



INŠTITUT ZA NARODNOSTNA VPRAŠANJA  
INSTITUTE FOR ETHNIC STUDIES

## **Formal and Informal Education for Roma: Different Models and Experience**

Edited by Romana Bešter, Vera Klopčič, Mojca Medvešek

Published by Institute for Ethnic Studies, Erjavčeva 26, 1000 Ljubljana ([www.inv.si](http://www.inv.si))

Director: Sonja Novak-Lukanovič

Translation and English editing: Tom Priestly

Print Run: 250 copies



This publication is part of the project “The increase in social and cultural capital in areas with a Roma population”. It is funded by the European Union through the European Social Fund and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. The operation is performed under the Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007–2013, priority axis: “Development of human resources and of life-long learning”; main type of activity: “Improvement of quality and effectiveness of education and training systems”.

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji  
Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

376-054.57(=214.58)(082)

FORMAL and informal education for Roma : different models and experience / edited by Romana Bešter, Vera Klopčič, Mojca Medvešek ; [translation Tom Priestly]. - Ljubljana : Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja, 2012

ISBN 978-961-6159-41-8

1. Bešter, Romana  
264708608

# Formal and Informal Education for Roma

*Different Models and Experience*

*Edited by*

Romana Bešter

Vera Klopčič

Mojca Medvešek

Note from translator and language editor:

The task of translating some, and editing all, of the contributions to this volume was extremely interesting, but brought its own challenges. Not least among them were those arising from the fact that I was not previously familiar with any of the terminology connected with the Roma and their ethnolinguistic sub-groupings. I am therefore deeply indebted to Professor Victor Friedman, Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Balkan and Slavic Linguistics and an eminent Romologist, for his advice with these matters. Any remaining infelicities are not his fault, but mine.

---

# Contents

---

- 7 List of Contributors
- 9 Introduction  
*Vera Klopčič, Mojca Medvešek and Romana Bešter*
- 13 Romani Educational Incubators – An Aid for Students in the Learning Process  
*Romana Bešter and Mojca Medvešek*
- 34 Romani Schooling: Light and Shadow  
*Marco Brazzoduro*
- 59 Two Decades of Educational Policies for the Roma: Lessons and Dilemmas from Romania  
*István Horváth*
- 72 Migration and Its Implications for the Educational System: The Case of the Roma in Bosnia, Germany and Canada  
*Hedina Tahirović Sijerčić*
- 84 From Anti-Roma Racism to Romani Rights in Sweden  
*Zoran Slavnić*
- 99 The Education of the Roma in Croatia: Statistical and Empirical Insights  
*Dragutin Babić*
- 110 Policy and Practice of Romani Inclusion in the Education System of the Republic of Serbia  
*Dragoljub B. Đorđević*
- 118 Romani Cultural After-School Activities as an Instrument for the Better and Easier Inclusion of Romani Children and Youth in the Formal Educational Process  
*Ljatif Demir*



# List of Contributors

**Dragoljub B. Dorđević** is sociologist of religion and romologist, a full professor of sociology of culture and morals and the Head of Department for social sciences at the University of Niš – Faculty of mechanical engineering, Serbia.

**Dragutin Babić** is sociologist and researcher at the Institute for migration and ethnic studies in Zagreb, Croatia.

**Hedina Tahirović Sijerčić** is a writer, a poet, an educator, currently working as a coordinator for Roma of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Ministry of human rights and refugees in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**István Horváth** is president of the Research institute on Romanian national minorities, associate professor and deputy dean at Sociology and social work department of the Babes-Bolyai University, Romania.

**Ljatif Demir** is a Romani writer, artist, researcher and professor of the Romani language at the University "Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje, Macedonia.

**Marco Brazzoduro** is a professor of Social Policy at "La Sapienza" University in Rome, Italy.

**Mojca Medvešek** is sociologist and researcher at the Institute for Ethnic Studies in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

**Romana Bešter** is political scientist and researcher at the Institute for Ethnic Studies in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

**Vera Klopčič** is lawyer and researcher at the Institute for Ethnic Studies in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

**Zoran Slavnic** is associate professor of sociology at the Institute for Research on Migration, Ethnicity and Society (REMESO), Department of Social and Welfare Studies (ISV), Linköping University, Sweden.





# Introduction

This monograph contains contributions to the international conference “Formal and Informal Education for Roma: Different Models and Experiences,” held in Ljubljana on October 21, 2011 in the framework of the project The increase in social and cultural capital in areas with a Roma population. At this conference we were able to present the aims of the project and the achievements and experiences of its first year in operation; we were also able to compare these with the motive impulses of educational policies, and with the results attained in this area, in some other European countries.

The structure of this monograph follows the original plan for the conference, in which first of all colleagues from the Ljubljana Institute for Ethnic Studies described the position of the Romani community of Slovenia and the results of their research. Next, specialists from various European countries described the general characteristics of the situation of the Roma and set out for their own countries the results of projects and of good practices which are important factors in the process of integrating members of the Romani communities in society at large. The studies presented to us and the projects under way in various countries are for the most part in line with the international documents and recommendations of the EU and the Council of Europe which encourage cultural heterogeneity and intercultural dialogue, the abolition of discrimination, and the social integration of vulnerable groups. Differences among individual countries mainly consist in the manner in which national policies and measures are based that aim to assist the Roma in their integration into society while at the same time maintaining and developing elements of Romani culture. For the time being, not one of current national policies achieves the desired results. As a challenge, we asked the following question at the conference: is it possible to devise alternative and innovative models of education for members of Romani society that will make possible a long-term improvement in their educational structure

and in this way accelerate their integration into society while taking account of their particular way of life, their traditions and culture?

The first contribution to this monograph, by Romana Bešter and Mojca Medvešek, is a condensed outline of the significance of Romani integration in the sphere of education in Slovenia together with the essentials of the achievements of the project Increase in Social and Cultural Capital in Areas with a Roma Population. Emphasis is placed on the activities of the Romani Educational Incubators which act as a support for Romani schoolchildren in their participation in the educational system. This chapter is followed by a section with the common theme: the description of experiences in other European countries. First, on the basis of rich experience with Romani parents and children, with local authorities and with teachers, Marco Brazzoduro writes about Romani education in Italy. He emphasises that integration of the Roma in the educational system depends above all on which Romani community they belong to, and their status. He also analyzes potential reasons for the unsatisfactory results of current measures and projects. He underlines the fact that in order to set up efficient measures a more thorough analysis must be made of the difficulties faced by Romani society, especially those economical, social and cultural aspects that have not hitherto been taken into account. István Horváth in "Two Decades of Educational Policies for the Roma: Lessons and Dilemmas from Romania," describes special policies intended for the integration of the Roma in the educational system. To this he adds some deliberations as to what the main aims of educational policies for the Roma should be. Hedina Tahirović Sijerčić, a Romani author, poet and journalist from Sarajevo, treats the implications of Romani migrations for the educational system, using examples of education for the Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany and Canada. She describes models of education for the children of Romani migrants that she herself experienced as a migrant and refugee at the time of the military conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The decisive significance of a qualitative change in thinking in the approach to discussing the situation of the Roma in Sweden is discussed by Zoran Slavnic. In his contribution he explains that the contemporary national strategy for the Roma in Sweden takes as its starting-point a redefinition in the discussion of the situation of the Roma. What is involved is an approach that directs attention from the minority group to the majority society. From this point of view the deprivations of the Roma are not to be understood simply as resulting from their particular way of life, their low educational structure, their lack of knowledge about their rights, and so on, but rather as the result of the many years of discrimination that the Roma have encountered in their contacts with the majority society. He further describes the basic tenets of the Swedish strategy towards the Roma, namely: acceptance, partnering (the inclusion not only of the Roma but also of all the relevant societal institutions and organizations involved in the strategy's implementation), a perspective of human rights, and finally long-term, well-defined governmental policy measures. Further, specialists from Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia write about models and experiences in the countries of the Western Balkans. Dragutin Babić describes and discusses the integration of Croatian Roma at various levels of the educational system, from pre-school care through primary and secondary school to higher education. Inter alia he analyses the results of a research project carried out in a school in the Zagreb area that is attended by a large number of Romani schoolchildren. Well-known Serbian Romologist Dragoljub B. Đorđević writes about the policies and practices of integrating the Roma into the Serbian educational system. He emphasizes that some of the measures included in the Strategy for Improving Educational Integration in the Republic of Serbia have produced practical results. He points to the introduction of Romani assistants in the

primary schools as especially successful. The monograph concludes with a contribution by Roma activist, author and Romani language professor Ljatif Demir, who presents the latest incentives for deliberation and action in his description of the significance of after-school activities as vehicles for the greater and easier integration of Romani children and young people into the formal educational process.

During the conference we formulated several important methods of defining shared factors that may enhance the efficacy of education, contribute to greater competence on the part of teachers, and improve the attainments of Romani students. Interestingly – in spite of the essential differences among all of the countries listed here with respect to the current situations of the Romani communities, their legal status, historical circumstances, demographic weight and degree of organisation – in the field of education in practice we encounter related obstacles, such as the following: the irregular school attendance by Romani schoolchildren, disunity and conflict within the Romani communities, a lack of an educated cadre with a knowledge of the Romani language, and covert or overt racism directed against Romani schoolchildren. The educational policy measures are directed in the main to assist the schoolchildren to overcome learning difficulties, to arouse a motivation for pupils to attend school, for teaching staff to co-operate with parents, for increasing the competence of the teachers, for enhanced acquisition of the Romani language and culture, and finally to create possibilities for further education and employment.

Of especial value in this publication is the fact that it provides theoretical and specialist bases, and is a channel for the results of research and analyses of concrete experiences in actual schools from various countries, without forcing the acceptance of any one approach or interpretation. On the basis of the contributions to this publication we may formulate some findings as an incentive for further study.

The first finding: in spite of the clearly proposed, defined aim of integrating Romani children into education, in practice it is repeatedly necessary to evaluate the suitability of and justification for individual measures, for concrete living conditions differ from one situation to the next, indeed often differ within any one group. In addition they change with time. It is with especial sensitivity that all situations must be handled in which, with reference to the maintenance of »cultural characteristics of the Roma«, different treatment of the members of that community has been essentially justified and their segregation maintained.

The second finding is that one must take into consideration the exacting nature and the complexity of the processes by which cultural models change, by which prejudices and mistrust are done away with. Given the specific historical circumstances which in the past stigmatised members of the Romani group and excluded them from public life in general, a change in the standardised beliefs is a requisite task for the Roma just as it is for the majority culture. From a legal point of view the situation of the Roma changed in essence over the last decades of the 20th century; the remnants of the former conception of the Romani way of life as something undesired or even dangerous for society have persisted until today, especially in some localities. A change in the fixed views and prejudices in mutual communication is therefore a prerequisite which may yet bring about changes.

Our third finding is that an interdisciplinary approach is required for research into the position of the Roma. Only in this way will we acquire some understanding of the complex social situations which would surpass the fragmentary findings of individual disciplines. Further, for the planning of policies to improve the position of the Roma, representatives of Romani communities must be included in the search for solutions, for without their

cooperation and agreement we can not expect that any measures will achieve the desired effect.

This monograph will be a useful aid for all who work in the educational process – teachers, Romani assistants, pedagogues and the originators and practitioners of educational policies. Given that it deals with a contemporary European theme, it will also certainly be of interest for a wider specialist audience – not just in the countries covered in the book, but more widely still.

# Romani Educational Incubators – An Aid for Students in the Learning Process

## 1. Introduction

Both practical experience and research<sup>1</sup> show that students who come from socio-economically weak families and who live in less stimulating environments are more likely than other students to attain lower results, to be less well incorporated in the educational process, and to finish their schooling earlier. Many Romani children come from socially and economically weak families. For many of them the environment in which they live does not offer them suitable conditions and encouragement for learning and for completing the assignments which the school system requires of them. Their pre-educational socialization takes place in a different cultural milieu than that of non-Romani children.<sup>2</sup>

---

1 In the comprehensive empirical study *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (the “Coleman Study”, leader James S. Coleman), which involved 600,000 students and teachers in the public schools in the USA, they attempted to assess whether there was equal access to educational opportunities for children of differing races, skin colours, beliefs, and ethnicities. The results showed that academic success on the part of students was associated less with the quality of the school and more with the social structure of the students at the schools, with the students’ abilities to control and direct their own careers, with the quality of specialists at the schools, and with the family background of the students (Coleman et al. 1966). The link between the socio-economic status of the family and educational attainment by the students, in the sense that students who came from families with a higher socio-economic status as a rule attained better success in school, was confirmed by other research studies that followed. So also the latest research, since the year 2000, confirms that the socio-economic status of the family remains a factor strongly linked to students’ academic attainment (Baker, Goesling & Letendre 2002; EREBUS International 2005; Sirin 2005; OECD 2001; OECD 2004; OECD 2007; OECD 2011).

2 See, e.g., Smith (1997).

Hence when they first go to school Romani children, most frequently, are not grounded in the values and norms of the majority culture with respect to all the requirements and expectations with which the school milieu presents them. Frequently, too, they meet with misunderstanding, prejudice and a negative attitude on the part of the majority (non-Romani) population, which does not ascribe any value to the Romani culture and does not acknowledge or recognize the value of the accomplishments and life experiences of Romani families. If the school milieu does not demonstrate respect for different cultures and does not acknowledge the value of the accomplishments that originates in those cultures, this has a harmful impact on the self-image and self-regard of students who are members of those cultures, and also has a negative impact on their image of their own parents (Ada 1995). In this kind of milieu Romani children sooner or later encounter feelings of lesser worth and shame with respect to their own identity, and these offer poor support for facing the challenges which await them in school.

When they first start primary school, Romani children often have no, or limited, competence in Slovenian, also, and this is frequently acknowledged in pedagogical circles as a key problem and the cause of Romani children's lack of success in school.<sup>3</sup> The problem is, however, not only the lack of competence in Slovenian: as noted by Réger (1974), the linguistic deficiency and the difficulties encountered by Romani children in schools are influenced not only by lack of competence in the majority language, but also by the fact that in the Romani children's linguistic socialization in their mother tongue the element of the written word and literacy are usually lacking. All these and other factors have the result that Romani children's school results are frequently below the average of their non-Romani cohorts, that Romani children less frequently complete their primary schooling successfully and even less frequently continue with higher levels of schooling. In the Slovenian primary school system various forms of supplementary assistance<sup>4</sup> are provided for the Romani children by the teachers, other professional workers and Romani assistants.<sup>5</sup>

But work at school alone is not sufficient for more significant improvements in educational success. For successful compatibility with the requirements of current primary school education what is required is that children study and complete assignments at home, also. For this, co-operation or at least support on the part of parents has a great significance. For numerous Romani students studying and writing homework during the afternoon are rather weak points. Also, assistance and encouragement by parents is frequently lacking. For this reason, in the framework of the project entitled *The increase in social and cultural capital in areas with a Roma population*<sup>6</sup> we wished to fill this gap by or-

---

3 The source for this is the personal diaries written by teachers in the schools participating in the project *The increase in social and cultural capital in areas with a Roma population*, and similar results have been reported by other research (see, e.g., Réger 1974, Tancer 1994, 75–76).

4 For more on policies and measures for including Romani children in the Slovenian educational system, see Žagar et al. 2006; Nečak Lük & Novak Lukanovič 2011.

5 The provision of Romani school assistants is known in many countries, e.g., Bulgaria, Spain, France, Serbia, Romania, Finland, Slovakia, Hungary and Croatia as well as Slovenia (Gomboc Mrzлак 2009, 28). For more on Romani assistants in Slovenia see, e.g., Bešter & Medvešek 2007, 168–172; Brezovšek, Haček & Bačlija 2008.

6 The following educational establishments co-operate in the project *The increase in social and cultural capital in areas with a Roma population*, which was directed by the Institute for Ethnic Studies: Kindergartens attached to the Elementary School Belokranjskega odreda Semič, the France Prešeren Elementary School in Črenšovci, the Leskovec pri Krškem Elementary School, and the Puconci Elementary School; the Jožice Flander Kindergarten in Maribor, the Metlika Kindergarten, the Murska Sobota Kindergarten, the Oton Zupančič Kindergarten in Črnomelj, the Pedenjped Kindergarten in Novo mesto, the Pobrežje Kindergarten in Maribor, the Tišina Kindergarten, the



ganizing learning assistance and other activities for Romani children during the afternoons and doing this in the localities where they live.<sup>7</sup> The idea of Romani Educational Incubators was born. These incubators were to provide common premises or programme in Romani communities which would approximate various forms of informal education for members of the Romani community and thus contribute to the greater inclusion of Romani children in the ordinary educational system. To a certain extent this programme of Romani Educational Incubators was meant to complement the parents' role in the process of their children's education, i.e., would offer support, encouragement and assistance to learning and completing homework, something which the parents for various reasons often cannot offer. A Romani Educational Incubator would also offer possibilities for quality utilization of free time in Romani settlements. One part of the programme of a Romani Educational Incubator is intended to be encouraging the participation of parents in the educational process for their children. It is worth making clear that everyone, not just Romani children, are to be included in the incubator programme.

In this chapter we shall present the work of the Romani Educational Incubators that were instituted in the school year 2010–11 in the framework of the project entitled *The increase in social and cultural capital in areas with a Roma population*. We shall devote our main attention to the programme of learning assistance, as the central activity of Romani Educational Incubators. We shall present the aims and intention of the programme, data concerning the participation of children during the 2010–11 school year, the obstacles and challenges which accompany the introduction of learning assistance, and the first results reflected in the reports written by the providers of the learning assistance and the schools that are partners in the programme. Before that, we shall present some data on the settlement of Roma in Slovenia.

## 2. Selected data on the Roma settlement in Slovenia

The quantitative data about individual ethnic groups in Slovenia were, from 1953 to 2002, based on censuses. In 2002 the last population census was held in which the inhabitants of Slovenia might self-identify according to ethnic group. In this census 3,246 (0.17%) inhabitants declared themselves as Roma community members, and 3,834 persons gave the Roma language as their mother tongue. The estimates of researchers, experts on Roma issues and different institutions (Social Service Centres, administrative units, municipalities) on the number of Roma in Slovenia were considerably higher, ranging between 7,000 (0.35%) (Winkler 1999) and 10,000 (0.5%) (Horvat 1999) or 12,000 (0.6%) (Žagar 2002,

---

Trebnje Kindergarten; the Semič Elementary School; the Dragotin Kette Elementary School in Novo mesto; the France Prešeren Elementary School in Črenšovci; the Janko Padežnik Elementary School in Maribor; the Kuzma Elementary School, the Leskovec pri Krškem Elementary School, the Louis Adamič Elementary School in Grosuplje, the Maks Durjava Elementary School in Maribor, the Metlika Elementary School, the Miran Jarc Elementary School in Črnomelj, the Šmihel Elementary School in Novo mesto, the Stara Cerkev Elementary School in Kočevje, the Tišina Elementary School, the Trebnje Elementary School; Secondary Schools: Novo mesto School Centre, Murska Sobota School of Economics, Murska Sobota Secondary Medical School, Radenci Secondary School of Catering and Tourism, and the Murska Sobota Student Dormitory.

<sup>7</sup> In *Strategija vzgoje in izobraževanja Romov [The Strategy of the Education of Roma]* (2011, 21) under strategic aim No. 6 is written: "the necessity of introducing several other forms of pedagogical activity, as, e.g., learning assistance during the afternoon both at school and in the settlement."

25). According to the most recent estimates in the specialised literature there are today probably about 9,500 members of the Roma community in Slovenia (Pirc, 2012).

The Roma are settled mostly in Prekmurje (Josipovič and Repolusk 2003, 127–149), in Dolenjska (Bela krajina, Posavje), in Gorenjska and in major urban centres such as Ljubljana and Maribor. According to estimates obtained from Social Service Centres, the greatest number of Roma live in Prekmurje (3,500), in Dolenjska with Kočevska (about 2,300) and in Bela krajina (perhaps 1,000). Other than in these areas of traditional settlement, the greatest number live in Maribor and its surroundings (about 3,500) (Pirc, 2012).

### 3. The role and aims of Romani Educational Incubators

Wishing to contribute to Romani students' greater inclusion, better participation and higher success rate in the educational system, we set up Romani Educational Incubators in various regions of Slovenia. In some settlements the programme of the incubator is carried out in multipurpose premises; in others, where such common premises do not exist, the programme develops within individual schools, or students' homes.<sup>8</sup>

With the exception of the Municipality of Maribor, the Romani Educational Incubators are active in municipalities where the traditional Romani settlements are officially recognised and the Roma in these municipalities have the right to a Romani Councillor. The Romani Educational Incubators are, sensibly, located in municipalities and in Romani settlements which, according to the latest data – mostly from Social Service Centres – are counted as the largest settlements with Romani populations in Slovenia. At the same time, according to data from the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport for the 2010–11 school year, the proportion of Romani schoolchildren in primary schools in these settlements is considered the highest in the individual regions.

In Slovenia in the 2010–11 school year 1,827 Romani schoolchildren (4.80 of the total) were registered in primary schools. The numbers of Romani schoolchildren, with their relative share of the total for each region, were as follows for the regions of Slovenia: Prekmurje 384 Romani schoolchildren (7.9%), Dolenjska 532 (6.6%), Bela krajina 233 (12%), other urban communities with their surroundings 545 (3.4%), Posavje and Zasavje 107 (2.9%), other communities 26 (0.7%) (Pirc 2012).

The aims which we wish to attain with the help of Romani Educational Incubators are multi-layered, and are especially set up to be long-term. We based the Romani Educational Incubators in part on the model of youth centres. In choosing the name *incubators* we

---

8 Šiftar in his monograph *Cigani* (1970, 167) with respect to the 1970 year wrote about the need for common space in a settlement, where school-age children might write assignments and prepare themselves for school. Similar multipurpose premises are anticipated also in the *Strategija vzgoje in izobraževanja Romov v Republiki Sloveniji* [The Strategy of the Education of Roma] (2011, 8–9): "The significance of a 'Romani' settlement and the construction of multipurpose premises in Romani settlements, in which there may be developed various year-round and short-duration educational programmes, workshops, lectures both in the mornings and in the afternoons; nursery school care as a year-round, everyday preparatory programme at the most until a child's fifth year, learning assistance for the primary and secondary students who are included in regular education, school-time activities, education for adults with the aim of acquiring specific skills and basic education which make employment and independent life possible; as a goal there would also be an office for a Romani counsellor, an office for visitations from the centre for social work and health establishments; for health education – pediatric nurses, nurses for preventative dentistry, etc., and a multipurpose space for societies, entertainments, meetings and also sports and dance activities..."



wished to draw attention to the fact that they multipurpose premises make possible for young people an especial growth and development in various spheres, from raising levels of success in their studies through informal education, to the development of young people's individual interests and a quality utilization of free time. With directed work and good examples on the part of young intellectuals (including Romani ones) who lead the work in the incubators we wished to encourage the children and youth to become successfully included in the educational process on different levels. We wished to stimulate an active role on the part of parents in their children's educational process, and also indirectly to stimulate a dialogue among the inhabitants in the local environment. Within the incubators students acquire experience in group dynamics and interaction, team work, public appearances and, not least, experience in leadership. In addition they develop a feeling of responsibility. Extensive inclusion and active co-operation by children in the incubators contributes to an increase in their social and cultural capital. We adapted the content and organization of the programmes of the Romani Educational Incubators to local conditions and included various activities in three respects: learning assistance, free time activities (the pursuit of interests, cultural activities, open air games) and work with parents (lectures and workshops).<sup>9</sup>

In the school year 2010–11 we established six Romani Educational Incubators in the framework of our project:

- **The Romani Educational Incubator in Prekmurje:** The incubator has its own central, multipurpose premises in the settlement of Vanča vas-Borejci, but the programme is carried out also in other locations: in a classroom at the headquarters of the Romani Academic Club in Murska Sobota; in the "ROKIC DROM" Romani cultural and information centre in the village of Kamenci; in the Janko Padežnik and Maks Durjava Primary Schools in Maribor; in the Primary School in Kuzma; in the Central Health Educational School in Murska Sobota; and in the Student Dormitory in Murska Sobota.<sup>10</sup> Where conditions allowed, learning assistance was also provided in individual students' homes, namely in the Romani settlements Dolič, Vadarci, Gornji Slaveči, Kuzma and Pušča.
- **The Romani Educational Incubator in Bela krajina:** The incubator has its own central, multipurpose premises in the settlement of Boriha-Rosalnice. In addition the programme was carried out in the Elementary School in Semič as well as in students' homes in the settlements of Lokve and Ručetna vas near Črnomelj, in the settlement of Sovinek near Semič and .
- **The Romani Educational Incubator in Trebnje:** The incubator has its own central, multipurpose room in the settlement of Hudeje. Learning assistance is also provided in the homes of individual students.
- **The Romani Educational Incubator in Novo mesto:** The programme content was developed within the Brezje Day Centre in rooms in the Brezje Kindergarten.

