a so-called screening of “school maturity”. A child is tested through a set of simple activities created to learn his/her social and emotional maturity, language skills, motor skills and the like. Where a possible delay is observed, the child is most often sent to a psychologist (usually from the PPAC) for further examination aimed at assessing intellectual maturity as well. The psychologist then recommends whether the child should enter a mainstream primary school or a special primary school, or postpone entering school to the next year, and recommends activities that may be helpful for the child.

The Commission consists of four specialists (a specialised pedagogue, a psychologist and more specialists such as a doctor or the representative of the PPAC). No Roma representation on the Commission is required, although it has been frequently recognised that persons executing the testing often lack the linguistic means to communicate with the child. Indeed, two main components of the required “mental retardation” finding, cognitive ability and diminished social competence, are profoundly affected by social and cultural influences.²⁶³

There is some ambiguity with regard to the Regulation governing the placement as well.²⁶⁴ This states that the school director is responsible for deciding on whether the child should be placed in or transferred to a special school on the basis of the proposal

²⁶¹ Ministry of Education, *Methodological Guide to Regulate the Procedures of the Pedagogical-Psychological Advisory Centres, in the Assessment of School Maturity of Pupils from Socially Disadvantaged Environment*, 2005 (hereafter, MoE, *Methodological Guide for PPACs*).

²⁶² Tomatová, *Sidetracked*.

²⁶³ See the SDI Report, p. 36 for a discussion of the shortcomings of the testing practice.

²⁶⁴ Regulation No. 212/1991 on Special Schools.

made by the Commission. However, the commission's recommendation is not binding for the school director.²⁶⁵

Moreover, placement based on the Commission's recommendation is not usually kept in practice. According to the SGI findings, the problem lies with the lack of qualified specialists, so that not every child placed into special school is tested. According to the SGI, in several cases children were examined only by a teacher and the school director, and therefore in 40 per cent of special schools and special classes for pupils with intellectual disabilities, the children were not examined by the specialised pedagogue at all.²⁶⁶ Usually it is only the psychologist who makes the diagnosis, because school directors give this assessment the most weight. When a child is diagnosed by a special pedagogue, it is usually done after placement in a special school. Unclear law, which does not name precisely and clearly what special examinations must be carried out in order to place a child in a special school, also contributes to incorrect placements.²⁶⁷

In 2003, the Child Psychology and Psychopathology Research Institute, in cooperation with the European Consultants Organisation and the Irish organisation FAS International, prepared culturally relevant tests for Roma children as part of the project "The Reintegration of Socially Disadvantaged Children from Special Schools into Mainstream Primary Schools" (under the Phare programme *Further Integration of the Roma Children in the Educational Field and Improved Living Conditions – SR 2002/000.610-03*).²⁶⁸ The new tests allow for more reliable testing of Roma children, many of whom were in the past transferred into special schools because the previously used tests did not take into account factors such as their cultural differences, social deprivation, or language skills. The Ministry of Education recommends using these diagnostic tests in special Methodological Guide for PPACs for all children from socially deprived environments, but this is not compulsory.²⁶⁹

There have been changes in the normative financing of special schools in 2007, whereby the normative funding amount for two groups forming 80 per cent of all

²⁶⁵ See the SDI Report, p. 39: "As far as obligatory team diagnosing is concerned, the valid legislation does not clearly state what specialised examinations must be performed before child placement/transfer to special needs education. The requirement to perform these examinations is only indirectly defined by the obligation to present to the specialised commission a document titled Child Placement/Transfer Proposal (SEVT 492820), which contains forms to be filled by specialised examinations and by the obligation to maintain the appropriate documentation."

²⁶⁶ Tomatová, *Sidetracked*, pp. 21–39 and 49.

²⁶⁷ Tomatová, *Sidetracked*, pp. 21–50.

²⁶⁸ European Consultants Organisation, *Reintegration of Socially Disadvantaged Children from Special Schools into Standard Primary Education* (Reintegrácia sociálne znevýhodnených detí zo špeciálnych škôl do štandardných základných škôl), 2004, information about the project is available at <http://home.nextra.sk/vudpap/reintegracia/> (accessed 14 June 2006).

²⁶⁹ Ministry of Education, *Methodological Guide for PPACs*, art. 4, point 2.

children in special schools increases from approximately 8,000 SKK to more than 57,500 SKK in group 2 and from 12,000 SKK to more than 67,000 SKK in group 3.

In the Košice area, a number of problems with the placement system have been reported. Allegedly, some special school directors remain willing to accept Roma children without diagnosed intellectual disabilities into their schools, due to the high normative funding available. The assessment procedure may be conducted by experts selected by the director, who are inclined to recommend placement in the special school. Parents are also said to have been encouraged to place their children in special schools, as the curriculum there is less demanding and so children are more successful. As a “motivational stipend” available to disadvantaged families is contingent on their children’s academic success, the less rigorous demands of the special schools have a financial appeal (see Section 3.2).²⁷⁰

Research conducted at the local level for this report also found that in Zborov, fees for the re-examination of children in special schools were too high for many parents. Consequently, according to the school’s director, “A child should be re-examined every two or three years, but due to the finances this is impossible. The examination should be paid by parents and we cannot expect most of the parents to pay. Children are thus examined only in the beginning, and then only when there is some problem.”²⁷¹

Segregated classes in mainstream schools

School integration of children with SEN into primary and secondary schools is governed by Act No. 29/1984 Coll. (hereafter, Education Act). The enrolment procedure, numbers of children in a class, and the organisation of educational activities have been governed by Act No. 596/2003 Coll. from January 2004, and certain other acts such as Act No. 71/1967 and Decree No. 212/1991 Coll.²⁷² Proposals to establish classes for children with SEN are made by the municipality and consulted by the municipal educational board (*obecná školská rada*).

Procedures for the reintegration of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds into mainstream education are stated in the Methodological Directive of the Ministry of Education No. 12/2005-R. The Directive recommends the use of a set of more sensitive diagnostic tools developed in 2004 by the Institute of Child Psychology and Psychopathology originally to be used for initial assessment of children’s maturity and mental capacity. Experimental implementation of these tools found that some 7–10

²⁷⁰ Comments received on a draft version of this report, October 2007.

²⁷¹ Interview with the director of the special school, 12 June 2007, case study Zborov.

²⁷² Act No. 596/2003 on state administration in the school system and school self-government in wording of the subsequent regulations. (Zákon č. 596/2003 o štátnej správe v školstve a školskej samospráve a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov v znení neskorších predpisov). Act No. 71/1967 Coll. on Administrative proceedings as amended (Zákon 71/1967 Z.z. o správnom konaní (správny poriadok) v znení neskorších predpisov). Act No. 212/1991 Coll. on Special Schools (Zákon č. 212/1991 Zb. o špeciálnych školách).

per cent of Roma children in special remedial schools show no signs of intellectual disabilities. The tools also showed that another 40 per cent were potentially wrongly placed and should be subject to further psychological examination. In February 2006, another Methodological Directive No. 3/2006 entered into force, specifying the procedure of integration of children with SEN into standard primary and secondary schools.

Education of children with SEN is governed by the Ministry of Education Regulation No. 212/1991 Coll. on Special Schools. The process of enrolment or transfer of a child into a special class is identical to that into a special school. According to section 14 of the Regulation, the suggestion/request for enrolment as well as transfer can be made by the legal representative of the child, the school where the child is currently enrolled, a pedagogical-psychological advisory centre, a health centre, a social institution or an advisory centre for special pedagogy.

Enrolment or transfer of a child to a special remedial class in a mainstream primary school is at the discretion of the school director.²⁷³ In municipalities where no special school is established, that director must propose the creation of a special remedial class with the founder of the school (generally the municipality).

The director creates and heads a committee consisting of teachers, a psychologist, a specialised doctor and a representative of the advisory centre for special pedagogy or the pedagogical-psychological advisory centre and upon the agreement of the parent. The director decides upon the committee's recommendation. The legal representative of the child must consent to the child's placement in a special class.

The decision about enrolling a child on the basis of individual integration is at the discretion of the director upon a written request by the legal representative of the child and a written recommendation/statement by the PPACs.²⁷⁴

The following tables show the number of children with SEN individually integrated into State-run primary schools.

²⁷³ Act No. 542/1990 Coll. on state administration in school system and school self-administration in wording of the subsequent regulations, para. 3 and para.16.

²⁷⁴ The Education Act, par. 32b as amended by Act No. 365/2004 Coll.

Table 26. Individual integration of children with SEN into standard State-run primary schools, 2006

Disability									
	TOTAL	Autism	Mental	Hearing	Sight	Communi- cation ability	Physical	Behavioural	Learning
Total	13,074	74	3,631	271	195	696	920	579	6,708
% Boys	65.69	71.62	56.54	53.51	56.92	69.97	56.09	85.84	70.45
% Girls	34.31	28.38	43.46	46.49	43.08	30.03	43.91	14.16	29.55

Source: ÚIPŠ

Table 27. Children in special integrated classes in standard State-run primary schools, 2006

	Physical Disability					Developmental Disability		
	Mental	Hearing	Sight	Communication ability	Physical	Behavioural	Learning	
Total	0	25	8	275	113	10	1,666	

Source: ÚIPŠ

Case study research carried out in Zborov revealed an overrepresentation of Roma in special classes that are organised for children with disabilities at the primary school, although it is in the same building as the special school. These special classes were established for children with learning and developmental disabilities. They are exclusively attended by Roma children, sometimes by all Roma children in a grade. According to interviews, the classes may have been established for budgetary reasons – there are higher normative funding amounts available to the school if there are pupils with special educational needs.²⁷⁵ Representatives of the school indicated that the special classes give Roma children a more individual approach, due to the lower numbers of pupils per class, and better meet the special educational needs of most Roma children.²⁷⁶ The deputy director stated that “90 per cent of Roma children are in the border zone for mental retardation [...] it is stupid to teach these children what is the subject and predicate.”²⁷⁷ According to the deputy director, in special classes the

²⁷⁵ Interviews with an NGO representative, 11 June 2007, and the director of the special school, 12 June 2007, case study Zborov.

²⁷⁶ Interview with the deputy director of the Zborov primary school, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

²⁷⁷ Interview with the deputy director of the Zborov primary school, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

school can devote more time to learning practical skills, and give the children an experience of success, which they would not otherwise have using a mainstream curriculum.²⁷⁸

The director of the special school does not have any explanation for these statements, as they have the same curriculum and there are no integration programmes. On the other hand, the primary school does not have enough special pedagogues, so the quality is probably lower.²⁷⁹

Transfer and reassessment

Transfer between classes in the same school is at the discretion of the school director. The transfer takes place upon the request of a parent or upon the suggestion of a teacher.

According to a recent study by the European Roma Rights Center, in the absence of comprehensive legal mechanisms regulating the transfer of children from transitional to mainstream classes (as well as from special schools to transitional classes), it is unlikely that reintegration of any significant number of Roma children will take place. Facing a diminishing school population, special schools are likely to resist. Standard schools, on the other hand, particularly those with few Roma children, may be opposed to receiving Roma children. Integration will also fail if Roma children from special schools are integrated into segregated standard schools.²⁸⁰

Given the rarity of transfers of children from special classes or schools to mainstream classes, there are no clear achievement indicators developed and officially enforced by the Ministry of Education.

There is no legal provision for regular reassessment of children in special schools and special classes (with the exception of children in institutional care).²⁸¹ In recent years, under the pressure of human rights initiatives, a growing number of recommendations are made in official State and regional documents for schools and Pedagogical-Psychological Advisory Centres to undertake reassessment at least every three years.

For children whose enrolment has been postponed and enrolled in the preparatory classes in pre-school, as well as for children in the first year of special schools, it is recommended that they be re-diagnosed after the first 6 months, using the “RR screening” method used to rule out mental disability for 6–10-year-olds, which was

²⁷⁸ Interview with the deputy director of the Zborov primary school, 12 June 2007, case study Zborov.

²⁷⁹ Interview with the director of the special school, 12 June 2007, case study Zborov.

²⁸⁰ ERRC, *Study of Anti-Discrimination Law*.

²⁸¹ Tomatová, *Sidetracked*.

developed by the aforementioned Phare 2002 project.²⁸² A general scepticism prevails about the frequency and quality of reassessment.

As mentioned above, it is the right of the parents to appeal against the results of an assessment. However, as of now, there is no legal precedent for cases of discrimination in education.

There are no official or comprehensive data available about the number of Roma children transferred from segregated Roma classes or schools to mixed classes.

In Slovakia, as well as in many other countries, school directors and teachers often admit that in order to keep non-Roma children enrolled in their school they need to be responsive to an overall racist atmosphere – and have to find ways to separate them from non-Roma children. It is a standard practice that schools that try to integrate children from segregated Roma classes become progressively abandoned by non-Roma children as other schools in the town, using numerous lacunae in the legal framework, exclude Roma children from their schools.²⁸³

4.6 Language barriers

Language is often cited as one of the most significant barriers for Roma children in access to education. As shown below in Table 28, a survey conducted by UNDP in 2002 revealed that 59.3 per cent of respondents stated that they use Romanes in everyday communication. However, there is a lack of statistical data on how many Roma children do not speak the language of instruction (Slovakian or Hungarian) at the age of beginning mandatory school attendance. Data on the use of Romanes constitute a very poorly covered area. The only existing data come from the population census, where respondents reported the language that they most often used in communication within the family as children. In 2001, 99,488 Slovakian citizens reported Romanes as their mother tongue.

²⁸² Ministry of Education, *Methodological Directive 12/2005-R amending the procedure of the pedagogical-psychological advice centres in assessing school aptitude to enrol in grade 1 of primary school of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds* (Metodické usmernenie MŠ SR č. 12/2005-R z 20. júla 2005, ktorým sa upravuje postup pedagogicko-psychologických poradní pri posudzovaní školskej spôsobilosti detí zo sociálne znevýhodneného prostredia pri prijímaní do 1. ročníka základnej školy”)

²⁸³ Ministry of Education, *Methodological Directive 12/2005-R*.

Table 28. Usage of Romanes

	Number of respondents	Share of respondents (%)
Use Romanes	606	59.3
Do not use Romanes	408	40.2
Total	1,014	100

Source: Roma Human Development Project²⁸⁴

There is no evidence available concerning the language proficiency of Roma children. The lack of official statistical data causes serious difficulties for the analysis of Roma children's school success. It is widely acknowledged that children from segregated Roma settlements often do not speak the language of instruction when they begin school at the age of 6. In general, Roma children from socially disadvantaged environments (especially from segregated rural settlements) speak neither Slovak nor Romanes sufficiently well.²⁸⁵ For this reason attempts to introduce Romanes as a language of instruction are often controversial.

For children from socially disadvantaged environments who do not speak any language other than Romanes, experts strongly recommend the employment of Roma teaching assistants or teachers who speak at least some Romanes.²⁸⁶ A broad discussion is being held by experts on Roma language instruction (see also subsection 3.2).

The *Concept for the Integrated Education of Roma Children and Young People, Including Development of Secondary and University Education* (2004)²⁸⁷ (see subsection 3.1) introduces the intention to implement the teaching of the Romani language at primary school according to requests from students' parents and their needs (their mother tongue, supporting language) as a) a voluntary subject, b) an optional subject (as another foreign language, for example), or c) within after-school activities. However, as yet there has been no evaluation of the impact of this measure. What this document does not include, moreover, is the option of using the language in regular, mainstream classes and to integrate it directly into the curriculum of learning mathematics, or other subjects. Bridging a language barrier by including the language in the classroom as a normal, standard event, and by including Romanes-speakers in the classrooms to perform this task (teaching assistants), is quite different from teaching the language as a separate subject.

²⁸⁴ UNDP/IVO 2002, available at http://www.ivo.sk/mensiny_vyskum/UNDP/Index.htm (accessed 15 June 2006).

²⁸⁵ Tomatová, *Sidetracked*, p. 60.

²⁸⁶ Tomatová, *Sidetracked*, p. 60.

²⁸⁷ MoE, *Roma Education Concept*.

No information is available about the number of teachers in kindergartens and primary schools who are able to teach children in Romanes.²⁸⁸ (Information about language courses and training courses for teachers are described in Section 3.5.) The number of Roma teaching assistants is available, however, and their role should be to help children in language acquisition by bridging the linguistic gap, and by helping to teach Roma children to understand and acquire the Slovakian language in a natural way, rather than only in an academic way.

²⁸⁸ No official or unofficial report has been published with regard to this question. Meetings with employees of the Ministry of Education and the State Pedagogical Institute proved that nobody in Slovakia can currently say how many teachers (and teaching assistants) speak Romanes at all.

5. BARRIERS TO QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Inadequate school infrastructure appears to be an increasing problem, as schools are consolidated and smaller schools are closed. Facilities at special schools are reported to be particularly poor. Rural schools, particularly those serving majority-Roma communities, suffer most from a shortage of qualified staff, and may employ teachers without appropriate qualifications. Few data about the school results of Roma are available, although some standardised testing is conducted. The Ministry of Education should disaggregate data by ethnicity from existing tests, to better assess the impact of educational policies on Roma achievement. Teachers do have access to a variety of relevant training opportunities, but these tend to be short-term and, with little in the way of follow-up, there is little support for implementing new methodologies in the classroom. A lack of differentiated instruction techniques and underdeveloped skills among teachers both cause particular problems for children integrated into mainstream classrooms from special classes or schools.

The relationships between schools and Roma communities are generally limited, except in areas where civil society outreach projects have been implemented. The Ministry of Education and local authorities should examine successful NGO practices as possible models for further policy in this area. A number of surveys examining teachers' attitudes towards Roma have been carried out, indicating that teachers working with Roma generally expressed more positive views towards Roma children than those who did not work with Roma. However, case study research conducted for this report suggests that some school staff working with Roma harbour strongly negative perceptions, which may carry over into their teaching. The system for school inspections does investigate the quality of teaching, and some reports have flagged the issue of segregation as a problem. However, as no action appears to have followed these reports, the system should be reinforced to ensure that inspections serve a real purpose in supporting equal access to high-quality education for Roma.

5.1 School facilities and human resources

Data for running water, school toilets, central heating and space per pupil are not collected by the Institute of Information and Prognoses on Education. A number of sources, however, point to a low quality or a lack of basic school amenities.

In a context where segregated “Roma schools” are not officially classified as such, a thorough collection of data on the physical quality of the respective school buildings is problematic. Multiple reports, however, evaluate the current situation as unsatisfactory.

The MPC 2002 survey looked into the physical quality of 72 pre-schools: 5.56 per cent of these demonstrated a very satisfactory level of quality of amenities, 58.33 per cent were deemed average, and 36.11 per cent were deemed to be highly unsatisfactory. Table 29 shows that only a tiny fraction of schools have even basic material resources.

Table 29. Infrastructure in primary and lower secondary schools (together) – national 2006–2007

	Computer/pupil (%) (average)	Equipped laboratories/pupil (%) – including language labs	Library/pupil (%)
SR	54,015/823,879 6.5	13,353/823,879 1.6	2,715/823,879 0.3
Urban	41,036/607,700 6.7	10,096/607,700 1.6	1,249/607,700 0.2
Rural	12,979/216,179 6.0	3,257/216,179 1.5	1,466/216,179 0.6

Source: ÚIPŠ

Special schools with a high concentration of Roma children are often said to be established in buildings that do not comply with official standards.²⁸⁹ In its 2003 special report, as well as in its numerous yearly reports, the State School Inspectorate observed that the material and technical amenities in schools with a large proportion of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and particularly in special schools is unsatisfactory.²⁹⁰ A 2004–2005 report remarks on the absence of school gyms and specialised labs in the special schools that inspectors visited that year.²⁹¹ Anecdotal evidence also suggests that some Roma children are segregated in classrooms placed in substandard buildings such as temporary buildings.

The size of schools, along with the amount of space per student, has become an issue with the rationalisation of smaller schools. As the overall demographic trend indicates a decrease in the school-age population, school closure and mergers create highly unfavourable conditions for the schooling of Roma children – whose numbers are

²⁸⁹ Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, *Správa o stave riešenia záležitostí rómskych komunit v jednotlivých regiónoch Slovenska, Annex c 3: Správa o vzdelávaní rómskych detí s návrhom opatrení* (Report on the State of Affairs Pertaining to Roma Communities in the Regions. Annex c3. Report on the Schooling of Roma Children, with Recommendations), Bratislava, 2006 (hereafter, Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, *Report on the State of Affairs Pertaining to Roma Communities in the Regions*).

²⁹⁰ School Inspection Centre, Košice, *Správa o stave výchovy a vzdelávania žiakov zo sociálne znevýhodneného prostredia v základných školách a špeciálnych základných školách v školskom roku 2002/2003* (Report on the State of Education and Schooling of Pupils from Socially Disadvantaged Backgrounds in Standard and Special Primary Schools in the School Year 2002/2003), Košice, 2003 (hereafter, School Inspection Centre, *Report on the State of Education*).

²⁹¹ State School Inspectorate, *Správa o stave a úrovni kvality výchovy a vzdelávania, podmienok a riadenia v špeciálnej základnej škole v Slovenskej republike v školskom roku 2004/2005* (Report on the State and Quality of the Upbringing and Education, Conditions and Management in Special Primary Schools in the Slovak Republic in the School Year 2004/2005), Bratislava: ŠŠI, 2005.

increasing. Schools catering for two or more villages (such as Kecerovce or Jarovnice) are likely to suffer from overcrowding, and even a “two-shift” system may fail to provide enough adequate space for all of the children enrolled in the school.²⁹² Multi-grade classrooms are also a frequent phenomenon in small rural schools. Some school directors acknowledge that such procedures have a negative effect on the quality of teaching and can cause withdrawal of non-Roma children from these schools.²⁹³

Teacher qualification is a serious problem in Slovakia. While the number of unqualified teachers remains high throughout the country, the percentages have been declining. According to the 2001 Government *Millennium Concept*, 34.78 per cent of lessons in primary and secondary schools are taught by unqualified teachers. Only 70.68 per cent of primary school teachers are qualified, and in some districts, less than half of the teachers in Grades 0–4 fulfil qualification requirements.²⁹⁴ The 2003 special report produced by the School Inspection Centre states that in the 78 mainstream primary schools inspected, only 68 per cent of the teachers were qualified. The percentage of qualified teachers working in the 19 special schools was reported as 50 per cent in the same report; 12 per cent of the staff in these schools were unqualified students.²⁹⁵ A more recent enquiry in 2005 by the Institute of Information and Prognoses on Education found that there were a total of 14.4 per cent unqualified teachers teaching in primary and secondary schools.²⁹⁶ In smaller primary schools with Grades 1 (0) to 4 only, up to 22 per cent of teachers were unqualified – a majority of these schools are located in rural areas and many are attended by Roma children. In the

²⁹² Some localities, such as Jarovnice or Kecerovce, are notoriously known for failing to cater for all of the local Roma children. Jarovnice, a town with the largest Roma settlement in Slovakia, has a school the capacity of which is 350 pupils, in which more than 800 are enrolled. Pupils are expected to attend other schools, but the distance of these schools is a considerable issue. In Roma Press Agency, 19 February 2007; *Poslanci NR SR navštívili v pondelok Jarovnice* (“Members of the Slovak Parliament will visit Jarovnice on Monday”), available at <http://www.rpa.sk/rpa.php?lang=SK&m=VYH&id=&show=5729> (accessed 15 July 2007).

²⁹³ Some argue that unless an evaluation of the two-shift system is carried out, it may be counterproductive to ban the system, as it may turn out that afternoon instruction is actually more effective for Roma children. (Personal communication with Alica Petrasová, Prešov University.)

²⁹⁴ MoE, *Concept for Educational Development*.

²⁹⁵ School Inspection Centre, *Report on the State of Education*.

²⁹⁶ ÚIPŠ, *Kvalifikovanosť pedagogických zamestnancov a odbornosť vyučovania v regionálnom školstve, Informácia o stave k 25. 4. 2005* (Report on the Degree of Qualified and Expert Teaching in Regional Schooling 25 April 2005), Bratislava: ÚIPŠ, 2006. available at <http://www.uips.sk/rs/index.html> (accessed 10 June 2007) (hereafter, ÚIPŠ, *Report on the Degree of Qualified and Expert Teaching in Regional Schooling*). In 2005, there were 42,578 primary school teachers. Disaggregated by age, 16.1 per cent of these teachers were aged 50–54, 4.7 per cent of the teachers were aged up to 24, and 7 per cent had passed their retirement (and almost half of these were employed in primary schools). Some 6.3 per cent of teachers were in their first year of teaching practice.

sample of lower secondary school teachers (Grades 5–9) some 13.2 per cent of teachers were unqualified.

The degree of formal qualifications for teachers at the lower secondary level was 67.9 per cent and an even lower level of expertise was documented in special primary schools, where it is only 63.8 per cent. The lowest degree of expertise was found in the eastern region of Košice, where it was a mere 62.7 per cent.²⁹⁷

According to reports examining the quality of teaching in schools with high numbers of Roma children, the proportion of qualified teachers is even lower than the national average. An independent report (based on a limited sample size) by the State School Inspectorate stated that three quarters of teachers teaching in the inspected primary schools with Roma children were qualified, and only about half were qualified to teach in special primary schools.²⁹⁸ The MPC Prešov 2002 report focusing on schools with Roma children states that 22.7 per cent of teachers were unqualified and more than one third teaching in Grades 0–4 were unqualified.²⁹⁹

While these reports provide no clear evidence of the type of classes taught without qualification, there is generally a diminishing interest, particularly among girls, in the field of science and technology.³⁰⁰ This trend is mirrored in the choices made in teacher training areas. As currently women account for more than half of primary school teachers, this development is likely to influence the quality of teaching in the domains in question, and will be particularly felt in less attractive regions and less competitive small schools, including rural schools and segregated Roma schools.

The quality of foreign language instruction has been evaluated as unsatisfactory in schools with a majority of Roma children and in special schools.³⁰¹ The inability of teachers and Roma teaching assistants to speak Romanes is also a frequent complaint,³⁰² and so is the insufficient number of adequately qualified Roma assistants

²⁹⁷ ÚIPŠ, *Report on the Degree of Qualified and Expert Teaching in Regional Schooling*.

²⁹⁸ School Inspection Centre, *Report on the State of Education*.

²⁹⁹ Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, *Evaluation of the Survey on the State of the Roma Child and Pupils in the Educational System*. These rates are indicative for 78 primary schools in the Prešov and Košice regions, where 35.4 per cent of school children were Roma.

³⁰⁰ Ministry of Education, *Správa o vzdelávacej politike: národná správa o naplnení cieľov pracovného programu Európskej komisie Vzdelávanie a odborná príprava 2010* (Report on Educational Policy: National Report on fulfilling the goals of the EC Education and Professional Development 2010 Working Programme), Bratislava: MŠ, 2005.

³⁰¹ A. Dluhošová, “Roma Children in the Slovak Educational System from the Perspective of the School Inspectorate” (hereafter, A. Dluhošová, “Roma Children in the Slovak Educational System”), in Andrej Salner (ed.), *Roma Children in the Slovak Education System*.

³⁰² According to the 2006 report of ÚIPŠ of all pedagogical staff, some 90,323 persons (89.4 per cent) identified themselves as Slovak, 8,726 (8.6 per cent) as Hungarian, and only 42 primary school staff identified themselves as Roma.

in pre-school.³⁰³ The lack of qualified psychologists and special pedagogues is also an issue in many schools and may present major obstacles to integration initiatives.³⁰⁴

There are no comprehensive accounts of school staff turnover. Issues have been raised with regard to teaching assistants whose employment conditions, due to the funding structure, are particularly unstable: many assistants are employed for a limited period of time, generally half a year, which has a de-motivating effect, particularly for those assistants who pursue parallel studies in order to raise their qualification.³⁰⁵ Reportedly, this situation may have legally changed as of the time of writing.

5.2 School results

Pupils' testing at the national level is undertaken in Grade 9 by means of the *Monitor 9* tests to assess pupils' performance in mathematics and the Slovakian language. Individual results are also taken into consideration in the selection process for upper secondary school entry.³⁰⁶ In the last grade of upper secondary schools, pupils pass their *Maturita* examination in a number of selected subjects. There are no official reports disaggregating the *Monitor 9* and *Maturita* results by pupils' ethnicity. Individual school directors would be able to provide disaggregating data representative for Roma pupils, but no such enquiry has so far been undertaken by State or non-governmental bodies.

Linguistic and cultural aspects often present major difficulties in the academic attainment of Roma children; the results of a thematic inspections of the State School Inspection examining the level of knowledge in the field of Slovak language and literature, mathematics and natural sciences found that Roma children lack the relevant vocabulary, which makes them not only unable to follow lessons, but also unable to understand exam and test questions. Primary literacy of many Roma children remains a critical issue even in higher grades.³⁰⁷

Considerably more Roma children from special schools than those from standard primary schools take part in school competitions.³⁰⁸ For instance, some 5 per cent of Roma children in mainstream and 15 per cent in special schools took part in visual arts

³⁰³ Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, *Report on the State of Affairs Pertaining to Roma Communities in the Regions*.

³⁰⁴ This issue is addressed in the 2007 Concepts of the Ministry of Education relating to special advisory centres: *Koncepcia špeciálnopedagogického poradenstva* and *Analýza stavu systému školského poradenstva s návrhom na riešenie*.

³⁰⁵ MoE, *Current State of Schooling*.

³⁰⁶ Directive of the Ministry of Education No. 145/1996 Coll. on enrolment at upper secondary schools as amended § 6 (vyhlášky MŠ SR č.145/1996 Z.z. o prijímaní na štúdium na stredných školách v znení neskorších predpisov).

³⁰⁷ A. Dluhošová, "Roma Children in the Slovak Educational System."

³⁰⁸ School Inspection Centre, *Report on the State of Education*.

competitions. Another 4 per cent in mainstream and 11 per cent in special schools entered musical competitions and 5 per cent in mainstream and 14 per cent in special schools competed in sports. In places where Roma pupils are encouraged to enter school competitions, these generally focus on disciplines such as visual and performance arts (dance, music, visual art).

There are no formal standards for the assessment of functional literacy in Slovakia. A number of questions in the *Monitor 9* test focus on work with educational text, and reading literacy is measured by the pedagogical-psychological centres with the use of a set of standardised tests,³⁰⁹ but neither of these provides a comprehensive method that could be used in practice to measure pupils' functional literacy.³¹⁰ Partial research projects in functional literacy were undertaken for lower secondary school students, but did not focus specifically on Roma children.³¹¹ There are currently two projects carried out by a number of academic bodies focusing partially on functional literacy (Academic and Practical Intelligence of the Slovak Population of Roma Children – APVV-20-049105; Practical Intelligence of Roma Children – VEGA 1/3666/06).³¹²

Results of the PISA 2003 testing in Slovakia showed high selectivity within the Slovak educational system: correlating particularly low results (especially for reading literacy) with the socio-economic background of the child – along with a high correlation with the level of education attained by the parents, particularly mothers.³¹³ PISA scores for localities with high numbers of Roma, such as the Banská Bystrica, Košice, and Prešov regions, were lower than the national average.³¹⁴ Extensive differentiation in the quality of education also takes place due to a selection of children by means of their assignment to language classes (at the early age of 8) and their enrolment in 8-year gymnasia at the age of 10–11.

Interviews conducted for this report's case studies suggest that Roma children in Zborov are less successful in school than their non-Roma peers. According to the director of the primary school in Zborov, "The knowledge of Roma children is very

³⁰⁹ Tests from 1999 are developed by Čižmarovič/Kalná and from 2001 by Matějček.

³¹⁰ Alica Petrasová, *Využitie stratégie EUR ako prostriedku eliminácie funkčnej negramotnosti rómskych žiakov* (Uses of the EUR Strategy as a Tool for the Elimination of Functional Illiteracy of Roma Pupils), Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, 2003.

³¹¹ Academic research by Peter Gavora and Zuzana Morávková.

³¹² Akademická a praktická inteligencia slovenskej populácie rómskych detí – projekt APVV-20-049105; Praktická inteligencia rómskych detí – VEGA 1/3666/06. Preliminary results of this research will be presented in autumn 2007.

³¹³ The sample size for PISA was 7,346 pupils in 281 schools.

³¹⁴ Alica Petrasová, a researcher and teacher trainer focusing on functional literacy and critical reading and writing methods, points out the low degrees of reading literacy among teachers. (Personal communication with Alica Petrasová, Prešov University.)

low, the same as their motivation.”³¹⁵ Most Roma children do not reach the ninth grade (in the school year 2006/2007 it was only one pupil). According to the deputy director, sometimes in the school’s “white class” [see subsection 2.4] there is a Roma pupil who shows artistic or athletic talent.³¹⁶

Many Roma children have difficulties with the prescribed curriculum from the first-level grades, and although they should be able to read and write in the second grade, teachers are “satisfied if pupils are able to read a text, without understanding it, in the third grade”.³¹⁷ The school director in Zborov named one exemplary student, who had very good school results but who then “yielded under the pressure of the environment and did not want to be different from the others”³¹⁸ and got much worse. The pressure from the community on successful individuals may be one of the reasons for the underachievement of Roma children. The director suggested that other problems may contribute to low achievement, such as neglected needs and insufficient nutrition: “Children go to school hungry, it is impossible to work with them, they are nervous and cannot pay attention.”³¹⁹ In the past the school solved this by providing children with brunches after the second lesson instead of lunches, so that “it was possible to teach them something”.³²⁰

The deputy director of the Zborov primary school indicated that many Roma children suffer from a “language deficit”, which is linked not only to their limited knowledge of Slovak, but also to general development of language abilities even in Romanes, such as the lack of knowledge of abstract nouns. Underachievement is also attributed to low motivation to pursue an education, weak parental support and an unsuitable curriculum.

5.3 Curricular standards

Segregated Roma classes in standard primary schools are taught using a standard national curriculum. Adapted guidelines have been created for specialised (transitional) classes, which were part of the Phare project “*Reintegration of children from a socially disadvantaged environment from special schools into regular primary schools*” (see Section 4.5).

³¹⁵ Interview with the deputy director of the Zborov primary school, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

³¹⁶ Interview with the deputy director of the Zborov primary school, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

³¹⁷ Interview with the deputy director of the Zborov primary school, 11 June 2007, case study Zborov.

³¹⁸ Interview with the director of the Zborov primary school, 12 June 2007, case study Zborov.

³¹⁹ Interview with the director of the Zborov primary school, 12 June 2007, case study Zborov.

³²⁰ Interview with the director of the Zborov primary school, 12 June 2007, case study Zborov.

According to the National Educational Standards for Primary Schools (up to Grade 4) of the Ministry of Education, all children enrolled in primary school should reach proficiency in reading and writing in upon completion of Grade 4.³²¹

Standards for special schools are the same as those for mainstream schools, with the exception of special schools for hearing difficulties and special schools for children with intellectual disabilities. Special school for children with intellectual disabilities do not have set standards pertaining to reading and writing proficiency, and the development of reading and writing skills is pursued on an individual basis depending on the ability of each student.³²² As special classrooms integrated in standard schools are classified under the category of special schools, educational standards for these follow the same standards set for special schools.

As stated in the ERRC's *Stigmata* report, the different standard of education provided in special schools is recognised by Slovak legislation.³²³ Indeed, Part 3, Article 33 of the Slovak School Act stipulates that “education completed in special schools, *except for the education completed in schools for the mentally handicapped*, is equal to the education completed in regular primary and secondary schools” (italics added). Special schools and special classes for the children with mental disabilities are considered to be inferior to regular primary school education. Successful completion does not allow attendance of secondary school, with the exception of special vocational schools. Many children in special schools fulfil their school attendance without having even basic reading and writing skills.

5.4 Classroom practice and pedagogy

There is no major comprehensive research on the quality of instruction in Slovakia. A discussion is currently taking place focusing on the need to monitor quality and school evaluation. There are, however, as yet no official certification programmes and quality standards that could be used in assessing the quality of instruction in all of the State, private and religious schools.

Fragmented surveys, opinion polls and media reports suggest that the situation regarding the quality of instruction and schooling in general is rather unsatisfactory. Quoting a number of survey reports dated from 1997 and 1998, the Government's 2001 *Millennium Concept* stated severe problems with the educational system, among which are the following: a lack of teachers, the lack and loss of motivation, low wages, and the questionable quality of teacher training caused, among other factors, by large numbers of trainee students whose enrolment is determined by current higher

³²¹ Ministry of Education, *Vzdelávací štandard zo slovenského jazyka pre 1. stupeň základnej školy* (Educational Standards for Slovakian Language, for Grades 1–4), 2003.

³²² See further below for account of the lack of differentiated instruction.

³²³ ERRC, *Stigmata*.

education funding structures rather than their personal qualities. These unfavourable conditions are mirrored in the general decline of the teachers' social status.

The Government's *Millennium Concept*, as well as its *Roma Education Concept*, calls for experimental testing of alternative programmes so as to strengthen the influence of humanist philosophy in schools. From the early 1990s a number of NGOs and educational groups promoted alternative teaching methods (Waldorf schools, Step by Step methodology, Integrated Thematic Education, Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking methodology, cooperative learning, project-based learning), which have been adopted to a varying extent by a number of schools and pedagogical departments.

Despite the growing number of different approaches, unstable funding and limited personal capacities of the training institutions tend to result in teachers being often offered short-term, one-off training, which provides them with little space to acquire in-depth understanding of the distinct methods and ability to use the methods in complementary ways. For instance, teachers thus may well be instructed about differentiated teaching and learning, but will hardly be able to actively consider and apply individual learning styles.³²⁴ A report by the State School Inspectorate indicated that teachers favour teaching by means of activities and play, experiential learning and the use of music and drama, and some are acquainted with the Step by Step methodology.³²⁵ Other surveys have shown that teachers are keen on differentiated teaching and activity-based learning, and many are aware (although many only from their everyday experience) of the need for providing positive feedback.³²⁶

The most crucial issue with regard to new educational trends and methods is the lack of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation and efficiency of alternative teaching methods. The State School Inspectorate, which is the key independent evaluation body, follows the academic results of children but does not evaluate a school's approach or the consistency and quality of methods used.

Critically little attention is paid to training teachers in evaluation methods, and more comprehensive quantitative or longitudinal research is equally rare.

Child-centred learning techniques are rarely employed, whether in the context of Roma or in that of non-Roma children. A number of NGO-led projects provide training in these techniques and their use in the school environments, but these initiatives are by their nature limited in number and scope. Moreover, teachers in

³²⁴ Personal communication with Alica Petrasová, Prešov University.

³²⁵ School Inspection Centre, *Report on the State of Education*.

³²⁶ M. Flešková, "Rómsky žiak v škole" (A Roma Pupil at School – Survey Report) (hereafter, Flešková, "A Roma Pupil at School"), in B. Kosová and Z. Huľová (eds.), *Edukácia rómskych žiakov: teória – výskum – prax* (Education of Roma Pupils: Theory, Research, Practice), Banská Bystrica: Univerzita Mateja Bela, 2006 (hereafter, B. Kosová and Z. Huľová (eds.), *Education of Roma Pupils: Theory, Research, Practice*); D. Valachová and A. Budašová, *Vzdelávanie Rómov* (Education of Roma), Bratislava: SPN, 2002.

Slovakia rarely use differentiated teaching and learning methods, and the relevant didactic resources are scarce, as revealed by case study research conducted for this report. In Lučenec, NGOs have voiced concern over the teachers' work with children who seem to need more support. An NGO representative described an example of a child in the first grade: "He came here and when I opened a book in front of him, he did not even make a sound. After half a year of his attendance at our extracurricular activities he was able to read at the level that he was supposed to. How do they work with these children?"³²⁷

Only a limited number of teachers have in-depth knowledge and understanding of these methods. As part of a Phare project, the Wide Open School Foundation trained some 150 teachers and 70 teaching assistants, many of whom work with Roma children, but this initiative alone can only help to improve the learning condition in a limited number of schools.³²⁸

A new *Concept of Integrated Education of Roma Children* is expected in autumn 2007, and this may promote more child-centred techniques. Differentiated instruction is also discussed with regard to possible educational reforms and a necessary harmonisation of national and EU standards, thus allowing for more locally relevant and flexible curricula.

Unfamiliarity with differentiated instruction is likely to be a major obstacle to the integration of children from special schools into standard schools. During the implementation of the project "*Reintegration of children from a socially disadvantaged environment from special schools into regular primary schools*", project coordinators and trainers found that even in special schools, differentiated instruction was an unknown practice, and teachers employed standard group-work methods. Numerous teachers never studied or worked with individual study plans, and were thus unable to design them for the needs of the individual children. Those teachers who created individual plans designed them without a prior needs assessment, and rarely consulted others such as the parents, a psychologist, or a special pedagogue.³²⁹ No research is available investigating how teachers design individual study plans and to what degree they seek contribution from other relevant parties.

Mentoring support to in-service teachers implementing new methods is provided by the six regional Methodological-Pedagogical Centres (MPCs) and education NGOs. The general role of the MPCs is to provide further education of pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff, to guarantee expert methodological activities in the field of further education, to carry out research, and to undertake tasks commissioned by the Ministry of Education.

³²⁷ Interview with a parent, 7 June 2007, case study Lučenec.

³²⁸ Personal communication with Ms. Končoková, Wide Open School Foundation, Step by Step trainer.

³²⁹ Personal communication with Alica Petrasová, Prešov University.

As a result of a Phare project, a Roma Educational, Information, Documentary, Advisory and Consultative centre – ROCEPO – was established at the Prešov MPC to address the educational needs of the Roma minority, its aim being to support schools and teachers of Roma children (see subsection 3.7).

There appears to be a general consensus among teacher training practitioners that teachers do very much appreciate innovative methods, for these provide them with new impulses and make up for the general lack of teaching resources. However, no overall comprehensive research or systematic monitoring has been carried out with regard to the teachers' opinions on and evaluation of these new methods or the implementation and actual effect of these in the space of the school.

Smaller research has been carried out by organisations specialising in particular methods, either as supporting evidence when applying for State accreditation, or as part of monitoring and evaluation of projects.