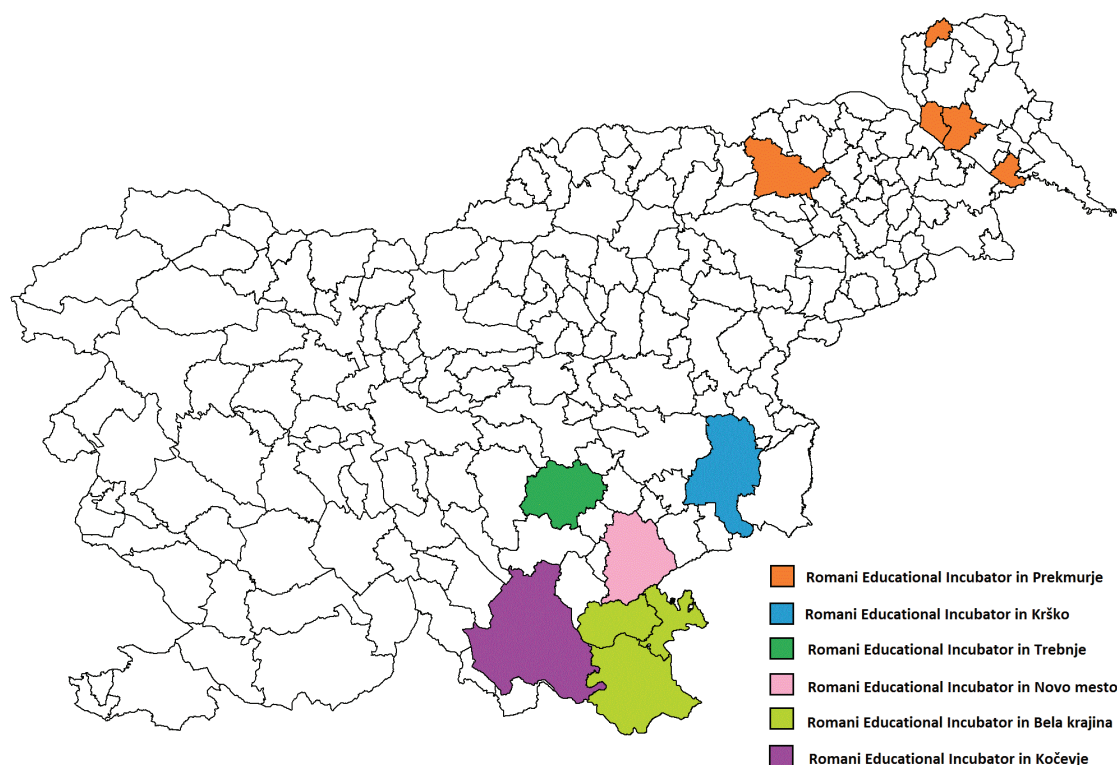
---

9 The programmes of the Romani Educational Incubators are carried out by various practitioners, or consortium partners of the project *The increase in social and cultural capital in areas with a Roma population* – the Romani Academic Club, the Novo Mesto Society for the Development of Voluntary Work, the Trebnje Centre for Social Work and the Institute for Ethnic Studies, which at the same time co-ordinates the project.

10 In the project framework learning assistance was also offered to students in the Murska Sobota Student Dormitory; we ceased offering learning assistance in the middle of the school year, for this involved children with special needs and work with them requires specially trained personnel. Nevertheless we continued with various creative workshops in the dormitory.

- **The Romani Educational Incubator in Krško:** The incubator has its own central, multipurpose room in the settlement of Kerinov grm. In this instance we are dealing with a pilot programme for nursery school care in the settlement.
- **The Romani Educational Incubator in Kočevje:** The programme of learning assistance and free-time activities was worked out in the Željne Branch of the Stara Cerkev Elementary School.

Figure 1: Romani Educational Incubator Locations in Slovenia



The search for premises where the programme of the incubators could be carried out, presented its own particular challenge. Prior experience working with the Romani population resulted in the decision that an incubator should be located in a Romani settlement; otherwise there would be little possibility of the children visiting it. Unfortunately there are very few settlements that might have had such premises. Even in settlements where we managed to place incubators, disapproval was soon voiced by a sector of the Romani community, since there became apparent various interests and questions about financial compensation for the use and maintenance of the rooms, or part of Romani community did not approve individual practitioners of learning assistance in the incubators. In some cases personal arguments within the community prevailed over the belief that involving the children in the incubator was of value. The provision of new premises in Romani settlements proved impracticable for various reasons – including disorganized property rights in Romani settlements, a lack of financial means at the local level, and the unpreparedness of the Romani community to help establishing the premises for the incubators or simply to agree among themselves whether or not they wish to have a multipurpose room of this kind.

Below we describe two sets of activities in the Romani Educational Incubators: learning assistance and free-time activities.

#### 4. Learning assistance within the Romani Educational Incubators

With respect to both content and execution, we adapted the originally planned programme for conducting learning assistance within existing Romani Educational Incubators at the time of their actual operation.

Table 1: Adaptations of the content and execution of the programmes of the Romani Educational Incubators

AS PLANNED	AS REALIZED
Individual learning assistance sessions.	A combination of individual and group learning assistance sessions.
The learning assistance to be conducted in the homes of individual primary and secondary students, or in Romani Educational Incubators in (Romani) settlements.	The learning assistance is conducted in Romani settlements (in premise of the Romani Educational Incubators, in the homes of primary and secondary students), in schools and in a library.
We anticipated providing learning assistance for primary and secondary students having problems attaining the minimal standards of knowledge, and also the scholastically more successful ones.	Participation in learning assistance is by mostly primary and secondary students having problems attaining the minimal standards of knowledge.
Those providing learning assistance should have as a minimum level V education, or levels VI or VII for learning assistance for secondary students.	Those providing learning assistance have as a minimum level V education; some have levels VI or VII; learning assistance is also offered by two secondary students.
Those providing learning assistance should if possible belong to the Romani community.	Learning assistance has been provided by 26 persons of whom more than half belong to the Romani community.
Learning assistance would be provided in close collaboration with the partner schools.	Some schools more and some less actively involved themselves in the projected activities and interacted with the providers of learning assistance.

At first we planned for learning assistance for Romani primary and secondary students to be provided, above all, individually, namely in the homes of individual students or in the common premises of the Romani settlement. It became apparent rather quickly that the number of children who needed assistance was high, and that in this light it was more expedient to organize and provide group learning assistance.

It has also become apparent that in many Romani settlements learning assistance is either not possible or not effective, and that in the majority of the settlements there are no common premises in which learning assistance might be conducted and there is no possibility of providing such premises in a short time. Some of the students who are included in the learning assistance programme live in unsuitable housing or are homeless and are itinerant and live in tents. For this reason we adapted the way in which learning assistance is offered to the actual conditions; this means that in some localities learning assistance is also provided in the schools. The provision of learning assistance in the schools has its advantages and also its disadvantages. An advantage is the constant contact between the provider of the learning assistance and individual teachers, for which reason he or she may keep up to date with the learning needs of an individual student and the assignment which the student

has to complete. A disadvantage of the provision of learning assistance in the school, on the other hand, is that it takes place immediately after the end of classes when the children are tired and their powers of concentration are weaker. Given the requirements indicated here, we created a combination of learning assistance in the school and in the home, and this proved to be effective. Most of the learning assistance, however, continues to be provided in the Romani settlements.

We did not foresee the provision of learning assistance only for students who have difficulties attaining minimal standards of knowledge, but also for primary and secondary students who are relatively more successful and may with some additional assistance attain even better results. Evaluation of the learning assistance at the end of the school year showed that the students who are included in the programme of learning assistance are preponderantly those who have difficulties attaining educational standards, while the better students do not usually avail themselves of learning assistance.

When we were planning the composition of the group of learning assistance practitioners, we had individuals in mind who would have completed at least level V education, would if possible belong to the Romani community and come from the local area. Among the 26 learning assistance practitioners over half are members of the Romani community and come from the local area. The majority have completed at least level V education, some have completed level VI or level VII. We also included in the number of learning assistance practitioners two successful secondary school students who by their example gave additional motivation to primary and secondary students to continue with their schooling. We gave the learning assistance practitioners the opportunity to take part in seminars and workshops where they acquired new skills for quality work with the children.

The whole time we took pains to ensure that the learning assistance should be provided in close co-operation with the schools. At the beginning of the 2010–11 school year we presented our plan for learning assistance to all the partner schools (11 elementary and 4 secondary schools) and the student dormitory, at the same time acquainting them with our expectations from them, and arranged for the schools and teachers to support and collaborate with the practitioners of learning assistance.<sup>11</sup> The majority of schools, or their administrations, received the project positively and offered their co-operation, whereas reservations were noticeable from a few. There is in fact a wide range of various kinds of additional learning assistance in schools directed to the Romani students or to all students who need extra help: for example: complementary classes,<sup>12</sup> adaptations of work methods, individual and group assistance,<sup>13</sup> additional teaching assistance,<sup>14</sup> Romani as-

---

11 In the first phase (during the application procedure) the project *The increase in social and cultural capital in areas with a Roma population* included 11 elementary schools, 4 secondary schools and one secondary school dormitory. In the 2011 school year three more schools became project partners: the Metlika Elementary School, the Dragotin Kette Elementary School in Novo mesto, and the Maks Durjava Elementary School in Maribor.

12 Complementary classes are intended for students who need help with learning. Students participate voluntarily. They can attend for a whole year or only occasionally, as required. Romani students often do not participate in complementary classes, especially when organized early in the morning, before classes.

13 Individual and group assistance is intended to help students overcome learning difficulties. It is provided by teachers in the school and indeed during class time. It takes place individually or in small groups which are formed flexibly, according to the needs of students.

14 Additional teaching assistance is provided by special educational needs teachers. Their particular tasks are to pinpoint individual students' peculiarities; to plan work with the students, parents and teachers; and to provide individual and group assistance and evaluation, i.e., to what extent the forms of assistance are effective. There are two kinds of assistance: additional teaching assistance provided by a special educational needs teacher, and assistance by an individual teacher - usually a teacher of the specific subject which is giving difficulties to a student.

sistants.<sup>15</sup> In this respect there was in some schools some scepticism about the learning assistance that was provided in our project, since they were of the opinion that the Romani children were already receiving sufficient and various kinds of learning assistance in their school system. In other schools the opinion was that any kind of learning assistance for Romani children was more than welcome, given that, in spite of all available possibilities for learning assistance and specially adapted programmes, many Romani children remained less successful at school. A teacher at one of the partner schools noted:

I think that it would be a good thing for all students to have even more assistance (outside regular classes) when someone would learn with them, work with them individually or in small groups. They have no support at home. They stay in school after-hours to take part in different activities and do their homework, but little time is left for instruction and assistance. /.../ These students would need at least one hour of additional assistance per day, either before or after classes, especially in the first three years when the foundations are laid for literacy, which is the requirement for further successful work and study.

In spite of hearing at introductory meetings from school management that there was already enough of these kinds of learning assistance available, we were nevertheless told by teachers that the problem was the limited number of hours that could not satisfy the actual needs. Furthermore those kinds of assistance are organized and structured rather formally, following school regulations and in a way which is not always optimal for Romani students, for which reason this kind of assistance has limited results.

When providing learning assistance the practitioners made especial efforts to increase the motivation for education among the students, a motivation which for many is very low. From young Romani people who have not finished elementary school we often hear comments about the inadequacy of the knowledge with which elementary education has equipped them. It is after all a fact that members of the Roma, with or without education, have difficulties finding employment, and this is an additional discouragement for them to be involved and stay many years in the school system. It frequently happens that the fears caused by poor experiences at school and later at work are mental patterns of the uselessness of education that are passed on to the children. Our aim was therefore to create the incubators conditions and circumstances in which not only the children, but also their parents, would find the motivation for education.

## **5. Free-time Activities in the Framework of Romani Educational Incubators**

In addition to learning assistance other free-time activities are carried out in the incubators, which are just as important for the development of the social and cultural capital of the child. We arranged the free-time activities in the Romani educational incubators in various forms:

- As an all-year free-time activity e.g., the football school in which also non-Romani children are included. Participants in the Football School' during the whole school

---

<sup>15</sup> Romani assistants offer assistance to Romani students and also to the schools for their communication with parents and the Romani community.



year acquired the foundations of teamwork, discipline, self-criticism and responsibility. The children train regularly and take part in matches and competitions in the local district, and also co-operate in competitions abroad. They are trained by representatives of the Romani community, of whom three obtained the title of 'C Trainer' (C-level UEFA licence) which is required for work with young football-players.

- In the form of workshops (e.g., the cinema and photography workshop) and summer camps during the summer holidays.
- In the form of various workshops (in some places occasionally, in others weekly) during the school year.

For the workshop themes we on the one hand adapted to the interests expressed by the children, and on the other interwove subjects from the school curriculum. The children could participate in workshops in the English language, dance, puppetry, natural science, fine arts, sport and games, reading fairy tales etc.. We also organised some quizzes, and geography and history workshops. During the workshops the children developed various skills, discovered new interests, took part in sports and acquired knowledge in new areas. The children participated in large numbers in organised activities during the summer holidays. In the future we shall observe whether this interest on the part of children for free-time activities will also spill over into a greater co-operation during sessions of learning assistance (and also in schoolwork).

It is more difficult to directly and objectively measure the effects and results of the various free-time activities which we arrange for the incubators, as outcomes of learning assistance; and we are convinced that these activities cannot replace learning assistance and regular classes, but in any case we believe that they may make a considerable contribution to the multilateral development of the child, especially to directly encouraging the child's motivation for education.

## **6. An Evaluation of the Provision of Learning Assistance in the 2010–2011 School Year**

In offering learning assistance we wished to attain the following goals: to increase the students' motivation for learning; to make possible for them additional learning assistance and explanation of educational material; to teach children 'how to learn,'<sup>16</sup> to encourage them to do their homework or take on the responsibility for completing their assignments; to make them accustomed to regular learning; to contribute to the formation of their positive self-image; raise their self-confidence; and to stimulate an interest in the education of their children on the part of parents.

The children who were included in the system of learning assistance in the school year 2010–11 numbered altogether 202, of whom 191 were elementary and 11 were second-

---

<sup>16</sup> The programmes of learning assistance hitherto have demonstrated a requirement for students first of all to learn how to learn. This involves developing the capability to work independently, for instance by forming mental maps, taking written notes, organizing time and learning from textbooks. It happens that children in school, as preparation for tests of knowledge, are given prepared questions and answers which they then learn by heart. This kind of approach is ineffective in the long term, and is, moreover, a clear indicator of the low expectations that individual teachers have from the Romani children.

ary school students. Among the 191 elementary students, 164 studied at partner-schools of the Project; the other 27 participated in the learning assistance although they were not students of the partner-schools of the Project.

## 6.1 The Learning Assistance for Elementary School Students

Table 2: Estimated numbers of Romani children at partner-schools, and numbers of Romani children included in the scheme of learning assistance in the school year 2010–11 as part of the Project *The increase in social and cultural capital in areas with a Roma population*

Elementary school [ES]	All children	Romani children at school		Romani children included in the learning assistance	
	Number	Number	% of total	Number	% of Romani children at school
Janko Padežnik ES Maribor	286	54	18.9	20	37
Tišina ES <sup>17</sup>	288	35	12.1	28	80
Kuzma ES	114	15	13.1	12	80
France Prešeren ES Črenšovci	191	31	16.2	21	67
Belokranjskega odreda ES, Semič	289	31	10.7	11	35
Miran Jarc ES Črnomelj	337	71	21.1	8	11
Trebnje ES	914 <sup>18</sup>	47	5.1	20	42
Stara Cerkev ES	276	40	14.5	11	27
Central ES	263	27	10.3	0	0
Željne Branch ES	13	13	100	11	84
Metlika ES	604	53	8.8	12	22
Dragotin Kette ES Novo mesto	85	18	21.2	7	38.8
Maks Durjava ES Maribor	147	23	15.6	3	13
Louis Adamič ES Grosuplje <sup>19</sup>	659	26	3.9	0	0
Leskovec pri Krškem ES <sup>20</sup>	522	69	13.2	0	0
Šmihel ES <sup>21</sup>	319	32	10	0	0
TOTAL	5,309	585	11.0	164	28.0

The proportion of Romani children taking learning assistance varies between 0% and 84% of the total attending individual schools. The largest proportions of Romani children taking learning assistance were at the Željne Branch ES, the Tišina ES and the Kuzma ES.

17 At the Gederovci Branch ES in school year 2010–11 no Romani children were enrolled.

18 The data apply to the Central ES and all branch ES.

19 In the Smrekec 2 Romani settlement (Grosuplje) we intended to organize a Romani Educational Incubator to include children at the Louis Adamič ES Grosuplje also, but because of local structural constraints, we did not manage to do so in the 2010–11 year. Activities will be initiated in 2012.

20 At Leskovec pri Krškem ES there has been no learning assistance programme, but there has been a pilot programme for Romani children and their families. A multipurpose room was set up and utilized by 19 children. The room is intended also for workshops and lectures for parents.

21 In the Project framework the learning assistance programme in Šmihel will, under the patronage of the Novo mesto Romani Educational Incubator, start operation in 2012.

Due to the organisational complexity of the Project, all the Romani Educational Incubators did not begin their operations simultaneously; rather, we set them up gradually at the various localities. For this reason they were in operation in some places no more than three months, in others six, eight or even nine months.

Approximately 60% of the children involved in the project activities participated in the learning assistance sessions for longer than two months, and some of them for the whole school year. Among those children who participated for less than two months there were some who first came to the sessions right at the end of the school year. Some students, after keen attendance at first, stopped participating in the sessions for various reasons: they stated that it was no more a question of a way of enjoyably spending their free time while real work was being expected from them; or that it was because of personal disagreements within the Romani community resulting in individual parents not allowing their children to participate in the learning assistance sessions; or that the cause was their family moving house or other changes in family circumstances such as the birth of a new baby. We also had one example where a sixth-grade female student moved in with a young man and so stopped attending school and consequently also learning assistance sessions.



Table 3: Data from the sessions of learning assistance in the school year 2010–11 at elementary schools as part of the Project *The increase in social and cultural capital in areas with a Roma population*

Elementary Schools	Total <sup>22</sup>	Number of children taking 1–2 months of learning assistance	More than 1–2 months of learning assistance	
			Number of children	Average number of months of learning assistance
Total	191	79	112	5.9
Boys	83	42	41	5.8
Girls	108	37	71	5.9
1st three years of school	65	23	42	6.0
2nd three years of school	88	37	51	6.1
3rd three years of school	38	19	19	5.0
Individual learning assistance	32	24	8	3.75
Group learning assistance	148	55	93	6.1
Individual/group learning assistance	11	0	11	5.4
Learning assistance in incubators	107	42	65	6.5
Learning assistance at student homes	23	15	8	4.1
Learning assistance in incubators and at student homes	4	0	4	5.7
Learning assistance at school	51	20	31	5.2
Learning assistance at student homes/at school	3	0	3	4.6
Learning assistance in student dormitory	3	2	1	5
Bela krajina region	31	19	12	3.6
Dolenjska region <sup>23</sup>	58	6	52	6.8
Prekmurje region	102	54	48	5.4

Elementary students participated in learning assistance sessions, on average, for 5.9 months. More girls (57%) than boys (43%) participated. The difference between the rates of participation by boys and girls is even greater if we consider only students who participated frequently. Of those that participated for more than 2 months 37% were boys and 63% girls. A division according to three-year cycles<sup>24</sup> for all children shows that 34% from the first cycle participated in the sessions, 46% from the second cycle and 20% from the third. A similar proportional structure obtains for those with more frequent attendance

22 The total comprises all the children, for whom learning assistance was provided, including students at the Murska Sobota student dormitory and also students who were not at schools partnering in the programme.

23 In the Dolenjska region we include also students in the Željne Branch of the Stara Cerkev ES, Kočevje.

24 Compulsory basic education in Slovenia is organised in a single structure nine-year basic school attended by children aged six to fifteen years. The basic school comprises three three-year cycles. First cycle: 1–3 years (age of children: 6–8), ISCED level 1. Second cycle: 4–6 years (age of children: 9–11), ISCED level 1. Third cycle: 7–9 years (age of children: 12–14), ISCED level 2.

(more than 2 months): 37.5% from the first three-year cycle participated, 45.5% from the second cycle and 17% from the third. As far as the different forms of learning assistance (viz., group vs. individual assistance) are concerned, the Bela Krajina region is an exceptional case, for here the lack of suitable group premises meant that the learning assistance sessions were offered, preponderantly, on an individual basis, either in individual students' homes or in the school.

## 6.2 Learning Assistance for Secondary Students

Table 4: Estimated numbers of Romani children at secondary partner-schools, and numbers of Romani children included in the scheme of learning assistance in the school year 2010–11 as part of the Project *The increase in social and cultural capital in areas with a Roma population*

Secondary school [SS]	All children	Romani children in the school		Romani children included in learning assistance							
				Total		1–2 months	Over 2 months	School years			
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	Number	1	2	3	4
School Centre Novo mesto	No data	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Radenci SS of Catering and Tourism	270	2	0.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Murska Sobota Secondary Medical School	518	7	1.4	4		1	3	3	1	0	0
Murska Sobota School of Economics	500	25	5	3		0	3	2	0	0	1
TOTALS	1,288	36	2.8	7		1	6				

The data show that not many Romani children attend partner-secondary schools, and we estimate that the situation is no better in the other secondary schools. Although a considerable number of Romani students wish to continue their education a smaller number manage to register in secondary schools and an even smaller number of students graduate from secondary education.

Table 5: Data from the sessions of learning assistance in the school year 2010–11 at secondary schools as part of the Project The increase in social and cultural capital in areas with a Roma population

Secondary Schools	Total <sup>25</sup>	Number of children taking 1–2 months of learning assistance	More than 1–2 months of learning assistance	
			Number of children	Average number of months of learning assistance
Total	11	4	7	4.8
Boys	3	3	0	0
Girls	8	1	7	4.8
1st year	7	1	6	
2nd year	1	0	1	
3rd year	1	1	0	
4th year	2	0	2	
Individual learning assistance	8	3	5	
Group learning assistance	3	1	2	
Individual/group learning assistance	0	0	0	
Learning assistance in incubators	4	2	2	
Learning assistance at student homes	3	1	2	
Learning assistance in incubators and at student homes	0	0	0	
Learning assistance at school or in student dormitory	3	1	2	
Other	1	0	1	

Secondary students participated in learning assistance sessions, on average, for 4.8 months. More girls (8) than boys (3) participated. The difference between the rates of participation by boys and girls is even greater if we consider students who participated frequently. Those who participated frequently, i.e., for more than 2 months are all girls (7). A division according to years shows that 6 students in their first year participated in the sessions, one in his second year and two in their fourth year. As far as the different forms of learning assistance (viz., group vs. individual assistance) are concerned, the individual form, which is more suitable for secondary students, predominates.

### 6.3 The Effectiveness of Learning Assistance

We assessed the effectiveness of the learning assistance sessions by means of an ongoing monitoring of the progress of the children included in our programme. In this respect we defined progress widely, taking many elements into consideration, including: grades

<sup>25</sup> The total comprises all the children for whom learning assistance was provided, including students at secondary schools that were not partner-schools in the programme.

and success at school, co-operation during lessons, the writing of home assignments, integration into the class collectivity, attendance, etc.

We collected data on the children's progress in two ways. The learning assistance practitioners monitored and assessed the children's progress and wrote weekly, monthly and yearly reports about their work with individual children. The practitioners noted down impressions of their work with individual children in diaries. They noted the goals set for implementing the learning assistance sessions, and whether the goals were attained. The children's progress was also assessed by the partner-schools. They informed us of the children's progress and the marks they had attained at the half-way stage and at the end of the school year. Using this kind of bilateral evaluation we were able to assess the actual progress and the effectiveness of carrying out learning assistance. One portion of the assessment of progress was in practice not performed, since we had to obtain the agreement of the parents to be given the marks of individual students, and many parents were unwilling to do so.

If we briefly summarize some overall observations from the reports with respect to the students by practitioners of learning assistance for the 2010–11 school year we may note the following:

- a low motivation for education;
- a weak knowledge of the Slovenian language, a second or foreign language for the Roma, resulting in difficulties for students in understanding and learning materials in all subjects;
- a short-term retention of materials: due to extremely feeble basic skills, the students learn new materials by heart without proper understanding, and this usually results in their promptly forgetting the new materials they have been studying;
- many of the students in their fourth through ninth years of school have a noticeably severe deficiency in the necessary basic skills;
- a preference among the students to participate in various workshops rather than in learning assistance sessions, for which reason practitioners try to include various curricular materials in the workshops;
- the fact that students require a great deal of approval of their work, friendly conversation, attention, etc.;
- the fact that learning assistance is as a rule more effective if there is close communication between its practitioners and the teaching staff.

On the basis of the above comments it is clear that we cannot expect very noticeable progress in educational success for many of the students overnight. As already noted, in the framework of our project we wished to complement the already existing efforts by the school and other actors in such a way that, with the Romani Educational Incubators and the daily presence of learning assistance practitioners in the settlements, we could help the students during their afternoon studies, for without completing their homework assignments and afternoon studies, we can expect no success in the elementary schools, let alone in the secondary schools. With our presence in the settlements we wished also to establish contacts with the students' parents and motivate them to encourage their children in their education.

We asked the schools (the teaching staff) to monitor and at the end of the school year to assess the progress of those children who participated in the learning assistance ses-

sions, and also the involvement of their parents in the educational process, with respect to several selected criteria:<sup>26</sup>

### *1. Students' academic performance*

The grades are a significant criterion for the assessment of the success of providing learning assistance. The evaluation of the children's progress in this respect in the 2010–11 school year was not carried out in complete accord with the plan, for because of various factors we were unable to obtain all the necessary information. From the information which we did obtain from the partner-schools it is apparent that the students, helped by the learning assistance practitioners, rectified several negative grades and also passed some re-examinations. Greater success was achieved by students who regularly attended the learning assistance sessions. It must be borne in mind that the majority of students in their fourth through ninth years who attended these sessions brought forward from preceding years significant deficiencies in knowledge. It was observable that a portion of the students progressed to higher class levels without acquiring minimal standards of knowledge. Consequently the learning assistance practitioners had to direct a large amount of time to the corrections of these deficiencies. Frequently, therefore, progress in their studies was not even expressed in better grades. On the basis of the descriptive evaluations of the students in the first cycle (1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> grade), it is currently impossible to determine their progress; it is however clear that several students do not attain minimal knowledge standards in spite of the availability of learning assistance. The advantages of out-of-school work with children were acknowledged by the teachers, who reported that even those students who did not attain the minimal knowledge standards showed progress because of the learning assistance.

### *2. Students' co-operation during class*

The teachers confirmed that some students who have participated in the learning assistance sessions in the incubators come to school better prepared. What was apparent was their being better prepared when both writing and taking oral tests. The students' co-operation during classes also improved. There still remains the great problem of students' low motivation for education. A large number of Romani students require constant encouragement, assistance and guidance in order to complete their work. Some teachers reported that Romani students rely too much on individual assistance on the part of their teachers, or of the learning assistance practitioners, or of the Romani assistants.