The Orava Association provides in-service teacher training focusing on democratic instructional practices incorporating strategies for student engagement and ownership in the learning process. Teachers are trained, among other areas, in intercultural skills of teachers and anti-prejudice education, critical thinking frameworks of learning and thinking about teaching, interactive methods and forms in teaching natural sciences, interactive methods and forms in teaching social sciences, reading and writing as a tool for learning in all content areas, parents' involvement, building a positive social atmosphere in school, and conflict resolution.

A training cycle offered by Orava and the Prešov MPC was evaluated, showing that the approach can be successfully implemented in classrooms with Roma students, impacting on the existing instructional approaches within the school as well as on the social atmosphere in the classroom, and thus leading to new attitudes and behaviour and a new equilibrium in the social relationships within classrooms. Teachers also reported an increase in students' active participation. A second survey focused on the project's impact on the development of the teachers' intercultural skills and their ability to implement anti-prejudice education. Comparing the teachers' attitudes to Roma and the degree of their racial prejudice at the beginning and at the end of the programme, the results showed an improvement of the index of racism, but relatively little change was recorded when using a semantic differential regarding 17 dimensions (including characteristics such as Educated/Uneducated, Quiet/Noisy, Orderly/Untidy – which showed the most changes in attitude).³³⁰

³³⁰ Alica Petrasová, *Service Training Programme for Teachers of Roma Students* (project results presentation), Prešov University: Department of Education and Psychology, Faculty of Education.

5.5 School–community relations

The involvement of parents in the everyday working of the school varies by school. There is no strong tradition in the Slovak educational system of parental involvement in school activities. The most extensive governmental programme in this regard was the “Mother and Child” initiative, focusing on Roma mothers of children enrolled in pre-school.³³¹ This Phare-funded project was implemented in 50 pre-schools in central and eastern Slovakia. The project’s main objective was to get Roma mothers involved in their children’s education. Mothers attend the school with their children and help them with many activities. Roma teaching assistants in pre-schools play an important role as mediators between families and pre-schools. The project aims to eliminate the negative implications of the poor socio-economic situation of most Roma families, in particular, insufficient command of the teaching language, delays in psycho-social and physical development, inadequate communication skills and habits, high sickness rates and related frequent absence from school. As yet, no external evaluation or detailed description of this project has been carried out, and nor was the Ministry of Education able to provide information on any results of this project.

A number of NGOs and community centres also pursue activities whereby parents and schools are encouraged to work together (the Wide Open School Foundation, Orava Association, PDCS Slovakia, Nadácia pre rómske dieťa – pre-school projects). The drawback of these initiatives, however, may be their limited scope and duration. Some schools have made use of cultural events to establish stronger relations and a more informal space for interaction between teachers, parents and children.³³²

Case study research in Lučenec suggests that the lack of support that children receive at home can affect their performance in school. Roma parents typically do not work with their children at home, according to an NGO volunteer: “When I tell [Roma parents] something, they say ‘Even if I kill her, it does not help’ and then I say ‘There’s no need to kill her, just ask work with her, ask her how was school today, look after her to do her homework, etc.’ But then there is also this problem that Roma parents cannot help their child in mathematics if they do not know it themselves.”³³³ NGOs try to address the lack of at-home support by offering a range of classes; the variety depends on the

³³¹ The project was part of a wider project, “Improving Conditions for the Self-Fulfilment of Roma within the Education System”, which was implemented under the patronage of the Ministry of Education and the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic. It fell within Activity 1: Strengthening a Complex Pre-School System for Roma Children Involving Their Mothers in the Educational Process with the Participation of Teaching Assistants.

³³² Roma Press Agency, “Špeciálna základná škola internátna vo Vranove nad Topľou našla spôsob komunikácie s rómskymi rodičmi” (“Special primary boarding school in Vranov nad Topľou found a way to communicate with Roma parents”) 1 January 2006, available at <http://www.rpa.sk/rpa.php?lang=SK&m=VYH&id=&show=4890> (accessed 12 June 2007)

³³³ Interview with a parent who also works for an NGO, 7 June 2007, case study Lučenec.

amount of money they manage to raise for the activity, but they always cover mathematics.³³⁴

A number of studies and surveys examined communication between Roma parents and teachers, generally concluding that the mutual relationship is very unsatisfactory. Based on the responses of teachers, the MPC Prešov 2002 report concluded that up to 83.3 per cent of parents show no interest in the school and teachers, while 12.8 per cent have an active rapport and 3.8 per cent perceive this relationship as negative. A different report stated that only 2.3 per cent of teachers consider communication with Roma parents to be satisfactory and unproblematic.³³⁵

Yearly reports from 2002 to 2006 by the State School Inspectorate confirm this grave lack of communication. A report from 2005–2006 stated that ineffective communication with Roma parents prevailed in almost a quarter of schools visited within the inspection (it is not clear on what basis the authors of the report attributed this situation to the parents' lack of interest in the education of their children).

A more detailed report of the Inspectorate states that cooperation between parents and standard primary and lower secondary schools is unsatisfactory, while cooperation with parents of children enrolled in special primary schools is good, but deteriorates as children reach higher grades (lower secondary school).³³⁶ Most teacher respondents, however, agreed that cooperation with the Roma community is practically nonexistent; only fewer than 10 per cent of teachers stated that it is exclusively upon their personal initiative that parents are willing to cooperate, helping in after-school activities, upkeep of the school area, or financially supporting the purchase of some teaching equipment.³³⁷ Some Roma parents are also involved in coordinating cultural events and summer camps.

While the involvement of Roma parents in the everyday workings of the school is minimal and the relationship between teachers and parents is often perceived as cold and unsatisfactory, anecdotal evidence suggests that in places where NGOs have closely worked with schools establishing alternative educational programmes or in schools where the management promoted a whole-school multicultural approach relations between the school and the parents changed in a relatively short period of time.

5.6 Discriminatory attitudes

There is a broad consensus that teachers often harbour negative emotions toward Roma children, their expectations are low and many maintain that they have lost any motivation to work with Roma children. On the other hand, some existing research showed that those teachers who work directly with Roma children have a much higher

³³⁴ Interview with the chair of a Roma NGO, 7 June 2007, case study Lučenec.

³³⁵ Flešková, "A Roma Pupil at School."

³³⁶ School Inspection Centre, *Report on the State of Education*.

³³⁷ School Inspection Centre, *Report on the State of Education*, p. 3.

opinion of them than teachers without the experience of working with Roma do. Given the lack of a more representative and comprehensive research, such conclusions remain highly individual.

While it is often suggested that a considerable proportion of Slovak society, including teachers, harbour negative attitudes toward Roma, individual results of different studies on this subject are often questionable, given the nature of the issue and its potential implications for respondents. Most conclusions are drawn from survey questionnaires, and comprehensive collection of supporting data and qualitative research (including interviews and observation) is rare.

A survey by MPC Prešov found in 2002 that 51.28 per cent of teachers have a generally positive and supportive attitude towards Roma children, while at the same time a considerably high percentage maintain a passive attitude (43.58 per cent) and 5.12 per cent a negative attitude (which prompted the authors to condemn such attitudes as de-motivating and partly at the root of much of these children's school failure).³³⁸ The results of a 2004 survey among teachers identified rather more positive attitudes on the part of the teachers towards Roma children.³³⁹

A number of studies undertaken by pedagogical departments of the PU Prešov, UMB Banská Bystrica or UKF Nitra Universities have focused on teachers' attitudes to Roma pupils. The most recent large enquiry undertaken by these bodies was commissioned by the Ministry and entitled *Raising the Level of Socialisation of the Roma Community by Means of Education of Social and Missionary Workers and Teaching Assistants*.³⁴⁰

A survey undertaken by the pedagogical faculty at UMB Banská Bystrica³⁴¹ looked at the perception of the role of teaching assistants³⁴² and teachers' attitudes toward

³³⁸ Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, Prešov, *Evaluation of the Survey on the State of the Roma Child and Pupils in the Educational System*.

³³⁹ J. Žaškovská, "Výchova a vzdelávanie žiakov zo sociálne znevýhodneného prostredia" (Upbringing and Education of Pupils from Socially Disadvantaged Backgrounds), *Pedagogické spektrum*, roč. 13, január/február, č.1/2, 2004 (Pedagogical Spectrum, vol. 13, no. 1/2, 2004).

³⁴⁰ *Zvyšovanie úrovne socializácie rómskej komunity prostredníctvom systémov vzdelávania sociálnych a misijných pracovníkov a asistentov učiteľa (uznesenia vlády SR č. 912/2002)* (Raising the socialisation level of the Roma community through the educational system of social and mission workers and teaching assistants (Slovak Republic Government Decision no. 912/2002)).

³⁴¹ Soňa Kariková and Bronislava Kasáčová, "Názory pedagógov na vzdelávanie asistentov učiteľa" (Teachers' Opinions on the Training of Teaching Assistants) (hereafter, Kariková and Kasáčová, "Teachers' Opinions on the Training of Teaching Assistants"), in B. Kosová and Z. Huľová (eds.), *Education of Roma Pupils: Theory, Research, Practice*.

³⁴² The sample included 80 teachers, 31 teaching assistants, 52 university lecturers involved in teacher training.

Roma.³⁴³ The survey investigated the expectations of school staff of a teaching assistant. Assistants themselves considered their role to be one of assisting teachers and helping children during lessons. This opinion was not shared by school teachers and university lecturers participating in the training of teaching assistants, who rather saw the role of the assistant as one of helping children in after-school club activities, and leading them towards developing hygienic habits.

While teaching assistants, school teachers and university lecturers shared the view that the key skills of an assistant are conflict resolution and communication skills (in contact with parents), the survey highlighted considerable differences with regard to the expectations of the assistants' theoretical pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical communication and group work: assistants considered this aspect to be very important to their training and practice, while school teachers and university lecturers assigned little importance to this factor.³⁴⁴ The authors of the report concluded that there is an inconsistency between the assistants' aspirations and willingness to contribute to the educational process and the rather low expectation of their superiors.

The survey also pointed out differences in expectations with regard to the assistants' specific skills and knowledge: assistants did not share the opinion of the rest of the respondents, who suggested that they should mainly concentrate on developing the children's skills in the domains of dance and musical instruments. All parties shared the opinion that computer literacy is not essential for a teaching assistant.

Using the method of a semantic differential, the second part of the survey focused on the respondents' perceptions of Roma. The researchers provided a set of 29 bipolar adjectives, which they asked the respondents to evaluate on a scale from positive to negative. The results showed that Roma assistants are most positive in their view of the Roma. In descending order they were followed by those teachers who have experience in working with Roma children, then teachers without such experience. The researchers point out that while the third group picked adjectives such as happy, sensitive, healthy, communicative and friendly as positive, a fourth group of mature students, considered by the researchers to represent majority population views, evaluated these characteristics with disdain and irony. Those attributes least often associated with Roma included trustworthiness, cleanliness, successfulness, being educated, and having high personal expectations.³⁴⁵

In more general terms, the authors of the survey observed that the most negative views were held by teachers with no experience in teaching Roma children, and by teacher trainees.

³⁴³ The sample included 334 respondents, including practising teachers (both with and without the experience of teaching Roma children), Roma assistants, and teacher trainees (both young and mature students).

³⁴⁴ Kariková and Kasáčova, "Teachers' Opinions on the Training of Teaching Assistants," p. 7.

³⁴⁵ Kariková and Kasáčova, "Teachers' Opinions on the Training of Teaching Assistants," p. 11.

A different study, enquiring into the attitudes of a group of 68 Roma and 68 non-Roma children in Grade 4 to school, showed that Roma children had a very positive attitude to learning and school in general, while the social environment (such as that they were exposed to during break times) of the school they perceived, to a varying degree, as a threat.³⁴⁶ The same study noted that teachers are prejudiced towards Roma: they perceive Roma children as a nuisance and they often label them as undisciplined and problematic.³⁴⁷ In spite of this, the research found that 90 per cent of the Roma children concerned had a positive attitude towards their teachers and did not feel threatened by their classmates, to whom they had neutral or positive attitudes.³⁴⁸

Numerous studies show that Roma children face many problems when trying to become part of a class, and face rejection by their non-Roma peers.³⁴⁹ Roma children find it difficult to become socially accepted by the rest of the class; this applies particularly to Roma boys, who appear to be less likely to be accepted by their non-Roma counterparts, even if their socio-economic status is similar.³⁵⁰

There has been no research carried out regarding talented Roma children.³⁵¹

³⁴⁶ K. Luptáková, “Základné charakteristiky vzťahu Rómskeho žiaka k školskému prostrediu – čiastkové výsledky výskumnej úlohy” (Key Characteristics of a Roma Child’s Relationship towards the School Environment – Partial Research Results) (hereafter, Luptáková, “Key Characteristics of a Roma Child’s Relationship towards the School Environment”), in *Edukácia rómskych žiakov. Teória – výskum – prax. Zborník vedeckovýskumných prác z riešenia úloh štátnej objednávky* (Education of Roma Pupils. Theory – Research – Practice (State Commission)), Banská Bystrica: PF UMB, 2006, available at <http://www.student.umb.sk/kovacik/romanyhelp/193/edukacia-romskych-ziakov> (accessed 20 November 2007).

³⁴⁷ This aspect was also shown in older research by Luptáková (2004).

³⁴⁸ Luptáková, “Key Characteristics of a Roma Child’s Relationship towards the School Environment,” p. 2.

³⁴⁹ L. Miškolciová, “Rómske dieťa pohľadom spolužiakov” (Perception of a Roma Child by His Classmates), in *Psychologické aspekty niektorých nežiaducich spoločenských fenoménov. Grantová výskumná úloha. Pdf UMB č. 2/2002* (Psychological Aspects of Certain Unwanted Social Phenomena – Research Grant. Pdf UMB č. 2/2002), Banská Bystrica: Pedagogical Department, Matej Bel University, 2004.

³⁵⁰ M. Flešková, “Rómsky žiak v školskej triede” (A Roma Pupil in the Classroom), in *Psychologické aspekty niektorých nežiaducich spoločenských fenoménov (Drogové závislosti, etnická neznášanlivosť, násilie v každodennom živote)* (Psychological Aspects of Certain Unwanted Social Phenomena (Drugs, Dependency, Ethnic Hatred in Everyday Life)), Banská Bystrica: Pedagogical Department, Matej Bel University, 2004.; Flešková, “A Roma Pupil at School.” (Sample size 43 teachers, 30 Roma parents.)

³⁵¹ Personal communication with Alica Petrasová, Prešov University.

5.7 School inspections

The State School Inspectorate is a State-controlled budgetary organisation of the Ministry of Education, and is governed by Act No. 596/2003 Coll. and the Regulation of the Ministry of Education No. 137/2005 Coll. on School Inspection.³⁵²

The head school inspector is directly appointed by the Minister of Education. Being the statutory organ of the State for inspection, the head inspector takes responsibility over the running of the Inspectorate and all its activities. Eight regional school inspection centres are the principal executive bodies of the Inspectorate.

Inspections follow the same procedures in standard and special schools. Given the number of schools, and the limited capacities of the Inspectorate, every school is subjected to a complex inspection once in five years (this was changed from once in every two years in 2005). A school may be visited more than once in these five years, which is the case when thematic inspections are commissioned by the Ministry of Education or when follow-up inspections are undertaken to check whether a problem highlighted in a previous inspection has been dealt with. Inspections that focus particularly on schools with high numbers of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds are only undertaken only upon a commission by the Ministry. The last such inspection took place in 2002.

The State School Inspectorate controls and evaluates the schools' observance of binding legal documents and internal school directives, the process and results of education and teaching, the quality of education, the spatial, material and technical conditions impacting the educational process, the further training of staff and the qualification of school directors. Complaints and petitions filed against the school are also dealt with by the Inspectorate.

During a school visit, inspectors examine the following:

- a) The educational and pedagogical documentation;
- b) The level of knowledge and skills of the pupils (based on the pedagogical documentation);
- c) The pedagogical and professional capacities of school staff.

Currently the most common inspection methods include examination of school documentation and in-class observation.

In special schools, the individual conditions of a child are observed in greater detail in terms of examining the placement of the child (on the basis of the diagnostic documentation – the inspectors do not carry out retesting themselves). In addition the inspection looks at the number of children in a class, children's development and

³⁵² Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva Slovenskej republiky č. 137/2005 Z. z. o školskej inšpekcií. Directive of the Ministry of Education No. 137/2005 Coll. on the State Inspectorate.

health, and the school's provision of special aids and their uses (with regard to conditions allowing for individual work with the child). It also evaluates the academic results of the child and the preparation of the child for future employment (taking into account the capacities of the child); it evaluates the work of the educational advisor, cooperation with parents, health practitioners, external organisations, and possibilities for integration.³⁵³

If and when inspectors identify problems in the school, they can (depending on the gravity of these deficits) recommend the resolution of the problems caused by violation of binding legal regulations or internal guidelines, and notify the relevant authorities about the violation of legal norms. Should it be considered possible to solve any of these problems, the inspector will see that the school undertakes the necessary action in order to do so, or will make specific recommendations as to the steps that it must take. The inspector can demand examination by commission of any pupil found to have been wrongly classified.

Based on its findings, the Inspectorate publishes reports, and issues suggestions and recommendations to the Ministry of Education, to other public sector institutions, to MPCs, to school founders, to the State Pedagogical Institute, etc.

It is within the competencies of the school inspector to sanction the director and other school staff should any problems not be rectified satisfactorily.³⁵⁴ If an inspector observes that issues that were highlighted in the inspection go uncorrected, or that the school fails to make adequate conditions for compulsory inspection, it is within the inspector's discretion to levy financial sanctions on the relevant staff member of between 1,000 and 10,000 SKK (€30 to €300).³⁵⁵ The efficacy of such sanctions has not been adequately researched.

A number of annual inspection reports mention segregation of Roma children as a problem and recommend that schools and the Ministry pay attention to this issue. No major initiative has, however, been undertaken on the part of the Inspectorate in this regard. Equally, it is not within the competencies of the Inspectorate to issue sanctions relating to segregation.

There are no Roma inspectors working at the county level. Annual inspection reports include observations on children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds only in those cases when the standards in these schools fail to meet the norm. A special inspection focusing on children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds was

³⁵³ A. Dluhošová, "Roma Children in the Slovak Educational System."

³⁵⁴ § 6 ods. 3 Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva Slovenskej republiky č. 137/2005 Z. z. o školskej inšpekčii. Directive of the Ministry of Education No. 137/2005 Coll. in State Inspectorate.

³⁵⁵ § 37 ods. 3 zákona NR SR č. 596/2003 Z. z. o štátnej správe v školstve a školskej samospráve a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov. Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education and School Self-governance and on the change and supplement to some acts.

commissioned by the Ministry of Education in 2002, while another should take place in 2007.

There are only a few sources available reporting on inspections of Roma segregated schools. These include occasional references to children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in a number of annual inspection reports and in a report by the Košice School Inspection Centre entitled *Report on the State of Education and Schooling of Pupils from Socially Disadvantaged Backgrounds in Standard and Special Primary Schools in the School Year 2002/2003*.³⁵⁶ A chapter written on behalf of the Inspectorate in the SGI report *Roma Children in the Slovak Educational System* (2004) represents the most complete compilation of its findings on this issue.

Inspection reports generally testify to the unsatisfactory state of education of Roma children. Ongoing problems include the following: unsatisfactory enrolment of Roma children in pre-school; testing of children and the procedure of enrolment in special schools; inadequate materials and technical equipment relative to high numbers of Roma children; high truancy rates among Roma children; negative attitudes of Roma children and their parents toward education; the low expertise of staff dealing with children requiring special care; children's acquired knowledge and skills under the current system, which is reported to be at a very low level; the employment of young Roma, which is also extremely low.³⁵⁷

A more specific finding of the inspection of special schools showed that Roma children were disproportionately represented in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities. The Inspectorate found that assessments of Roma children's development prior to enrolment were carried out only as a formality. In these cases, the judgments of a single psychologist were relied upon for making the decision in these assessments. The report noted that retesting only seldom takes place, if at all.

³⁵⁶ School Inspection Centre, *Report on the State of Education*. This survey (the outcome of a complex inspection) was undertaken in 78 primary and 19 special primary schools. Children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds accounted for 49 per cent (75 per cent in Košice) of children in standard schools and 84 per cent (elsewhere stating 94 per cent) of all children enrolled in special schools. Data were collected by means of questionnaires from 548 teachers (by region: Prešov 165, Košice 150, Banská Bystrica 52, Trenčín 19, Trnava 6, Nitra 1, Bratislava 0, Žilina 0). There were 15 respondents in special primary schools (v Banská Bystrica 73, Košice 46, Trenčín 19, Trnava 3, Žilina 7, Bratislava 7, Prešov 0, Nitra 0).

³⁵⁷ A. Dluhošová, "Roma Children in the Slovak Educational System."

ANNEX 1. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

A1.1 Structure and organisation

A1.1.1 General structure of the education system

The Slovak education system (excluding tertiary education) is divided into four different types of schools: primary schools, secondary schools, apprentice schools and special schools. The education system includes both public and private (including church) schools. Education at public primary and secondary schools is provided free of charge, but church and private schools may charge tuition fees.³⁵⁸

The public education system also includes pre-primary education, but this is not compulsory. Before 1989, one year of pre-school education was mandatory for all children, but this requirement was abolished in the early 1990s (see Section 3.3).

Pre-schools

Pre-school education in Slovakia is provided by pre-schools (i.e. kindergartens and special kindergartens).³⁵⁹ There are both public and private (including church) pre-schools. In the public pre-schools, parents are expected to pay to cover some of the costs related to attendance (see Section 3.3), although since 2004 subsidies have become available for parents in social need (see Section 6.3).

Pre-schools admit children between the ages of three and six years old. Exceptionally, it is possible to admit children from the age of two. Pre-school education in pre-schools can also be provided to children aged over six years old whose start of compulsory school attendance was postponed.³⁶⁰

Primary schools

Primary schools (ISCED 1, 2) provide general basic education. Since 1997, they have consisted of nine grades and two stages – the first stage (Grades 1–4, ISCED 1) and the second stage (Grades 5–9, ISCED 2), which is usually differentiated according to pupils' interests and skills. There is also a zero year in many primary schools, which also counts as one year of compulsory education and is free of charge.

Grades 1–4 focus on developing basic skills such as writing and mathematics, aesthetics, health, environment, and physical education. Since 2003, the curriculum includes religion (or ethics) as a compulsory subject. Grades 5–9 focus on specialisation and differentiation.

Most public primary schools provide education for Grades 1–9. However, so-called Limited Grade Schools account for one third of the primary schools in Slovakia. These

³⁵⁸ ÚIPŠ, *The Educational System*, p. 13.

³⁵⁹ Act No. 279/1993 On School Facilities.

³⁶⁰ Ministry of Education, *Education in the Slovak Republic*, p. 6.

schools generally only cover the first stage (Grades 1–4),³⁶¹ and usually do not have separate classes for individual grades. Limited Grade Schools can be found in small villages or in ethnically mixed territories. The majority of these schools are in the Košice and Prešov regions (eastern Slovakia), where they account for 40–45 per cent of the primary schools.³⁶²

Compulsory education begins on the first 1 September following the day on which the child has reached six years of age. Children usually attend primary school in the school district of their place of residence. However, parents have the right to enrol their child at any other primary school in the municipality or in the country (for enrolment procedures, see subsection 3.2.1).

If a six-year-old child has not reached the required level of school maturity for entering Grade 1, then the school governing body (the school board – see subsection 1.2) can decide to place the child in the zero year, or to postpone the child's school attendance for one year (see subsection 3.3). The approval of the child's parents is required in both instances.

The zero year is intended for children who, as of September 1, have attained the age of 6 years old, but have either not reached the required level of school maturity or come from a socially disadvantaged environment, and given their social and language environment it is assumed that they will not cope with the first year of schooling in one year.³⁶³ Education in the zero year is aimed at developing the child's cognitive and extra-cognitive functions, and contains part of the curriculum of the standard first grade. Children pass into Grade 1 provided that they "pass" the zero year. The zero year in practice also involves a Roma teaching assistant. 15 children is the maximum allowed in a single zero year class.³⁶⁴

The duration of compulsory education is ten years or at most until the school year when the pupil attains the age of 16.³⁶⁵ Pupils can leave primary school in any grade, provided they have completed the duration of compulsory education. If a child attends primary school without any repetition of grade, he or she usually ends primary school

³⁶¹ Since the amendment to the Education Law in 1990, an eight-year secondary general school was established as an alternative to the traditional four-year one. When students reach Grade 4, parents may decide whether to enrol their child in the basic system, or in the new one, which is targeted for more exceptionally gifted pupils. Z. Srankova, H. Yaeko and C. Lafuente, *Education Sub-sector Review: Slovakia*, ESP, December 2004.

³⁶² M. Beblavý and M. Kubánová, *National Report on Education Policy*, SGI/INEKO, Bratislava, 2001, p. 21.

³⁶³ Ministry of Education, *Metodické usmernenie Ministerstva školstva č. 600/2002 – 43 k zavedeniu nulých ročníkov do základných škôl* (Methodological Instruction of the Ministry of Education of the SR 600/2002 – 43 to the Introduction of Zero Years of Primary Schools), available at <http://www.minedu.sk/RS/OVaVRK/ovavrk.htm> (accessed 15 June 2006).

³⁶⁴ REF, *Needs Assessment*, p. 36.

³⁶⁵ Education Act, Part 5, art. 34.

at the age of 15 years old. Therefore it is compulsory for these children to attend at least one year of any secondary school.

Public primary schools are established by municipalities (towns). Private schools may also be established by churches, natural persons or legal entities, provided that they comply with standard conditions established by the Ministry of Education. A primary school may also include a school club, school library, boarding facilities, or other facilities for education outside the classroom.³⁶⁶

Secondary education

Secondary education (ISCED 3, 4) consists of three types of school: *gymnasia* (high schools), technical secondary schools (*stredna odborná škola*) and vocational secondary schools (*stredne odborné učiliste*).³⁶⁷ Courses are organised on either a full-time, a part-time or a combined basis.

Gymnasia provide general secondary education with a school-leaving certificate, and prepare students for study in higher education institutions. It lasts 4–5 years (when students transfer from Grade 9 of primary school), or 8 years (when students transfer from Grade 4 of basic school).

Specialised schools provide technical secondary education with a school-leaving certificate. They prepare students for various occupations and for further studies in higher education institutions. They also offer 2–3-year courses at the post-secondary level. Vocational schools provide vocational training for occupations requiring 1–3 and 4–5 years of education. Students qualify for access to higher education institutions through an examination (*prijímacie skúšky*).

Admittance to secondary schools on a full-time basis is conditional on completion of entrance examinations. Students may attend gymnasia and technical secondary schools from any year after Grade 4 of primary school. However, it is exceptional for pupils to leave primary school after Grade 4, and there is only one type of secondary school that begins after Grade 4 – eight-grade gymnasium. After Grade 9 of primary school pupils can attend any type of secondary school.

Slovak school legislation does not determine what age is necessary for entering any kind of secondary school. Usually pupils enter secondary school at the age of 15 and leave it at the age of 19. However, the duration of secondary education depends on the type of school, and can vary from three years (in vocational secondary schools) to five years (in specialised grammar schools, such as language schools).

³⁶⁶ ÚIPŠ, *The Educational System*, pp. 11–12.

³⁶⁷ Conservatory (*konzervatorium*) provides artistic education. It lasts 4–8 years and is completed by a certificate of secondary education, allowing its graduates access to higher education.

Public secondary schools are established by self-governing regions after they are approved by the Ministry of Education and social partners. Private schools may be established by churches, legal entities and private persons.

Apprentice Training Centres

Apprentice Training Centres (*Odborné učilište*) (ISCED 2C) prepare students to learn and follow trades. They take students who have completed the period of compulsory schooling (10 years) in a lower grade at primary school, or who have failed to successfully complete Grade 9 (the final grade of primary education), so therefore cannot advance to secondary school.

Special schools

The objective of special schools is to provide education using special educational and training methods, tools and forms for students with mental, sensorial or physical handicaps, students with dysphasia, students with multiple handicaps, maladjusted pupils, and ill or weakened pupils placed in medical facilities, and to prepare them for their integration into the working process and social life.

Special schools include special primary schools, special secondary schools, practical training schools and vocational schools. These schools are classified according to the type and the degree of the handicap of their students. Special education and training are also provided in the form of integration of handicapped students into the mainstream schools, or into special classes within mainstream schools, with the assistance of professional teachers.

Education in special primary and secondary schools is provided according to study plans and curricula of regular schools, with only partial modifications. Therefore, education received in these schools is equivalent to the education received in regular primary or secondary schools.

Training of children with intellectual disabilities, however, involves a preparation for a future career only in some less demanding trades. The level of vocational training of the school-leavers is defined as gaining skills and familiarity with a working environment (ISCED 2C).

For pupils with intellectual disabilities who completed special primary school and were not admitted to a vocational school or special apprentice school there are practical schools provided. The function of these schools is to prepare students for independent living, family life, simple chores and auxiliary work under supervision.

Special schools usually accept pupils on the recommendation of educational, psychological, or special advisory centres. Teachers working in special schools are required to have a special teacher training of the respective specialisation.

The educational system also includes segregated special schools for children with special educational needs (SEN). This includes the following groups of students:

students with intellectual, sensorial or physical disabilities, or dysphasia, pupils with behavioural problems (“maladjusted pupils”), and ill/weakened pupils who have been placed in hospital.³⁶⁸

Special schools are divided into a number of different types, according to the type and degree of the disabilities or disadvantages of their students. As confirmed in the ERRC’s *Stigmata* report,³⁶⁹ the majority of Roma pupils attend special schools for pupils with intellectual disabilities (*Speciálna škola*). Therefore this report focuses exclusively on this kind of special school.³⁷⁰

As shown in Table A1, in 2004–2005, a total of 16,679 children attended special primary schools for children with intellectual disabilities.

³⁶⁸ Children with special educational needs are defined as children with any mental or physical handicap, children with communication disabilities, children with autism, and children with learning difficulties. ÚIPŠ, *The Educational System*, 2005, pp. 18–19.

³⁶⁹ ERRC, *Stigmata*.

³⁷⁰ Other types of special school include schools for children with physical disabilities and sensory disabilities.

Table A1. Overview of special schools in Slovakia (2004–2005)

Type of school	Number of schools	Number of classes	Number of pupils	Number of teachers	
				Full-time	Part-time
Special kindergartens	67	125	1,034	196	1
Special primary schools	276	2,366	20,551	3,226	82
– pupils with mental disabilities	198	1,922	16,679	2,644	63
– pupils with other kinds of disabilities,	78	444	3,872	562	19
Special secondary schools	19	127	1,007	159	41
– gymnasia	2	7	69	12	8
– specialised secondary schools	5	22	210	33	22
– vocational secondary schools	12	98	728	114	11
Vocational schools	45	397	4,018	242	48
Practical schools	28	53	374	67	16
Total	437	3,068	26,984	3,870	188

Source: Eurybase³⁷¹

Entrance to special schools for children with intellectual disabilities is determined by a maturity test at the age of six, which is administered by the Pedagogical-Psychological Advisory Centres (PPACs), which are responsible for the diagnosis of disability and the placement of children in special schools for children with mental disabilities (see also Section 6.3).

As shown above in Table A1, special schools for students with intellectual disabilities include special primary schools, special secondary schools, practical training schools and vocational schools. They are intended to provide education for such students, using special educational and training methods, tools and forms, and to prepare them for integration into employment and social life.³⁷²

³⁷¹ In the table, the number of full-time teachers also include head teachers and deputy head teachers; Special primary schools for children with other kinds of disabilities include special schools for children with hearing, sight or physical disabilities, for ill and weakened pupils situated in health centres and for pupils with impaired communication. Eurybase, *Information Database Slovakia*, Section 10.8.1.

³⁷² ÚIPŠ, *The Educational System*, p. 18.

Pupils with intellectual disabilities who have completed a special primary school, but who were not admitted to a vocational school or special apprentice school, may attend a practical school (*praktické školy*). The function of these schools is to prepare students for independent living, family life, simple chores and auxiliary work under supervision. Teachers working in special schools are required to have special teacher training in the specialisation concerned.

Currently, the whole system of special education and training is undergoing a major restructuring, which underlines the principle of humanisation of education and training, respect for the individual qualities of each person and maximum possibilities for their integration into the general population, instead of their segregation, with the aim of providing the pupils with the highest education corresponding to their abilities and professional qualification (see also subsection 4.5). The integration is carried out by the involvement of individuals in regular schools or by the establishment of special classes in mainstream schools or by integration of special schools with special educational facilities (by establishing special boarding schools for providing all-day and longer care for pupils).³⁷³

A1.1.2 National structures dealing with education of Roma

Hierarchically, the Ministry of Education is divided into Sections, each of which is divided into Departments.

The Department of Education and Upbringing of the Roma Communities was established within the Ministry of Education's Section on Regional Education.³⁷⁴ However, bearing in mind the importance of the issues relating to the education of Roma children, the Department was significantly underequipped, with regard to human resources, in comparison with the other departments of the Ministry (it employed only three full-time employees). Since the formation of a new Government in 2006, however, this Department no longer exists. It has been incorporated into the existing Department for National Minorities, which employs eight people full time.³⁷⁵

³⁷³ ÚIPŠ, *The Educational System*, pp. 18–19.

³⁷⁴ The Department of Education and Upbringing of the Roma Communities provided the State governance on the education of the Roma communities and of children from socially disadvantaged environments, in pre-schools, primary schools, secondary schools, special schools and school facilities. The Department was also the responsible body for the defence of children and of human rights in the field of education. From 2004, the Department's mandate was expanded to also cover migration issues. Information from the Ministry of Education website, available in Slovakian at <http://www.minedu.sk/RS/OVaVRK/ovavrk.htm> (accessed 15 June 2006).

³⁷⁵ Information from the Ministry of Education website, available in Slovak at <http://www.minedu.sk/RS/OVNM/OVNMM/zOVNM.htm> (accessed 16 March 2007).

A1.2 Legal roles and decision-making

The administration of education up to the level of higher education is regulated by the Act on State Administration in Education and School Self-governance.³⁷⁶

A decentralisation process is on going in Slovakia. In compliance with the concept of public administration reform that began in the Slovak Republic in 2002, the operations of the regional educational system (primary schools, secondary schools and school facilities) are gradually passing to the municipalities, and to the eight self-governing regions.³⁷⁷

The Ministry of Education determines generally binding rules for the education system – in particular concerning curricula and the rules for financing schools.³⁷⁸ The Ministry is solely responsible for the regulation of the curricula taught in primary, secondary and special schools.

Each school is managed by a head, who is appointed by the founder of the school. For private schools, the founder is a church or religious society recognised by the State (for church schools) or another legal entity or natural person. For public schools, the founders of the schools and school facilities are as follows:

- for kindergartens and primary schools: the municipality;
- for secondary schools: the region;
- for special schools: the Regional School Authority.

Regional School Authorities (RSAs)

In addition to funding kindergartens and primary schools, the municipalities make initial decisions concerning failure to attend compulsory education for pupils who are resident within their area. In the second stage it is the RSA's responsibility.³⁷⁹

There are eight RSAs (one for each region), which are responsible for redistributing the finances of the State budget among the individual founders of schools and school facilities, and supervising compliance with generally binding regulations – with the exception of areas falling within the competency of the State School Inspectorate (SSI).³⁸⁰ (For further information on the SSI, see subsection 5.5).

³⁷⁶ Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education.

³⁷⁷ The eight regions are as follows: Bratislava (capital Bratislava); Trnava (capital Trnava); Trenčín (capital Trenčín); Nitra (capital Nitra); Žilina (capital Žilina); Banská Bystrica (capital Banská Bystrica); Prešov (capital Prešov); Košice (capital Košice).

³⁷⁸ Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education, PART VI.

³⁷⁹ Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education, PART II, Section 3.

³⁸⁰ Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education, PART IV, Section 10.

School Boards

School boards have been strengthened as part of the decentralised system. If the founder of a school is a municipality or a region, the head is selected on the basis of a selection procedure conducted by the school board.³⁸¹

The founder of the school is responsible for the establishment of the school board, which consists of 5 to 11 members.³⁸² For schools founded by the municipality, the 11 members of the school board are comprised as follows: there are two elected representatives of pedagogical employees and one elected representative of the other employees of the school, four elected representatives of parents, three delegated representatives of the founder, and a delegated representative of another legal entity or natural person taking part in education and training.³⁸³

Specifically, the school board is responsible for the following:

- carrying out the selection procedure for appointing the head teacher;
- proposing, on the basis of the selection procedure, the candidate for appointment to the post of head teacher;
- submitting a proposal for the withdrawal of the head teacher (this must be accompanied by a reason) or expressing its opinion on the proposed withdrawal of the head teacher;
- expressing its opinion on conceptual intentions on the development of the school or school facility, and on proposals for the dissolution of the school or school facility.³⁸⁴

The school head is accountable both to the founder and to the school board. The school founder opens calls for tender, but the school board is responsible for the selection. This selection process is obligatory for selecting the school head. The representative of the founder, as well as the municipal council, is present at the selection; however, their power is only advisory. The accountability of a school head to the founder lies with the founder's right to withdraw the school head.³⁸⁵

Based on Law 596/2003 Coll. on State Administration in Education, school governance bodies consist of school councils (*rada školy*), municipal educational

³⁸¹ Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education, Section 3.

³⁸² However, if the school or school facility has a lower number of employees than 25, then the number of school board members may be under 11. A school board with five members may be established only in schools and school facilities where the total number of employees does not exceed 10.

³⁸³ Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education, PART IX, Section 25.

³⁸⁴ Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education, PART IX, Section 24.

³⁸⁵ Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education, PART II Arts. 3–4.

councils (*obecná školská rada*), territorial educational councils (*územná školská rada*) and student school councils (*žiacka školská rada*).

School Councils

The establishment of a school council is in the mandate of the founder (generally being the municipality).³⁸⁶ School councils are composed of 5 to 11 members. Council members who are not members of school staff have to form a majority.

School council members of a school the founder of which is the municipality comprise three staff members (two pedagogues), four parents, three delegated representatives of the founder (at least one is an elected member of the local council), one delegated representative of a different body (or person) active in the field of education.

School council members of a school for which the founder is the self-governing region or the State regional educational body consist of three staff members (two pedagogues; if a pre-school is part of the school, then also one pre-school teacher representative), three parents (if a pre-school is part of the school, then also one pre-school parent representative), two delegated representatives of the founder and one delegated representative of the municipality in which the school is seated (both of whom are members of the regional council, excluding the director or the deputy director), and one delegated representative of another institution (or a person) active in the field of education. School councils for upper secondary schools also include one elected student member.

Municipal Educational Council/Authority

Establishment of the municipal educational council is in the responsibility of the municipality. This council consists of 11 members: four elected directors, two parent representatives, three representatives of all school councils established within the municipality and two representatives of the municipality (with the exception of the mayor).

Territorial Educational Council

Establishment of the territorial educational council is the responsibility of the self-governing region. The territorial educational council consists of three elected head masters, two parent representatives, and four elected representatives from among the chairs of school councils of schools the founder of which is the State regional educational office of the self-governing region. The council further consists of one delegated representative of the self-governing region and one delegate from the State regional educational office (excluding the chair of the regional council and the head of the State regional educational office).

³⁸⁶ Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education, PART IX, Section 25.

In 2003, the competencies of school councils were strengthened, allowing members to better support school directors in the management of the school and to defend the interests of children, parents and teachers.

School governance bodies take decisions in the present of an absolute majority of its members. A decision of either of the governance bodies requires an absolute majority of votes. A valid decision in the case of an appointment, reappointment or dismissal of a director requires the presence of an absolute majority of the council members. Council meetings are public unless the council decides otherwise. The functional period of the councils is four years.

The school council/board is responsible for the following

- carrying out the selection procedure and appointing the head teacher;
- proposing, on the basis of the selection procedure, the candidate for appointment to the post of head teacher;
- submitting a proposal for the withdrawal of the head teacher (accompanied by a reason) or expressing its opinion on the proposed withdrawal of the head teacher;
- expressing its opinion on concepts for the development of the school or school facility, and on proposals for the dissolution of the school or school facility;³⁸⁷
- expressing its opinion on issues reported by the school director to the founder, including the following:
 - proposals of number of children to be enrolled;
 - proposal of new courses and study focus;
 - proposals of changes to education and study plans;
 - budget drafts;
 - school business plans;
 - school educational reports;
 - school management reports;
 - information on the pedagogical-organisational and material-technical provisions.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁷ Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education, PART IX, Section 24.

³⁸⁸ Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education.

Municipal Educational Council/Authority

Establishment of the municipal educational council is in the responsibility of the municipality. This council consists of 11 members: four elected directors, two parent representatives, three representatives of all school councils established within the municipality and two representatives of the municipality (with the exception of the mayor).

The municipal educational council is established in towns where there are at least three school districts, or at least 10 schools.

The municipal council expresses its opinion on the following:

- the activities of the schools' founder;
- the conceptual development of schools;
- proposals of allocation of funding to schools from the State budget;
- human resources issues, material and social conditions of staff;
- requests for improving the educational services and related financial aspects;
- reports on the quality of local education/schooling.

Municipal educational councils perform the role of school councils in cases where the municipality has not established one.

The territorial school council is established within the territorial mandate of the self-governing region.

The territorial school council expresses its opinion on the following:

- the activities of the relevant regional educational office;
- the educational activities of the self-governing region;
- the schools' development within the self-governing region;
- budget proposals;
- staffing issues and social condition of the staff;
- requests on the part of the self-governing region of improvement of the educational services and related financial aspects;
- proposals for new study areas;
- reports on the quality of local education.

The territorial school council performs the function of school councils in those schools where the State regional educational office of the self-governing region has not established one.

Schools have no autonomy with regard to curricula.

A1.3 School Funding

A1.3.1 Total education funding

All reports show that Slovakia allocates a relatively low share of its GDP to education. There has been a dramatic decline in Government expenditure in education in Slovakia since 1990.

According to the UNDP, in 1990 public expenditure on education (including current and capital expenditures) was 5.1 per cent in Slovakia. However, as shown below in Table A2, according to World Bank data, from 1996 to 2001 there was a decline in public expenditure on education as a share of GDP.