### *3. Completion of homework*

Although the learning assistance practitioners during the sessions encouraged the students to do their homework, and checked whether or not it had been completed, at the end of the school year the teachers reported that homework was not being done regularly.

---

<sup>26</sup> It is worth noting that not a single secondary partner-school replied to our invitation to submit assessments of the progress of the students who participated in the learning assistance sessions, and that not one sent assessments.

#### *4. Assessment of degree to which the students were included in the classroom collectivity*

In the 2010–11 school year neither the schools nor the teachers reported noting significant differences with respect to the inclusion of individual students in the classroom collectivity. The majority of teachers are of the opinion that Romani students are well received by their classmates, although they often add that, all the same, they associate with each other even more. Some ascribe this in part or even preponderantly to their poor knowledge of the Slovenian language. On the basis of our own experience and our knowledge of the conditions in the schools we maintain that the characterization ‘well received by their classmates’ is in many cases no more than just an empty phrase.

#### *5. Classroom attendance (justified and unjustified absences)*

Although one of the aims of the learning assistance programme is to encourage the Romani students to regularly attend classes, in the 2010–11 school year our partner-schools did not note any changes or improvement in this area. A large proportion of students still have many absences from class. The teachers report that the Romani parents often send in written apologies for their children, but they themselves consider that the reasons adduced by the parents as excuses are not the real reasons for the children’s not being in class. On many occasions they do not even receive apologies.<sup>27</sup> The majority of Romani students do no more than attend classes regularly and do not participate in other school activities (sports days, cultural days, science days, technical days, excursions ...

#### *6. Parent-school co-operation*

In this area no apparent changes occurred. The parents continue for the most part to not participate in the regular parent meetings. Some respond to special invitations and come to the schools, others however do not do this. On the other hand it is noticeable that the schools and individual teachers do not know or do not have any interest in contacting the Romani parents (and also their children) in any other way that might encourage their co-operation. The class teachers often do not know the Romani parents personally at all. According to the assessments of the learning assistance practitioners, most teachers have never been in the Romani settlements that their students come from. A good relationship between parents and schools and teachers may well play a significant role in whether their child will be more or less successful in school, and also whether he or she will be included in the learning assistance activities or not. In contacts with parents we were confronted with various situations: from some parents having an apparently uncaring attitude to their child’s school attendance, let alone participation in learning assistance, to their forbidding their children to attend learning assistance sessions or supporting their children’s decisions not to attend the sessions. Some parents expressed their lack of authority with respect to individual children’s arbitrary decisions not to participate in the learning assistance that was provided; others were enthusiastic about the availability of learning assistance and regularly expressed interest to the learning assistance practitioners and

---

27 The agreement between the schools and the Centre for Social Work provided for the monthly submission of data about the students absent from class. The Centre for Social Work is allowed to take the rights to monetary social assistance from their parents. The procedures for imposing sanctions are however lengthy. According to the principal of the Bršljin Elementary School, in 2010 rights to monetary social assistance were taken away from 63 parents of Romani children (Radio broadcast *Amare Droma, Amared Drumia, Mengere Droma*, Radio Slovenia Channel One, 17 October 2011.)



in the schools about the progress of their children. One positive development was that the practitioners of learning assistance in some Romani settlements set up links between teachers on the one hand and inhabitants of the settlements, something that had not existed previously.

From the data collected it is apparent that the provision of learning assistance to Romani children in the framework of our project had positive results in the school year 2010–11. The observation made by the schools in this respect may be condensed in a series of points:

- The learning assistance lasted a relatively short period of time, which is why they did not note more obvious advances in the students' success. Those students who attended the learning assistance sessions regularly exhibited positive shifts in their attitude to both school and homework.
- The teachers attested that some students come to school better prepared (especially before taking written or oral tests) and to a much greater degree take an active part in lessons.
- With the help of the learning assistance practitioners the students rectified some negative grades and also completed some re-examinations at the end of the school year.
- Actual changes with respect to reducing students' absences were not to be observed.
- The teachers expressed the need to set up regular cooperation between the learning assistance practitioners on the one hand and the schools or teachers on the other.
- The teachers made it clear that more should be done to raise the interest of the parents for the education of their children.
- The teachers expressed the need for learning assistance to be provided as early as possible for students, and especially for those in their first six years of elementary school.
- During the summer holidays, also, workshops should be organized in such a way that there is practice in individual areas in the basic skills that are needed by the students in school. Experience has, in fact, shown that in their holidays children forget a great deal of what they have learned, and that at the beginning of the new school year considerable time has to be devoted to reviewing the knowledge and skills from the previous year.

On the basis of the evaluation conducted to date we may note that the first results of the learning assistance sessions and other activities which were developed in the framework of the Romani educational incubators are positive, although here and there progress can only be measured in tiny steps. In some circumstances and in some incubators the activities were developed over too short a time for their effects to be properly evaluated.

## **7. Conclusion**

With the help of the activities which were developed on different levels and in various forms in the framework of the project *The increase in social and cultural capital in areas with a Roma population* we wish to contribute to the creation of conditions for the social exclusion of members of the Romani community to be surmounted. We consider that the education (formal or informal) of the children, youth, parents, teachers and general public is

one of the key elements in the chain of measures which may bring about an improvement in social inclusion.

In the last forty years a very great number of different projects in various areas, including education, were completed in Slovenia. Many measures were taken for the greater incorporation of Romani children into the educational system: subsidised nutrition, school books, transportation to school, various reorganizations for the inclusion of Romani children while at school (the formation of homogeneous classes consisting solely of Romani children, of partly homogeneous and of completely heterogeneous classes), the supplementary financing of professional workers, supplementary class periods for individual or group work in schools, etc. (Bešter & Medvešek 2007; Strategija vzgoje in izobraževanja Romov v Republiki Sloveniji 2004, 11); nevertheless, the incorporation and success of Romani children in the school system has been improving only slowly and in small increments. In recent years – and this has also been shown by data from the field – the proportion of advancements by Romani students into the higher grades has maybe increased, but this proportion remains smaller than that of other students. Furthermore it may be doubted that a larger proportion of the advancements by Romani students means actual progress in knowledge, for the teachers (and also the learning assistance practitioners) in the higher grades report exceptionally great deficits of skills carried forward from previous years.

The reasons for and causes of the fact the most Romani students are less successful on their educational journey are many and closely interlinked. Some of the reasons, for instance the weaker socio-economic circumstances of Romani families, their poor living conditions and so on, are not directly connected to the education system, but nevertheless influence the children's academic achievements. Within the school system there remains, however, much that needs to be improved and which specialists and educators have been drawing attention to for many years (Nečak Lük, Knaflič & Novak-Lukanovič 1994; Krek & Vogrinc 2005; Peček & Lesar 2006; Bešter & Medvešek 2007). One continuing significant deficiency affecting the inclusion of Romani children in the school system is the lack of opportunities for them to learn Slovene as a second or foreign language. Children who do not have Slovene as a first language, as compared with their cohorts, have right from the start a weaker point of departure for attaining good results in school. If a difference between the mother tongue and the language of instruction is accompanied by an inappropriate teaching method, it will negatively affect not only the child's cognitive, but also his general development (Peček & Lesar 2006; Nečak Lük & Novak Lukanovič 2011: 165). Another area where much might be done is providing the teachers with the capability of working with the children in an ethnically and culturally mixed environment. Individual schools and teachers include the Romani children in the school and the educational process in various ways. It is noteworthy that in some schools there is no consensus within the teaching staff as a whole, including the school management, with respect to the methods of treating Romani students. Frequently the approach 'we treat all students equally', in fact results in unequal treatment of individual groups of students.

The first year of the project to a great extent featured efforts to set up the Romani Educational Incubators in the different locations, in which the educational assistance sessions and free-time activities especially for young people would be carried out. We struggled with the problems of acquiring suitable premises and searching out appropriate practitioners of educational assistance sessions and free-time activities. As far as the first results are concerned we may say that on the one hand they exceeded our expectations, especially with respect to the interest and the numbers of children involved in the activities of the project. Among the posi-



tive project results we must also mention its significance for representatives of the Romani community, who are employed in the project as practitioners of educational assistance, facilitators in workshops, trainers and co-ordinators, and some of whom collaborated in setting up the programme and registration for the project. By working on the project they acquire experience of (first-time) employment, experience of working on a European Social Fund project, and the competence necessary for later independent work. On the other hand, some of our expectations for the first year of the project were not realised, and for various reasons, such as: problems in setting up the necessary infrastructure for starting work, resulting in a late start for carrying out the activities; great deficiencies in the children's skills, for whom the filling-in of gaps in knowledge in retrospect cannot be so rapidly reflected in greater success in learning; misunderstandings or lack of preparation for collaboration on the part of individual actors (schools, parents, local communities, etc.); excessive demands that became apparent in the field and too small a capacity on the part of the project (the demands for the number of practitioners of and locations of educational assistance are essentially greater than the financial and organisational capabilities of the project).

In the upcoming two years our goal is the continuation of the activities that have been initiated, and the consolidation of the Romani Educational Incubators as permanent fixtures in the Romani settlements beyond the expiration of the project. It is after all a fact that the activities introduced by the project *The increase in social and cultural capital in areas with a Roma population* may not bring about the desired results until they are extended for a longer period, in any case longer than the projected length of the project.

## References

- Ada, A. F., 1995. Fostering the Home-School Connection. In J. Frederickson (ed.) *Reclaiming Our Voices, Bilingual Education Critical Pedagogy and Praxis*. Ontario, CA: California Association for Bilingual Education, <http://www.osi.hu/iep/minorities/ResBook1/Fostering.htm> (5 November 2011).
- Baker, D. P., Goesling, B. & Letendre, G. K., 2002. Socioeconomic Status, School Quality, and National Economic Development: A Cross-National Analysis of the "Heyneman-Loxley Effect" on Mathematics and Science Achievement. *Comparative Education Review*. 46(3), 291–312.
- Baranja, S., Bešter, R., Brajnik, M., Bukovec, B., Friedreich, K., Geržina, S., Globevnik, R., Grafenauer, D., Jager, J., Janežič, M., Kejžar, B., Klopčič, V., Komac, M., Koretič, M., Krese, N., Križanič M., Luštek, A., Medvešek, M., Pirc, J., Radovan, D., Repše, J., Štremfel, U., Udovič, L. & Vonta, T., 2011. *Dvig socialnega in kulturnega kapitala v okoljih, kjer živijo predstavniki romske skupnosti: projektna knjiga*. Ponatis. Ljubljana, Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja/ Institute for Ethnic Studies.
- Bešter, R. & Medvešek, M., 2007. Education of Roma Children in Slovenia: Evaluation of the Education Policy Defined in National Action Plan on Social Inclusion. In M. Komac & R. Varga (eds.) *Social Inclusion of Roma*. Ljubljana, Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja/Institute for Ethnic Studies; Murska Sobota: Regionalna razvojna agencija Mura/Regional Development Agency Mura, 129–183.
- Brezovšek, M., Haček, M. & Bačlija, I., 2008. *Reševanje romske problematike v Sloveniji s poudarkom na socialni inkluzivnosti Romov v šolski sistem*. Končno poročilo CRP. Ljubljana, FDV, [http://www.mss.gov.si/fileadmin/mss.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocje/razvoj\\_solstva/crp/2008/crp\\_V5\\_0231\\_porocilo.doc](http://www.mss.gov.si/fileadmin/mss.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocje/razvoj_solstva/crp/2008/crp_V5_0231_porocilo.doc) (11 January 2012).
- Coleman, J. S., Campbell, E. Q., Hobson, C. F., McPartland, J., Mood, A. M., Weinfeld, F. D., & York, R. L., 1966. *Equality of educational opportunity*, Washington, U. S. Office of Education.
- EREBUS International, 2005. *Review of the Recent Literature on Socio-economic Status and Learning*. Report to the NSW Department of Education and Training. NSW Department of Education and Training, Darlinghurst.
- Horvat, J., 1999. Položaj Romov v Sloveniji. In Klopčič, V. and Polzer, M. (eds.), *Poti za izboljšanje položaja Romov v Srednji in Vzhodni Evropi*. Ljubljana, Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja/Institute for Ethnic Studies, 20–26.
- Gomboc Mrzlak, S., 2009. Romi v procesu integracije pri nas in v Evropi. *Sodobna pedagogika* 60/5, 26–42.
- Josipovič, D. & Repolusk, P., 2003. Demographic characteristics of the Romany in Prekmurje. *Acta geographica Slovenica*, 43(1), 127–149.
- Krek, J. & Vogrinc, J., 2005. Znanje slovenskega jezika kot pogoj šolskega uspeha učencev iz jezikovno in kulturno različnih ter socialno deprivilegiranih družin – primer začetnega opismenjevanja romskih učencev. *Sodobna pedagogika = Journal of contemporary educational studies*, 56(2), 118–139.
- Naše poti – Amare Droma, Amared Drumia, Mengere Droma, 2011. Radio Slovenija, Prvi program, radijska oddaja, 17 October 2011.
- Nečak Lük, A., Knaflič, L. & Novak-Lukanovič, S., 1994. *Večkulturno/večjezično okolje in šola*. Ljubljana, Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja/Institute for Ethnic Studies.

- Nečak Lük, A. & Novak Lukanovič, S., 2011. Inclusion of Roma Children into Education in Slovenia: The Language Competence and Cultural Dimensions. *The Open Education Journal* 4 (Suppl 2–M6), 164–173.
- OECD, 2001. *Knowledge and Skills for Life: First Results from the OECD Program for International Student Assessment*, OECD, Paris.
- OECD, 2004. *Learning for Tomorrow's World – First Results from PISA 2003*, OECD, Paris.
- OECD, 2007. *PISA 2006 Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World Volume 1: Analysis*, OECD, Paris.
- OECD, 2011. *Against the Odds: Disadvantaged Students Who Succeed in School*, OECD Publishing.
- Peček, M. & Lesar, I., 2006. *Pravičnost slovenske šole: mit ali realnost?* Ljubljana, Sophia.
- Pirc, J., 2011. Selected demographic and Spatial Dynamics of the Roma Population in Slovenia. Unpublished paper.
- Réger, Z., 1974. *Gypsy Children's Language Problems and Their Chances to Manage at School*. Valóság, 1974/1, <http://www.osi.hu/iep/minorities/ResBook1/LanguageReger.htm> (28 November 2011).
- Sirin, Selcuk R., 2005. Socio-Economic Status and Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analytic Review of Research. *Review of Educational Research* 75(3), 417–453.
- Smith, T., 1997. Recognising Difference: The Romani "GYPSY" Child Socialisation and Education Process. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 18(2), 243–257.
- Strategija vzgoje in izobraževanja Romov v Republiki Sloveniji, 2004. Pripravila delovna skupina za pripravo strategije vključevanja Romov v vzgojo in izobraževanje v sestavi Andreja Barle Lakote... [et al.]. Ljubljana: Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport.
- Strategija vzgoje in izobraževanja Romov v Republiki Sloveniji, 2011. Pripravila delovna skupina za pripravo strategije vključevanja Romov v vzgojo in izobraževanje v sestavi Andreja Barle Lakote... [et al.]. Ljubljana: Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport.
- Šiftar, V., 1970. *Cigani: minulosť v sedanjosti*. Murska Sobota, Pomurska založba.
- Tancer, M., 1994. *Vzgoja in izobraževanje Romov na Slovenskem*. Maribor, Založba Obzorja.
- Winkler, P., 1999. Izkušnje Slovenije pri urejanju položaja Romov. In Klopčič, V. and Polzer, M. (eds.), *Poti za izboljšanje položaja Romov v Srednji in Vzhodni Evropi*. Ljubljana, Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja/Institute for Ethnic Studies, 27–36.
- ZUOPP, 2007. Zakon o usmerjanju otrok s posebnimi potrebami. Uradni list RS, št. 3/2007 z dne 12. 1. 2007.
- Žagar, M. 2002. *Politika integracije romske skupnosti v Sloveniji: preprečevanje socialne izključenosti Romov*. Zaključno poročilo raziskovalne naloge za Ministrstvo za delo, družino in socialne zadeve (2001–2002). Ljubljana, Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja/Institute for Ethnic Studies.
- Žagar, M., Komac, M., Medvešek, M. & Bešter, R., 2006. *The Aspect of Culture in The Social Inclusion of Ethnic Minorities: Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under The Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing The Cultural Policies of Six Member States*. Final Report. Slovenia, (ECMI Working paper, 32). Flensburg, European center for minority issues, Ljubljana, Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja/Institute for Ethnic Studies.

# Romani Schooling: Light and Shadow

## 1. Introduction

The Roma in Italy currently number about 120–150,000. This estimate is based on an evaluation made by experts, rather than being based on a census or some kind of registration, since in Italy there is no registration based on ethnicity. The usual registrations indicate place of birth and citizenship, which allows a distinction between Italian citizens and immigrants, but nothing more.

Of these 120–150,000 about half are believed to be Italian citizens. The Roma with Italian citizenship belong to two groups: the Sinti and the Roma. All Sinti have Italian citizenship and live almost exclusively in the north and central areas of the country. They are divided according to the region of residence: thus we have Piedmont Sinti, Marche Sinti, Emilia-Romagna Sinti and Estrekaria Sinti. Most of them work at travelling shows: funfairs, darts games, bumper-cars, etc. For this reason they are semi-nomads; they live in caravans, and do not wish to move into more permanent homes. There is a State law<sup>1</sup> to aid travelling shows, which provides that each municipality should provide special areas with basic utilities (water, electricity etc.), to allow those who do so, to carry out this activity. Unfortunately the law is frequently misapplied and the Sinti rightly complain about that. As a matter of fact many municipalities fail to provide areas with basic facilities.

---

<sup>1</sup> Disposizioni sui circhi equestri e sullo spettacolo viaggiante, Gazzetta Ufficiale, Legge 18 marzo 1968, N. 337.

The earliest documents recording the presence of the Roma on Italian soil date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Today they differ according to region of origin: the Abruzzi Roma (who, in the past, used to have an almost total monopoly on horse breeding and trading; today this job has become obsolete and they had to find new and different jobs, and they live in permanent homes), the Naples Roma (*napulengre* in their own language), the Cilento Roma, etc.

Other Italian Romani citizens are the *kalderasha* (only a few hundred), originally coming from Istria. They are semi-nomads and live in particularly elegant caravans. They ask for serviced areas for their long-stay periods.

The Roma without Italian citizenship migrated from Eastern Europe during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in the last decade. Most of them come from Romania; this influx started in 2000. For example, in the city of Rome, which is, so to speak, home to about 15,000 Roma, in 1999 there were about 500 Romanian Roma, while today they are estimated to be about 5,000, ten times as many.<sup>3</sup> The others belong to Romani groups from former Yugoslavia, the Italian Roma and the Sinti.

## 2. Legal Rights

As far as their rights are concerned, one must distinguish, first of all, between the Roma with Italian citizenship who, at least formally, enjoy the same rights as the other Italian citizens, and the immigrant Roma. Within the latter group we must distinguish EU citizens from non-EU citizens. Since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007 Romania and Bulgaria have become part of the European Union. Their citizens, therefore, are already benefiting from the norms of free movement of people in the Schengen area (not needing an entry visa), and enjoy the right to free movement and therefore cannot be subject to deportation.

Nevertheless, to obtain legal right of abode (which is an essential requirement to access the benefits of the welfare state) a residence permit is needed; this being issued is subject – apart from special cases such as pregnancy, serious health reasons, studies – to the applicants proving that they have a proper job, either as an employee or as self-employed, and earn an income adequate for maintaining themselves and their families; three income thresholds have been fixed according to the number of dependent family members. Yet there is an EU regulation allowing the deportation of EU citizens who cannot prove to have an adequate income to sustain themselves.<sup>4</sup>

---

2 In the document referred to some “Egyptians” are reported to have stopped and stayed in Bologna. Scholars think they were Roma in the loosest meaning of the word.

3 This is my personal assessment. In 1995 there had been a census of Roma living in camps; fewer than 6,000 of them had been registered. In 2008 another census took place, funded by the Home Office, and implemented by the Italian Red Cross. It is interesting to note that the Roma manifested various feelings about this census. Some, being undocumented, were happy to have the possibility of receiving a card with their picture, which they (incorrectly) considered to be an official document. Other Roma looked at the census as the starting point for evictions and expulsions, and therefore they deliberately avoided it. The result of the census was that in Rome there were 7,200 Roma. According to my personal opinion that figure is a gross underestimate. I have evidence for this opinion. In an authorised camp, for which the census indicated the presence of 208 Roma, my personal listing (based on my frequent visits) gave an actual number of 400. The Home Office Minister himself seemed not to consider the Red Cross census reliable, and only months later allowed another census, this time charging State police and soldiers with the task.

4 See: Directive 2004/38/EC. Inserted into Italian legislation with *decreto legislativo* N. 30/2007.

As for the Roma from former Yugoslavia, their situation is very precarious. Most of them came to Italy in the early nineties after the civil war that affected that area. Originally they had a residence permit for “humanitarian reasons”.<sup>5</sup> Towards the end of the nineties, when the war in Bosnia had ended, the Italian Government decided to ask the beneficiaries to change this humanitarian permit to a permit for reasons of employment. Not all of them have been able to do that. Moreover there was a small migratory influx for marriage and other non-standard reasons, while quite a few lost their original permit because they failed to renew it due to negligence or ignorance. According to my estimate, about 80% of the Roma from former Yugoslavia are “irregular” (without a residence permit), in spite of having been in Italy for even 30 or 40 years. Either they forfeited their permit (because they failed to ask for renewal – deadline: 60 days after expiry), or they never had one. These individuals, despite feeling *de facto* Italian citizens, having spent about 2/3 of their life in Italy, are not only lacking formal recognition of a consolidated *de facto* situation but also can be deported *ad nutum* (arbitrarily).

During an interview, a 34 year old Romani man, born in Italy of Bosnian parents, who had lived all his life in Italy where he fathered seven children, declared: “I was born in Italy and I have always been here. I got not one but two deportation orders to leave Italy within 5 days. But where should I go? To a country I have never been to? To a country whose language I do not even speak?” This statement perfectly reflects the utter absurdity of the legislation on the matter.

But there is more and it concerns Romani children born in Italy. According to Italian legislation the acquisition of citizenship follows the *ius sanguinis* principle, therefore children born in Italy to immigrant parents are given their parents’ citizenship. But if their parents have cut all relationships with their mother country<sup>6</sup> to which, once they had left, they never returned, their children are not registered in Italy nor in their parents’ country of origin: they are *de facto* stateless, without any identity documents, therefore legally do not exist or are at least invisible.<sup>7</sup>

As far as the legal recognition of minority status is concerned, we must point out the following: in 1999 the Italian Parliament enacted a law on the recognition and protection of language minorities. The protection of the law embraces 12 language minorities, some of them extremely small.<sup>8</sup> The Romani people, in spite of numbering 150,000, have been excluded, on the grounds that they are not established in a specific territory.<sup>9</sup> This is a clear example of marginalisation if not of downright institutional racism.

---

5 See: Interventi straordinari di carattere umanitario a favore degli sfollati delle repubbliche sorte nei territori della ex Jugoslavia, nonché misure urgenti in materia di rapporti internazionali e di italiani all'estero, N. 390/1992. (Interventions in Favour of Displaced Persons from Former Republics of Yugoslavia).

6 The severance of all relationships with the country of origin does not mean they gave up their citizenship. It means that they never went back to their country and so could not register their children. They could have done so, but they did not, because they did not care to do so.

7 They have their birth certificate but they do not have residence and thus they cannot have neither an Identity Card nor a Passport.

8 See: Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche. 15. 12. 1999, N. 482 pubblicata nella *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, N. 297, 20. 12. 1999.

9 According to article 3 the linguistic minority should amount to 15% of the population of the Municipality.



### 3. Social Background

The Roma now living in Italy belong to different groups. The Sinti, all of them Italian citizens, are mostly employed with travelling shows and live in caravans. Some of them tend to become sedentary but are reluctant to live in huge council housing estates. They ask for micro-areas to be made available where they may settle with their extended families. They are estimated at about 30,000.

The Roma with Italian citizenship number about 30,000 and live in their own homes or council housing homes. They are classified according to the region where they settled. Their socio-economical situation is very diverse. Although a minority enjoys relative wealth, the majority is extremely poor.

The Kalderasha Roma are also Italian citizens; they came from Istria and are devoted to the traditional occupation of silversmithing, gilding and the general handling of metals. They are still semi-nomads and live in elegant caravans. The Harvati Roma are also Italian citizens; they came from Croatia and over time became naturalised Italians. Moreover, a certain number of *Horahanè* (Muslim) Roma and the *Dasikanè* (Christian) Roma have over time obtained Italian citizenship. The Roma who came from Romania belong to different groups: *keramizara*, *lautari*, *ursari*, *tismanari*, and others. The Roma who came from Serbia are mostly *rudari* but also *bsniarija*, *mzniarija* and *kanijarija*. The *Horahanè* community who came from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia: *crnogorski*, *čergairija*, *arlija* and others, is numerous. The living conditions of non-Italian Roma are particularly precarious. Subject to all sorts of discrimination and often considered natural criminals, many of them live in “nomad encampments” which are nothing more than shanty towns. For example, in Rome, which with its 7,000 Roma population is the one with the highest density, about 2,700 live in 11 “authorised” encampments, another 2,200 live in semi-legal or tolerated encampments (14 in number)<sup>10</sup> and another 2,100 live in illegal encampments (numbering 80 according to a Commissioner’s statement or 200 according to the mayor’s statement).

### 4. Political Background

Unfortunately the Roma in Italy, from a political point of view, are extremely weak. They do not have a party and official parties tend to avoid the responsibility of initiating social inclusion processes for them, because any form of accommodation for them means losing votes.

There are Roma and Sinti associations which try to increase in size to give voice and representation to this reality, but the process is slow and weak. This is the overall situation; nevertheless, in the city of Mantua a Sinti is a town councillor and in the recent European Parliament elections an Italian citizen, a *dasikanè romni*, was the third most voted person in her party and in her constituency even though she was not elected.

In any case, neither a single Rom nor Romni has ever been elected to the National Parliament or to any Regional or Provincial Council. Recently two Romani umbrella as-

---

<sup>10</sup> See: Corriere Romano (on line), 7 May 2008; Brazzoduro (2009a).

sociations have been established: “Federazione Rom e Sinti insieme” and “Federazione Romani”.

## 5. Policy

In Italy there is no policy whatsoever at the national level to promote Romani social inclusion.<sup>11</sup> The Romani social inclusion issue has never been in the agenda either of the Parliament or of the Government.

On the contrary a policy has been recently initiated, based on an evident, if not declared, social control policy considering the Roma a criminal issue. That policy was initiated in 2008 when the Home Ministry appointed three Commissioners to deal with the Romani emergency<sup>12</sup> (in Rome, Milan and Naples), a group recently extended to two new Commissioners (in Turin and Venice). These Commissioners are given special powers to deal with the issue of the Roma. Their mandate would have been ended after one year but it has recently been extended.

They have a plan of action. For example on the 31<sup>th</sup> July 2009 the plan regarding the Roma in Rome was announced at a press conference given by the Prefect, the Mayor and the Home Minister himself (a clear sign of the importance given by the Government to the issue): 2 new camps, enlargement of some of the existing camps, and clearance of the 80 illegal camps and of the so called tolerated camps.

I want to draw attention to the fact that the Home Minister himself publicly declared that the main goal of these Commissioners will be a census of all people living in the so-called *campi nomadi* in order to find out who is entitled to stay and who is not and will be deported from the country.

Everybody having an even partial knowledge of the phenomenon knows that roughly 80% of the non-EU Roma (the ones who migrated from the former Yugoslavia) are not in the possession of proper documents, such as residence permits or even passports, as a consequence of the process of fragmentation undergone by the Republic of Yugoslavia.

When the census began, the Commissioner in Naples ordained the filling in of forms where, among personal data, were listed also ethnicity and religion; this raised great protests even at the international level. Moreover, fingerprints were taken even of children; this led to an official condemnation issued by the European Parliament on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July, 2008.<sup>13</sup> After the publicity raised at the national and international level, prompting the

---

11 Law Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche (482/1999 *Gazzetta Ufficiale* n. 297, 20. 12. 1999) addresses the protection of 12 linguistic minorities. The Roma, although being one of the most numerous minorities, have been deliberately excluded.

12 See: Ordinanza del Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri 30 maggio 2008. Disposizioni urgenti di protezione civile per fronteggiare lo stato di emergenza in relazione agli insediamenti di comunità nomadi nel territorio della regione Lazio (Ordinanza 3676). [Ordinance of the Premier. Urgent Projects of Civil Protection to Cope with the Emergency in the Romani Communities Settlements on the Territory of the Lazio Region]. Ordinanza del Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri 30 maggio 2008. Disposizioni urgenti di protezione civile per fronteggiare lo stato di emergenza in relazione agli insediamenti di comunità nomadi nel territorio della regione Lombardia (Ordinanza 3677). Ordinanza del Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri 30 maggio 2008. Disposizioni urgenti di protezione civile per fronteggiare lo stato di emergenza in relazione agli insediamenti di comunità nomadi nel territorio della regione Campania (Ordinanza 3678).

13 See: Census of Roma on the basis of ethnicity in Italy.



above-mentioned EU Parliament condemnation, the fingerprinting of minors was discontinued.

The *campi nomadi* census was carried out, being implemented by the Italian Red Cross. The outcome was not considered reliable, and so another census was instigated, administered by State police and army soldiers. This is the only policy towards the Roma, apart from their exclusion from the Act (cited above) providing recognition and support to twelve linguistic minority groups. While this is true at the national level, at the regional level – in Italy the country is divided into 20 regions – there is something worth noting. Starting in the 1980s some regions passed bills<sup>14</sup> directly addressing the Roma issue, which may be considered a framework providing guidelines for the possible interventions of Municipalities. But as a matter of fact either these acts have no funds for their operation, or the Municipalities have not been applying for funds, which is a clear evidence of their lack of interest.

The *campi nomadi* policy, even if not based on a national (legislative or administrative) initiative, should be considered an institutional practice because it is based on regional laws (see above). As late as the 1960s the Roma and Sinti were not allowed to stay in the cities; they were always moved away. Thus the then unique NGO that advocated their rights, the *Opera Nomadi*, having been established in 1963 and extended to the national level in 1965, started to raise the question of allowing the Roma to stop in proper “nomadic camps”. Some Municipalities established these camps. In the 1980s the *questione zingari* was taken up at the institutional level and many regions passed bills addressing Romani rights, as already mentioned. The first rights to be recognised were the right to stop and the right to the nomadic lifestyle. As a consequence that acts allocated funds to Municipalities in order to build *campi nomadi*.<sup>15</sup>

In the 1990s the Romani immigration from former Yugoslavia began, and around 2,000 also came from Romania. No accommodation policy had been envisaged to cope with the need of a proper shelter for these Romani migrants, who were already used to living in houses. Thus we saw the widespread establishment of spontaneous and illegal encampments (for example, according to the *Prefetto* declaration of 31 July 2009 there are 80 of them in Rome). In sum: the conditions of the Roma with respect to accommodation are worse now than it was 10 or even 20 years ago (Piasere 2006; Sigona 2005).

With respect to the Roma from Romania, as mentioned already, the remarkable exodus from Romania started at the beginning of the current century, encouraged by the fact that Italian Government, differently from other EU countries, did not establish any restrictions when Romania became party to the Schengen accord. But nobody knows how many Romanian Roma are resident (Sigona 2008, 6).

After 1 January 2007, the date since when Romanians enjoy the right to free movement in the EU countries, many Roma migrated to Italy, settling in spontaneous and

---

14 Regione Lazio: legge regionale N. 82/1985, Regione Sardegna: legge regionale N. 9/1988, Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia: legge regionale N. 11/1988, Regione Emilia Romagna: legge regionale N. 47/1988, Regione Veneto: legge regionale N. 54/1989, Regione Lombardia: legge regionale N. 77/1989, Regione Umbria: I legge regionale N. 32/1990, Regione Liguria I legge regionale N. 16/1992, Regione Piemonte legge regionale N. 26/93, Regione Marche legge regionale N. 3/1994, Regione Toscana legge regionale N. 2/2000.

15 “Regional Laws force them to live – because it can only be considered forced when, as generally occurs, every other space is denied to them – [...] in a condition of extreme hardship to which the definition of apartheid fits well” (Colacicchi 1998).

illegal camps from which they have often been evicted; it is therefore nearly impossible to either trace or to map them. Since the brutal murder of Giovanna Reggiani (2007) by a Romanian citizen, wrongly assumed by media to be a Rom, the Roma, especially those from Romania, became the target of a kind of witch hunt, helped by the attitudes expressed in the media and even by institutional figures; as a result, many left the country.

## 6. Education

Education stands out as a real problem because of the high level of school avoidance and dropping out. That problem has, according to the Romani community, several facets. The nomadic life style and residing on the outskirts of town makes it difficult for Italian Sinti children to properly attend schools.

The *Horahanè Romà* have a negative attitude to schooling and are inclined not to register and send their children to school, if they are not pressured at least to some extent.<sup>16</sup> The Roma from Romania mainly live in illegal settlements (without water, electricity, fuel, toilets) which forces them to lead a very rough life (in mud during the winter and in dust during the summer). Thus they have worries other than finding schools where to register their children.

Some local administrations took these problems into consideration and funded special projects to facilitate Romani attendance at school. Given the difficulties with which the Roma are confronted when living in camps, suffering with economic marginalisation and social exclusion, it is quite understandable why school truancy and failure are quite common. Unfortunately it is impossible to cite precise data because Romani children, when enrolled, are not asked their ethnicity, only their citizenship and date and place of birth.

We can collect data concerning enrolment, attendance and achievement of Romani children in cities like Rome, where the local administration has been funding a large project to help the Romani children's access to schools. In any case the plight of their everyday life makes it difficult for us to be successful. In Rome that project, started in 1991,<sup>17</sup> at present sees over 2,000 under age Roma being registered at different school grades. The project is intended to fund bus transport and several accompanying activities.

### **6.1 Project *Scolarizzazione dei bambini e adolescenti Rom per l'anno scolastico 2008-09 (Roma)*/ Schooling of Romani Children and Adolescents in the School Year 2008-09 (Rome)**

Projects to improve the schooling of Romani children have been adopted by the Municipality of Rome as early as 1993. From then on the projects initially funded yearly but later funded for three-year periods, have greatly improved in scope and also in the number of minors included.<sup>18</sup>

---

16 My personal opinion based on research which I conducted for several years (Brazzoduro 2009b).

17 In 1991 and 1992 the project had been funded by the Lazio Region.

18 Project Duration: from 15. 9. 2008 to 31. 8. 2009; Beneficiaries: 2,027 Romani minors; Cost: € 2,104,026.00.

As to the number of minors benefiting from the project: in 1993 this was around 200 while at present those registered exceed 2,000, even if actual regular attendance is less than 40%. Moreover minors living in the 80 illegal settlements are excluded from the project and they can be enrolled and attend school only if their parents arrange for it on their own.

### 6.1.1 Objectives

The objectives of the education service for Romani children and adolescents are:

1. Favours the practical implementation of children's rights, as stated in the International Convention of the Rights of the Child, as ratified by UNO on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 1989 and by the Italian State with law n° 176 of the 27<sup>th</sup> May 1991;
2. Facilitating, increasing, and improving school attendance from nursery school to the end of the educational process;
3. Improving learning conditions;
4. Supporting the continuation of education of adolescents after they graduate with the compulsory school-leaving certificate (after 9 years in school);
5. Rendering Romani adults more responsible towards their children schooling, leading to eventual autonomy.

Actions to achieve aims:

The schooling process goes through four phases: school enrolment, school attendance, learning, achievement of a certificate allowing young Roma the integration in the work environment. This kind of process needs to go hand in hand with various interventions, apart from actual schooling, enabling the social integration of Romani children and their families.

#### *Objective 1: Favours the practical actuation of Children's rights – "Rights to the Camp"*

To meet this objective various actions are needed:

- Action 1) Actuation of specific projects, called *Diritti al Campo* (Rights to the Camp), aimed at making possible and practicable the enjoyment of the rights stated in the International Convention of the Rights of the Child. To this end, interventions will be carried out by a professional team made by a number of workers according to the features, abilities and the number of children and/or adolescents involved, always taking into consideration some interventions that will involve Romani families. The project could provide for the involvement of Romani adults, schools and associations in the district. The proposal will have to include one or more of these projects involving at least 50% of the children and youth for each project allotted.
- Action 2) Implementation of a project to be carried out during the Christmas season aimed at granting recreation to Romani children and adolescents in the spirit of the festive season traditionally dedicated to children.
- Action 3) Implementation of a project to be carried out during the summer holidays targeting Romani children and adolescents aimed at allowing Romani minors to take part in all those recreational, sport, and play activities enjoyed by all other children and adolescents in the summer.

*Objective 2: Facilitating, increasing, and improving school attendance from nursery school to the end of the schooling process.*

- Action 1) Implementing the transport service using means provided by the Authorities.

*Objective 3: Improving learning conditions.*

- Action 1) Promoting out-of-school initiatives that assist in the consolidation of learning, supporting and aiding minors in their search for their own study skills.
- Action 2) Promoting in-school initiatives aimed at supporting compulsory school attendance, aiding minors throughout the different levels of schooling (instruction, organisation of school-time).

*Objective 4: Supporting the continuation of education of adolescents after the achievement of the compulsory school-leaving certificate (after 9 years in school).*

- Action 1) Setting-up tailor-made educational projects, either by making use of the training bodies in the district or by creating ad hoc instruments that will allow the integration of the youth in the social and working context.

*Objective 5: Helping Romani adults to become responsible for their children's schooling with the aim of developing autonomy.*

- Action 1) promoting actions to change any uninterested or oppositional attitude towards school, with particular attention given to the personal and hygienic care of children and adolescents.
- Action 2) favouring all those situations where parents can take children to school by themselves and arranging a dialogue between school and family.
- Action 3) favouring the drafting of individual educational agreements between school, family and municipalities.

### **6.1.2 Methods of Intervention**

Methods of intervention are:

1. Models of educational and social intervention should be applied that are suited to the situations where work is carried out with children and adolescents in contexts characterised by a high relational complexity;
2. Programs should be devised where the individual operational actions will be integrated in well-articulated projects that have an effect on the schooling process of children and adolescents, and joining together the Roma and local communities;
3. Interventions should be planned according to the specific features of the community involved (for example: the arrangements for taking children to school should be different according to whether the children live in houses or in camps, come from a community where normally the adults take their children to school or not, and so on.)

Intervention should be planned providing for cooperation with Romani adults; this should also enable processes of making the adults directly responsible with respect to the education of their children and the ways of overcoming the conditions of being always on the receiving end of welfare assistance.

I have quoted the municipality plan aimed at improving schooling among Romani children, because it appears to be a worthwhile effort in the right direction. In any case I have to admit that there is a large gap between words and reality.

In general terms the schooling process for most of the Roma implies the risk of assimilation to the host society. They are clearly facing problems, because if they do not accept that they should send their children to school, on the one hand they can maintain their traditional culture and lifestyle, while on the other in this way they fail to acquire the means to survive in a non-marginalised way in an ever more technological contemporary society.

The task of keeping their own traditions and at the same time learning the methods of the contemporary world is far from simple. For the Roma, in fact, it means welding together their proud sense of belonging to their own ethnicity with a clear awareness that, if their world does not come to grips with contemporary life and its instrumental values, they risk worsening their marginalisation, and progressively counting for less and less. Schools can educate a new generation to be aware of the richness of their history and their culture and at the same time to combine this with the techno-scientific knowledge of what is by now a global culture.

On this subject, I like to recall a telling image put to me by a Roma from the Abruzzi region, the painter Bruno Morelli. He described the Roma as a person who uses two lungs, one breathing the Romani culture, the other breathing the Gadjo (non-Romani) culture. Together, the lungs can breathe the air of the whole world, and thus live a completely rounded and fulfilled life.

There is much contradictory evidence regarding the schooling of Romani children in Rome, but the overall picture is not satisfactory. In this paper, I offer the results of a research project carried out on this complex issue.

In order to construct an overall assessment of the process of schooling of young Roma the logical point of departure is to examine statistics concerning enrolment and attendance. A first reading of these data can only give rise to a justified sense of satisfaction. Over the years a constant progress is evident regarding both the number of children enrolled in school and their rates of attendance. The attention and commitment to this complex question on the part of the municipal authorities have produced the desired results, as for the first time a bridge is thrown over the gulf that created a widespread metropolitan ghetto; an effective policy of inclusion of a marginalised minority becomes concrete reality; the conditions are created in which the state can fulfil its mandate to provide instruction for all.

If, however, we intend to examine the question in greater depth, we cannot omit two further considerations.

1. Enrolment and attendance are on the increase. This is an indisputable fact. But to obtain a closer and more realistic evaluation of the problem of schooling and its counterpart, dispersion, we must focus our attention on the ratio of the number of children enrolled and attending school to the number of children who have the right to schooling. A quick estimate shows us that, in the first place, of the average 3,000 Romani minors present in the city of Rome, those enrolled in the education system are approximately two thirds of the total. In the second place, those who attend school more or less regularly are no more than 40% of those enrolled. Thus at the present time, less than a quarter of those having the right to attend school actually do so.
2. If legitimate satisfaction must be somewhat qualified after a less superficial reading of the statistics, it is also true that nothing has yet been mentioned on the subject of



the effective results of the teaching/learning process. In other words, nothing about the validity and adequacy of the syllabus, approach, and teaching methods for the needs that, at least hypothetically, can arise from the specific economic, social and cultural reality of the Romani population. If an assessment of the process of schooling is to be complete, it cannot limit itself simply to quantitative aspects, leaving out any evaluation of the “qualitative” appropriateness of the process itself; and all the more so, because evidence of poor results has been abundantly confirmed by my research.

It was precisely as a result of an interest in evaluating the possible obstacles to full success in this field that this research project was commissioned, and carried out. Notwithstanding the necessarily restricted range of my research, which was carried out, moreover, in a field characterised by specific peculiarities, the field work and the subsequent theoretical evaluation of the findings have treated in depth, with a separate unitary examination for each, the various different aspects of this complex issue. Thus my analysis is articulated in the form of a series of surveys involving:

1. The children as individual agents of behaviour and attitudes, whose interpretation and categorisation can be generalised.
2. Teachers as agents of the process of teaching in its various aspects (from the “technical” to those of motivation and socialisation).
3. The necessary material structures (transport, showers, clothing, etc.)
4. Social workers who, despite the negative and usually unfounded criticisms levelled against them even by the Roma themselves, perform a pivotal role connecting schools and Romani society, with a decisive influence on the quality and degree of success of the project.
5. Romani encampments as the places in which daily life is lived, and whose condition of greater or lesser squalor exercises a profound influence on the overall relationship between the Romani community and the society into which they are to be integrated, and thus between child and school.

In the light of the findings which have emerged, the research group has come to the conclusion that, given the quantity of interacting problems involved, successful schooling will only be possible if the deployment of material and personal resources and the elaboration and experimentation of teaching methods go well beyond those contemplated by the project at present in progress. Apart from other considerations, this involves first and foremost the responsibility and competence of the Education Office.

The project at present under way under the auspices of the City Council can boast the undeniable merit of having brought to light the dust that was previously swept under the carpet; that is, of having uncovered a world of non-attendance and dispersion, and therefore of a scandalous failure to provide such a basic right as the right to education. This is further aggravated by its cultural specificity, that is, by the fact that the victims belong to one ethnic minority.

My investigations and subsequent analysis of the findings have enabled me to build up a large body of material, mostly gained from direct observation – above all in the areas of anthropology, sociology and pedagogy. Reflecting on this material has led to the conclusion, in the first place, that the world of the Romani peoples includes a wide spectrum of different realities. It would therefore be misleading to refer to this world in terms of

a homogeneous whole, though, from the point of view of schooling, these differences in reality dwindle towards a general levelling at the lowest standards.

Bearing in mind these preliminary considerations, the nub of the question, in my opinion, consists in the conviction that if schooling is to be a success – if more is asked than, simply, a covert solution to the problem of keeping children off the streets – this will depend on an aggregate of interventions. In the light of the research team's direct observations in schools and in the field, of the involvement and activation of teachers and of the elaboration and organising of the data collected, I am persuaded of the necessity of planning and promoting coordinated interventions which will affect various aspects of the schooling process.

I will concentrate my attention on the more important aspects, describing them as obstacles to schooling.

### ***6.1.3 Obstacles to the Success of Schooling***

#### *School Attendance*

The majority of the teachers interviewed point to infrequent attendance as one of the main causes of lack of scholastic success. The base from which Romani children start off is already different from that of their contemporaries. At home they speak Romani. For this reason, particularly at the beginning of their school careers, going to school means setting out into a new world in which a different language is spoken, finding themselves in a situation of inferiority caused purely and simply by difficulty of communication. Looking through a school text book with children in the first and second year of primary school and asking them to put a name to the objects depicted, they will almost always be able to do so, but the word will be in Romani, not in Italian.

This situation of undeniable initial disadvantage is reinforced by the cultural deprivation (in the restricted sense, referring only to education) of their family background. Their own parents are often illiterate or in any case express themselves in a less correct Italian than the children themselves, who often have to act as interpreters in encounters between their parents and social workers.

It is almost impossible for children to overcome the accumulation of initial disadvantages. Only in extremely rare cases children do really well both on a relational and an educational level. At this point I must underline the fact that success in schooling is to be measured, and pursued, in terms of learning skills. Success in terms of relationships, however useful and important, is not enough. And in fact, the objective of providing the children with the basic skills can reasonably be met if attendance in the classroom is more than sporadic.

The lack of consistent attendance at school depends on a large number of factors, the most important of which are:

#### *Motivation*

School is an institution which Roma have, throughout history, more often than not done without. The passing down of information needed for survival has been undertaken orally within the family; and the family, together with peer groups, fulfils a far more important role as socialising agent than is usual in the wider society, in which other factors reduce the influence of the family.



Only a small minority of the Roma realise that their traditional forms of socialisation, indeed, ways of life, not only widen the gap which separates them from citizenship in the wider society, but actually make it impossible for that gap to be closed. If this observation is valid, it must in any case be noted that making any difference to customs which are so deeply rooted takes time and commitment, even when the strategies adopted are the appropriate ones. Seen in this light, when the Roma undervalue schooling as a means towards social integration and upward mobility, it is an attitude in many ways similar to that of the rest of the Italian underclasses, with whom the Roma share many of the conditions of life.

### *Punctuality*

School attendance is impeded by a series of far more banal factors, in which it is possible to intervene effectively because they simply call for organisational adaptation. For example, the Romani sense of time is far closer to that of traditional societies for whom the concept of punctuality is very different from the – tendentiously neurotic – clock-watching of advanced urban societies. Where there is no need to arrive at the factory, the office and the shop at the same time every day, it is practically impossible to acquire the particular rhythm of life which to the factory hand, the office worker and the shop keeper, has become second nature.

Romani children often do not attend school simply because they have not woken up in time, or nobody has wakened them. For the social workers it is a common occurrence to go to knock at hut doors, to find the whole family still asleep. In this context, school attendance could be greatly improved if there were a sufficient number of social workers on hand to pay a morning visit to each home containing a school age child.

### *Health*

Contrary to current opinion on the subject, according to which the physically hard life led by Romani children will toughen them and make them resistant to disease, in reality their health is frail. Often, the nourishment they receive is inadequate. In any case, it is irregular and in direct contrast to the most basic dietary norms; seeing what is brought for the breakfast/mid-morning break is enough to convince us of the vital and immediate need to provide the parents with some education in nutrition. From this fact and from the hygienic – or rather the unhygienic – conditions of the encampments, derive a whole series of recurrent health problems, from respiratory problems (bronchitis is chronic) to intestinal problems, skin diseases (verruca, warts) and bad teeth. The sickness rates of Romani children are higher than those of their contemporaries living in more appropriate conditions. In this case, solutions to these reasons for absence from the schoolroom lie outside issues directly concerned with schooling and will be found only when the primary conditions of providing healthy and comfortable homes have been met.

### *Poverty*

Some children fail to come to school because they do not have decent clothes and shoes. Many “tolerated” encampments turn into muddy swamps every time it rains. In these conditions anyone crossing the camp from one side to the other, even following the least muddy route, becomes splattered with mud up to the knees. What can be said about

children in these circumstances, who are not afraid of mud and who are allowed – indeed, forced by their restricted living quarters – to stay out of doors all day? This simple fact means a high turnover of clothing for each child which, multiplied by the large number of children in each family, creates a large-scale problem.

Of course I am not blind to the fact that this excuse is not infrequently used simply to cover a desire to avoid school. However, first-hand knowledge of the conditions in which these families actually live leaves no margin of doubt as to the fact that as a motivation, it is often no more than the bare truth.

### *Marginality*

With this term, I wish to allude to the situation which emerges from the simultaneous presence of poverty, educational deprivation and social deviancy. The association of these three ingredients gives rise to a mixture whose natural outcome is social marginalisation. A life lived on the margins of society, among the outcasts from the “normal” circuits of social relations, cannot fail to affect children and their relationship to school. Under this circumstance, school is not seen as a vehicle for integration; or if it is, then it would be an integration not available to those who see their lives unfolding in another context, in different territories and with different rules.

In these cases schooling is a Utopia. Before attempting to attain it, a preliminary operation of social improvement is called for to combat poverty and social deviancy. Seen in these terms, responsibility clearly lies with society at large and the institutions set up to combat the various forms of socio-economic exclusion.

### *Lack of Success*

It is common knowledge that in all human activities success is the most powerful reinforcement of motivation and therefore the factor which most efficiently initiates the mechanism whereby external stimuli are no longer necessary to encourage an individual to follow his or her aims.

The same is true with education. The disadvantaged position from which, as we have seen, Romani children set off on their scholastic careers forces them into a defensive position. Often they do not grasp simple concepts only because they have not understood some elementary terms. Two children in the fifth year of primary school were unable to solve a simple arithmetical problem because they did not know how to interpret the terms “firm” and “job applications”.

The inevitable string of small failures, even when not noticed, much less reprimanded by the teacher, the awareness of “not being up to” the standard of their companions, tend to undermine these children’s self-esteem and, in the final analysis, to place education among the areas that are likely to cause distress. Where this is not balanced by a corresponding amount of gratification, in terms of socialisation or even simply the satisfying of curiosity about a different experience, drop-out rates are high.

In any situation where school results are compared, Romani children are always the losers. Their desire to come out on top, to gain the admiration of their peers, will be channelled into other spheres: in particular that of “street cred”, linked above all to physical prowess (speed, strength, stamina, courage and so on). If these skills were in some way incorporated into the scholastic evaluation system, Romani children would not feel they were, so to speak, always playing an away match.

### *Specific Difficulties*

This area is one of the most delicate aspects of the whole problem and the most difficult to investigate: in depth ad-hoc studies would be needed. However, the research group, using purpose-specific experimental material, has been able to identify the existence of difficulties peculiar to Romani children, difficulties which cannot be compared with those of other immigrant groups.

As is well known, the number of immigrant children enrolled in school in Rome has grown enormously in recent years – indeed has multiplied by ten compared with only a few years ago – and is now over 8,000. This increase is not distributed evenly over the territory but, understandably, is concentrated in the schools of the suburbs which therefore have to a greater degree found themselves having to devise their own projects to cope with this new situation.