In 2001, Slovakia invested 4.1 per cent of its GDP in education, as compared to an average of 4.8 per cent for the CEE region as a whole.³⁸⁹ In 2000, spending on education accounted for 10–15 per cent of total Government expenditures (depending on the data source).³⁹⁰

Table A2. Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP (2002)

Year	Share of GDP (%)
1996	4.60
1997	4.30
1998	4.10
1999	4.00
2000	3.9
2001	4.1

Source: World Bank³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ Klugman, Micklewright, Redmond, “Poverty in the Transition: Social Expenditures and the Working-Age Poor”, Innocenti Working Papers No. 91, March 2002.

³⁹⁰ The official Ministry statistics show that 5 per cent of spending is on education. The World Bank and UNDP, however, show roughly 10 per cent. See UNDP, *National Human Development Report Slovak Republic 2001–2002*, 2003, and World Bank, *Achieving Education for All by 2015: Simulation Results for 47 Low-Income Countries*, Human Development Network, Africa Region and Education Department, 2002 (hereafter, World Bank, *Achieving Education for All*).

³⁹¹ World Bank, *Achieving Education for All*.

The impact of the decline in education funding in Slovakia can be seen in its increasing social inequality. For example, teachers' annual starting salary is, at \$5,319, considerably lower than it is in the Czech Republic (\$10,704) or Hungary (\$6,339).³⁹²

A1.3.2 School funding

Public primary and secondary schools are primarily funded from two sources: funding from the Ministry of Education and funding from income tax revenues (via the municipal or regional authorities).

Funding from other sources of income, such as contributions (from pupils, parents or others) or business activities³⁹³ is negligible.

Funding from the Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education finances primary and secondary schools through its so-called discretionary competencies. This moves the actual execution of the financing to the local municipalities or regional self-governments (i.e. the founders of public schools). Discretionary competency also means that the school founders cannot decide on the allocation of the funds coming from the Ministry, as these funds are target-based and set in accordance with objectives set by the Ministry (for example, operational funds cannot be used to cover salary costs).

The amount of funding that each school receives depends primarily on per-pupil normative funding. Each school founder³⁹⁴ must inform the appropriate RSA of the total numbers of pupils in each of the schools and school facilities under the founder's competency, together with any other data required for the allocation of Ministry funds.³⁹⁵

The per-pupil normative funding sums comprise two components:

- The *per-pupil salary normative* amount covers school salary costs.³⁹⁶

³⁹² Z. Srankova, H. Yaeko and C. Lafuente, *Education Sub-sector Review: Slovakia*, p. 14.

³⁹³ Schools and practical education centres may also perform business activities, provided that these are not in conflict with the fulfilment of their mission. Ministry of Education, *Education in the Slovak Republic*, p. 24.

³⁹⁴ This includes the founders of public schools, primary art schools and school facilities, as well as non-State schools, primary art schools and school facilities.

³⁹⁵ The school founder is obliged to provide this information by 30 September of the current calendar year. (The Ministry must notify school founders of the required data, and the form of this data, by 15 June of the current calendar year. Act No. 597/2003 on Financing Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and School Facilities, as amended by the Act No. 564/2004, Section 7.)

³⁹⁶ This includes the standardised annual costs for wages and salaries, as well as the employer's insurance and contributions to insurance companies, for employees who provide for the process of education and training, as well as those who provide for operation of the school.

- The *per-pupil operational normative* amount covers costs such as health, operational costs (except heating), costs of further education for teachers, and equipment.

The per-pupil normative (both the salary and operational components) is calculated according to the type of school, the personnel demands of the field of study or trade, the form of study, and the language of instruction. For primary schools, the school size may also be taken into account.³⁹⁷

There is a higher (formula-based) per-pupil normative (both the salary and operational components) allocated for the following:

- students with special educational needs who have been integrated since 2004, up to 250 per cent of the standard subsidy (see Section 3.3);
- students in special schools (see Section 3.4).

Thus, the most significant factor for school funding is the total number of students. This is intended to ensure that a school founder is motivated to use the allocated financial resources efficiently, and to rationalise the school network under the founder's responsibility. According to the Ministry of Education, schools are motivated to provide higher-quality education, as this will result in increased interest in the school and a higher number of pupils (and hence a higher total level of funding).³⁹⁸

However, the school founders are not simply “conveyor belts” for centrally determined funding. Funds allocated to the founders of individual State schools are determined by the financing norms, which are dependent on the number of students, and the per-student normative funds for the various categories of schools and pupils. Based on the total per-pupil normative amount, and the number of pupils per school, the founder then receives from the Ministry a total amount of funding for all the schools under its administration. They then have the right to change the actual amount that a school receives, to a certain extent.³⁹⁹

In this way, the founders are able to shift funds among the schools, according to their needs. For example, they may decide to reallocate 20 per cent of the operational funds from one school to another. In this way, if there are two schools, one with a broken roof and one without, the one with a broken roof could receive the extra funding. The determination of the minimal subsidy that the school automatically receives is an instrument that should create some degree of financial autonomy for the school. The

³⁹⁷ The normative funding may be increased to double at most.

³⁹⁸ Ministry of Education, *Education in the Slovak Republic*, p. 23, no longer available online (last accessed 15 June 2006).

³⁹⁹ “To a certain extent” means that a school must receive at a minimum 85 per cent of the staff costs normative funding and 80 per cent of the operational normative funding, as prescribed to it according by law.

aim of this system is to support local autonomy, while still maintaining certainty and predictability in the school's budget.

In addition to the per-pupil normative funding, the Ministry of Education also covers the following central costs:

- financing the process of education and training;
- covering the capital costs of the reconstruction of school buildings, and the modernisation of schools and school facilities;
- publishing textbooks;⁴⁰⁰
- the development and production of methodological aids.⁴⁰¹

Funding from personal income tax

The second source of funding for primary and secondary schools comes from personal income tax. The receipts from this tax are collected centrally through tax offices. The total collected amount is then divided into three parts:⁴⁰² 70.3 per cent goes to the local municipalities, 23.5 per cent goes to the regional self-governments, and 6.2 per cent remains in the State budget.

This source of funding allows the school founders (such as the local municipalities and the regional self-governments) to decide upon the use of the funds.⁴⁰³ The original competencies of the local municipalities are slightly different from those of the regional self-governments, thus enabling synchronised funding. In general, these funds can be used for the financing of primary art schools, pre-schools and school facilities (such as school refectories, centres for leisure time, language schools established within a primary or secondary school, or school clubs).

According to a study published in 2005:

The law and related government decree define several other possibilities for preferential funding that can be applied in the case of Roma students.

⁴⁰⁰ For the pupils of non-State schools, the Ministry lends out textbooks and study texts for obligatory subjects free of charge. Ministry of Education, *Education in the Slovak Republic*, p. 8.

⁴⁰¹ Act No. 597/2003 on Financing Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and School Facilities, as amended by the Act No. 564/2004.

⁴⁰² According to Act No. 564/2004 on Budgetary Assessment of Redistribution of Income Tax Revenues to Regional Self-governance, as amended (Act No. 564/2004 on Budgetary Assessment).

⁴⁰³ Set according to Act No. 564/2004 on Budgetary Assessment and Government Regulation 668/2004.

- **Special factors:** the Ministry of Education will provide funds for objectively justified recurring costs, which cannot be reflected in the financing norm, due to their specific nature (Article 4, Section 13 of the law).
- **List of special factors:** student transport costs according to special regulations, costs of wages and insurance payments for teaching assistants and zero grade teachers, and subsidies to founders for the schooling of students from socially disadvantaged environments (Article 6 of the Government Decree).
- **Development projects:** as permitted by available funds, the Ministry shall allocate targeted funds from the budget section of the Ministry to the founder of a State school requesting funding for a development project and for its putting into practice; the selection of projects is performed by the Ministry (Article 4, Section 16 of the law).
- **Education voucher:** they can be used to support after-school and spare-time activities as envisaged by the Ministry of Education’s *Concept for the Integrated Education of Roma Children and Young People, Including Development of Secondary and University Education*. The report also recommends the following: “Therefore, it might be possible to use the following provision for the financing of schooling for Roma students: the staff-costs subsidy and the subsidy for the educational process per student at a school with a teaching language other than Slovakian amount to 108 per cent of the respective subsidies and to 125 per cent of the respective subsidies in the case of bilingual teaching (Article 4, Section 1 of the Government Decree).”⁴⁰⁴

A1.3.4 Funding levels

Data from UNICEF show a gradual increase in per-pupil spending from 1995 to 1999, as shown below in Table A3.

⁴⁰⁴ Andrej Salner (ed.), *Roma Children in the Slovak Education System*, p. 72.

Table A3. Development of total per-pupil expenditure (1995–1999)

Year	Per-pupil expenditure (SKK)	
	Expenditure on regional education	Expenditure on higher education
1995	54,797	17,704
1996	50,659	17,542
1997	56,256	20,871
1998	55,955	21,782
1999	55,000	23,337

Source: UNICEF, *Education for All Report Assessment: Country Report on Slovakia, 2000*

The Government has acknowledged the need to increase per-student funding, through a multi-source funding system, for which a new Law on School Financing was adopted in 2003.⁴⁰⁵

According to one source, due to the low proportion of Roma students in secondary schools and higher education institutions, one can assume that the average expenditure per Roma child compared to other children, over the course of the entire schooling period, is significantly lower, even taking into consideration the higher expenditure on some Roma children due to their excessive placement in special needs schools, where per-student costs are approximately three times higher than such costs at mainstream primary schools.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁵ According to UNESCO's Institute of Statistics, public expenditure per student as a share of per capita GDP is 11.6 per cent for primary schools, 17.1 per cent for secondary and 30 per cent for tertiary.

⁴⁰⁶ Andrej Salner, *Roma Children in the Slovak Education System*, Bratislava, SDI, 2004, p. 16.

ANNEX 2. CASE STUDIES

For each country report in this series of EUMAP reports on “Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma”, three case studies were carried out to supplement and corroborate data gathered from other sources. Information from the case studies is integrated throughout the body of each country report. Annex 2 includes additional details from each of the case study sites. In Slovakia the three sites are Lučenec, Prešov and Zborov.

A2.1 Case Study: Lučenec

A2.1.1 Administrative Unit

Lučenec is a district centre in south-central Slovakia. It has a population of about 29,000 inhabitants. There are no official data available about the number of Roma in the municipality,⁴⁰⁷ but according to interviews the proportion may be up to 20 per cent.

The region of south-central Slovakia is characterised by a higher unemployment rate as compared to the average in the country. The region is ethnically mixed, with a high proportion of Roma and ethnic Hungarians. Compared to the Hungarian minority, the Roma minority has poorer representation at the decision-making processes at all levels, and has much weaker political organisation.

Almost all problems in the region are linked to the slow economic development: unemployment, investments, purchasing power, and the like. Open nationalistic/racist conflicts are not common.

People who are employed primarily work in western Slovakia or the Czech Republic. Some people, including Roma, work in the United Kingdom and other Western European countries.⁴⁰⁸

A2.1.2 Roma and the Community

In the past Roma represented cheap labour to the farmers. According to an NGO representative, “After World War II many Roma from Lučenec left to live in the Czech Republic, and Roma from the nearby villages moved to Lučenec. Nowadays the trend is the opposite: Roma from Lučenec move to the nearby villages, because the housing costs are lower there.”⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ Lučenec was not involved in the *Sociographical Mapping of Roma Communities in Slovakia* (the broadest study on the Roma population in Slovakia so far) and none of the representatives interviewed was able to give a specific estimate.

⁴⁰⁸ Interview with the chair of a Roma NGO, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴⁰⁹ Interview with the chair of a Roma NGO, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

At present Roma are concentrated in three areas in the town, while in addition a large proportion of the community live scattered throughout the town, generally isolated from their non-Roma neighbours. In the two of the Roma neighbourhoods the living conditions are equal to the surroundings, but in one settlement the living conditions are very bad, which is called the “Settlement of Public Cleanliness”. The Settlement is about 2 kilometres from the town, and about 4 kilometres from the closest school and the nearest shop. The houses in the Settlement are inhabited exclusively by Roma, most whom are unemployed and living in poverty.⁴¹⁰

In Lučenec there are several Roma NGOs, but these rarely cooperate, and indeed are strongly competitive. There is no leader able to unite the local Roma population; power is distributed among many community leaders and there is great – sometimes unfair – competition among them.⁴¹¹

The educational level within the Roma community varies. According to an NGO representative, “Some study at secondary schools and universities, but we have to acknowledge that the educational level is decreasing. In the past it was common that almost everyone had finished at least an apprentice secondary school and there were no cases of not finishing primary school, which is now very common.”⁴¹²

A parent observed that although open racist conflicts are rare, there is a lot of hidden discrimination in the area: “Nobody dares to put a sign on his pub saying that Roma are not allowed inside, but this [the discrimination] is almost everywhere. [...] My child is half-Roma. I have a non-Roma husband. The doctor’s treatment is different when I go there with our child compared to when my husband goes with her.”⁴¹³ The chair of an NGO indicated that racism is more of a problem within institutions and bureaus than on the streets, and these attitudes complicate their work through their unwillingness to cooperate.⁴¹⁴

Although Roma children have many non-Roma friends, there are also prejudices among children. An NGO representative reported the following: “When we advertise a camp for children, many non-Roma children come here to apply for it, but after they see the number of Roma here, they run away. If you would only see those children, they are clean, nice-smelling. There are no children from the Settlement. And if there were, you would not notice that.”⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁰ During the research it was not possible to obtain the proper number of people living in the Settlement of Public Cleanliness, but observations indicate about 20 overcrowded houses, sometimes with 10 or more inhabitants.

⁴¹¹ Interview with the chair of a Roma NGO, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴¹² Interview with the Chair of a Roma NGO, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴¹³ Interview with a mother, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴¹⁴ Interview with the chair of a Roma NGO, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴¹⁵ Interview with the chair of a Roma NGO, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

A2.1.3 Education

The school and education network

There are nine pre-schools in Lučenec located throughout the town, three of which are attached to primary schools, and the rest are free-standing with legal subjectivity.⁴¹⁶ One of the pre-schools is for children with mental disabilities.

Representatives of primary schools estimated that about 80 per cent of children enrolled at their schools had attended pre-school. They were unable to calculate this proportion among Roma children, but agreed that this would be much lower.⁴¹⁷

According to the representatives of the municipality responsible for education, there are no differences between the pre-schools within the town in terms of quality or equipment: "Such differences could be seen only between a pre-school in town and pre-schools in a village."⁴¹⁸

There is general agreement that almost all the problems of Roma pupils in schools can be linked to whether the child was attending pre-school or not. The importance of pre-school for all children, but especially Roma children, is widely accepted, yet there is a very low attendance of Roma children at pre-schools, often ascribed to the costs associated with pre-school.

One of the interviewed parents said that there might be also some other problems apart from material obstacles: "One of my friends had this experience that she had her child at pre-school and she was the only Roma girl there. She was told that other kids and their parents mind having a Roma girl at their pre-school and that it would be better if she stopped attending."⁴¹⁹

For most children in the town, there are accessible nearby pre-schools. However, children from the Settlement of Public Cleanliness live about 4 kilometres from the nearest pre-school. Consequently, there was no child from the settlement attending pre-school until recently, when the Office of the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, in cooperation with the local municipality office, supported the establishment of a regular bus line to transport children from the Settlement to and from school. This is a significant change compared to the previous arrangement, when most children had to walk to school, because the bus ran infrequently and very often did not stop next to the Settlement. Children were not only tired; they were also in

⁴¹⁶ Meaning they are fully administered by their respective decision-making bodies. The municipality funds them, but there is no further involvement in administration, decision processes, etc.

⁴¹⁷ Interviews with primary school staff, Lučenec, June 2007.

⁴¹⁸ Interview with two representatives of the Education Department at the Municipality Office in Lučenec. One of them is responsible for primary schools and the other is responsible for pre-schools, Lučenec, 8 June 2007.

⁴¹⁹ Interview with a parent, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

danger, as there is no pavement next to the road, which is quite busy. Although the project started only in spring 2007, there is general confidence that the addition of transport will increase children's attendance in pre-school and decrease the truancy of children attending primary schools.

There are seven primary schools – six with legal subjectivity and one school with only Grades 1–4, which does not have legal subjectivity. One of the schools uses Hungarian as the language of instruction.

Enrolment

While children are expected to enrol in a school in their area or district and must be permitted to enrol there, all schools can accept a child from another area; according to school staff, parents may freely choose the school for their children; no parents could recall an instance when a school refused to enrol a child.⁴²⁰ As there is normative financing in practice (meaning that schools are financed according to the number of pupils) and there is a lack of children, schools fight to attract as many pupils as possible, so it is very rare for a school to refuse enrolment to a child. Only where children seek to transfer from another school in the fifth grade have refusals been reported, when bad behaviour is reported.⁴²¹

In order to attract more pupils, schools offer programmes such as specialised football classes, intensive language programmes and the like. As these usually begin only at the second level (starting in the fifth grade), the number of children changing schools after the fourth grade is high.

Inspections

While scheduled inspections take place regularly in the Lučenec schools, inspections in response to parents' requests are rare. Only one of the visited schools in Lučenec had come under such an inspection, six years ago.

School financing and infrastructure

Schools are financed by the Ministry of Education according to the normative per pupil, which is about 25,000 SKK (approximately €760): "The bigger the school is, the easier financial management it has, as the financing is dependent on the number of pupils"⁴²²

⁴²⁰ Interviews with parents, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴²¹ Interviews with the deputy director for first-level classes and the deputy director for second-level classes, the primary school on Vajanského Street, Lučenec, 8 June 2007.

⁴²² Interviews with representatives of the primary school on Vajanského street, Lučenec, 8 June 2007.

Regarding the financial situation in schools, the deputy director of the primary school on Kubínyiho Street⁴²³ said that their school runs a debt of about half a million on utilities, but adds that this is the state of almost every school: “The costs are covered only by what we get from the normative funding. [...] It depends on the skills of management pretty much. We keep them quiet by paying them a little, because if we pay normally to one, we wouldn’t pay the others.”⁴²⁴

Schools also try to find other sources of funding. One of them is the municipality budget, up to 40 per cent of which goes on education. But as this includes pre-schools, school canteens, and school clubs that do not have any other source of funding apart from primary schools (normative funding), primary schools often only receive emergency funds needed immediately for repairs.

Schools can also find some sources by renting their space for commercial use, from the fund of the Association of Parents and Friends of the School, some from collecting paper, chestnuts, and the like.⁴²⁵ There is no correlation between the proportion of Roma and the level of equipment in schools. For example, in the school on Kubínyiho Street every fourth pupil is Roma, but the school is well equipped. Schools have up to 25 pupils per classroom and about the same number of pupils per computer. The situation is similar in the various schools in the area.

Absenteeism

Truancy is a serious problem at all schools in Lučenec. In the school on Kubínyiho Street, where every fourth pupil is Roma, in the third quarter of the school year 2006/2007 all pupils together missed 17,000 lessons, of which 7,000 (41 per cent) were missed by Roma pupils. In these cases the absences were excused due to illness or other reasons; in terms of unexcused absences, in the same time frame all pupils together missed 1,614 lessons without an excuse, and Roma pupils accounted for 1,370 (85 per cent) of these absences. “It depends on the weather. As long as it is cold outside, they come inside, but immediately after the winter ends, they want to stay outside,” according to the deputy director.⁴²⁶

Absenteeism is addressed in cooperation with the municipality office and other bureaus. If a child misses 15 lessons in a month without a proper excuse, the family stops receiving the State child’s allowance. If a pupil misses 60 lessons in aggregate

⁴²³ Interview with the deputy director for second-level classes, the primary school on Kubínyiho Street, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴²⁴ Interview with the deputy director for second-level classes, the primary school on Kubínyiho Street, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴²⁵ Interview with the deputy director for second-level classes, the primary school on Kubínyiho Street, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴²⁶ Interview with the deputy director for second-level classes, the primary school on Kubínyiho Street, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

without a legitimate excuse, the situation is handled by the trespass commission at the municipality. Even if parents want to cooperate, sometimes the process is very difficult; children mislead their parents and pretend to leave for school, but never arrive.⁴²⁷

Patterns of segregation

Representatives of the schools with the highest proportion of Roma children covered by this research are aware that their schools are labelled as “Roma (Gypsy) schools” and are making efforts to attract more non-Roma students by the additional sports and language programmes. On the other hand representatives of both schools do not think that “white flight” is a serious problem.⁴²⁸

While it has been reported that there are many more Roma in special schools than non-Roma,⁴²⁹ NGO representatives indicated that the misdiagnosis of children is not a significant problem at present, after a shift in diagnosis procedures. The law requires that children can be placed into special schools for children with disabilities only with the agreement of their legal representative. According to school representatives, this requirement can sometimes complicate the education of a child. For example, at the primary school on Vajanského Street there is a pupil who was diagnosed with intellectual disabilities; his parents insist on having him in a mainstream school, while the teachers report that the level of support is not sufficient: “For such a pupil integration is not enough; he needs a special pedagogue.”⁴³⁰

Schools try to satisfy parents who request a transfer for their children, although there was no reported case of a child being transferred from a special remedial class to a mainstream primary school. Regarding the transfers between classes within one school, representatives of schools named several obstacles to this – pupils of one class usually learn the same foreign language, and attend a class on either religion or ethics.⁴³¹

At the opposite extreme are parents who want their children to attend special schools although they do not have any disability, reportedly because the schools are easier for the children.⁴³²

⁴²⁷ Interviews with the deputy director of the primary school at Vajanského street, Lučenec, 8 June 2007.