On the whole, according to transcripts gathered from the teachers themselves, the integration of these children (Peruvian, Indian, Brazilian, Chinese, etc.) happens without traumas and, after the inevitable introductory period, reasonably satisfactorily. This is particularly true of children coming from a culture in which school plays an important role. For the majority of Romani children, this is not so. This comparison leads me to confirm my belief that we are not dealing, here, with a purely linguistic problem as children coming from contexts far further removed from ours, such as the Chinese and Indians, manage to overcome this difficulty without trouble. The language problem, for Romani children, is intertwined with others which derive from two underlying features specific to them. One concerns their ethnic identity, which calls on historical values, customs and ways of living which the various Romani groupings have developed over the centuries in response to what is frequently a hostile socio-economic context. The second is given by their present situation, at the bottom of the social pyramid, with all these means in terms of the attitudes typical of an underclass, including – as we have seen – the question of motivation for school attendance.

Briefly, then, immigrant children are highly motivated in favour of socio-economic integration, often to the extent of actual assimilation which can be pursued as a conscious strategy. In these cases, school is considered to be a factor that can speed up their acceptance, as the fast lane towards social mobility. The majority of the Roma, on the other hand, not only resist assimilation – as is their sacrosanct right to do – but often resist integration, too, which they fear will lead to a loss of identity, foreshadowing a state of diaspora in which they will disappear completely as a distinct ethnic group. This attitude does not, obviously, stem from an explicit and conscious strategy: it can only be encountered and described through observing behaviour patterns and attempting to discern their meaning.

### *Hostility in the Environment*

There is no need, I feel, to underline the fact that the Roma are victims of prejudice and ethnic discrimination. From research carried out into prejudices, it emerges that in the collective perception, they are placed at the bottom of a scale that goes from tolerance to various forms and degrees of discrimination (Colasanti 1994). This attitude is equally evident within schools where we see two orders of hostility at work: one specific to the institution, one to non-Romani parents and pupils.

The attitude we attribute to the school itself is not manifest in openly hostile behaviour but rather in various forms of “passive resistance”. For example it is not unusual for obstacles to be put in the way of enrolment when, for a series of reasons, it is not possible for the children to be enrolled by the proper date; given the anomalous circumstances, I would expect some flexibility on this point. Another expression of the attitude is to be found in various forms of what one might call “neutralisation” of the presence of the Roma in the school by, for example, “parking” them out of the classroom so that their vivacity and lack of discipline cannot upset the normal teaching routine. It seems clear from this kind of behaviour that schools often react defensively because they have no training for dealing with the problems of Romani children. Under the circumstances, it is obviously tempting to take “neutralising” action.

Another manifestation of inadequacy is found when the school limits itself to treating Romani children “no differently from the others”. This approach, which comes out repeatedly in interviews, gives a clear and eloquent message of acceptance and openness and due credit should be given. However, I feel I must point out that however well-intentioned, this approach is not up to the task it sets itself, because Romani children, burdened as they are with a multiplicity of socio-economic and educational disadvantages, actually need more resources and greater attention spent on them; that is, they need what is currently defined as “positive action” to counteract the inequalities of their point of departure.

The hostility of some parents of non-Romani children expresses itself in exerting pressure on the school authorities and teachers, with demands ranging from requiring that their child should not be put next to a Romani child in the classroom or canteen, to withdrawing their children from the school, to accusations of theft or dirtiness or bringing disease into the school. No school is exempt. In these cases it is up to the firmness and persuasive capacities of the staff and teachers to confront the hostility and manage to transform it into convinced acceptance.

Non-Romani children themselves usually create fewer problems. There is no lack of unpleasant, often cruel and ruthless episodes but these can be attributed as much to the normal dynamics of childhood, the coalition of the strong against the weak or the different, as to genuine ethnic or racial prejudice. In this case, the vigilant presence of the teacher, as part of routine class-bonding practice, is sufficient to avoid the isolation and/or exclusion of the Romani child from the group or class.

Certainly, excluding a Romani child because he or she “stinks” is far from infrequent and cannot altogether be blamed. The problem would be solved if showers and a change of clothes were available, neither of which should be beyond the reach of most schools. However, two points should be made. One is that not all schools with Romani pupils are, in fact, equipped in this way and therefore there is no possibility of making these children “like the others” as far as cleanliness is concerned. The second concerns the underlying question of cleanliness itself being a parameter for judging “difference”, and therefore for discrimination, even if the difficulty is adequately overcome at school. In fact, the time spent in the changing room and under the shower inevitably means the children will arrive late in the classroom for the start of lessons, by as much as an hour or more. The child is forced once again to be aware of being “different” and his or her relationship with the other children in class will be filtered through this anxiety. And if a policy of integration is to succeed, it is essential to eliminate as far as possible all such sources of anxiety and inadequacy. In this specific case, the research group wishes to emphasise how important

it is that the children arrive at school looking neat and clean. Showers, then, should be installed in the encampments.

### *Lack of Training for Teachers*

The complexity of the problems involved in the schooling of Romani children has been undervalued. Notwithstanding the fact that the first moves made by the Ministry for Education go back to the early 1960s, with the creation of *lacio drom* (good journey) classes, it must be said that the training for that and other experiences, both in Italy and in other European countries, was not taken sufficiently seriously, with too much trust being placed on the professional capacities of teachers who were already facing the problems inherent in the arrival of increasing numbers of immigrant pupils.

But the schooling of Romani children requires a different kind of commitment and different tools. Even if in the great majority of cases the spirit of initiative of individual teachers can, indeed, be trusted, teaching materials and the specific skills needed cannot be improvised. Many of the teachers whom we approached confessed to feelings of uncertainty caused by their insufficient knowledge of the Romani world and the consequent need to proceed by a process of trial and error under conditions of considerable complexity (the coexisting presence in the classroom of Roma, immigrants, handicapped children and children at risk).

Many teachers who have taken part in courses relating to the problem of multicultural education complain about the excessively theoretical, and therefore generic, approach of the courses and the difficulty of translating the rhetoric about the educational advantages of intercultural study into concrete teaching strategies for everyday use in the classroom.

It seems that, as far as the schooling of Romani children is concerned, conventional types of training course, undertaken under classroom conditions, are destined to produce few if any results. It would seem more useful to attempt a new approach based on forms of self-teaching involving the more motivated teachers under the guidance of expert tutors able to offer on-going practical advice.

A further element which undermines the efficacy of the project is the sense of “solitude” which many teachers mention experiencing, because of a lack of adequate appreciation for the efforts they make – when these are real and not simply sporadic exceptions. The “solitude” of teachers must be overcome, not least in order to harvest the fruits of their experiences and their innovative ideas which deserve to be made known and given further trials. That is possible if teachers are provided with constant support; this will, at the same time, reinforce their own motivation.

### *Failings of State Institutions*

The state provides little, indeed almost non-existent, support. It is not so much the local authorities that are to blame but the Education Office. There are 300 teachers available, some of whom are used in various types of office work, but the Office has cut down on both child psychologists and support teachers, despite growing demand for them from schools. Many teachers, even those most involved and committed to the cause, feel alone and abandoned and so they are openly bitter about what could be done and is not done; willingness, enthusiasm and personal planning skills cannot make up for structural deficiencies. The battle for the schooling of Romani children cannot be fought and won on only one front. What is needed is collaboration and co-ordination between different



bodies, local authorities, Education Offices, volunteer organisations dealing with transportation and relations with the campsites, district social workers, the police, etc.

### *Romani Culture*

This is a general term because in actual fact there is more than just one culture (in the anthropological sense). Values, social rules, way of life and material life vary from group to group.

Having said this, groups of Horahanè, who are the specific object of this study, share common and recurring elements in their attitudes towards schooling; these are briefly mentioned above in the discussion of the “motivation” they may have in participating fully in the project. Even the most knowledgeable and sensitive teachers have noticed a difference of approach to this question between the Roma and the non-Roma, depending on their cultural diversity.

One of the most crucial questions regarding the world of the Roma is the conflict between their traditional culture and the dominant culture. As has already been described (Calabrò 1992), in this conflict the weaker culture is the loser, not only because it represents a minority but also, and above all, because it conforms less to reality. The inevitable consequence is that the former risks anomic disintegration (Durkheim 1897) under the hammer blows of mass society, which tends to impose its own mechanisms at all levels, and the seductive nature of consumerism, which, by some sort of unfailing intrinsic law, spreads more rapidly among the culturally and socially weak.

This means that if the Roma want to avoid the risk of their culture and collective identity disintegrating they must adapt and change. This could be a successful process if they manage to maintain a nucleus of values that are at the heart of their identity, acquire new social practices correlated to inclusion and abide by the “rules”. In the transition phase there will inevitably be conflicts between individuals and, even more between different generations, especially when schooling sparks off changes of identity.

In particular the conflict between generations is more widespread than it may seem at first, since it rarely can be seen beyond family confines. Two factors are responsible for this increase. One is the powerful attraction on young Roma exerted by some aspects of Gadjo (non-Romani) society: consumerism (especially shoes, clothes, but also radios, stereos and various gadgets) and entertainment (discotheques and amusement arcades). The second is the position of the family social system in Romani values. In fact the family constitutes a social system which is authoritative and fairly closed to the outside, and hence less flexible than that found among the Gadjo.

#### **6.1.4 Didactic Problems**

In this section I will discuss the learning difficulties encountered by Romani children. It is not a systematic analysis because this would have required a very different study. It is a record of learning difficulties as revealed in teachers’ comments both by those involved in direct research and those interviewed.

### *Irregular Attendance*

This lies at the root of a series of problems. Firstly there is the simple fact that to assimilate a concept, a notion or a skill requires time, exercise, repetition. If a concept or a

skill is not reinforced (at school or at home), it gradually fades away, and a start must be made right from the beginning. But the teacher is also responsible for the rest of the class and so what happens is that, even with the greatest attention and dedication, a student cannot always start again.

#### *Fine Mobility Development*

Many teachers mentioned deficiencies in motor ability, confirming studies in this area; this is attributed to mothers keeping their babies bundled up till until the age of three. This practice provides, on the one hand, a great sense of reassurance because the baby feels protected, but at the same times it deprives them of the experiences of crawling, which is indispensable for the acquisition of a series of skills required for learning to write.

Some teachers have noticed that simply the positioning of the exercise book and the sheet of drawing paper created difficulties for the students.

#### *Vocabulary*

Especially among Horahanè Roma, vocabulary is extremely limited. They do not have words for some everyday objects or colours; they are, for instance, not used to distinguishing their right from their left.

This lack of vocabulary inevitably compromises the entire learning process. Often, a failure to understand even an elementary concept depends on the fact that the verbal sequence used by the teacher to express it is simply not available to the child. Clearly there is a need to multiply the efforts towards literacy over and above the work done in class, which, given the children's initial disadvantages, is not by itself enough to fill the gap.

#### *Memory*

Many teachers draw attention to the weakness of memory of their Romani pupils. In reality, however frequently it is repeated, this opinion does not sound convincing. In fact, it is well known that in all cultures based on oral tradition for obvious internal reasons the opposite is true and memory is highly developed. When written documents are lacking, the memory is the only instrument to which to entrust the received wisdom and personal and collective records on which the community's identity is based. These, briefly, are among the reasons why in ethnic groups which do not have a written culture, the memory is particularly well developed.

This well-established observation is directly contradicted by the reports that many teachers give of their Romani pupils. The most probable explanation for this is that the memory works selectively. Children remember what they want to remember, because it is interesting or important to them. For Romani children schoolroom learning is neither of these things.

#### *Logical and Mathematical Ability*

An area of difficulty, repeatedly reported, is that of logical and mathematical thinking. Here we are on delicate ground and we must tread carefully if we want to focus correctly on the problem. Firstly, logical and mathematical ability is often seen as a synonym of



intelligence, or at least as one of its most noble manifestations, if not the noblest of all. For this reason to focus on a presumed difficulty in this area could easily lead us to that unacceptable consideration that the Roma are intellectually inferior. Secondly, although many teachers do say the Romani children have little logical and/or mathematical ability, this is not a unanimous opinion. There are, in fact, teachers who have pointed out that when non-traditional criteria of evaluation are used, that is criteria not based on resolving mathematical problems, some Romani children have shown precision and sharpness. If their aptitude for logical reasoning is assessed by practical behaviour criteria which require the rigorous consequentiality of means-to-an-end, the results are often brilliant.

On this point I can make two observations. Firstly, as is known, logical reasoning aptitude tests, if they are to be a valid instrument of assessment, must take into account the subjects on which they are used. Environmental and cultural conditioning tend to develop logical capacity in diverse directions.

The second concerns the teaching methods used to develop this capacity. It is clear, from what has been said above, that exercises and activities should take into account different environments, cultures and experiences.

### *Concentration*

Opinions are almost unanimous about Romani children having problems paying attention and concentrating during lesson time, although there are exceptions. It is likely that, apart from lack of interest in the subjects studied at school, lifestyle is also a factor, since most of the time out of school they are outdoors. It would then perhaps be an idea to try out an approach that took these experiences, relative skills and interests into consideration.

### **6.1.5 Problems of Socialisation**

The question of socialisation falls into two distinct categories. The first concerns the inculcation of the rules of behaviour established by the school to ensure the smooth running of its essential tasks: learning and conduct. The second concerns the interaction of the child with his or her companions in the class and the school, that is, the acceptance of the norms of behaviour which regulate group relations and are inspired by principles of sharing, solidarity, sociability etc.

The first category often causes problems. Romani children come from an environment in which different norms govern behaviour. In a large number of cases, their lives revolve round the street. They therefore develop a precocious independence and a high degree of self-regulation. The adults themselves encourage this tendency, at least in the sense of manifesting their expectations in this regard – and there is no need to underline the extent to which parental expectations, whether explicit or not, influence the social development of their children.

Romani children, to some extent like those of the lower classes in general, develop to a high degree the qualities defined, schematically but eloquently, as “street virtues”; but these are, to a greater or lesser degree, in conflict with scholastic virtues. The problems arising from this are far from easy to solve, but unless handled in a balanced, patient and skilled manner, can easily risk provoking children into leaving school, providing them with the excuse – for themselves and for others – which they have been waiting for, to

abandon an experience they find hard and from which they gain little gratification. But it would in any case be a defeat for the school, a falling off from its institutional duties.

The second category, the relationship with school companions, presents fewer problems. In the majority of cases, the presence of Romani children causes no reaction at all. Thanks also to the skill of the teachers, the first step of welcome and the second step of inclusion into the group as an equal happen almost naturally.

Difficulties do occur, however. One element which inevitably complicates the situation is the personal hygiene of Romani children. If they or, more usually their clothes, “stink” they are spontaneously isolated if not directly excluded, confining them to the ghetto of the mentally or physically “different” and giving birth to, or reinforcing, the syndrome of the pariah (Hancock 1987).

Cases of total and irreversible refusal of any kind of acceptance are not rare. There are also cases where the situation is not so serious but which reveal how committed the school as institution and the teachers in particular are expected to be.

An aspect pointed out with particular acumen by one teacher gives rise to reflection on the different facets of the problem of socialisation. It is possible to feel bewildered, out of one’s depth or excluded by not sharing the knowledge of how everyday childhood games are played.

## References

- Brazzoduro, M., 2009a. I Rom: Identità e Integrazione. In L. D'Orsi & M. Torani (eds.) *Rom(a). Nomadi o Monadi? Prospettive Antropologiche*. Università degli Studi 'La Sapienza', Roma.
- Brazzoduro, M., 2009b. Rom e sinti a scuola. Luci e ombre della scolarizzazione. *Zapruder* 19, 138-144.
- Calabrò, A. R., 1992. *Il Vento non soffia più*. Marsilio, Padova.
- Census of the Roma on the Basis of Ethnicity in Italy. P6\_TA(2008)0361. European Parliament Resolution of 10 July 2008 on the Census of the Roma on the Basis of Ethnicity in Italy (2009/C 294 E/12), <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:294E:0054:0057:EN:PDF> (30 July 2012).
- Colacicchi, P., 1998. *Down by law: police abuse of Roma in Italy*. ERRC, <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=497> (30 July 2012).
- Colasanti, G., 1994. *Il pregiudizio*. Angeli, Milano.
- Corriere Romano, 7 May 2008, <http://www.corriereromano.it/romani-nel-mondo.html>.
- Decreto, Legge: 1992-07-24;350; 390/1992. Interventi straordinari di carattere umanitario a favore degli sfollati delle repubbliche sorte nei territori della ex Jugoslavia, nonché misure urgenti in materia di rapporti internazionali e di italiani all'estero.
- Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the Right of Citizens of the Union and their Family Members to Move and Reside Freely within the Territory of the Member States Amending Regulation (EEC) No 1612/68 and Repealing Directives 64/221/EEC, 68/360/EEC, 72/194/EEC, 73/148/EEC, 75/34/EEC, 75/35/EEC, 90/364/EEC, 90/365/EEC and 93/96/EEC. Official Journal of the European Union L 158/77.
- Disciplina degli interventi regionali per i servizi educativi alla prima infanzia: asili nido e servizi innovativi. Legge regionale N. 32/1990.
- Disposizioni sui circhi equestri e sullo spettacolo viaggiante, Gazzette Ufficiale, Legge 18 marzo 1968, N. 337.
- Durkheim, É., 1897. *Le Suicide: étude de sociologie*. Paris: Alcan. Tr. 1951a.
- Hancock, I. F., 1987. *The Pariah Syndrome. An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution*. Karoma Publishers.
- Legge 15. 12. 1999, N. 482 pubblicata nella *Gazzetta Ufficiale* N. 297, 20. 12. 1999. Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche.
- Legge regionale N. 3/1994. Interventi a favore degli emigrati, degli immigrati, dei rifugiati, degli apolidi, dei nomadi e delle loro famiglie.
- Legge regionale N. 9/1988. Tutela dell'etnia e della cultura dei nomadi.
- Legge regionale N. 11/1988. Norme a tutela della cultura << Rom >> nell'ambito del territorio della Regione autonoma Friuli - Venezia Giulia.
- Legge regionale N. 16/1992. Istituzione e funzioni della Commissione Regionale per la realizzazione di Pari Opportunità tra uomo e donna.
- Legge regionale N. 26/1993. Interventi a favore della popolazione zingara.
- Legge regionale n. 47/1988, testo coordinato con le modifiche apportate da: l.r. 6 settembre 1993 n. 34; l.r. 22 agosto 1994 n. 37; l.r. 12 marzo 2003 N. 2. Norme per le minoranze nomadi in emilia-romagna.
- Legge regionale N. 54/1989. Interventi a tutela della cultura dei rom e dei sinti.
- Legge regionale N. 77/1989. Azione regionale per la tutela delle popolazioni appartenenti alle etnie tradizionalmente nomadi e seminomadi.

- Legge regionale N. 82/1985. Norme in favore dei ROM.
- Ordinanza N. 3676/2008, Disposizioni urgenti di protezione civile per fronteggiare lo stato di emergenza in relazione agli insediamenti di comunità nomadi nel territorio della regione Lazio, *Gazzetta Ufficiale* della Repubblica italiana, N. 127 del 31. 5. 2008.
- Ordinanza N. 3677/2008, Disposizioni urgenti di protezione civile per fronteggiare lo stato di emergenza in relazione agli insediamenti di comunità nomadi nel territorio della regione Lombardia, *Gazzetta Ufficiale* della Repubblica italiana, N. 127 del 31. 8. 2008.
- Ordinanza N. 3678/2008, Disposizioni urgenti di protezione civile per fronteggiare lo stato di emergenza in relazione agli insediamenti di comunità nomadi nel territorio della regione Campania, *Gazzetta Ufficiale* della Repubblica italiana, N. 127 del 31. 5. 2008.
- Piasere, L., 2006. Che cos'è un campo nomadi? *Achab – Rivista di Antropologia* 8, 8–16.
- Sigona, N., 2005. I confini del “problema zingari”. In T. Caponio & A. Colombo (eds.), *Migrazioni globali, integrazioni locali*. Il Mulino, Bologna, 272–293.
- Sigona, N., 2006. Lo scandalo dell'alterità: Rom e Sinti in Italia. In S. Bragato & L. Menetto (eds.), *E per patria una lingua segreta. Rom e Sinti in provincia di Venezia*. Nuova Dimensione, Portogruaro.
- Sigona, N. (ed.), 2008. *The “Latest” Public Enemy: Romanian Roma in Italy. The Case Studies of Milan, Bologna, Rome and Naples*. Osservazione, [http://www.osservazione.org/documenti/OSCE\\_publicenemy.pdf](http://www.osservazione.org/documenti/OSCE_publicenemy.pdf) (30 July 2012).

# Two Decades of Educational Policies for the Roma: Lessons and Dilemmas from Romania

## 1. Demographics: Between Census Figures and Estimates

According to the last census taken in 2002, the official number of Roma in Romania was 535,140 persons, representing almost 2.5% of the population. There is, however, a widespread consensus that this figure does not reflect the real number of Roma. It is generally assumed that there is a considerable discrepancy between the number of those who self-identify as Roma in the census and the number of those who are externally identified as belonging to this group. And there is general agreement that the number of those who according to external criteria are considered Roma is several times higher than the figure provided by the census.

“The Roma” is an umbrella concept covering a wide range of realities: from groups displaying relevant cultural aspects (occupation, dress, language use, etc.) that are generally considered as features of the traditional Romani lifestyle, to persons living in extremely marginal situations in conditions that are frequently associated with the Roma (Engelbristen 2007; Fleck & Rughiniş 2008; Kligman 2001; Ladányi & Szelényi 2001; Marian-Bălaşa 2004); from persons who in a variety of situations use for self-identification the category of Roma (in Rumanian, *țigăni*), to persons who are identified by others as Roma, but would only situationally (if at all) make use of this ethnonym for self-identification (Beissinger 2001; Rughiniş 2010). Due to this complex interplay and the multidimensionality of external and self-identification, it is rather difficult to use the classical techniques of quantitative description in order to accurately describe the condition of this population. In these circumstances it is unanimously accepted that the census data on the number of Roma are not reliable.

Though the task of making an accurate assessment of the number of Roma is difficult (many alternative methods are questioned both on moral, political or methodological grounds), it is not necessarily impossible. With a variety of methodologies in use, there are some widely accepted estimates of the number of Roma. One rather reliable attempt was carried out in 1998, and combined outsiders' perspectives (hetero-attribution) with self-identification. Based on a complex sampling technique, it was estimated that in 1998 there lived in Romania approximately 1.5 million Roma, from which 63.5% (roughly 960,000 persons) were included in the "Romani" category according to both an external (expert) assessment and self-identification; the remainder were included on this category based only on external (expert) assessment (Preda 2002, 14). Based on this estimates, the figure of 1.8 million Romanian Roma is considered to be realistic for today. With this figure as a reference point, Romania is the European country with the largest Romani population.

## **2. Territorial Distribution**

No census or survey data reveal a significant territorial (i.e., regional or county) concentration of the Romani population. At the local level it is typical for the Roma to live in relatively segregated and often peripheral communities. The most frequently occurring community type comprises 170–300 persons, but somewhat larger communities, comprising 300–500 persons are relatively frequent too (Sandu 2005, 16). We can rarely find Romani communities representing large segments of the overall population of the settlement where they are living: their share in the overall population of a given locality rarely exceeds 15–20%. The Roma mostly (i.e., approx. 60%) live in rural areas, but not necessarily in the economically backward or geographically isolated regions of the country.

## **3. Living Conditions and Poverty**

Most of the Roma have marginal social positions in terms of both incomes and living conditions. In the mid-2000s 66% of Romani households had incomes below the poverty threshold,<sup>1</sup> while the country average was 20%. But the share of individuals living below the poverty threshold was higher: approximately 72% of the Roma (Ivanov et al. 2006, 18).

The differences between the Romani and non-Romani communities in terms of quality of housing and living conditions are also significant. Romani households, compared with non-Romani ones, have significantly lower access to various public utilities (see Table 1). The differences in living conditions between Roma and non-Roma are more prominent in rural than in urban areas (Bădescu et al. 2007; Fleck & Rughiniș 2008).

---

<sup>1</sup> The poverty threshold was PPP \$4.30 per day equivalized expenditures.



Table 1: Variables highlighting the difference of living conditions between Roma and non-Roma in Romania (persons included in Roma sub-sample based on self-identification)<sup>2</sup>

	Roma	Non-Roma
Not connected to electricity	13%	2%
Obtaining water for domestic consumption from a public source outside the household	47%	8%
Not connected to a collector sewer system	86%	4%
Condition of roads connecting the household with the rest of the locality	64% (totally unsatisfactory or non-existing)	42% (totally unsatisfactory or non-existing)
Public transportation	50% (totally unsatisfactory or non-existing)	34% (totally unsatisfactory or non-existing)
Street illumination	55% (totally unsatisfactory or non-existing)	23% (totally unsatisfactory or non-existing)
Access to shops, markets for buying goods for daily use	25% (highly difficult or totally inexistent)	13% (highly difficult or totally inexistent)
Access to school	22% (highly difficult or totally inexistent)	11% (highly difficult or totally inexistent)

The gap between the Roma and the non-Roma is significant in terms of access to work and public services. According to a UNDP report (capturing the situation from the mid-2000s) 44% of the Roma, compared to 28% of the non-Roma, were unemployed (Ivanov et al. 2006, 42). Even if succeeding to connect with the world of labour, the Roma have far less chance to be formally employed than the non-Roma: the relative ratio of those working casually is four time higher in the case of the Romani than in the case of the non-Romani population (Fleck & Rughiniş 2008, 133–135).

And it should be added that even access to work does not necessarily involve a stable social condition. In 2005 approximately 6% of Romania's population (15 years and above) were included in the category of "working poor". Among the Roma the share of working poor was 38% (Stănculescu 2008, 14). This means that, even if employed (including self employment), the resources that the Roma are able to generate will provide only for rather modest social conditions.

The differences in terms of access to different public services (health care, education, etc.) of the Roma in Romania was synthetized by the title of a recently published report *No discrimination. Just unequal access...* (Popescu et al. 2010). Indeed, the Romanian Roma tend to report less discrimination than the Roma in other countries (FRA 2009a; b). However, this does not necessarily imply an equality of access and opportunities. Due to a variety of reasons the Roma are more likely not to register for the primary health care system than the rest of the population (Bădescu et al. 2007; Fleck & Rughiniş 2008; Popescu et al. 2010). Using a variety of sources of data, it can be concluded that at least 10% of the Roma are not registered for the public health care system (Popescu 2009, 164). This situation of more limited access to health care services can be extended for many other similar

<sup>2</sup> Source: Bădescu et al. 2007, 41–42.



situations. As Bădescu highlighted, as compared with the average citizen, the Roma have less social capital and are poorly informed, and they have in general more limited access to different public goods and services (Bădescu et al. 2007, 83).

#### 4. Educational Problems of the Roma in Romania

With regard to educational attainment, the situation of the Romanian Roma, compared with national averages, tends to be rather sub-standard. An analysis of the data of three consecutive censuses (Table 2) shows that the general educational situation of the overall population improved considerably: the share of those having a very low level of education (i.e., up to year four) decreased significantly, and the share of those possessing a university diploma increased significantly. However in the case of the Roma no major development took place: in 2002 two-thirds of the Roma attended only up to four year of compulsory education (in 1977 their share was 86.2%), and only 0.15% of them had a university diploma (the country average was 6.7%).

Table 2: The comparative educational situation of the whole country and of the Roma, by population at three consecutive censuses (persons 10 years or older, percentages)<sup>3</sup>

Census year	1977		1992		2002	
	All	Roma	All	Roma	All	Roma
Illiterate	4.8	26.1	3.1	21.5	2.6	25.2
Up to four years of formal education	49.9	86.2	29.7	63.2	24.3	66.6
University completed	2.6	0.03	5.1	0.09	6.7	0.15

#### 5. School Enrolment and Dropout Rates

The prospects of the educational integration of the Roma are not especially promising; on the contrary, they are rather bleak. Recent data on school enrolments of the Roma reveal considerable differences between the average situation for Romania as a whole and the Roma separately. Though accurate figures on the present day rates of enrolment of Romani pupils are rather scarce, some data that reveal a general picture are available. In 2008, at the kindergarten level the rate of inclusion of the Roma was 31% while the national average was somewhat higher than 70%. For the primary level of compulsory instruction (at this level enrolment is legally enforced) the inclusion rates for 2004 were considerably higher: the participation of the non-Romani population at this level was 98.9%, while for the Romani population it was 64% (Miclea et al. 2007, 8). Nevertheless the relatively high rates of inclusion attained at this early stage of education could not be maintained for a long period. Research showed that starting with the last year of the primary cycle (i.e., the fourth grade) the dropout rate among the Roma is ten times higher than the national average (Open Society Institute 2007, 352–353). Thus a large

---

3 Compiled by the author, data source Minnesota Population Center. *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, International: Version 6.1* [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2011.

segment of the Romani pupils leaves the educational system during the lower secondary level (classes 5–8 of compulsory education, ages 10–11 to 14–15). Taking age-specific indicators: in 2002 only 21% of Romani youth aged between 15 and 18 years were included in some form of secondary education, whereas generally the share of inclusion of young people in this age bracket in formal education was 75%). Altogether, the chances of being included in tertiary education are rather low: in 2002, only 2% of the Roma aged between 19 and 22 were included in any form of post-secondary education, while nationally the rate of inclusion for the same age group was 30%. As can be seen, Romania is confronted with problems with respect to both enrolment and retention of the Roma in the compulsory education system.

## **6. Causes of Educational Marginality**

There is a complex causality behind the educational marginality of the Roma. Research highlights a complex mixture of cultural, institutional and socio-economic causes for the educational failures and low educational attainments of a considerable segment of Romani children. Since this study has limitations in terms of length, we will only highlight some of the possible explanations, focusing on those substantiated by research providing empirical evidence.

Statistical evidence reveals the existence of differences between the mainstream society and the Roma in terms of cultural definitions of the appropriate age for becoming an adult. The passage to adulthood usually involves several major aspects, such as: becoming economically independent, or at least a contributor to the household budget; and establishing one's own household and family, including parenthood. There are, however, considerable differences regarding what is considered by different social groups and categories to be the appropriate age for this threshold to be crossed. Especially in traditional communities (but in some cases in both Romani and non-Romani ones that are poor and marginal) the age considered to be appropriate for marriage or child-bearing is considerably lower than the mainstream view. According to the figures provided by the last census (2002), at the national level 4.5% of females aged between 15 and 19 declared themselves as the mother of at least one child. Within the population which assumed Romani ethnic affiliation, the share of young mothers was 22.3% (INS 2005). Though this indicator may suggest that early marriage or pregnancy may be the direct cause of school drop-outs, this is not necessarily true. Research suggests that marriage or pregnancy as direct cause of leaving school, as compared to other causes, is marginal: 6–7% for young people of Romani origin (Surdu et al. 2011, 6). However the relatively high rates of young motherhood among females with Romani ethnic affiliation suggest, as an indirect indicator, that in the Romani communities, as compared with non-Romani ones, persons assume roles characteristic of adults at rather early ages. These roles that are considered to conflict with schooling.

This perspective is confirmed by other research. The majority of drop-outs become economically active after leaving school: 70% of the parents of Romani children who leave school early declared that their children performed some kind of productive activity, in or outside the household (Surdu et al. 2011, 6). Thus it appears that they are becoming adults in the economic sense, or at least contributors to the budget of their families, at an earlier stage of their life than the bulk of non-Romani young people. However the question of economic coercion versus value system still remains open. We still do not know

to what degree these families actually lack the resources to economically support their children in school, or how much they consider that after a certain age supporting education is not a priority for family budgets. It is certain that some of the parents, especially those with low educational attainment, consider schooling (other than the acquisition of basic literacy) in some respects futile. This kind of perception is rooted mostly in the fact that success related to educational attainment is a rather distant social reality for many Roma, thus the efforts to attend school “is sometimes reckoned as too high in comparison to the benefits it could offer – from the perspective of both parents and children” (Fleck & Rughiniş 2008, 157). But this also has its roots in the different attitudes to education of Romani parents, especially of those from the traditional communities), as compared with school administrators and teachers. In non-Romani communities the educational role of schools is predominantly seen as a division of tasks between parents and educators to prepare children for various adult roles. Meanwhile, in many Romani communities there is a different vision regarding the division of tasks between school and family. Many parents assume that it is their obligation to transform children into adults, and a smaller formative role is attributed to schools, which are seen mainly as an institution meant to transfer some well delineated intellectual skills to children (Forray & Hegedüs 1990).

Underlying the fact that there is a difference of perspective between school educators and Romani families, there is very limited communication between them. School is perceived, especially by poor Roma, as being a distant and unfamiliar institutional space, and as a general rule teachers and school administrators are merely reiterating their asymmetric power relations when and if they interact with the Romani parents (Fleck & Rughiniş 2008, 158–161). This rift between worlds of Romani life and the schools as institutional space is replicated by the cultural experiences of Romani children. The school, both in terms of its institutional organization and the content of education, is supposed to be consonant to some degree with the cultural experiences of the children attending formal education. It is often assumed that both the teachers’ cultural experiences and the hierarchy of culturally legitimate, or valued, behaviour as promoted by the school, diverge from the experiences of the Romani children, thus alienating them from the formal educational system. For example in some traditional Romani communities young boys are allowed to interrupt adults’ conversations, and the interruptions are often positively rewarded, since a young boy’s communicational skills are a source of pride for the father. However mainstream schools promote communicational discipline, not welcoming (and even punishing) unauthorized interruptions.

The institutional distance between school and Romani communities is often increased by different kinds of unfair treatment of Romani children within the schools. Educational segregation is one of the most wide-ranging form of differential treatment with a negative outcome. Several distinct forms of segregation have been identified, including segregation at the class level, within the school, school level segregation; and the high percentage of Roma educated in special schools. In a few cases segregation is voluntary, given that Romani parents prefer schools where the percentage of Roma is high, in other cases the non-Roma transfer their children to other schools, leaving behind a school population that is increasingly composed of pupils of Romani origin. And in other cases again, school segregation reflects the already existing spatial segregation of the Romani community within the settlement: because schools are placed near a Romani colony that is already far from the centre of the locality, school segregation is inevitable.

The major problem with segregation is the loss of quality of education. On one hand, because the physical conditions in the segregated units are poorer, the school directorate

and the local governments administrating the educational infrastructure tend to invest less in maintenance or restoration. On the other hand, the quality of the educational process is affected in a negative manner, while the segregated schools or classes are less attractive for instructors, the teachings posts in these environments being filled by poorly qualified and poorly motivated personnel (Open Society Institute 2007; Surdu 2003). Based on methodologically grounded assessments, it may be stated that the degree of segregation of the Roma in primary education is considered to be valid for approximately 30% of the schools with enrolments of Romani pupils (Duminică & Ivasiuc 2010, 116; Surdu 2003).

Socio-cultural and institutional limitations are often increased by different physical limitations. According to a survey taken in 2007, over one fifth (22%) of Romani families considered that access to school was extremely difficult (or, in certain instances, non-existent) compared with just over one out of ten (11%) non-Romani families who reported similar difficulties.

## **7. Measures Taken to Improve the Integration of the Roma into Formal Education**

Since the early 1990s Romania has become a laboratory for many NGOs aiming to enhance the educational inclusion of the Roma. The state also became active in this field, in some cases taking over successful projects of the NGOs and replicating them. The limits of this study does not allow the presentation of the variety of civil initiatives, i.e., NGO projects that (either comprehensively or focusing on one or two major issues) addressed the complex issue of the educational marginality of the Roma. A brief (and by far not exhaustive) overview of the educational policies for the Roma initiated by the Romanian central government will now be briefly presented.

There are three major kinds of measures: a) institutional, b) content oriented, c) didactical. The institutional measures are those that intend to redesign some aspects of the schools as institutions, in order to address some of the difficulties limiting the educational successes of the children of Romani origin. By content oriented measures we refer to those transformations of the curriculum that were undertaken in order to improve school enrolment and the completion of compulsory education by Romani pupils. Didactical changes are those measures aiming to change the educational process itself by adapting the teaching methodology to the particular needs of the pupils of Romani origin. In this paper we will address the first two aspects.

## **8. Measures to Foster the Institutional Inclusion of the Roma**

Four main initiatives for increasing institutional inclusiveness can be identified:

1. Facilitating institutional contact between schools and Romani communities;
2. Accommodating educational programmes to the specific needs and conditions of dropouts;
3. Early integration into the educational system;
4. Affirmative action.

As mentioned earlier, one of the sources of the educational marginality of the Roma is in relation with the mental and emotional distance between schools as institutions and the Romani community – the perceived distance generated by cultural differences, different expectations, the cold and bureaucratic relationship of the teachers and school administration with children and parents of Romani origin, etc. (Fleck & Rughiniş 2008, 158–161). Generally, one of the main goal of the policies aiming to foster the institutional inclusion of pupils of Romani origin was *to increase the effectiveness of communication between schools and Romani communities, through the institution of a school mediator* (for a detailed description see Open Society Institute 2007, 383–386). Initiated by NGOs that were active in the field of Romani integration at the beginning of the 1990s, this initiative aimed to create a stronger and non-bureaucratic link between the schools and the local Romani communities, and began to expand starting in 2000. The main task of the mediator is to monitor the enrolment of the school-aged children in the schools and, using non-bureaucratic means, to contact the families which send their children to the schools. The role is that of an intermediary between the community and the school, having no specific classroom functions as have the teaching assistants for the Roma, whose major task is to facilitate classroom communication between pupils of Romani origin and the teacher (as in Poland, Slovakia or Bulgaria).<sup>4</sup> In Romania the mediator has no specific classroom functions, does not act as a teaching assistant, and is not responsible for various educational or any other kind of (out-of-school) activities. Basically, the mediators have a good knowledge of the particular cultural features of, and are socially connected with, these communities. Thus a personal connectivity is their major asset, based on which they can consult with and convince parents to send their children to school and-or keep them there. According to the latest assessments (Duminică & Ivasiuc 2010, 145–154) the institution of school mediator has proved to be effective in different dimensions: it has increased both inclusion and the average period spent in school. On the other hand, it seems that the school mediator has also promoted the voice of the community, serving as a feedback agent in the parent-school relationship. According to various reports by officials, the number of school mediators in 2009–10 was 424, which number decreased in 2010–11 to 376 mediators.<sup>5</sup>

On the one hand due to socio-economic constraints, and on the other determined by particular cultural patterns, the Roma become economically active at a much earlier stage of their life than do the non-Roma. Even if they could and would make use of further education, they are in no position to accommodate the world of labour with the specific features of the organization of the educational process. In particular, in 2000 the programme “Second Chance” was initiated; it was extended to the whole Romanian school system in 2003. It is a specially designed educational programme for assisting those who have left school early and intend to re-enter formal education and obtain a degree. In practical terms, it is a form of flexible education both in terms of curriculum and organization, allowing for youngsters and adults to complete their education.

Research shows that Romani children who attended kindergarten prior to first grade have been much more successful at school. The reasons are obvious, since kindergartens

---

4 For the difference between the two types of institutions and for a Europe-wide inventory of the specific details of these institutions, see Rus (2006).

5 See Strategy of the Government of Romania for the inclusion of the Romanian citizens belonging to Roma minority for the period 2012–2020.



in Romania are not simply day-care centres, but have considerable pedagogical functions in shaping the skills that are absolutely necessary in the school (Open Society Institute 2007, 415). Enrolment in a kindergarten is not however compulsory (except for one preparatory year), but is rather flexible. The enrolment of children of Romani origin is far from the national average (20–30% compared with 60–70%). Starting in 1999 non-governmental organizations initiated the programme of summer kindergartens: a programme that was gradually taken over by the Ministry of Education. The major aim of the programme is to create an early familiarity of the children (and their parents) with school and to start to develop basic skills for school attendance, skills that are customarily developed within kindergartens. The programme is addressed to children aged 6–7 and lasts three to four weeks, being open to the parents too. The initiative is not exclusively state-financed; indeed there are a diversity of sources, and a rather large platform for collaboration between different actors (national and international, central, local authorities and NGOs); thus it is rather hard to assess the numbers that have benefited and the dynamics of this program (Open Society Institute 2007, 415, 425).

The fourth way in which, according to Romanian policies, greater institutional inclusiveness for the Roma may be attained is to assist Roma when entering to secondary and the tertiary level of education. This objective is carried out by implementing a system of reserved places for the Roma in the universities (starting in 1993) and in high-schools and vocational training (starting in 2000). For the school year 2011–12, 611 such reserved places were allocated to 49 institutions of tertiary education.

## **9. Adjusting the Content of Education**

A second set of measures, often presented as designed to increase school inclusion and prevent the drop-out of the students of Romani origin, pertains to the content of education (Open Society Institute 2007, 413–415). In this respect the primary policy change was the introduction of the Romani language, first as the subject of instruction and later as the medium of instruction. The first measure in this direction was the introduction, in 1990, of the Romani language as part of the curriculum, in some institutions of teacher training. In 1992 the teaching of Romani was introduced at the university level for teacher training. Gradually a comprehensive infrastructure for teaching, the quality control of education and teacher training was developed (for a review of the process see Sarău 2009).

The context of and reason for this measure are the following. According to various sets of data, a considerable segment of the Roma rather frequently use, in a variety of contexts, dialects of Romani. According to the census 45% of those who report Romani identity declare Romani as their mother tongue (i.e., the first language learned). The data are supported by surveys too. According to a 2007 survey (Fleck & Rughiniş 2008, 48), 47% of the Roma are using Romani as the dominant language at home, 32% as the primary language in the community (i.e., talking with friends). Though for other domains of language use the use of Romani is less common, its extensive use as a home and community language is notable. This means that, for a considerable segment of the children coming from Romani communities, Romani is the first language, and these children have in many cases only limited competence in the school language (Romanian, or Hungarian for those living in area inhabited by Hungarians). The use of Romani in the school could have several major functions in assisting the integration of the Romani children, as follows:

1. Status and self esteem. The practice of Romani language teaching gives value to the domestic linguistic experience. When a language that is used at home is also used in the schools, this may raise the prestige both of that language and of its speakers.
2. Bridging cultural universes. As mentioned above, a rather widespread phenomenon is the perceived distance between the school as institution and community. The use of Romani in the school may have a kind of bridging function between school and community, and may thus ease the children's daily commute between the two worlds.
3. Assisting linguistic integration. Since the primary language in many families is Romani, the children's linguistic competence in the language of instruction is probably weak, and hence teaching Romani may become an *ad hoc* immersion process.
4. Cultural closeness. Knowing a language is not simply knowledge of vocabulary and grammar; it involves a certain degree of knowledge of the everyday cultural features of usage, in this instance knowledge of certain aspects of Romani culture. Thus teachers' knowledge and use of the language may mean a different understanding of some of the particular needs of the Romani pupils, and this may result in their being able to communicate more effectively with them.
5. Structural. Since many of the teachers of the Romani language have Romani origins, the introduction of Romani as subject of education has offered employment opportunities in the educational system. Research is still ongoing as to what can be the added value of their presence within the system, but it may well go beyond their simple classroom participation as language teachers.

With regard to this last function: in the school year 2009–10, 252 teachers of Romani language were active within the Romanian educational system. Some (but only few) of them taught not only Romani as a subject, but also taught in the Romani language at the primary level. According to various statistics, around 10% of the pupils with Romani background benefited of this program. For example, in the school year 2007–08, out of 263,400 children with Romani identity registered as students, 26,800 attended classes of Romani language. In 2008–09, out of 235,000, 31,700 studied Romani as a subject (Open Society Institute 2007, 413–414; Sarău 2009, 205). The other content-related aspect concerns the introduction of another subject item in the curriculum: The history and the traditions of Roma. This subject is meant to be taken by the pupils with Romani origin, and is customarily held in the classes where there is also Romani language teaching. The use of the Romani language within the schools, as mentioned above, is only exceptionally carried out as a medium of instruction, and is mostly taught as a separate item, as language instruction. There is a certain controversy about the appropriateness of this way of introducing the Romani language in the schools. On one hand there is not necessarily a widespread consensus among the Roma themselves as to whether it is appropriate or not that Romani should be used as a subject for instruction (Fleck & Rughiniş 2008; Open Society Institute 2007, 415). Of course such a viewpoint may reflect the low status of the language in the eyes of the speakers themselves, and is not a judgement about the language teaching itself; but even so, the fact that the language teaching is not considered appropriate by at least a third of the Roma (Rughiniş 2007) reveals some of the limits of this undertaking. On the other hand there is a linguistic controversy with respect to how, for teaching purposes, a certain standardised variety was imposed in classes, limiting the pluralist development of the language (Matras 2005). Nevertheless this debate has also an important pedagogical aspect. Since the formal instruction makes use of a linguistic



variety that is not necessarily the same as the one spoken at home (and may sound not simply different, but in some cases even divergent) there are some serious question marks with respect to the degree to which the integrative functions of Romani language use within the schools are achieved.

## **10. Concluding Remarks**

Lately there has been an ongoing process of assessment of the effectiveness of the educational measures taken to foster the integration of the Roma in education (Duminică & Ivasiuc 2010; Open Society Institute 2007). Though many emphasise that these programmes (as presented in this article) could have substantially resulted in an increase in the average years spent by children of Romani origin in school, all these assessments conclude that there are major deficiencies in terms of collaboration and coordination between the different actors involved in the project, the sustained durability of some of the programs and the lack of a comprehensive vision on behalf of the actors who effectively implement these policy measures.

## References

- Bădescu, G., Grigoraș, V., Rughiniș, C., Voicu, M. & Voicu, O., 2007. *Barometrul Incluziunii Romilor*. București, Fundația pentru o Societate Deschisă.
- Beissinger, M. H., 2001. Occupation and Ethnicity: Constructing Identity among Professional (Gypsy) Musicians in Romania. *Slavic Review* 60(1), 24–49.
- Duminică, G. & Ivasiuc, A., 2010. *O școală pentru toți? Accesul copiilor romi la o educație de calitate*. București, Vanemonde.
- Engebrigsten, A., 2007. *Exploring Gypsiness: Power, Exchange and Interdependence in a Transylvanian Village*. Oxford-New York, Berghahn Books.
- Fleck, G. & Rughiniș, C. (eds.), 2008. *Come Closer: Inclusion and Exclusion of Roma in Present-day Romanian Society*. Bucharest, Human Dynamics.
- Forray, K. R. & Hegedüs, T. A., 1990. *A cigány etnikum újjászületőben: tanulmány a családról és az iskoláról*. Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó.
- FRA, 2009a. Data in Focus Report: The Roma. In *European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey*, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.
- FRA, 2009b. Housing Discrimination Against Roma in Selected EU Member States. In *European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey*, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.
- INS, 2005. *Recensământul populației și al locuințelor 18–27 martie 2002. Structura etnică și confesională*. Volume IV. București, Institutul Național de Statistică.
- Ivanov, A., Collins, M., Grosu, C., Kling, J., Milcher, S., O'Higgins, N., Slay, B. Zhelyazkova, A., 2006. *At risk: Roma and the Displaced in Southeast Europe*. Bratislava, United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.
- Kligman, G., 2001. On the Social Construction of “Otherness”: Identifying “the Roma” in Post-Socialist Communities. *Review of Sociology* 7(2), 61–78.
- Ladányi, J. & Szelényi, I., 2001. The Social Construction of Roma Ethnicity in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary During Market Transition. *Review of Sociology* 7(2), 79–89.
- Marian-Bălașa, M., 2004. Romany Music and Gypsy Criminality. *Ethnologia Balkanica* 8, 195–225.
- Matras, Y., 2005. The Future of Romani: Toward a Policy of Linguistic Pluralism. *Roma Rights Quarterly* 1, 31–44.
- Miclea, M., David, D., Funeriu, D., Florian, R. V., Ciuparu, D., Ionac, M., Luchian, T., Banabic, D., Lucu, R., Frangopol, P. T., Vlăsceanu, L. & Bârzea, C., 2007. *România educației, România cercetării. Raportul Comisiei Prezidențiale pentru analiza și elaborarea politicilor din domeniile educației și cercetării*. București, Comisia Prezidențială pentru analiza și elaborarea politicilor din domeniile educației și cercetării.
- Minnesota Population Center 2011. *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, International: Version 6.1*. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.
- Open Society Institute, 2007. *Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma*. Budapest, OSI/EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program.
- Popescu, L., 2009. Riscuri și inechități sociale în România. M. Preda (ed.) *Iași, Polirom*, 152–168.
- Popescu, L., Raț, C. & Rebeleanu, A., 2010. No Discrimination. Just Unequal Access... Barriers in the Use of Health-Care Services Among the Romanian Roma. In *Working*

- Papers In Romanian Minority Studies*. I. Hossu & I. Horváth (eds.) Cluj-Napoca, Institutul pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale.
- Preda, M., 2002. Estimarea numărului de Romi din România. In C. Zamfir & M. Preda (eds.) *Romii în România*. București, Editura Expert, 11–38.
- Rughiniș, C., 2010. The Forest Behind the Bar Charts: Bridging Quantitative and Qualitative Research on Roma/Țigani in Contemporary Romania. *Patterns of prejudice* 44(4), 337–367.
- Rughiniș, C., 2007. Who are the Roma? In G. Bădescu, V. Grigoraș, C. Rughiniș, M. Voicu & O. Voicu (eds.) *Roma Inclusion Barometer*. Bucharest, Open Society Foundation, 7–17.
- Rus, C., 2006. The Situation of Roma School Mediators and Assistants in Europe. In *Education for Roma Children in Europe*, Council of Europe [DGIV/EDU/ROM(2006)3].
- Sandu, D., 2005. *Roma Social Mapping. Targeting by a Community Poverty Survey*. Bucharest, National Agency for Roma, World Bank.
- Sarău, G., 2009. Limba rromani. Planificarea lingvistică în România între anii 1990–2008. In I. Horváth & E. Tódor (eds.) *O evaluare a politicilor de producere a bilingvismului*. Cluj Napoca, Editura Limes – Institutul pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 194–206.
- Stănculescu, M. S., 2008. Working Poor in Romania. In *Poverty Monitoring AAA Program*. București, Institute for the Study of the Quality of Life.
- Strategy of the Government of Romania for the inclusion of the Romanian citizens belonging to Roma minority for the period 2012–2020*, [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma\\_romania\\_strategy\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_romania_strategy_en.pdf) (5 June 2012).
- Surdu, L., Vincze, E. & Wamsiedel, M., 2011. *Roma School Participation, Non-Attendance and Discrimination in Romania*. Bucuresti: Vanemonde, UNICEF.
- Surdu, M., 2003. *Segregarea romilor în educație – Distanță fizică sau socială?* București, Editura Arves.

# Migration and Its Implications for the Educational System: The Case of the Roma in Bosnia, Germany and Canada

## 1. Introduction

Migration is a complex global phenomenon. According to the World Migration Report (2005) there are 191 million international migrants in the world, 23.7 million internally displaced persons in 52 countries, and 8.4 million refugees. Migrants immigrate mostly to three main destination countries: the USA, the Russian Federation and Germany, and their chief destination regions are Europe and Asia.<sup>1</sup>

Migration statistics are cited in general term, but there is no research about, and no statistics on, Romani migration or Romani migrant quotas. Migration is a phenomenon that affects the formation of new identities, and this in turn is dependent on identity politics in the country where the Roma live and from which they migrate. However, it is important to note that the movement of majority populations is classified as migration, but Romani movement, traditionally and usually, is identified and classified by the majority of peoples with the word “nomadism”.

Non-Roma never ask whether Romani migrations occurred by force of circumstance. As Jean Cocteau (in Liégeois 2005, 54) wrote of the famous Gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt,

---

1 In the USA there are 35 million migrants which is 20% of the global migrant total; the Russian Federation with 13.3 million migrants has 7.6% of the total; and Germany with 7.3 million migrants has 4.2% of the total. Europe has the largest migrant population in the world – more than 56 million. Asia is in the second place with 50 million migrants (World Migration Report 2005; Migration in an Interconnected World: New Directions for Action. Report of the Global Commission on International Migration, 2005).