⁴²⁸ Interviews with school staff, Lučenec, 8 June 2007.

⁴²⁹ Interviews with the chair of a Roma NGO, Lučenec, 7 June 2007; a parent, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴³⁰ Interview with the deputy director for second-level classes, the primary school on Vajanského street, Lučenec, 8 June 2007.

⁴³¹ Interview with the deputy director for first-level classes, the primary school on Vajanského street, Lučenec, 8 June 2007.

⁴³² Interview with a parent, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

Human resources at schools

While no problems with the availability of qualified teachers were reported,⁴³³ there are difficulties in finding teachers with the necessary specialisations in Lučenec schools. Teachers who could teach two subjects are needed, but finding the right combination is rare, so sometimes it happens that the teachers are not specialists for the classes they teach. Usually all members of the teaching staff are trained in pedagogy, with the exception of language classes, where in some cases the teacher does not yet have pedagogical training.

At the schools visited, there are no programmes for in-service training regarding teaching in ethnically mixed classes, teaching socially disadvantaged pupils or bilingual teaching.

Teaching assistants

Although there was a change in the name of the position, from “Roma teaching assistant” to “teaching assistant”, these assistants still work only in Roma classes. Assistants are employed in various ways. Sometimes they are regular employees of a school, and sometimes they are employees of an NGO. Sometimes they are paid by a school, sometimes by the Bureau of Labour, and sometimes indirectly by a school from the funding of Regional Bureau of Education.

There are two assistants in the Kubíniyho Street school; one is working within a programme for unemployed people that offers a bonus to their social welfare rather than a salary, and one is paid directly by the school. They do not have any assistant employed in the programme supported by the regional bureau. The programme is difficult to administer, and therefore schools try to find other ways to pay their assistants.⁴³⁴

Assistants are present in some classes and help teachers to explain the material, and to keep order in the classroom; their responsibilities are agreed upon with the teacher.

School staff noted that ethnicity is not significant as qualification for the position: “It is more important for them to have some skills in working with children and to know more than the children.”⁴³⁵ However, according to the deputy director at the Vajanského Street school, “We have had bad experiences with Roma assistants – they

⁴³³ Interview with the deputy director for second-level classes, the primary school on Kubíniyho Street, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴³⁴ Interview with the deputy director for second-level classes, the primary school on Kubíniyho Street, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴³⁵ Interview with the deputy director for second-level classes, the primary school on Kubíniyho Street, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

were not well educated and were thus unable to help the children. They should have at least a secondary school education.”⁴³⁶

Academic achievement

Pre-school attendance was cited as the greatest factor in determining school success.⁴³⁷ In the case of Lučenec, pre-school preparation is not needed to overcome any language barrier (teachers say that children do not speak Romanes even among themselves), but much more about the social barrier – children not used to attending pre-school find it more difficult to adapt to a new social environment in primary school.

Representatives of schools say that they do not file the results of children by ethnicity, but also say that there are not many top students among Roma: “They are rather the opposite”;⁴³⁸ “Class repetition is rather common among Roma pupils”; “Maybe every tenth [Roma] pupil has ever repeated a class.”⁴³⁹ While inspections appear to find conditions in the schools satisfactory, a parent indicated that children are not able to meet standards: “Children leave school in the ninth grade and they cannot read or write properly, nothing. [...] They are not even familiar with the clock.”⁴⁴⁰

Enrolment in secondary schools is difficult to analyse, due to unclear rules for admission. Some schools are underenrolled and recruit students, while elsewhere school results are the most important, and in other schools school results are not taken into account, as there are differences among primary schools.⁴⁴¹

According to the deputy director, Roma pupils prefer vocational secondary schools to other schools, because these are expected to be easier.⁴⁴² At each school a teacher is assigned to give students guidance in choosing an appropriate secondary school. The most crucial is the second year, because as they finish obligatory schooling at the end of the first year, they very often do not continue into the second.

⁴³⁶ Interviews with the deputy director, the primary school on Vajanského Street, Lučenec, 8 June 2007; the deputy director for first-level classes, the primary school on Vajanského Street, Lučenec, 8 June 2007.

⁴³⁷ Interviews with a parent, Lučenec, 7 June 2007; representatives of Education Department of the Municipality Office, Lučenec, 8 June 2007.

⁴³⁸ Interview with the deputy director, primary school at Kubíniyho Street, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴³⁹ Interview with the deputy director, the primary school on Kubíniyho Street, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴⁴⁰ Interview with a parent, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴⁴¹ Interview with a parent, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴⁴² Interview with the deputy director for the second level, primary school at Kubíniyho Street, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

School–community relations

In general Roma parents are not involved in any school activities. At the schools visited there were no Roma involved in the school councils. Similarly, although Roma parents are members of the Association of Parents and Friends of the School (membership is automatic for parents whose children attend school and whose parents have to contribute to the fund), Roma parents say that they are not involved in any decision-making processes at school.⁴⁴³

Regarding the parent–teacher meetings, those parents whose children do well at school come to ask about their child, but school staff expressed concern that the parents of children with problems rarely approach the school.⁴⁴⁴ This was attributed to parents' reluctance to hear bad news about their children in front of other parents, and in response, representatives of the Vajanského Street primary school decided to offer individual consultations to parents. Although some parents appreciated this step forward, there are still many parents with whom communication is very difficult.⁴⁴⁵

According to NGO representatives, all activities undertaken by civil society are done on their own initiative; while schools are willing to cooperate, outreach is always from the NGO, never the schools themselves. School directors welcome the activities, but expressed a need for improved cooperation if they are to be successful in influencing children.⁴⁴⁶

A2.2 Case Study: Zborov

A2.2.1 Administrative Unit

Zborov is a village in north-eastern Slovakia of about 2,950 inhabitants. According to the chair of the municipality office, about 45 per cent of the local population is Roma.⁴⁴⁷ An NGO representative reported that there are about 1,300 Roma inhabitants.⁴⁴⁸ The municipality has a positive demographic trend, with approximately 50 births to 30 deaths.

The budget of the municipality is about 50 million SKK (€1.5 million). Recent large investments in the locality were the sewage system and building of affordable housing, where 51 flats have been constructed. At present 14 more houses are under construction.

⁴⁴³ Interviews with Roma parents, Lučenec, 8 June 2007.

⁴⁴⁴ Interviews with school representatives, Vajanského and Kubínnyho Street primary schools, 7 June 2007.

⁴⁴⁵ Interview with the deputy director, the primary school on Vajanského Street, Lučenec, 8 June 2007.

⁴⁴⁶ Interview with the chair of a Roma NGO, Lučenec, 7 June 2007.

⁴⁴⁷ Interview with the chair of the Zborov Municipality Office, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁴⁸ Interview with an NGO representative, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

There are 370 unemployed people (giving a 25 per cent unemployment rate) in the municipality; about 230 of them are Roma (“Maybe up to 95 per cent”).⁴⁴⁹ Roma men mostly work in construction, and some women work as tailors. There are reports that some residents have gone abroad to look for work.⁴⁵⁰ Roma are often hired informally to work in building a house or in agricultural work.⁴⁵¹

A2.2.2 Roma and the Community

The local Roma population in Zborov is very young; the average age among Roma is much lower than the average age of non-Roma – while the overall proportion of Roma in the municipality is 45 per cent, 60 per cent of the children enrolled in school are Roma.⁴⁵² About seven out of ten children born are Roma.⁴⁵³

The educational level of local Roma is rather low, according to the chair of the municipality: “There are only two Roma who have finished secondary school. [...] We know this, because when we wanted to offer employment to Roma and the demand was that they need to have secondary-level education, only two of them could apply.”⁴⁵⁴

In last election period there was a Roma municipality representative, but currently there is no Roma member on the council. The municipal chair noted the following, however: “We are aware of [the Roma community’s] problems; we want to work for them, too. They live here with us, they make up 45 per cent of the inhabitants, they are at school, at church, at offices, we have to live with them, and so we try to help them.”⁴⁵⁵

The chair of the municipality named several projects aimed at supporting the Roma community, but was critical: “The only good thing is the programme of community social work. Apart from other things, as we are discussing the educational issue, it is important to note that they also help us to raise the attendance of Roma children at school. [...] In winter a child does not come to school, so after a discussion with a teacher or the director it is decided to visit the family. The parent says ‘The child does not have shoes, or clothes’, and ‘It is cold’. So then these social workers, they have contacts in the Slovak Red Cross and they can help the family through some humanitarian support.”⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁴⁹ Interview with the chair of the Zborov Municipality Office, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁵⁰ Interview with the chair of the Zborov Municipality Office, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁵¹ Interview with the chair of the Zborov Municipality Office, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁵² Interview with the chair of the Zborov Municipality Office, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁵³ Interview with the chair of the Zborov Municipality Office, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁵⁴ Interview with the chair of the Zborov Municipality Office, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁵⁵ Interview with the chair of the Zborov Municipality Office, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁵⁶ Interview with the chair of the Zborov Municipality Office, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

Until 2006, the most visible support came from the NGO Romane Vasta (Roma Hands). They organised several projects aimed mainly on the support of Roma culture and free time activities for children (dance classes, competitions, carnivals and the like). They also tried to prevent problems at school for Roma children – they accompanied children to school in order to eliminate truancy and they also looked after children during breaks between lessons at school. Currently the NGO does not run any activities, due to a lack of funding for salaries.⁴⁵⁷

Historically, according to the chair of the municipality, the Roma population in Zborov worked as blacksmiths, but at present no Roma work as smiths.⁴⁵⁸ During the Communist period, Roma worked in nearby factories in Bardejov, some worked in agriculture, construction, and other trades.

“There are no open conflicts between the Roma and the non-Roma community. All public places are visited both by Roma and non-Roma,”⁴⁵⁹ according to the chair of the municipality. The church offers “Roma masses”, reportedly because in the past Roma children interrupted the usual service and did not know how to behave in a church. Now Roma no longer attend the mainstream mass service.⁴⁶⁰ Residents are critical of the attitude of municipality representatives in several spheres. There are allegations that an unwritten prohibition forbids renting the cultural house to Roma musical or sports groups, and no Roma have been hired to work for the municipality, even though Roma with higher levels of education applied for positions.⁴⁶¹

A2.2.3 Education

School and Education network

In Zborov, there is one special school for children with disabilities, and a primary school with a pre-school.

The pre-school is united with the primary school and falls under the director of the primary school. There is a deputy director responsible for the pre-school. About 35 children are enrolled, four of whom are Roma. According to the deputy director, these children attend regularly and are “from exemplary families”.⁴⁶² There are 46 children of pre-school age in Zborov.⁴⁶³ The reasons why Roma do not attend pre-school, according to the representative, of an NGO, are as follows: the costs are too high,

⁴⁵⁷ Interview with an NGO representative, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁵⁸ Interview with the chair of the Zborov Municipality Office, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁵⁹ Interview with the chair of the Zborov Municipality Office, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁶⁰ Interview with the chair of the Zborov Municipality Office, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁶¹ Interview with an NGO representative, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁶² Interview with the deputy director of primary school, responsible for pre-school. Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁶³ Interview with an NGO representative, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

mainly for those who do not meet the material need requirement, the distance between home and pre-school (half a kilometre on average) is too great, and there is a language barrier, as there is no Roma assistant who would be able to help to overcome this.

Costs

Parents pay a parents' contribution: for children up to five years it is 150 SKK (€4.50), and for those older than five it is 100 SKK (€3) per month. When parents are in material need, they do not have to pay the contribution. There were only two such cases in Zborov, and none at present. Apart from this contribution, parents pay board, which is 26 SKK (€0.78) per day for three meals. The representative of an NGO reported that, apart from this cost, pre-school attendance includes other costs that families cannot afford – buying clothes, slippers, pyjamas, and other supplies.

Enrolment

The local pre-school is not operating at capacity, so all children are accepted. Most children attend pre-school, both Roma and non-Roma, starting at the age of three; children are rarely enrolled for the last year only.

The Roma children attending pre-school mostly understand Slovak without significant problems. In the past they had a case where a child did not speak Slovak at all; the teachers did not know how to manage the situation, so the parents withdrew the child.

The primary school in Zborov is attended by 403 pupils, 253 of whom are Roma. The school includes Grades 1–9, plus the specialised zero years. There are also special classes for children with special educational needs in the same building. Mainstream classes are attended by 17–23 children on average.

Enrolment at school

The primary school enrolls all children who apply; after a psychological check-up, children are placed either in the zero year or directly in the first grade.⁴⁶⁴

There is a special measure in place in Zborov, based on an agreement between the special school and the primary school. Children who are said not to be suitable to start school at the primary school are first enrolled in the zero year in order to avoid the possibility of misdiagnosing a child: “Although the psychologist says that the child should go to a special school, we let them go to the zero year so that they have a chance to catch up and we can decrease the chance of mistaking a language barrier for intellectual disabilities.”⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁴ Interview with the deputy director of the primary school, Zborov, 11 June 2007. During the interview she also mentioned enrollment of children according to the fact whether or not they attended pre-school.

⁴⁶⁵ Interview with the director of the primary school, Zborov, 12 June 2007.

There were reports that the special school exerts pressure on parents to enrol other children in the family. A decreasing number of children in schools threatens the continued existence of schools, and motivates them to recruit new pupils. It is said that many Roma use this opportunity, mainly because it offers financial advantages (see Section 3.2).⁴⁶⁶

In addition to children from Zborov, children from nearby villages should also go to Zborov schools. Interviews suggest that there is “white flight” linked to the free choice of school, as parents from nearby villages indicate that if children must go to school by bus or car to Zborov, they can just as well go to Bardejov, where they can attend a better school.⁴⁶⁷

School administration and decision processes

The school is operated by the Zborov Municipality. The decisions regarding the organisation of the school year (the number of employees, classes, and so on) are fully in the hands of the director. The director of the school highlighted a problem common to many municipalities: as the establishing body, the municipality should be giving orders to the school and intervening in decisions, but as the municipalities do not have experts, all decisions are made by the school director. The director further reported unsatisfactory cooperation between the school and the municipality.

The special school was established by the Regional School Office, but the school director indicated that the office does not intervene in the administration much. For example, the director does not have to ask for permission for every operation regarding the budget. Similarly human resources issues are fully under the director’s competency.

Inspections

At the primary school in last two years there were only thematic inspections – testing of children’s knowledge from specific subjects. There was no inspection focused especially on Roma children, and the director of the school does not know about any Roma inspector. Inspections regarding integrated pupils can be carried out by the Regional School Bureau, but so far they have not carried out any such inspection.

School financing and infrastructure

According to the chair of the municipality office, about 20 million SKK (40 per cent, about €600,000) from the municipality budget goes to schools.

⁴⁶⁶ One of the issues is the “motivational stipendium” for children in material need. This is paid to parents according to the school results of the child. If a child goes to the special school it is more probable that he/she will have good results than if it would be he/she went to an ordinary primary school.

⁴⁶⁷ Interview with the chair of the Zborov Municipality Office, Zborov, 11 June 2007.; Interview with the director of the special school, Zborov, 12 June 2007.

The pre-school is situated in a reconstructed building, which has access to all the necessary facilities. Zero year classes are situated here as well. The building in which Grades 1–9 of primary school and the special school are situated was built in the 1970s and is in regular need of repair, so the greatest part of the budgets is spent on repairs. For some repairs, such as the roof, the municipality secured a grant from the Ministry of Education. Other repairs are financed from municipal sources or from the money saved from the normative funding that schools get from the Ministry of Finance; for example, the most recent repair of bathrooms cost 550,000 SKK (€16,667). Regarding material equipment, the school has an IT classroom with 17 computers, a library and specialised classrooms for teaching physics, mathematics, chemistry and biology.

Representatives of the primary school indicated that there are serious financial problems, caused mainly by the change of the per-pupil normative amount for special educational needs (since 1 January 2007). The change concerns the diagnosis “social development disorder”, which was applied to a large group of Roma children at the school. By lowering the normative amount for pupils with this diagnosis, the school’s budget was lowered by almost one million SKK (€30,300).

The budget of the special school is approximately 3 million SKK (€90,900). Every year they manage to save some money for repairs.

Absenteeism

According to an NGO representative, absenteeism recently decreased, primarily because of the reduction of benefits when a child does not attend school, and the activity of community social workers, who work individually with parents of truants.⁴⁶⁸

According to the director of the primary school, attendance is the best during winter, and then when spring arrives attendance drops; the director did indicate that the problem is improving.⁴⁶⁹

Curriculum

Teachers choose whether or not to involve facts about Roma in the curriculum. At the primary school there are some materials about Roma, but “only one or two exemplars”.⁴⁷⁰ According to the deputy director, Roma history or literature are not addressed in the lessons. The deputy director indicated that if there should be more space for Roma minority in education, a change of curriculum is needed, as there is no space in the curriculum as it is currently designed to cover themes related to Roma.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁸ Interview with an NGO representative, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁶⁹ Interview with the director of the primary school, Zborov, 12 June 2007.

⁴⁷⁰ Interview with the director of the primary school, Zborov, 12 June 2007.

⁴⁷¹ Interview with the deputy director of the primary school, Zborov, 12 June 2007.

In the special school they have some books about Roma in the library and, according to the director, teachers do use them sometimes, although mainly by reading Roma fairytales to the youngest pupils.⁴⁷²

Patterns of segregation

While there are concerns about segregated classes, parents spoke most seriously about the conflict with the cleaner who physically punished children for running through the corridors, for not changing their shoes after coming to school, and the like. “The mothers of children went to school to solve the case, but nothing happened and the cleaner is still working at the school. Does this mean that she was doing right?” a parent asked.⁴⁷³

Transfers

At the primary school there have been Roma children transferred into non-Roma class (2–3 pupils per year). According to the deputy director, these transfers take place because “these are the pupils for whom it is a pity to be in Roma class”.⁴⁷⁴ There are also transfers from the mainstream to the Roma class – if the Roma pupil is “too weak”.⁴⁷⁵

According to the representative of an NGO, in recent years “white flight” has increased, with non-Roma parents moving their children to schools in Bardejov after the first or second year. The NGO representative estimates that some five or six children have been transferred, due to the “bad behaviour of Roma children and bad hygiene”.⁴⁷⁶ Similarly, the representatives of the primary school spoke about the need to “fight for white pupils”.⁴⁷⁷ Non-Roma parents are opposed to the idea of a Roma school: “They say that Roma are aggressive, are not hygienic. They are afraid of their children.”⁴⁷⁸ According to the deputy director, these opinions are based mostly on experiences from outside rather than what is really going on at school – the protests of non-Roma parents appear only rarely, when there is some concrete problem (e.g. lice).

Regarding transfers of children from the primary school into the special school, these happen only in cases when a child is unable to manage the curriculum, and only upon the recommendation of a psychologist. According to the deputy director of the primary school, in most cases parents agree, because “they appreciate that the work is less difficult for a child there”.⁴⁷⁹ She noted that parents make an effort to have their

⁴⁷² Interview with the director of the special school, Zborov, 12 June 2007.

⁴⁷³ Interview with parents, Zborov, 12 June 2007.

⁴⁷⁴ Interview with the deputy director of primary school, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁷⁵ Interview with the deputy director of primary school, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁷⁶ Interview with an NGO representative, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁷⁷ Interview with the deputy director of primary school, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁷⁸ Interview with the deputy director of primary school, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁷⁹ Interview with the deputy director of primary school, Zborov, 11 June 11 2007.

children moved into the special school, because “When a pupil in the fifth grade goes there, he/she is a star there; he/she improves his results by 100 per cent. [...] And then others want it too, because they feel that their children are doing better when they go there.”⁴⁸⁰

There was only one case of a child being transferred from the special school, when after the re-examination of a child it was found that the child was able to go to a mainstream school, and the child was moved.⁴⁸¹

Special school for children with disabilities

All 38 pupils in the special school are Roma, and, according to the director of this school, special classes at the primary school are Roma-only as well, so the fact that there is a special school and a primary school with special classes is also not linked to the effort of segregating Roma.⁴⁸² There is a dramatic imbalance between boys and girls in the school as well: out of 38 pupils, only three are girls.

There are 6–11 pupils per class in the special school. Apart from ordinary classes they have a workroom where children learn practical skills working with various materials. The school does not have laboratories, but, according to the director, teachers say that they do not need them, as they can conduct physics and chemistry experiments in ordinary classrooms.⁴⁸³

Regarding the language barrier, the director of the special school indicated that the introduction of the zero year has almost eliminated this problem: “The vocabulary is very poor, but they understand most of the basic tasks.”⁴⁸⁴

Human resources at schools

According to the director of the primary school, all teachers are qualified and there is never a shortage of qualified applicants. However, as elsewhere, as there is a rather low number of classes, it would be impossible for teachers to teach a full course load only in their specialisations, so some classes are led by teachers not qualified in that subject. Staff turnover is unusual, according to the director: even teachers who have reached retirement age are trying to keep their jobs.⁴⁸⁵

The teaching in special classes is done by teachers who supplemented their education with external studies of special pedagogy. Three quarters of the teaching staff have an academic background in special pedagogy. There is only a very slight staff turnover in

⁴⁸⁰ Interview with the deputy director of primary school, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁸¹ Interview with the director of the special school, Zborov, 12 June 2007.

⁴⁸² Interview with the director of the special school, Zborov, 12 June 2007.

⁴⁸³ Interview with the director of the special school, Zborov, 12 June 2007.

⁴⁸⁴ Interview with the director of the special school, Zborov, 12 June 2007.

⁴⁸⁵ Interview with the director of the primary school, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

the special school, and people mostly leave only because they get a chance to start working closer to their homes, as many currently commute to Zborov.

Teaching assistants

At the primary school there are three teaching assistants. In the past one of them was Roma, but currently all of them are non-Roma.

At the special school there is one teaching assistant, who is non-Roma. The director expressed concern that the assistants are paid regardless of their education, since “When they are educated they can help us more.”⁴⁸⁶ The special school has the condition that an assistant must have a secondary-level education regardless of ethnicity. In the past, this job was held by a Roma assistant, but he was dismissed for insufficient qualification. According to a representative of an NGO, the school did not want to use bilingual techniques and the assistant was asked not to use the Roma language. Parents agree that the assistant should be educated, but they indicated that knowledge of Romanes is an important qualification.⁴⁸⁷

Academic achievement

Repetition of classes by Roma pupils varies according to the grade. In Grades 1–4, most Roma children attend special, and therefore smaller, classes, so the teacher can spend more time with individuals and can use different methods in teaching, and the material is less demanding. In the second-level grades approximately 40 per cent of Roma pupils repeat grades.

Parents indicated that the language barrier is a serious obstacle for their children, and compared the situation to that if non-Roma children would have to start learning mathematics in Romanes.⁴⁸⁸

Continuing in studies

Currently approximately ten Roma children attend secondary school.⁴⁸⁹ According to an NGO representative, this number could be higher, but children lack the necessary support both from parents and from the school.⁴⁹⁰ The deputy director of the primary school estimated that approximately 20 per cent of Roma pupils in the ninth grade continue their studies, but leave school after they finish the obligatory attendance by the age of 16. The deputy director further indicated that Roma children do not have the motivation to study and want to “be on welfare as soon as possible. [...] There was

⁴⁸⁶ Interview with the director of the special school, Zborov, 12 June 2007.

⁴⁸⁷ Interview with parents, Zborov, 12 June 2007.

⁴⁸⁸ Interview with an NGO representative, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁸⁹ Interview with an NGO representative, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁹⁰ Interview with an NGO representative, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

an exception of one pupil who went to a grammar school. However, she got pregnant in the second year and left school.”⁴⁹¹

In the region there is only one opportunity to continue studies for children from special schools, an apprentice school in Stará Ľubovňa, about 65 kilometres from Zborov. According to the special school director, “Last year six out of eight pupils applied there, and three of them still attend the school. This year only one out of nine applied, but then another two came here to tell me that they would like to apply, so we’ll see how this will go.”⁴⁹²

School–community relations

Representatives of the primary school gave the relationship with parents a negative evaluation. According to them, parents are not interested in their children’s academic achievement: “They do not come to parent–teacher meetings at all. But when we pay [the stipend for pupils from families in material need], they are always here.”⁴⁹³ According to the deputy director of the primary school, from the whole school only four parents at most come to ask about their child’s school results; other parents only communicate when there is a problem and even then “they have to be invited officially because otherwise they would not come”.⁴⁹⁴ The deputy director says that Roma parents are not involved in any activities, saying “If they are not able to organise their own family, how could they organise something else?”⁴⁹⁵

According to the director of the special school, about 70 per cent of parents come to the parent–teacher meetings and in general communication with families is good.⁴⁹⁶ As the school is Roma-only and parents must be represented in the school council, Roma parents are also partly involved in the school decision-making processes.

School–NGOs relations

The NGO Romane Vasta working in Zborov carried out activities to improve attendance at school, mainly in 2004 and 2005. Activists accompanied children to school and looked after them during the breaks between lessons. These activities have stopped, due to poor cooperation between the primary school and the NGO; according to activists, there was no support from the school staff and so they gradually lost interest in continuing the project.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹¹ Interview with the deputy director of primary school, Zborov, 11 June, 2007.

⁴⁹² Interview with the director of the special school, Zborov, 12 June 2007.

⁴⁹³ Interview with the director of the primary school, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁹⁴ Interview with the deputy director of primary school, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁹⁵ Interview with the deputy director of primary school, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁹⁶ Interview with the director of the special school, Zborov, 12 June 2007.

⁴⁹⁷ Interview with an NGO representative, Zborov, 11 June 2007.

Teacher training and support

At the primary school no teacher speaks Romanes, although several of them take part in further training courses, which are organised by the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre in Prešov. The participation at training courses is supported by the management of the school, but teachers have to finance it themselves. The school tries to compensate their costs by material refunds.

The director of the special school is aware of the need of training courses for their teachers, but she says “Only very rarely do we manage to attend the training courses or seminars. [...] We have only eight teachers, we cannot let two of them leave for training.”⁴⁹⁸

A2.3 Case Study: Prešov

A2.3.1 Administrative Unit

Prešov is a regional centre in eastern Slovakia with 91,000 inhabitants. The estimated number of Roma living in the locality is up to 5,000;⁴⁹⁹ according to the *Sociographical Mapping of Roma Communities*, there are approximately 3,300 Roma inhabitants in Prešov.⁵⁰⁰

The budget of the municipality is about 470 million SKK (€1.4 million), about 40 per cent of which is invested in schools and pre-school institutions. Further sources of school financing are per-pupil normative funds from the Ministry of Finance (in 2007 these were 8 million SKK, €242,000). These finances are divided among schools, but can be used only on capital costs (not investments).

This year the municipality invested 23 million SKK (€697,000) only in repairs of schools’ roofs and other repairs, while some schools managed to find other sources for repairs and investments; one of the schools – the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street – managed to secure 3 million SKK (€90,900).⁵⁰¹ Although the economy in the town is developing, Prešov still has quite a high unemployment rate, which, similarly to other regions, affects mostly Roma.

Many of the local Roma leave Prešov to work abroad, mainly in the United Kingdom. This causes many problems for school-age children, because whole families relocate abroad, return, and move away again, disrupting their education in either country.

⁴⁹⁸ Interview with the director of the special school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁴⁹⁹ Interviews with a representative of Prešov Municipality, Prešov, 19 June 2007, and representatives of an NGO, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁰⁰ *Sociographical Mapping of Roma Communities Conducted in 2003–2004*.

⁵⁰¹ Interview with a representative of Prešov Municipality, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

A2.3.2 Roma and the Community

The biggest problem of unemployed Roma in Prešov is an inability to pay rent, which leads to forced evictions. According to the representative of the municipality, Roma owe more than 20 million SKK (€606,000) to Prešov Municipality for rent.⁵⁰²

Stará Tehelňa, a recently constructed neighbourhood of social housing, is inhabited exclusively by Roma. There are 1,652 people living in 176 flats. There are 1,200 children of school age living there.⁵⁰³ Apart from Stará Tehelňa, Roma in Prešov live integrated among the majority population or in Roma neighbourhoods and streets, such as Čapajevova Street, Na Podhrádku, and T. Ševčenka Street.

With so large a Roma community it is difficult to generalise about the relationship between Roma and majority population. Open conflicts appear to be rare.⁵⁰⁴

According to a representative of the municipality, there is a difference between the average level of education in the Roma and non-Roma communities. However, the representative also noted that in the locality there are many educated Roma. Several respondents spoke about a worsening trend in terms of the educational level of Roma in the last ten years.⁵⁰⁵

A2.3.3 Education

School and education network

There are 9,285 children in primary schools and 2,470 children in pre-schools in the Prešov school system. Among all children attending schools in Prešov, there are 600 with special educational needs – 160 of them are talented, while the rest have been diagnosed with learning problems. Approximately one third of all Roma pupils in Prešov are listed as pupils with special educational needs (including pupils in special classes).⁵⁰⁶

There are 19 schools in Prešov, which compete for enrolment due to declining numbers of children. Five schools have higher proportions of Roma children. Regarding material equipment, a representative of the municipality indicated that there are no differences among schools, although there are differences in their reputation – some are considered to be “elite”, while some are considered to be “Roma” schools.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰² Interview with a representative of Prešov Municipality, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁰³ Interview with the representative of an NGO, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁰⁴ Interview with the representative of the Office of the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities.

⁵⁰⁵ Interviews with the representative of an NGO, Prešov, 19 June 2007 and the director of the private Tobiáš pre-school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁰⁶ Interview with a representative of Prešov Municipality, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁰⁷ Interview with a representative of Prešov Municipality, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

There are very few Roma at elite schools, possibly because the costs of studying at these schools may be higher, and unaffordable for lower-income families.

In recent years, schools have been closed for economic reasons. One of the schools affected by these rationalising measures was the primary school attended by most Roma children from Stará Tehelňa, located on Sládkovičova Street. After this school was closed, the children were distributed into other schools, most of them to the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street.⁵⁰⁸ Regarding the distribution of Roma children in primary schools, a representative of the municipality stated that “Schools do not address Roma pupils much. But two thirds of directors do not have problems with accepting Roma pupils. And even if some of the directors would like to discriminate, they wouldn’t dare to.”⁵⁰⁹

Pre-schools

There are 21 pre-schools in Prešov, attended by 2,470 children.⁵¹⁰ With the exception of two pre-schools operated by NGOs (but part of the system of pre-schools), only a small number of Roma children attend.

A representative of an NGO working with the community in Stará Tehelňa expressed dissatisfaction with the number of Roma children attending pre-school: “Even if I was unemployed I would put my child in pre-school.”⁵¹¹ In terms of the reasons for not putting children in pre-schools, the NGO representative indicated that high costs are a barrier, as is the low awareness of the advantages of pre-school and simply “not being accustomed” to doing so.

Among five children interviewed from Stará Tehelňa, four had attended pre-school. These also said that they now have good results at school.⁵¹²

The private Tobiáš pre-school is operated by an NGO, with some funding from the municipality budget, but the greater part of sources comes from grants. There are 56 children enrolled in this pre-school, but many of them have left with their parents to work abroad. The majority of pupils are from one neighbourhood – Podhrádok. The pre-school is attended exclusively by Roma. According to the pre-school director, “We established this pre-school because we wanted to help children from this locality [Podhrádok], but it is not the policy of the pre-school to accept only Roma children. We are not against enrolling non-Roma children. [...] Usually parents come here to have their child enrolled because they see the word ‘private’ in the name of the pre-

⁵⁰⁸ This school was named by several respondents as the school accepting Roma without any obstacles

⁵⁰⁹ Interview with a representative of Prešov Municipality, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵¹⁰ Interview with a representative of Prešov Municipality, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵¹¹ Interview with the representative of an NGO, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵¹² Interviews with children from Stará Tehelňa, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

school, so that seems interesting to them. Then they see that there are only Roma children here and decide to leave.”⁵¹³

There are two classes at the pre-school; one is for children of pre-school age and the other is for younger children. The director says that the pre-school is equipped according to standards and they have everything that they need, although on the other hand the pre-school building’s condition is rather bad and there is still much to be repaired.⁵¹⁴

According to the director of the pre-school, their work is crucial for the further development of children: “We do not amend the family education, we compensate for it.”⁵¹⁵ A representative of the municipality also praised the work of this pre-school, on the grounds that it can create a natural environment for Roma children better than other pre-schools.⁵¹⁶ Nevertheless, there is also the opinion that it would be better to mix Roma and non-Roma children at pre-school institutions and avoid segregation as much as possible.⁵¹⁷

The biggest obstacle in preparing the children for schooling is regular attendance at pre-school: “It is always a lottery. You never know how many children will come the next day. [...] Parents aren’t disciplined in bringing their children to pre-school. Sometimes the reason is the rain, then the snow, then their shame for not being able to pay for the boarding, etc.”⁵¹⁸ A representative of the municipality also reported that Roma parents are not able to ensure that their children regularly attend pre-school.⁵¹⁹

A second pre-school, on Vážecká Street, enrolls 196 children, two of whom are Roma. The pre-school offers many extra activities (English, exercises, sauna, and more) and they are involved in many health and ecology projects.

Prešov Municipality has a measure according to which in every pre-school parents pay 250 SKK (€7.60) for a child per month, regardless of the pre-school. Apart from this, parents contribute to the Association of Parents Fund (APF), where the parents themselves decide how much this will be. The Vážecká Street pre-school determined that this year’s contribution is 400 SKK (€12) per year. While for the municipality-set fee there is an official rule that families in need do not have to pay, only parents

⁵¹³ Interview with the Director of the private pre-school Tobiáš, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵¹⁴ Interview with the director of the private Tobiáš pre-school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵¹⁵ Interview with the director of the private Tobiáš pre-school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵¹⁶ Interview with a representative of Prešov Municipality, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵¹⁷ Interviews with the representative of an NGO, Prešov, 19 June 2007, the director of the special school Prešov, 19 June 2007; director of the pre-school on Vážecká Street, 19 June 2007.

⁵¹⁸ Interview with the director of the private Tobiáš pre-school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵¹⁹ Interview with a representative of Prešov Municipality, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

themselves can decide whether some families will not have to pay the contribution to the APF.⁵²⁰

At the Tobiáš pre-school parents do not contribute to the Association of Parents Fund and there is no other fee for the pre-school except meals: “There are some parents who could contribute, but then there are many others who cannot, so we do not ask for contributions. We know what kind of people we have here. For example there is a boy here whose parents are delaying their payment for boarding by four months, but what we can do? The child should not be blamed for his parents. [...] Some parents contribute by buying toilet paper, things for cleaning or something,” the director reported.⁵²¹ Meals at both pre-schools are up to 30 SKK (€0.91) per day, and families in material need pay just 1 SKK (€0.03) per day for meals.

The Tobiáš pre-school accepts children from the age of two or three; all children who apply are accepted as there are still some free places due to families moving abroad.⁵²² It is more common for children to attend pre-school from an early age, not just the last year.

At the Važecká Street pre-school they accept children from the age of two, as the capacities of the pre-school allow them to enrol all children who apply. The age of enrolment varies, often depending on whether the parents are employed, according to the director: “If a mother hasn’t got a job, she keeps her child at home. Then when she finds another job, she brings her child to pre-school again. This happens regardless of the child’s age.”⁵²³

The director indicated that the reason why almost all Roma children attending pre-school go to the Tobiáš pre-school is as follows: “If children do not have basic hygienic habits, it is difficult to work with them in a mixed class, but after they have these basics, they should be in mixed classes with non-Roma children.”⁵²⁴

In the neighbourhood of the Tobiáš pre-school there are three primary schools that draw children from the pre-school. Two of the primary schools have Roma classes; the church school does not, and does not ask about religious affiliation upon enrolment. According to the director of the Tobiáš pre-school, “We have a good relationship with this school. We have positive feedback that they can see the difference between the children who come from pre-school and who don’t.”⁵²⁵

⁵²⁰ Interview with the director of the pre-school on Važecká Street, 19 June 2007.

⁵²¹ Interview with the director of the private Tobiáš pre-school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵²² Interview with the director of the private Tobiáš pre-school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵²³ Interview with the director of the pre-school on Važecká Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵²⁴ Interview with the director of the pre-school on Važecká Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵²⁵ Interview with the director of the private Tobiáš pre-school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

Roma children attending the pre-school in Važecká Street do not have problems with understanding Slovak. At the Tobiáš pre-school sometimes children do not understand Slovak when they arrive, but more often they at least understand the basics. “There is a difference between a town and a village. And there are differences between specific settlements, too,” claims the director⁵²⁶ They have some Roma and Romanes-speakers among their pre-school staff, but they try not to speak Romanes with children as then the children want to speak only Romanes and do not even try to speak Slovak. When a child does not understand, they ask another child to explain. According to a representative of the municipality, this is not a one-sided issue: “We are not ready to communicate with children in their mother tongue.”⁵²⁷

Primary schools

One of the schools with a higher concentration of Roma pupils (among 320 pupils about one third are Roma) is the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street. This school has about 100 integrated pupils with special educational needs; about 80 of them are Roma.⁵²⁸ Several people interviewed referred to this school as pro-Roma (accepting Roma pupils without problems, and trying to implement alternative ways of teaching Roma). At the primary school there are special classes for children with social development disorders, with learning disabilities and behavioural challenges, and one class for children with intellectual disabilities. In mainstream classes, there are about 18 pupils on average, while in special classes the average is 10–15 pupils per class.

The church primary school of St. Gorazd currently has 241 pupils, 25 of whom are Roma. Most of the Roma pupils are in the first-level classes (up to the fourth grade), so the percentage of Roma is higher in those grades.

Enrolment at school

According to several sources of information, most schools accept Roma children without any problem.⁵²⁹ Where parents miss the date of enrolment (usually in January) there are sometimes problems when the parents want to enrol the child in September. Some schools require an entrance test, which “should be passed by a prepared child without any problem”, according to an NGO representative.⁵³⁰ Parents decide about the choice of school, mostly taking into consideration the distance from home and also according to where any other children go to school.

The church school on Duklianska Street is the nearest school to Stará Tehelňa, but as no Roma children have passed the entrance exam, there are no Roma enrolled.

⁵²⁶ Interview with the director of the private Tobiáš pre-school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵²⁷ Interview with a representative of Prešov Municipality, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵²⁸ Interview with a representative of Prešov Municipality, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵²⁹ Interviews with the representative of an NGO, Prešov, 19 June 2007; a representative of Prešov Municipality, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵³⁰ Interview with the representative of an NGO, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

A parent reported that the school representatives were unwilling to show her the test of her child, or even to tell her the result.⁵³¹ The school director was not willing to meet with the researchers for this report, despite several requests.⁵³²

At the St. Gorazd church school they do not take religion into consideration during the enrolment process. “We only do not enrol children with severe intellectual disabilities, otherwise we enrol all children,” says the director, who also indicated that parents choose the school for various reasons, convenience as well as religious identification.⁵³³

Many Roma children who did not attend pre-school are enrolled at the school, which the director reported makes working with them more difficult, because they have a language deficit and do not understand the tasks.⁵³⁴

There are no zero years at any of the primary schools in Prešov. According to the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, zero years would be a big advantage for many Roma children, but “there is no will on behalf of the municipality to establish them”.⁵³⁵ The only exception is so-called transitional classes in special schools, but these have a slightly different conception (see subsection 3.2).

Inspections

At the Matica Slovenská Street primary school in recent times there were no major inspections, only thematic inspections regarding the knowledge of children in specific disciplines. These inspections do not maintain data on ethnicity, however, so there is no information comparing results between Roma and non-Roma.

At the special school the deputy director was not able to remember any inspection in recent years.

Financing of schools

School financing goes through the municipality office, including funds directly from the municipal budget, but also funding from the Ministry of Finance and distributed by regional school bureaus to schools is allocated by a decision of the municipal office. According to a representative of the municipality, several issues are taken into account

⁵³¹ Interview with a parent, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵³² It is said that the school defends itself against accusations of discrimination by saying that they have Roma pupils. These are two Roma girls whose grandmother works at the school as a cleaner.

⁵³³ Interview with the director of the St. Gorazd Catholic primary school, 19 June 2007, case study Prešov.

⁵³⁴ Interview with the director of the St. Gorazd Catholic primary school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵³⁵ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

for the allocation, but the most crucial is the number of pupils.⁵³⁶ Several schools manage to secure some further funding from grants offered by various institutions such as the Ministry of Education, the Office of the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, or the European Social Fund. The director of the school on Matica Slovenská Street reported that in the past the school had problems covering the costs of inevitable repairs and material equipment: “The municipality did not want to give money to a Gypsy school.”⁵³⁷ Currently reconstruction and investment are covered by the municipality (e.g. reconstruction of the roof, repairs of the boiler room) and the school manages to buy equipment by preparing and implementing projects (at the time of research, there were eight such projects). According to the director, the equipment of the school is very good – the school has a computer room, multimedia room and library.

St. Gorazd also receives the per-pupil normative funding and according to the director they do not have any other source of funding. They are able to get some sources from joining some projects.⁵³⁸

There is a specific situation regarding financing at the special school, where a third of all pupils are Roma. The school was established by the Regional School Bureau. In recent times the school has had financial problems – in the school year 2006/2007 the school was given only 83 per cent of what they should have been allocated. The rest of the money was probably allocated to another special school in the region by the Regional School Bureau.⁵³⁹ Representatives of the special school expressed their discontent with the lack of transparency in the whole process, noting “Probably the finances are not distributed by an intern norm of the bureau, but we think they take more from some schools, less from the others.”⁵⁴⁰ The school had to adjust to the loss of 17 per cent of the planned budget by cutting teachers’ salaries.⁵⁴¹ They must make a request to the Regional School Bureau for any repairs or other emergencies, but according to the deputy director the Bureau has money only for critical repairs. The school thus tries to find other sources of funding from private donors, private companies or foundations.⁵⁴²

⁵³⁶ This means that schools do not get the exact sum every year that would come from the number of pupils, but the municipality decides about the final amount of money going to a specific school. The representatives of primary schools expressed their discontent with the lack of transparency of the whole process.