He lived as one dreams of living, in a caravan. And even when it was no longer a caravan, somehow it still was. Just as settled people remain settled people even when they travel, so the Gypsy is a nomad even when not travelling. A Gypsy at rest remains a traveller. So it is really more accurate to speak of *sedentarized* Gypsies rather than *sedentary* Gypsies, for the former suggests a temporary condition for people who still consider movement meaningful and vital. Nomadism is a state of mind more than a state of fact. Its existence and importance are psychological more than geographical.

In the case of the Roma, however, nomadism is not merely a state of mind (Đurić 1987). Nomadism in the eyes of the non-Roma is a cultural value on which they build and create an imaginary picture of the identity of the Roma. Are the English and Irish Roma nomadic? The necessity of movement has been caused by economic, social and political difficulties, persecution, discrimination and attacks, and wars in countries where the Roma have lived. This “nomadism by force of law” led to problems identifying their nationality. The globalization of the Romani identity, of their cultural and traditional values, and of the value of the Romani life style have led to them losing Romani national consciousness, and thus losing the already small number of the educated with a Romani identity, who tend rather to be attributed to the majority, powerful nation.

Why do the Roma fall under the category “black”, rather than “white”, with the stereotyped image of beauty attached to this word, even though there are plenty of Roma with white skins? Why, just because of their identity, do they suffer discrimination in education, housing, health care and employment? To what extent does Romani migration influence the education of the Roma?

There are many questions which we could ponder and discuss in writing, but I wish to write about the problems which have forced the Roma into internal displacement and migration. Also, in order to explain some aspects of Romani migration, I shall mention some facts about prejudices, bias, discrimination, racism, persecution, violence, segregation, marginalization and how they reflect on the loss of Romani identification, identity and identity politics, on the loss of the Romani language<sup>2</sup> and on Romani education.

## **2. Internally Forced Displacement and/or Forced Migration**

The Romani trail of suffering started a long time ago in India, in the middle ages. After the first signs of discrimination and persecution, the Roma left India and, in quest of better living conditions and prosperity, settled in Europe. However, they were not accepted by the indigenous people, so they were forced to move frequently and in that way forced to do without education. Forced movement has been characterized by indigenous people as nomadism and this has been associated with the Roma ever since. Nobody with reference to the Roma has ever spoken about Romani migration, or about internally forced displacement, or about how much internal displacement and forced migration have resulted in a lack of education.

Discrimination, intolerance, mass extermination, killings and persecution of the Roma continue to put our people on the margins of society and have resulted in our being

---

2 Or, in the Romani language “Romani čhib”.

considered as generally unacceptable, unequal and less worthy people wherever we go. The Roma have been killed and targeted by skinheads and neo-Nazis, and daily assaults, beatings and other forms of violence have become prevalent.<sup>3</sup> Nowadays, at the beginning of the 21st century, the Roma still live below the minimum social, economic, educational and cultural level enjoyed by civilized human beings.

The Roma have come to believe that they cannot obtain any form of protection from the law-enforcement agencies in the countries where they live. They believe that the state cannot or will not protect them from violence. They are therefore forced to displace internally, i.e., to move long distances with their families. In this situation there is no opportunity to think, and to be concerned with education which is the key of the prosperity and survival of any ethnic group. For the Roma, education has become the lowest-priority problem they have to think about in their fight against poverty and for the bare necessities of life.

The majority of the Roma from the ex-Yugoslav region, the Balkans, and Eastern European countries have been forced to move to Western Europe (Germany, France, Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands, Italy) and to the USA and Canada, and there are Romani migrants all over the world.<sup>4</sup> In their new countries of residence, however, they are forced either to displace internally, or to move to other countries. As they travel through different countries and assimilate part of the language structure or the vocabulary of non-Romani languages, they slowly lose their own language and neologisms automatically. A notable poem about Romani migration as the cause of problems in the education of the Roma, written by a Romani poet, was published in *The European Constitution in Verse* (2008, 61):

*I was born in Russia.  
I went to school in Poland.  
I worked as an apprentice in Romania.  
I married in Serbia.  
I got a job in Bosnia.*

*I had my first child in Croatia.  
The second child in France, the third in Spain, the fourth in Germany,  
The fifth in Belgium.*

*I returned to Serbia. I had my sixth child in Serbia.  
I had to escape to Italy, after the birth of my seventh child.  
I had twins.*

*I endured the biggest tragedy: My child was found dead and they said he  
drowned in the sea.*

---

3 More on this issue: Europa Roma Rights Center (ERRC); Roma Virtual Network (RVN); Lee (1998): "The number of assaults against Roma is not admitted to by the Czech, Hungarian or Romanian governments. However, the American researcher Paul Polansky, in his book *Dvakrát Tim Samým* (Living Through It Twice, published in 1997), reports that over 2,000 cases were recorded at that time."

4 According to NGO Romani activists, there are ca. 15 million Roma living in Europe, and about 18 million in the world as a whole.



*They drove me away, burned my roof, and they wanted to take my fingerprints. And those of my children too.*

*I am scared. They did it once like that before, with the fingerprints, not so long ago. I am scared.*

*I escaped to Holland.*

*I had my tenth child.*

*I had the eleventh child in Sweden.*

*I am forty. I speak Romani (my mother tongue), Russian, Slovakian, Romanian, Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian, Italian, French, Spanish, German, Dutch and a little bit of English.*

*What my family needs and longs for is literacy.*

*I am getting old.*

(Tahirović Sijerčić in Reybrouck Van & Vermeersch 2008, 61)

The situation with respect to the migration and displacement of the Roma also depends on the constitutions and laws of the countries they migrate to.

### **3. Migration and Education in Western Europe**

In many of the countries of Western Europe educational practice and certainly academic theory is closely confronted with the problems of organizing an adequate education for children of migrants. Practical solutions have brought some results in education in terms of, on the one hand, the total assimilation and loss of ethno-cultural and linguistic identity and, on the other, the complete separation of immigrant children from indigenous children, extended segregation and ghettoization (Husen 1975). As a rule, non-indigenous children have not had the necessary pedagogical assistance for adapting the new environment.

Also, involving children in public schools under identical conditions for all, not taking into account their linguistic, cultural, family and other origin, has proved to be extremely unfair. There is nothing more unjust than to offer all children the same treatment (Rogers & Freiberg 1994; Banks 1994).

Romani immigrants in Western Europe, especially the children and women, are mostly left with their problems ignored, and marginalized in all aspects of life: education, access to employment, psychosocial and material support. In fact, no attention has been paid to the specific problems of minority populations such as the Roma, whose problems have been completely ignored.

Nowadays the Western European situation has been complicated by the arrival of large numbers of Romani refugees fleeing persecution in the East European countries. They constitute a serious issue for the authorities in Italy, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, the UK, the Republic of Ireland and elsewhere. The children of these Romani refugees are not fluent in the local languages, the parents are awaiting deportation or going through some process in which they hope to gain residency, citizenship or work permits, and their status in the country is in limbo. In effect, most of these children are not receiving education within the national school systems but some are attending special schools run by various organizations dedicated to helping Romani refugees and asylum seekers in these countries. Large numbers of adults are still illiterate

and some of them are barely able to sign their names. The situation is improving among the younger generation, but mass literacy among the Roma in Western Europe is still far from becoming a reality.

#### **4. Romani Migration and Education in Cologne**

Among few positive examples providing assistance to Romani migrants, I am personally acquainted with one from my own experience, namely at the Amaro Kher/Our Home,<sup>5</sup> teaching young children (6–13 years old) the Romani language in preparatory school classes, at the Rom e.V. in Cologne in Germany.<sup>6</sup> Children who attend the Amaro Kher school are mostly children whose parents are originally from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), mostly Horahane Roma,<sup>7</sup> and from Serbia. Their parents moved in 1970s from BiH and Serbia first to Italy, then they were forced to move to France, and then finally they came to Germany. The children speak Gurbeti (Aromanian)<sup>8</sup> and it is very hard to work with them if you do not understand their reduced knowledge of Romani and the mixture of other languages they adapted into Romani during their and their families' lives. Specially created lessons for more groups according to their age and knowledge were successful, even though the children, despite their previous life, had – from my own experience working with children – an attention span of no more than 15 minutes of effective work.

Since 2004 Amaro Kher has started to work as a model school for Romani children. In cooperation with the Ministry for Youth and Ministry of Education, and by networking with schools, children's, youth and refugee organizations, over seven years Amaro Kher has achieved success as a school. UN Special Ambassador Prof. Munoz praised the school project during his visit in 2006.

In Amaro Kher, there are two regular classes attended by Romani children. In addition to this there are support and leisure activities in the afternoon, three healthy meals and school buses with which the children are transported. With the support for the often traumatized children, Amaro Kher provides an opportunity for educational advancement. Positive learning experiences, an evolving self-confidence and confidence in dealing with language and with learning the culture of the majority society, are all important for transition into the general mainstream schools. Cooperative education and leisure projects

---

5 I worked for six months in Amaro Kher/Our Home (Rom e.V. [eingetragener Verein, registered association] Köln/Cologne) as a teacher of the Romani language.

6 *Rom e.V. Köln/Cologne, Amaro Kher Köln/Cologne, Germany*; <http://www.romev.de/>. Since 1986, hence for almost 25 years, this foundation has been working for the human and civil rights of the Sinti and Roma. All this work began when hundreds of Romani refugees from Yugoslavia sought refuge in Cologne. Since then, many have built up their activities and fight for Sinti and Romani rights, work as counsellors on all social and residence issues, family work, teach in the preparatory school as a full time institution for Roma children and in the kindergarten, organize sports, music, art and other leisure activities. They have one of Europe's best-known documentation centres with a library and archives; they have organized cultural events, and have been in the forefront of resistance to racism, to individual and structural discrimination, and have especially fostered aid against deportation.

7 The Muslim Roma throughout Southern Europe call themselves Horahane Roma ("Turkish Roma", also spelled as Khorakhane, Xoraxane, Kharokane, Xoraxai, etc.) and are colloquially referred to as Turkish Roma or Turkish Gypsies in the host countries (Muslim Roma, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xoraxane>).

8 The Gurbeti language-variety, which is Aromanian, is also referred to as Vlach. *Vlach* are those Roma people who lived many centuries in the territory of Romania in slavery. Their vocabulary is borrowed from Romanian.

are education-oriented also with respect to the parents, with the goal of encouraging children and their families in intercultural exchange, and in their desire for social integration and recognition.

## **5. Education in Bosnia and Internal Displacement**

Multiethnicity is one of the main characteristics of modern societies. The Bosnian region in that way is not just a phenomenon of yesterday. One could say that previously it used to be appreciated, in part at least, more than it is today. The war in the former Yugoslavia brought losses to everyone, but to the Roma more than others. They were not allowed to return to the homes and settlements in which they lived before the war, and therefore had to migrate internally to wherever they could find a place to live; this brought enormous problems of identification and identity and, of course, of visible discrimination. The Roma in BiH are discriminated against because they are poor, because they are Roma, because they are an ethnic minority and because they are uneducated.

Internal displacement brought to the Roma housing, employment and health care problems, and as victims of forced internal migration they were often not registered and had no birth certificates, which – beside other problems – affected the enrolment of their children in preschool education and also in school.

The aim of Romani education in BiH is to demonstrate the need to involve themes of the language and culture of the Roma in the ordinary curriculum of the country. The needs of the Roma and their children are directly related to their mother tongue, Romani čhib, and their culture. To facilitate this involvement and implementation through the Action Plan on the Educational Needs of Roma it is necessary to know their language and culture and their specific characteristics, and to recognize and be aware of the problems affecting their development and preservation. These problems, as mentioned above, are discrimination in education, in housing, in employment and in health care. There are, however, some positive steps which may contribute to the development of Romani education in BiH.

The first published Bosnian-Romani and Romani-Bosnian dictionary (Tahirović Sijerčić 2010) came out in 2010 and was distributed to schools, libraries, Romani NGO and Institutions in the country, even though there are no Romani language courses in the curriculum and it is not yet taught to children even as supplementary subject.

The pilot project “Preschool education” (2010), supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina, has resulted in the first positive experience in the education of the Roma. Six Romani teacher assistants, working with this project and providing excellent results helping teachers in classrooms, have gained entrance into BiH Faculties of Education (Preschool and Primary Education departments) despite their lack of success at the end of their completed middle school. But this is just the first positive step in Romani education in BiH. The revised BiH Action Plan on the Educational Needs of the Roma<sup>9</sup> defines four objectives and forty seven measures

---

9 Goal 1: To ensure that child members of the Roma National Minority are included in the system of compulsory primary education; Goal 2: To encourage the Roma population to continue to secondary, high and higher education but also to be trained for a vocation; Goal 3: The preservation and promotion of the Romani Language, Culture and History; Goal 4: To develop a systematic solution that will lead to the fulfilment of the educational needs of the Roma people (Jurić 2010, 165–172).

aimed at providing equal access to quality education to this marginalized group of children, so that they can acquire the necessary knowledge for further quality integration into Bosnian and Herzegovinian society. “Quality education for the Roma is the only way out of the vicious circle of marginalization and social isolation” (Đuderija in Jurić 2010, 5).

Based on the fact that the educational system in BiH, as well as other social sectors, is the responsibility of 13 ministries of education and each has its own separate legislative and executive roles, my contention is that the division of education on ethnic grounds in any country exacerbates the problem of the education of national minorities. In the case of BiH the most affected has been the largest national minority, namely the Roma.

The problems that the Roma are suffering constantly, namely persecution, discrimination, violence, neo-Nazis skinheads,<sup>10</sup> have not improved and the Roma do not have adequate protection under the law.<sup>11</sup> Knowing about the Western European Romani migrations and their problems, the Roma try to escape, and manage to emigrate to countries outside Europe.

## **6. Identity Values Encourage Migration Outside Europe**

Internal displacement, the constantly increasing amount of forced migration, self-categorisation about differences and values and the characteristics of Romani identity, have all, of course, influenced the education of the Roma. As is the case with any kind of Romani migration, the different evaluation of their “old” and “new” identity and the fear of their previous life are sufficient to lead the Roma to identify with those who have greater value and power in society.

The problems posed by the majority language of the country to which they migrate is additional to all the problems they had in their countries of origin.

---

10 This term, as quoted by news sources, is generally understood as a subset of white supremacy movements with ideologies based on the core values of Nazism and ethnic nationalism.

11 “In the Czech Republic, the government admits that over 60 Roma have been murdered by skinheads since 1989. The actual count is much higher but the Czech courts differentiate between racially-motivated murders and ordinary murders. In 1998, one Czech skinhead received 8 years for the murder of a 26 year-old Romani mother of six. She was beaten unconscious and thrown into a river to drown. In many cases, the culprits are not even brought to trial. The perpetrators are often related to officials in law-enforcement or otherwise “connected” and are thus often protected from prosecution. Sometime they are also egged on by statements from elected officials who publicly state that the Roma should be eliminated or driven from their country. The number of assaults against the Roma is not admitted to by the Czech, Hungarian or Romanian governments. /.../ Conditions in Hungary are just as bad as in the Czech Republic but not as well reported in the international press. Roma have been murdered, assaulted, raped and their homes burned down by gangs of neo-Nazis and skinheads.” (Lee 1998). The Nationalist and extreme right wing Jobbik (Movement for a Better Hungary) has won 47 seats in the Hungarian Parliament. Jobbik has its own Neo-Nazi paramilitary organization, the now illegal Magyar Garda (Hungarian Guard), which nevertheless continues to intimidate and attack Roma. In November 2010, Amnesty International called upon the Hungarian government to investigate the 48 violent attacks and 9 murders committed since 2008 as racially motivated crimes targeting Roma (Rights Groups Demand Protection for Hungarian Roma, 2011).

## 7. “Old” Romani Identity and Identity Politics

The Roma have their own identity, which can be viewed according to its specific characteristics. These characteristics are in many respects common to all, but they also differ depending on the Romani group involved. Unfortunately, Romani identity and identity politics are the product of the prejudice and stereotyping in the society where they live; they are inherent in the non-Romani society, and historically arose long ago with the first appearance of the Roma, in whatever part of the world they were.

The lack of a common Romani ethnic consciousness, which is reflected in the above-mentioned identification, as well as the internal differentiation are the result of a complex historical process, including the centuries-old migrations which resulted in being in specific minority situations. This history does not, however, erase the similarities that stem from the character and culture, and in particular the status, of those Roma who are in the majority society, irrespective of the country in which they live, while the ordinary Roma suffer precisely because of the Romani educational élite and their hidden identity.

Ian Hancock, a contemporary American romologist, notes that one simple political distinction may be defined as the most accurate perception of their role in society: they are Roma, and all the others are not (Hancock, 2006). In this regard, Mirga and Mruz, in *The Roma – Differences and Intolerance* (1997), describe several characteristic values of the Romani identity, among which one gender and cultural dichotomy stands out: any persons who by nature belong to the group by birth, through their parents, are thus classified as Roma. These authors take the example of men’s identity formation; the identity politics of Romani women is more discriminatory. Children from mixed marriages acquire the full status of Roma if they meet all the criteria, provided that they remained in the group.

The second identity criterion is associated with the rules of ritual purity, respect, appreciation and age. The issues of power and exploitation of the powerless (i.e., the women and children) are of great importance, especially for the Roma in certain groups, where there are families with elders who can only be older women. Younger women are not respected and are often exposed to all forms of violence. Ethnocentrism among the Roma has developed on the basis of their own cultural patterns.

The third identity criterion value is related to the Romani language, i.e., any Romani dialect in its relationship with another language (non-Romani). The language performs the role of symbolic separation from the non-Romani world. Indigenous (locally-born) groups of Roma speak the language of the countries they live in as their first language. In the case of indigenous Roma, therefore, the Romani language is not a sign of Romani identity, but it provides an additional secondary value that can provide a necessary secrecy in relation to non-Roma who do not understand it. In this context we can talk about a loss of identity that led to a loss of the native language as a core identity value.

The fourth criterion is the value of identity in connection with the acceptance of exclusions arising from the social organization of the group, which have a relationship to age, sex, kinship, legal and religious traditions. These prohibitions are a matter of male power. This power is associated with the mind-set of the Romani group. Girls and younger women in these groups have not the right to accept or reject approaches by men. This male dominance and male rights affect the education of the girls.



The fifth identity criterion involves a certain model of economic dependence of the Roma, and their being exploited in the world Gadjó.<sup>12</sup> Here ethnic boundaries are distinctly marked and, according to the laws of the Roma, this applies only in non-Romani world. In my opinion, this criterion is most apparent in public discourse; the exploitation of Romani children (begging, washing cars, cleaning shoes, early marriages with a profit motive) and of Romani women (begging, prostitution, theft, etc.).

The last and sixth identity criterion involves all the visual signs and traits by which the Roma identify themselves as Roma. These may be anthropological characteristics, a distinctive movement style, the wearing of particular decorations, costumes and the like. They, obviously, can vary depending on the group and period, but members of the given group can easily distinguish the characteristics which they use for self-definition.

Whoever has power is in a position to rule. In his final interview Foucault stated that identities are formed within current political systems in connection with certain requirements of the liberal state. The confirmation of rights and licenses can be based only on the individual and the identity of the disadvantaged. If identities are more personal, so much more is identity created more precisely on the basis of these characteristics (Butler 1997, 83–106).

As we can see from our discussion of identification and recognition of an ethnic group, patterns that are already assumed on the basis of prejudice are at a huge risk. When it comes to risk it should be noted here that there is a risk of false recognition if a name other than the correct one, especially that of a social category, is used (Žižek 1987, 90–91). When somebody uses the term “Gypsy”<sup>13</sup> for a Roma, it is an insult that results in a total reduction of identity, with a paralyzing and negative effect, although this may be in a way liberating. Acceptance of self, of one’s own identity and characteristics and values, is the basic condition for individual and group strength.

Hoping to find a better life with a “new” identity, without all the identification and recognition patterns that are characteristic of Romani roots, our Roma are nowadays, migrating to Canada. It is the continued persecution all over the Europe that is leading the Roma to flee to Canada.

## **8. Migration to Canada**

Another serious problem is raised by the concept of the Romani diaspora itself. It goes beyond the borderlines of Europe, since Romani communities are found in the Middle East, Central Asia, both Americas, and Australia (Ian Hancock).

A large number of Romani immigrants have come to Canada since the end of the Second World War from the former Czechoslovakia, the former Yugoslavia, Poland, the former Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries. Many of them had been educated by the Communists and have entered mainstream professions and become businessmen in Canada. Their children are attending elementary, high school and university. Many have graduated in the professions. These groups have integrated into Canadian society and do

---

12 Gadjó is the name used by Roma to refer to non-Romani people.

13 Offensive name for Romani person.



not comprise visible minorities. Others have become skilled tradespeople and business people. Since their Romani ethnicity was not the basis of their refugee claims, their arrival went unnoticed by Immigration Canada, the media and the public. For this and other reasons, the size of the immigrant Romani population of Canada cannot be estimated. It is, however, considerable.<sup>14</sup>

A growing number of Roma are now entering Canada<sup>15</sup> seeking Convention Refugee Status as they flee persecution in the countries of Europe where they have been scapegoated and targeted by skinheads and neo-Nazis. The largest group to arrive was the Czech-Roma influx beginning in August, 1997. Despite the fact that many of the children had been placed in schools for the mentally-challenged in the Czech Republic, most of them have entered into the Canadian school system without any problems.

In Toronto, the Roma Community and Advocacy Centre was established in 1998 and has been working for the all Romani newcomers to Canada. They have hired a liaison worker as a contact person between the Romani parents and the Toronto District School Board's schools, which many Romani children have attended. Romani children and non-Romani children are separated into classes for special needs and all children attend the same school program. There are teacher-assistants in the classrooms working with children in need of language competence. For this purpose they have hired some Romani teacher-assistants.

The Roma Community Centre<sup>16</sup> published the first ever Romani newsletter in Canada, *Romano Lil*, a poetry book, and important public education materials. Also, with the Toronto publisher Magoria Books the following have been published: six illustrated Romani folktales for children, *Stories and Legends of the Gurbeti Roma* for adults, autobiographical novels, and dictionaries for two language-varieties: Kalderash and Gurbeti.

Romani migration and education, both for children and for adults, is improving and there is visible success with respect to the enrolment of Romani students at the University of Toronto. Moreover, there are Romani professors hired by University of Toronto teaching a course about the Romani diaspora and Romani culture and tradition. Also, Concordia University (Montreal)'s Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling applied for status as a Romani Studies Centre and now it is an official affiliate. The education of the Roma in Canada nowadays gives us a hope for the new generation of Roma who will be educated without losing their Romani identity.

---

14 See Lee 2007.

15 The United Nations Development Programme ranks Canada as 6th country overall using their Human Development Index scoring system, which includes life expectancy, education ratios, and GDP per capita statistics (Human Development Report 2011).

16 Roma Community Centre Toronto, Canada: <http://www.romatoronto.org/>.

## **9. Conclusion**

In general, the problems of education of the Roma are caused by internal displacement and migration, forced on them by poverty, anti-Roma stereotyping prejudice, discrimination, racism, segregation, marginalization, identification and identity difficulties, and loss of the Romani language.

Today, Romani linguists in many countries are working towards the creation of a Romani literary language so that Romani children can be educated in Romani and taught their own history and culture. A growing body of literature in Romani is emerging in many countries and there are now Romani authors, poets and journalists among the new Romani intelligentsia. It is important for young Romani students to be able to learn about their own history and culture. The learning tools they need can only be created by fellow Roma and preferably in the Romani language. This is being accomplished by the increasing number of educated Roma (Lee 2009).

## References

- Banks, J. A., 1994. *An introduction to multicultural education*. Allyn and Bacon, Boston.
- Butler, J., 1997. *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection*. Stanford University Press.
- Đurić, R., 1987. *Seobe Roma*. BIGZ, Beograd.
- Europa Roma Right Center (ERRC), <http://www.bnr.de/initiativen/european-roma-rights-center>.
- Hancock, I. The Struggle for the Control of Identity. Roma Participation Program. pp. 1–8. <http://www.osi.hu/rpp/perspectives1a.htm> (3 August 2012).
- Hancock, I., 2006. On Romani Origins and Identity: questions for discussion. In A. Marsh and E. Strand (eds). *Gypsies and the problem of identity: contextual, constructed and contested*. Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute.
- Human Development Report 2011, 2011. Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All. United Nations Development Programme, New York, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2011/summary/> (3 August 2012).
- Husen, T., 1975. *Social Influences on Educational Attainment*. Centre for Educational Research and Inovation. OECD–CERI, Paris.
- Jurić, M. (ed.), 2010. *Revidirani akcioni plan Bosne i Hercegovine o obrazovnim potrebama Roma = Bosnako thaj Hercegovinako revidirano akciono plano kataro Romengo edukativno trubujipe = Revised action plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina on Roma educational needs*. Ministarstvo za ljudska prava i izbjeglice BiH, Sarajevo, [http://www.mhrr.gov.ba/ljudska-prava/djeca\\_bih/Revidirani%20Akcioni%20plan%20Bosne%20i%20Hercegovine%20o%20obrazovnim%20potrebama%20Roma.pdf](http://www.mhrr.gov.ba/ljudska-prava/djeca_bih/Revidirani%20Akcioni%20plan%20Bosne%20i%20Hercegovine%20o%20obrazovnim%20potrebama%20Roma.pdf) (24 July 2012).
- Lee, R., 1998. *Why Roma are coming to Canada*. Updated by Paul St. Clair, March, 2007., [http://www.romatoronto.org/facts\\_immigration.html](http://www.romatoronto.org/facts_immigration.html) (24 July 2012).
- Lee, R., 2007. *The Romani Diaspora in Canada*. CSPI, Canadian Scholar's press INC.
- Lee, R., 2009. Roma and Education, <http://kopachi.com/articles/roma-and-education-by-ronald-lee/> (24 July 2012).
- Liégeois, J. P., 1986. *Gypsies. An Illustrated History*. Al Saqi Books, London.
- Migration in an Interconnected World: New Directions for Action. Report of the Global Commission on International Migration, 2005. Global Commission on International Migration, [http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/policy\\_and\\_research/gcim/GCIM\\_Report\\_Complete.pdf](http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/policy_and_research/gcim/GCIM_Report_Complete.pdf) (23 July 2012).
- Mirga, A. & Mruz, L., 1997. *Roma/Differences and intolerance*. AKAPIT, Beograd.
- Muslim Roma, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xoraxane> (22 September 2011).
- Reybrouck Van, D. & Vermeersch, P. (eds.), 2008. *The European Constitution in Verse*. Passa Porta – International House of Literature Brussels, <http://www.passaporta.be/var/media/gallery/72/be3e6c071d07191717d8619d755bf326.pdf> (23 July 2012).
- Rights Groups Demand Protection for Hungarian Roma, 2011. 17 March 2011, <http://www.errc.org/article/rights-groups-demand-protection-for-hungarian-roma/3816> (24 July 2012).
- Rogers, C. & Freiberg, H. J., 1994. *Freedom to learn*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Rom e.V. Köln, <http://www.romev.de> (3 August 2012).
- Roma Virtual Network (RVN), <http://www.linkedin.com/in/romavirtualnetwork>; <http://www.valery-novoselsky.org/romavirtualnetwork.html> (24 July 2012).
- Tahirović Sijerčić, H., 2010. Bosansko-romski i romsko-bosanski rječnik / Bosnaki-Rromani thaj Rromani-Bosnaki alavari. Federalno Ministarstvo obrazovanja i nauke Bosne i Hercegovine, Mostar.
- World Migration Report 2005. International Migration Trends: Facts and Figures, [http://images.gmanews.tv/html/research/2007/12/world\\_migration\\_report\\_2005.htm](http://images.gmanews.tv/html/research/2007/12/world_migration_report_2005.htm) (23 July 2012).
- Žižek, S., 1987. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. Verso, London.