⁵³⁷ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵³⁸ Interview with the director of the St. Gorazd Catholic primary school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵³⁹ Interview with the deputy director at the special school, Prešov, 19 June 2007

⁵⁴⁰ Interview with the deputy director at the special school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁴¹ Interview with the deputy director at the special school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁴² Interview with the deputy director at the special school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

Absenteeism

In general, truancy is a problem with many Roma children in Prešov, mainly among children from Stará Tehelňa, where there are about 1,200 children of school age. Absenteeism increased when the primary school in the neighbourhood of Stará Tehelňa was closed.⁵⁴³ Children were distributed into other schools, often in rather distant parts of town. Children thus have to travel to school by bus, and in many cases there is no direct bus. Particularly in families with several children, travel costs were too high, 10 SKK (€0.30) per child per day, according to a parent. Furthermore, young children must be accompanied by a parent, which could be a problem if a family has other small children.⁵⁴⁴

The problem of absenteeism among Roma children is present at the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street as well. One of the main reasons, according to the director, is the insufficient preparedness of schools to accept Roma children from socially disadvantaged families: “The curriculum is not made for Roma, it includes too much and too abstract subjects. [...] A Roma child has insufficient motivation, does not have a chance to experience success at school.”⁵⁴⁵ This problem is linked to all “different” children, such as pupils with learning disabilities.

The director of the church school indicated that absenteeism is a real problem, but they take steps to address it immediately, persuading parents to cooperate by pointing to possible financial losses if a child does not go to school.⁵⁴⁶

The representatives of an NGO reported that they were aware of some cases of 8-to-12-year-old children who did not attend school at all.⁵⁴⁷

Patterns of segregation

In general, at several schools where there is a higher concentration of Roma children, Roma classes exist. However, in many schools classes are mixed. According to a representative of an NGO, this cannot be taken as a result of a school’s effort to desegregate, as it is caused only by the fact that they do not have enough Roma children to create a separate Roma class.⁵⁴⁸ NGO representatives described a case when the integration of a Roma pupil into a non-Roma class caused so huge a wave of protests that the child was eventually sent to a different school.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴³ Interview with the representative of an NGO, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁴⁴ Interview with the representative of an NGO, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁴⁵ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁴⁶ Interview with the director of the St. Gorazd Catholic primary school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁴⁷ Interview with NGO representatives, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁴⁸ Interview with the representative of an NGO, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁴⁹ The case happened at the Mirko Nešpor primary school, where, according to one interviewed mother, “They do not want Roma because they have a pool there.”

A representative of the municipality does not support grouping Roma children: “When they are dispersed, it is better. [...] Even the classes of grouping children according to their results did not work well. [...] At Matica Slovenská they have Roma classes, but we see that they work with these children, that the teachers are motivated to do their work and do not take it as a punishment for something.”⁵⁵⁰ On the other hand one of the children (in the sixth grade) interviewed at Stará Tehelňa said that one teacher at this school called him a Gypsy when he did not behave.⁵⁵¹

According to an NGO representative, there are differences between the teachers’ approach in Roma and non-Roma classes. In Roma classes they are not so strict and do not demand the same performance from Roma children as they would from non-Roma children. On the other hand the representative raised the possibility that this is a “mistake in the behaviour of the children”⁵⁵² – teachers are afraid of them and thus rather do not have too high demands.

The Matica Slovenská Street school has three types of classes: A-classes are “white”, B-classes are special classes for children with learning disorders (there are only four Roma pupils who attend such classes) and C-classes are Roma-only (in some grades they have the status of special class). Some Roma children also go the “white” class, but according to the director, “They can keep up till the sixth grade and then they ask to be moved to Roma classes. [...] In some cases they try to have bad school results and repeat class in order to do that.”⁵⁵³ The director noted the discontent of non-Roma parents if children are not divided into more classes: “Mainly after the sixth grade the problem of low hygiene standards appears.”⁵⁵⁴ In general Roma and non-Roma parents “got used to this state, mainly after they found out that thanks to this there is more money at the school from grants”.⁵⁵⁵

There were no Roma classes at the church school in the past, but last year they decided to create a special class for children with learning difficulties. There is only one such class, and it is Roma-only. “We would like to have an individual approach [...] but an individual approach is very difficult for teachers in classes of 21 children, so we have

⁵⁵⁰ Interview with a representative of Prešov Municipality, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁵¹ The parents of the child refused to talk about this and did not want their name to be mentioned. Interview with a pupil, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁵² Interview with the representative of an NGO, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁵³ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁵⁴ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁵⁵ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

decided to open a special class,” the director reported.⁵⁵⁶ Apart from the special class they have at least one integrated pupil with special educational needs in every class.

Special measures regarding pupils in material need

All Roma pupils at the St. Gorazd school are in material need. At the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street the management gives the measures more or less a positive evaluation, but the director pointed out that children from the most disadvantaged families gain the least from these measures, because their parents do not pay even the required 1 SKK for lunch.⁵⁵⁷ The possibility of buying school equipment for children helps teachers in the educational process. Regarding the motivational stipend for good results, the director said that “in many cases parents drink from them”.⁵⁵⁸

Transfers

According to a representative of the municipality, transfers between schools do take place; however, this cannot be considered as “white flight”. Mostly the transfers are related to the general level of educational process or the problems of a pupil at specific school. Regarding the movement from schools referred to as “Roma schools”, the representative of the municipality noted cases when Roma parents move their children into schools with lower concentrations of Roma.⁵⁵⁹ This was confirmed also by children randomly interviewed at Stará Tehelňa – several boys aged 8–10 complained that they cannot be at school together as their parents keep them separate.⁵⁶⁰

Transfers between special and mainstream schools are mainly towards special schools. NGO representatives did not know of any cases where children were sent to the special school without a proper examination or according to bad judgment. They only mentioned one case of a mother who refused to send her child to the special school; she applied to the Regional School Bureau and eventually had her child enrolled in mainstream school.⁵⁶¹

According to the deputy director of the special school, transfers are initiated by the extraordinary lagging behind of children at mainstream schools. Then children are examined by experts from the special pedagogy centre, and only upon their diagnosis are the children recommended to the special school.⁵⁶² Children with borderline

⁵⁵⁶ Interview with the director of the St. Gorazd Catholic primary school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁵⁷ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁵⁸ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁵⁹ Interview with a representative of Prešov municipality, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁶⁰ Interviews with children, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁶¹ Interview with the representative of an NGO, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁶² Interview with the deputy director of the special school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

disabilities stay in mainstream schools, as integrated pupils following an individual curriculum.

Reintegration of pupils from special schools into mainstream schools is very rare. The deputy director of the special school argues that this is because children are transferred into the special school only upon a serious diagnosis given by the special pedagogy centre (most often intellectual disabilities or autism).⁵⁶³ The director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street described a case when a pupil from the special school was transferred into their school because he had only borderline intellectual disabilities: “The parents and also he himself protested against the transfer, but he had to attend our school.”⁵⁶⁴

Special school for children with disabilities

In Prešov there are two special schools – one of them is for children with hearing impairments and one is for children with intellectual disabilities and disorders on the autistic spectrum. These schools were established by the Regional School Bureau. Apart from these, many schools in Prešov have special classes.

Among all pupils at the special school for children with intellectual disabilities, about a third are Roma. Most of them come to school during the first-level grades at a mainstream primary school upon the recommendation of the special pedagogy centre. Only a small number of pupils come to school directly from the first grade (at the time of research there were only five pupils in the first grade). According to the deputy director, these are children whose diagnosis was clear even at pre-school age.⁵⁶⁵ During their schooling, children are re-examined every three years, but, as was already mentioned, the reintegration of children is very rare.

Most children in the special school are in B- or C-variant classes⁵⁶⁶ children in A-variant programmes are usually integrated into mainstream schools or special classes in mainstream schools. The deputy director observed that integration into mainstream schools does not reflect the needs of children – pupils are often in classes where there are about 30 other children and the teacher cannot devote enough time to them individually. Also many pedagogues at mainstream primary schools do not have the

⁵⁶³ Interview with the deputy director of the special school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁶⁴ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁶⁵ Interview with the deputy director of the special school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁶⁶ The A-, B- and C-variants of educating children with special needs refer to the level of difficulty of the curriculum – the A-variant is aimed at children with mild intellectual disabilities, the B-variant is for children with moderate intellectual disabilities, and the C-variant is for children with severe intellectual disabilities.

qualification to educate children with disabilities.⁵⁶⁷ At the special school they have three separate classes for children with disorders on the autistic spectrum.

At the school there is a transitional class, which was established in the framework of a Phare project for two years. The curriculum of transitional classes is a modification of the mainstream primary school curriculum – part of it is reduced and the pace is slower. The class is currently attended by eight children who were diagnosed with “social delays”. These are exclusively Roma children from disadvantaged families. The project lasts two years; after its end children will be re-examined and either moved to a mainstream school or stay in the special school.

In other classes most often there are Roma and non-Roma children mixed, as they are put into classes according to the degree of their disability.⁵⁶⁸ In two grades they have Roma-only classes. In cases of mixed classes sometimes “non-Roma parents protest and demand their child to be transferred into another class”.⁵⁶⁹ In mixed classes, according to the director, there is a difference in the performance of Roma and non-Roma pupils: “Non-Roma children go further faster, which is the result of intensive preparation at home and help from their parents. Roma children often lack elementary knowledge, for example of geography.”⁵⁷⁰ The deputy director noted the perceived lack of interest of parents in their child’s progress in school. Parents do not let children prepare for lessons at home also because “children often have to support their parents in relationships with younger siblings.”⁵⁷¹

Human resources at schools

At the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street they have enough qualified teachers. However, the director says that the school has sometimes problems in finding qualified pedagogues for all disciplines; for example, currently chemistry is taught by a biologist.⁵⁷² Recently, the management of the school replaced some of the pedagogues because of insufficient qualifications and also because of poor working discipline.⁵⁷³ The school employs a special pedagogue, a speech specialist and a school psychologist working part-time. Among all the staff only the assistants of teachers speak Romanes. The others “caught only a few words”.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁶⁷ Interview with the deputy director of the special school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁶⁸ Interview with the deputy director of the special school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁶⁹ Interview with the deputy director of the special school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁷⁰ Interview with the deputy director of the special school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁷¹ Interview with the deputy director of the special school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁷² Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁷³ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁷⁴ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

All teachers at the church school are qualified teachers. They also have a special pedagogue there. There are no Roma or Romanes-speakers among them.

At the special school all teachers have a special pedagogy qualification. Apart from them there is a school speech specialist and a school psychologist working part-time.

Teaching assistants

At the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street they currently have one teaching assistant who is non-Roma. In the past they employed two Roma women in this position. The director says that the school was very satisfied with them, but they had to cancel their job because of inappropriate interventions into the schooling.⁵⁷⁵ Currently the assistant works as a communicator and social worker, mainly dealing with absenteeism by contacting families and communicating with parents. In this regard the director pointed to the poor cooperation with the local social department (under the Bureau of Labour, Social Issues and Family), whose competency it is to solve poor school attendance. The director says that the bureau often intervenes in families where there is only a small and temporary problem. On the other hand, in families where there are problems of permanent and more intense character, social workers do not intervene at all (probably because of fear from potential attacks).⁵⁷⁶

There are no assistants at the church school, but they could use them mainly to overcome the language barrier.⁵⁷⁷

At the special school there are two teaching assistants, one of whom is Roma. Their work is mainly in helping teachers with lessons, and in individual work with struggling children. In cases of a language barrier for smaller children, the assistant helps in the beginning to overcome it, but this is not very common – according to the deputy director of the school, most children know the basics of Slovak at their enrolment at school.

Academic achievement

The achievement of Roma pupils at the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street varies according to the grade, according to the director. In lower grades children more or less manage the curriculum. The school has also the “unwritten internal directive according to which they do not let children repeat the class if they are in the first or second grade, so that they do not lose one year”.⁵⁷⁸ In the second level of grades, about

⁵⁷⁵ According to the director, these were the members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses religion, who were proselytising in the school.

⁵⁷⁶ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁷⁷ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁷⁸ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

60 to 70 per cent of Roma pupils repeat classes. There are only one or two Roma pupils in the ninth grade (out of the original number of 25 pupils in the class). The director mentioned the effort of teachers to “push the children and let them go as high as possible” regardless of insufficient knowledge, but on the other hand she expressed the need to keep the prescribed standards because of possible sanctions from the school inspection.⁵⁷⁹ The director sees the main reasons for Roma children’s failure as stemming from the “social neglect” of children, and their bad health, which causes frequent absences,⁵⁸⁰ and an inappropriate curriculum and lack of specialised methodologies. Children achieve success only in artistic competitions (mainly regarding singing).⁵⁸¹

The director of the St. Gorazd school says that in general Roma have the worst results, but there are also some good students. When comparing Roma boys and girls, “surprisingly” boys do better at school than girls.⁵⁸² He also thinks there could be some good points in Roma-only classes: “Sometimes I think it would be better for these children to be in Roma classes, because it de-motivates them when they cannot catch up in mixed class.”⁵⁸³

Several NGOs in Prešov organise free-time activities, aimed mainly at improving school results of Roma children from socially disadvantaged families. One of them is Roma Scouting, working in the locality of Stará Tehelňa. Volunteers – scouts – organise extracurricular afternoon courses for children.

Continuing in studies

Many children from Roma families living in poor conditions do not continue with secondary school after finishing their obligatory schooling. For example, in Stará Tehelňa there are only about 20 children attending secondary school. According to an NGO representative, the number of children in secondary schools is decreasing: based on their own monitoring of the locality, the older generation, 30–35 years old, finished at least secondary apprentice schools.⁵⁸⁴ Currently many parents prefer that their children participate in “activation works”⁵⁸⁵ to gaining qualifications. The representatives of an NGO perceive a problem with the communication between

⁵⁷⁹ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁸⁰ She pointed to the higher frequency of serious health issues among Roma pupils – epilepsy, brain ulcers, etc.

⁵⁸¹ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁸² Interview with the director of the St. Gorazd Catholic primary school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁸³ Interview with the director of the St. Gorazd Catholic primary school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁸⁴ Interview with an NGO representative, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁸⁵ Program of active unemployment policy. Unemployed people do some work in the public interest (20 hours per week) and get 1,900 SKK per month (€58).

schools and families – parents do not know about the opportunity to receive financial aid and “wrongly think that the studies at secondary school are too expensive”.⁵⁸⁶ However, according to an NGO representative, there are localities around Prešov where children normally have secondary-level education, such as Giraltovce.

According to the director of the St. Gorazd school, Roma pupils apply for secondary schools, but most often they leave after the first year, which is needed to finish the obligatory schooling.⁵⁸⁷ The director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street observed that it is a pity that even the extraordinarily talented children do not develop their talent further, because their parents do not allow them to go to the secondary boarding school.⁵⁸⁸

Approximately half of the Roma children who attend a special school continue at a special secondary apprentice school. Compared to non-Roma children the number is lower – according to the deputy director, every non-Roma child applies to a special secondary school.

School–community relations

The cooperation between parents of children and the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street varies depending on the family. In general, according to the director, Roma parents do not express much interest, and attend regular parent–teacher meetings only in small numbers. The biggest problem is getting the contribution into the Association of Parents Fund – although “Roma parents do not have to pay the full amount, and most of them do not pay it at all.”⁵⁸⁹ This led this year to the absence of Roma pupils of first grade at the initiation (the ritual for first-graders where they are initiated by historical swordsmen). On the other hand, many Roma parents are involved in what is going on at school – such as by organising free-time activities for children.

The situation is different at the church primary school. There is almost no communication between the school and parents: “Parents react only when there is some ‘financial’ problem.”⁵⁹⁰

According to the staff of the special school, Roma parents are not interested in their children, do not communicate with teachers and do not come to school even if they are invited. Most Roma parents are not involved in any activities, even in the activities organised by other parents (e.g. International Day of Children).⁵⁹¹ The deputy director

⁵⁸⁶ Interview with the representative of an NGO, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁸⁷ Interview with the director of the St. Gorazd Catholic primary school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁸⁸ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁸⁹ Interview with the director of the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁹⁰ Interview with the director of the St. Gorazd Catholic primary school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

⁵⁹¹ Interview with the deputy director of the special school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

mentioned a case when Roma parents from Stará Tehelňa organised a Roma band concert at the school, “But there were 50 other people who came with them and we had to send them away.”⁵⁹²

School–NGO relations

The representatives of NGOs evaluate the relationships between them and schools as very positive. However, schools do not initiate cooperative activities, and work together mainly in the sphere of solving truancy and mediating contact between schools and family. Similarly, at the primary school on Matica Slovenská Street they appreciated the opportunity to cooperate with NGOs, mainly in the sphere of truancy prevention and solving specific problems in families.

Teacher training and support

The teachers at the church school did not attend any seminars or training courses regarding teaching in ethnically mixed classes or teaching socially disadvantaged pupils. Several teachers at the special school have passed training courses on innovative techniques in educating Roma children (organised by the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre in Prešov). The costs linked to the training courses are in most cases covered by the organisers, and in cases of need the school helps in covering the costs from their own budget. The school supports the participation of teachers in further education – in cases of training taking place during workdays the teachers’ lessons are taught by their colleagues.

⁵⁹² Interview with the deputy director of the special school, Prešov, 19 June 2007.

ANNEX 3. LEGISLATION CITED IN THE REPORT

Constitution

Constitution of the Slovak Republic, 3 September 1992, Last Amended by Constitution Law No. 323/2004 Z. z. Available in English at http://www.government.gov.sk/VLADA/USTAVA/en_vlada_ustava.shtml (accessed 14 June 2006)

Laws & Acts

Act No. 71/1967 Coll. on Administrative Proceedings as Amended (Zákon 71/1967 Z.z. o správnom konaní (správny poriadok) v znení neskorších predpisov). Act No. 212/1991 Coll. on Special Schools (Zákon č. 212/1991 Zb. o špeciálnych školách).

Act No. 29/1984 Coll. on the System of Primary and Secondary Schools (“The Education Act”, Zákon č. 29/1984 o sústave základných a stredných škôl).

Act No. 542/1990 Coll. on State Administration in the School System and School Self-Administration (Zákon č. 542/1990 o štátnej správe v školstve a školskej samospráve).

Act No. 279/1993 Coll. on School Facilities (Zákon č. 279/1993 Z.z. o školských zariadeniach).

Act No. 308/1993 Coll. on the Establishment of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (Zákon č. 308/1993 o zriadení Slovenského národného strediska pre ľudské práva).

Act No. 588/2001 Coll. on the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages (Zákon č. 588/2001 o uzavretí Európskej charty regionálnych alebo menšinových jazykov).

Act No. 428/2002 Coll. On the Protection of Personal Data (Zákon č. 428/2002 Z. z. o ochrane osobných údajov).

Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in the School System and School Self-Government in the Wording of the Subsequent Regulations (Zákon č. 596/2003 o štátnej správe v školstve a školskej samospráve a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov v znení neskorších predpisov).

Act No. 597/2003 on Financing Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and School Facilities (Zákon č. 597/2003 Z.z. o financovaní základných škôl, stredných škôl a školských zariadení) as Amended by the Act No. 564/2004.

Government decree No. 2/2004 Coll. Detailing the Financial Allocation from the State Budget to Primary, Secondary, Vocational and Primary Art Schools and School Facilities (Zákon č. 2/2004 Z.z., ktorým sa ustanovujú podrobnosti rozpisu finančných prostriedkov zo štátneho rozpočtu pre základné školy, stredné školy, strediská praktického vyučovania, základné umelecké školy a školské zariadenia v znení nariadenia vlády SR č. 758/2004 Z.z. a nariadenia vlády SR č. 662/2005 Z. z.).

Act No. 564/2004 on Budgetary Assessment of Redistribution of Income Tax Revenues to Regional Self-Governance (Zákon č. 564/2004 Z.z. o rozpočtovom určení výnosu dane z príjmov územnej samosprávy a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov) as Amended.

Regulations and directives

Ministry of Education. Directive No. 7496/1985-20 on Primary Schools as Amended by the Directive No. 8119/1989-20, Directive No. 1074/2000-41 and Directive No. 11/2006-R. (Smernica Ministerstva školstva Slovenskej socialistickej republiky z 5. júla 1985 č.7496/1985-20 o základnej škole v znení smernice MŠMaTV SSR z 28. augusta 1989 č.8119/1989-20, smernice MŠ SR z 13. júla 2000 č.1074/2000-41 a smernice MŠ SR č. 11/2006-R z 25. mája 2006.

Ministry of Education. Regulation No. 353/1994 on Pre-school Facilities, as Amended.

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The Roma are one of Europe's largest and most vulnerable minorities. Throughout Europe, Roma remain excluded from many aspects of society, denied their rights and entrenched in poverty. The "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015" is an unprecedented international effort to combat discrimination and to close the gap in welfare and living conditions between Roma and non-Roma, in order to break the cycle of poverty and exclusion. The initiative is supported by the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the World Bank, and endorsed by nine Central and Eastern European countries. Education is one of the four main areas of the Decade, and the particular problems faced by Roma in accessing quality educational opportunities have been widely recognised.

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ISBN 9781891385667



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