# From Anti-Roma Racism to Romani Rights in Sweden

## **1. Historical “Heritage”**

The first official records relating to the presence of the Romani people in Sweden are from 1512 (Rodell Olgaç 2006; Montesino Parra 2002). In these early documents the group was called “Tattare”, because they were confused with the ethnic group of Tatars. The name “Zigenare” began to be used more than 100 years later, during the 1630s. The majority of the population normally used both of these two pejorative names until the 1900s (Fraurud & Hyltenstam 1999).

The history of the Roma in Sweden over the past 500 years has been marked by persecution and suffering. Their repression in Sweden does not differ much from their historical experience in other European countries. Anti-Roma Racism, which includes hostility towards the Roma, discrimination and prejudice, and systematic limitation of human rights, has characterised both the popular view and the official policy during all this time. Such attitudes towards the Roma both made possible and justified different oppressive methods, which have varied between enslavement, enforced assimilation, expulsion and internment.

In the more recent history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Swedish borders were, for example, completely closed to the Roma between 1914 and 1954, which implies that the borders were closed even for Romani refugees during the Second World War. Another example is that most municipalities in Sweden did not allow Romani families to spend more than a couple of weeks on any one site and, as a consequence, they could not be registered to vote, their children could not attend school and they were denied child allowances which were guaranteed to all other citizens. Yet another example is the sterilisation law, which was in force between 1943 and 1976. The purpose of the law was to “prevent mentally ill

and physically defective individuals from having children that they were unable to take care of or who were at risk of inheriting their parents' risky characteristics".<sup>1</sup> Altogether, 63,000 people were sterilised during the time the law was in force, approximately 50% of whom were compulsory sterilised. The proportion of Roma origin clearly exceeded the proportion of Roma in the total population.

In the second half of the century the policymakers' view on Romani issues began to change.<sup>2</sup> The Romani "social deviation" was no longer viewed as inherited and thus immutable, but as a "problem", which could be treated and which needed to be handled by a policy of effective social engineering. The Roma were no longer described as vagrants and a threat to mainstream society, but as victims, or as a poor and unfortunate group in need of help in order to adapt to a modern society. The idea that the Roma were unable to overcome their own situation was used as an argument for establishing so-called "Gypsy-consultants" with the task of helping the Roma to solve practical problems. They became an increasingly interesting research topic in different scientific fields. The concept of culture as an obstacle to assimilation into mainstream society was used by ethnologists. Psychologists used subjective aspects of the "problem" as examples.

The main characteristic of all these perceptions was that the "problem" is placed within "them" and the task of policy measures is to help them change in order to become more "like us". Policies designed on these bases were in force until the 1990s, and have proved to be ineffective, missing more or less completely the aim of integrating the Roma into mainstream society.

The most important consequence of their history is that the contemporary situation of the Roma in Sweden is much worse than any other group in society. The current Romani population in Sweden is estimated at 50,000.<sup>3</sup> Their living conditions are perhaps not as severe as in other countries, because of Sweden's generous welfare protection system, but as a group, they are still excluded from mainstream society. According to the government commission on Romani rights (SOU 2010:55 2010), the vast majority of adult Roma (80%) are unemployed,<sup>4</sup> most of their children do not complete primary school, a small proportion attends secondary school and even fewer university. Their living standard is much below the average, which results in more health problems and lower life expectancy compared with the majority of the population. According to the same report, the Roma remain the most discriminated against group in Swedish society. There is discrimination in public places, e.g., in restaurants, hotels and shops, as well as in housing when they want to rent or buy apartments. In the labour market they are discriminated against at all stages of the employment process: when they apply for a job, during the interviews and even in cases where they manage to get a job.

---

1 SOU 2010:55 2010; Broberg & Tydén 1991; Hagerman 2006.

2 This summary of the more recent history of the Roma in Sweden relies on SOU 2010:55 (2010), ch. 3 and 4.

3 These figures are only rough estimates because there is no practice of ethnic registration in Sweden.

4 These are also only rough estimates. Since Sweden does not record ethnicity, there is no public data on ethnic-related unemployment or figures on how many Roma are enrolled in employment services. The estimates therefore rely on other, less reliable forms of data gathering, for example, reports from Roma representatives or through limited surveys.

A number of national as well as international organisations<sup>5</sup> have criticised this situation. A 2004 report by the Ombudsman for Ethnic Discrimination (DO 2004) noted that the Roma are largely excluded from the labour market and that there are very few Roma working in national and local authorities today, despite the fact that their expertise is indispensable in schools, hospitals and other public institutions. Similar criticism was presented by the Children's Ombudsman (Barnombudsmannen rapporterar 2005) and The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket 1999).

Such was the Romani situation when on 9 February 2000 Sweden ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The groups which then were recognised as a historic national minorities were Sami, Finns, Torne Valley Finns, Roma and Jews in minority languages, Sami, Finnish, Torne Valley Finnish (Meänkielli), Romani čhib and Yiddish (Rodell Olgaç 2006). By ratifying the Framework Convention, Sweden has committed itself to promote political, economic, social, and cultural equality between the Roma and the rest of the population, as well as to protect the Romani language and contribute to its development opportunities.

The specific policy measure that followed the recognition of the Roma as a national minority in Sweden was the 2002 establishment of the Council for Roma Issues, as an advisory body to the Government. The Council included representatives of the Romani national organisations, representatives of Government Offices, the Ombudsman for Ethnic Discrimination, the Integration Board, the Living History Forum and the Swedish Association of Local and Regional Authorities.

The Council for Roma Issues was replaced in 2006 by the Delegation for Roma Issues with the aim of being active on a national level in order to improve the situation of the Roma in Sweden, and to help break their political and social marginalisation. The Delegation's work resulted in the new national strategy for the Roma in Sweden, officially presented in a recent government commission on Romani rights (SOU 2010:55 2010).

## **2. The New National Strategy for the Roma in Sweden**

The new national strategy for the Roma in Sweden has three main goals (SOU 2010:55 2010, 38):

1. To close the welfare divide between the Roma and mainstream society;
2. To reduce the power deficit of the Roma; and
3. To bridge the confidence gap and build Romani trust in state institutions and mainstream society.

An important precondition for realising these goals is to change previously dominant attitudes by starting with a redefinition of the problem. Deprivation among the Roma is not a consequence of their own way of life, low education, and lack of awareness of their rights. On the contrary, as was expressed in DO (2004, 31), their disadvantaged position in the labour market and in society at large is an obvious result of the longstanding and pervasive discrimination their community has lived with and the difficulty of breaking the

---

5 For international criticism of the Roma situation in Sweden see, for instance, ECRI's Second report on Sweden (2003); and UN CERD (Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 2007) Reports submitted by states parties under article 9 – Sweden.



long-established offensive and derogatory attitudes that the Roma often face when in contact with mainstream society.

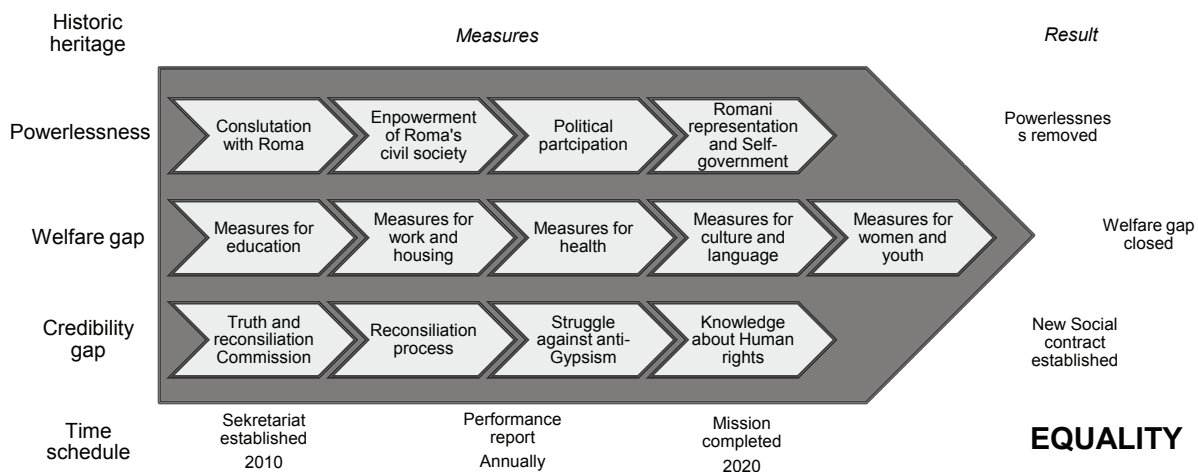
This approach has moved the focus from the minority group to mainstream society. If society in general is historically responsible for the Roma's situation, it should also take full responsibility for their integration. The first prerequisite is recognition of the Roma as a national minority; this process, described above, started in 2000.

The second important precursor is to change the focus from patron-client where the state is always benefactor and the Roma the object of the various policies. The political discourse which treats the Roma as "the other" must be replaced with a human rights discourse. The Roma have the right to political participation and influence, the right to education, the right to work, the right to housing, the right to health and welfare protection, the right to their own culture and language, the right not to be discriminated against, etc., and the role of authorities is to protect and secure these rights. This necessitates a third set of conditions whereby the Roma themselves are included in all national, regional and local projects aimed to help their integration, while at the same time all relevant societal institutions and organisations must make similar coordinated efforts towards this aim.

Finally, the fourth essential precondition for policies to be successful is awareness that the situation requires long-term, sustained and determined policy measures (SOU 2010:55 2010). The consequences of 500 years of oppression cannot be removed with short-term, ad-hoc or stop-and-go policies. The Swedish new national strategy for the Roma, initiated by The Delegation for Roma Issues and formulated in SOU 2010:55 (2010), estimates that the strategy should be implemented in the course of 20 years.

In sum, the new Swedish strategy for the Roma relies on at least four essential principles. These are recognition, partnership (inclusion of both the Roma and all relevant societal institutions and organisations in the implementation of the strategy), human rights, and sustained policy measures.

Figure 1: Swedish National Strategy for Roma (SOU 2010:55 2010)



The political goals that have been briefly presented above are unquestionably positive and progressive, viewed from the perspective of human rights. But how realistic are they in the given political and social reality? This reality is not only characterised by deeply biased, humiliating and oppressive discourses that still dominate the majority view of the Roma, but also by the real consequences of long-term historical experiences of persecution, discrimination and suffering that the Romani population have been exposed to. In what follows these issues will be discussed in two domains: political measures targeting

education, and political measures targeting the protection and development of Romani culture and language.

## **2.1 Measures for Education**

### **2.1.1 Actual Situation**

#### *High Level of Truancy*

The actual situation with education of Romani children is characterised by high levels of truancy<sup>6</sup> and poor study results, which means that many do not complete primary school and very few continue education at secondary school (Skolverket 1999; Skolverket 2007; Liedholm & Lindberg 2010; SOU 2010:55 2010). These studies show also that many students have ambitions to move on to secondary school but very few succeed in this. More detailed studies at a national level are not available, but some local studies on these issues show that, for example, in Malmö only 450 out of 1,000 Romani children aged 7–15 regularly attend school, while 550 have a high degree of absence, or do not attend school at all (Malmö Stadskontor 2008). At the same time only 50 students out of 1,000 continue their education at secondary schools. More recent statistical figures on a national level are, as mentioned, not available, but they presumably do not differ essentially from the figures representing the situation in Malmö.

If centuries of discrimination and exclusion partly explain the educational situation, the dominant explanation is, in the first place, their traditions and customs. Thus school absence and poor study results are according to these arguments the result of:

- A weak study tradition among the Romani older generation, i.e., the parents of today's students have little faith in the Swedish educational system due to their own experience of distrust, mass bullying, prejudice and discrimination;
- The Romani language has no written tradition;
- The Roma feel inferior in their contacts with the majority of schools;
- The Romani students have none of their own as role models;
- The Roma avoid education and the labour market because of fear of assimilation;
- Many Romani girls get married and have children when they are 15–16 years old, resulting in their absence from school; and
- boys are normally considered as adults already at age of 15.

Such fixed notions about the low educational attainment of Romani students are quite common not only among non-Romani teachers and school officials, but also in the media, official reports and even some academic texts. Some scholars (see for instance Rodell Olgaç 2006 and Horvante 2009) however have criticised such views as one-sided and superficial.

According to Rodell Olgaç (2006) these fixed notions about the Romani minority may have contributed to the fact that schools in general have mainly ignored the responsibility for changing attitudes towards the Roma, as well as their responsibility to make sure

---

6 At the end of the 1990s, for example, the overall school absenteeism of Roma in Stockholm in the school years seven to nine was on average 28%. At the same time, more than one third of Roma pupils had an absence of 40% (Romska elever. Hur går det för dem i skolan 1998, cited in Skolverket 1999).

that both Romani children and their parents are treated with proper respect. Instead, the responsibility for attitudes and attainment has been mainly laid at the door of the Romani children and families themselves. What is more, the culturalist discourses which relate the poor school performance of the Roma to their culture is still commonly present within the Swedish school system.

This is the wrong way to go, continues Rodell Olgaç (*ibid.*). Instead, the focus should be moved to other relevant aspects of the problem. One of them is the fact that school teachers and other officials do not even try to do anything about the absence of Romani students. “When they are absent, nobody asks about them. Once they arrive at school, they are most often not offered the kind of education they need and are entitled to. In both cases the result is poor school performance” (*ibid.*, 120). What is happening here is that many teachers are inclined to reason: “We do not care anymore, because it is meaningless, they wouldn’t come [i.e., increase their school attendance] anyway.” There are very few teachers that look at the problem from the other side and think: “Perhaps they don’t come because we don’t care.”

Another relevant aspect is the weak and irregular contacts between school and Romani students’ parents. Here again, many teachers do not make contact with parents, because they presume that parents do not care about either the school or their children. There are very few teachers who reason that perhaps parents do not show sufficient interest in their children’s schooling just because they are very seldom contacted by the school.

This kind of wide spread indifference towards the Romani students and their needs, in combination with the continuing mass bullying and abusive treatment that Romani children are exposed to, results in high levels of truancy and low motivation among Romani students. Furthermore, Romani history, language and culture are more or less completely absent from both the curriculum and the school environment, even though schools are obliged, according to law and other relevant national policy documents, to actively contribute and promote knowledge about minority cultures through the general curriculum. Antti Ylikiiskilä (in Rodell Olgaç 2006) for example examined 21 textbooks in Swedish and nine history textbooks for secondary schools published after 2000, and found only two references to the Roma and their culture or history. In one textbook there is a picture of a young Romani girl in traditional clothes and in another book the Roma were mentioned in a text designed to practice punctuation.

Finally, an additional factor that schools are responsible for, and which contributes to the poor performance of Romani students, is so-called ability grouping, where students who have the same type of difficulties are collected in special education groups in order to be helped in the most effective way. In reality this educational strategy indicates the rather low level of expectations that schools and teachers have of these students, which in its turn often results in an even lower quality of teaching.

Despite all these obstacles, there are according to Rodell Olgaç (*ibid.*) an increasing number of indications that experience of “school as a threat” among the Romani people is gradually weakening and being replaced by the discourse of “school as a possibility”. This new attitude is actually a necessary precondition for any successful action aimed at improving the situation of Romani students in Swedish schools.

### *Mother Tongue*

All relevant policy documents agree that using the mother tongue is of crucial importance for the development of children’s identity, general knowledge and, of course, as a

learning tool in all areas of education (Skolverket 2002). According to the National Agency for Education (Skolverket 1999, 12), the mother tongue plays a particularly important role for Romani students because it improves the chance of the Romani being accepted in school. It also sends an important signal to parents that society respects them and their culture and it establishes the teacher of their native language as a working model for the Romani students. Furthermore, it helps Romani children to strengthen and further develop their confidence and their thirst for knowledge.

In reality however, the mother tongue is often generally rather marginalised as a subject in most Swedish schools (Skolverket 2008; SOU 2010:55 2010). Schools often do not meet their obligation to inform parents and their children about their right to mother tongue education (Skolverket 2008). In the case of Romani čhib, there is also a general lack of qualified teachers. In the year 2005 there were not more than 15 teachers of Romani čhib in all schools in the country (Skolverket 2007). Moreover, there is deficient knowledge among the national school leaders about the fact that Romani čhib has several different dialects, and this fact requires investment in the education of different kinds of teachers. More will be said about this in following sections of the paper. Education is also affected by the lack of adequate textbooks, dictionaries and examination tools.

All this results in the fact that only 25% of all Romani children that are entitled to mother tongue education, actually attend such courses, compared with 63% of Sami children (Skolverket 2005, 58). Besides, classes in the mother tongue are most often given only once a week. There is a similar situation with other educational tools that according to the general curriculum and other policy documents should exist, but are very seldom employed in practice. Two such educational tools are bilingual education and a study guide in the native language.

According to the National Primary School Regulations (Grundskoleförordning, 2. Kap. 7§), schools can run bilingual classes using so-called social communication or the language of colloquial speech, for up to 50% of the teaching time in school years 7–9. Currently, there is only one case of such practice in the country, one bilingual class where teaching is in Romani čhib and Swedish (Skolverket 2007).

The same school regulation act (Grundskoleförordning, 5. Kap. 2§) offers possibilities for students to be given study guidance in their native language. This kind of help is however also rather rare in practice, partly because schools are reluctant to offer such help to their students (they for instance do not inform parents about this possibility), partly because of the lack of competent teachers for this task (Rodell Olgaç 2006).

### *Role of Family and Contacts with Parents*

The aim of the traditional Swedish “Gypsy policy” from 1950s and 1960s was assimilation.<sup>7</sup> The most important preconditions for this, as viewed by policy-makers at that time, were settlement projects and integration into the labour market. In the long run however, the most effective strategy was assimilation through school attendance and education. This government policy was employed through different school projects, targeting Romani children and their families. Children’s schooling was monitored and evaluated, special

---

7 This section relies on Montesino Parra (2002).

measures were undertaken to increase their attendance, their family situation was evaluated and the relationship between parents and children was studied.

The parents were deemed to be unable to recognise the schools' impact on their children's future because of their own lack of schooling. Since the parents "lacked the necessary knowledge", it was society's responsibility to teach and involve them in their new parental roles. The parents thus became the subject of so-called family therapeutic activity. This meant that the child welfare committee hired a person to give parents information about the school and also to give them support in parenting. One of the most important measures in family therapy was a "third parent institution". A person who inspired confidence in the "gypsies" would lead family sessions to thrash out concerns and problems. An important task was to help the parents to achieve "for themselves satisfactory parenting."

It is clear that the Roma were officially viewed as a "socially handicapped" group which needed help to adapt to Swedish everyday life. To the Roma this was seen as offensive and humiliating. As a reaction, they developed avoidance and resistance strategies, which resulted in them being defined by some contemporary scholars and policy makers as "helpless" and/or "unchangeable". This in its turn resulted in even stricter and more systematic measures on the part of the Swedish "social engineering machinery".

This short description of the situation from 50–60 years ago may help us understand contemporary difficulties in communication between schools and Romani families. First, it explains a great part of the Romani ambivalence to school and education. Historically, school and education have not been for them the means of liberation and progress, but rather the means of oppression and regression. Secondly, it gives us, on the one hand, some ideas about why the methods described above and the concomitant attitudes have not completely disappeared from today's society in general and from the school system in particular: on the other hand, it largely explains why actual policy measures for the improvement of relations between Romani parents and school are not successful. Here is a list of some the methods (as presented in Liedholm & Lindberg 2010) that schools in Malmö use to communicate with Romani parents:

- Home visits – both as a first meeting and at performance appraisal meetings. The experience is good. The benefits from meeting in the home mean the parents do not feel at a disadvantage and children often are proud to show off their homes.
- Performance appraisal meetings at school – Romani parents most often attend these meetings, but many of them want to have a Romani member of staff with them, which suggests that this kind of meeting can be frightening.
- Schools sometimes organise parent meetings to provide general information about the school or in connection with any general problems encountered. Romani parents often attend these meetings. Meetings with the children present, especially if the children have a part to play in the event, attract more families, including Romani parents. A measure shown to be effective is to call and remind the Romani parents about the meeting. Romani parents are said to have no calendars.
- Parent's Café and a Mothers' group are examples of activities that a school organised to increase contacts between school and home. Romani parents are reluctant to visit them.
- COPE – a course in which parents can discuss their role as parents and also foster contacts with the school. No Romani parents have attended.
- Most importantly, close daily contact between school and parents. This kind of communication between teacher and parent is common.



- Romani staff members of all categories are important links between schools and parents. The Romani people who work in schools have their own network through which they can disseminate information. It is often easier for them to make contact with Romani parents because they have the advantage of speaking the same language as the parents but are also versed in the school's rules and language. They can explain the children's behaviour and messages from parents that regular teachers might not understand. The Romani staff can give practical advice to teachers on how they should approach the Romani parents to make good contacts; and vice versa, they can tell parents as to how they should behave in their dealings with the school. The Romani staff may thus increase the parties' understanding of each other and sometimes, it has been shown, even get a positive dialogue when dialogue was not thought possible.
- Some municipalities have employed so-called parental communicators. None of them is Roma, and they have not been specifically directed at the Roma. So far they have neither managed to make good contacts with the Romani parents, nor have the Romani parents sought their help.
- Finally, a good knowledge of the Romani culture and insight into the social conditions under which Romani children live is a good basis for improving dialogue with the parents and contact with the children. Increased cultural competence among teaching staff can facilitate not only the communication between them and their students but also their educational work.

As we can see some of these methods are successful, some not. Those which are least successful, for instance the Parent's Café or the COPE courses, show also the highest degree of similarity with the notorious assimilation methods from earlier times. At the same time those methods which take as the point of departure the Roma's real needs, as defined by themselves, and which include the Roma as initiators and/or organisers of the projects, and which above all show respect for Romani students and/or their parents and recognise them as genuine subjects of the projects, have the highest chances of success.

### *Adult Education*

During the 1950s, the 1960s and even the 1970s, adult education for the Roma was viewed as a part of the "rehabilitation measures" (*rehabiliteringsåtgärder*) for this "socially handicapped group" (*socialt handikappad grupp*), with the general aim to integrating them as "useful" or "healthy" members of the population (Montesino Parra 2002, 171). We have already noted that such measures were not only unpopular among the Roma, but also ineffective. There are three main goals of the New National Strategy for Romani adult education in Sweden, namely to close the welfare divide between the Roma and mainstream society, reduce the power deficit of the Roma, and bridge the confidence gap and build Romani trust in state institutions and mainstream society (SOU 2010:55 2010).

For this purpose a number of adult education projects have been organised, carried out and evaluated during the last decade. Knowledge collected from these projects resulted in a list of necessary preconditions for successful adult education for the Roma. These include a strong anchor in the Romani community, a Romani project leader, the selection of participants according to their degree of engagement rather than their educational background, the existence of effective support for solving social problems, individualised instruction by strongly committed teachers, a decent economy during



the study period and a relatively safe economic situation after training (SOU 2010:55 2010, 349). Project assistants with a Romani language and cultural background are also needed. They should work as “cultural interpreters” between the students and others involved in teaching. They should also work actively in arranging traineeships for students, keep in touch with the students who come to school and serve as additional support for teachers during the lessons. The family and family support are also emphasised as important. Without support from the family it is not possible to carry out adult education successfully, especially for women, who are often forced into debt if they want to complete their adult education, which in principle should be free (*ibid.*).

As we can see, a decent economy during studies and compensation for lost income during the time that is invested in education is a recurring issue in this context. A solution for this problem, as proposed by the Delegation for Roma issues (see the proceeding section), is the “creation of a government grant for training in local study associations” and possibly “cancellation of student debt for basic adult education for people with Romani language and cultural background” (SOU 2010:55 2010). Some representatives of the Roma however claim that the state should provide financial compensation for past discrimination, racism and exclusion from the education that the Roma minority suffered. They argue that this could be achieved, for example, by providing financial compensation which should make it possible for members of the Romani community to attend and carry out certain training or educational courses (Rodell Olgaç 2006). An example of such compensation already exists in Norway, where some Roma (travelers) have received 60,000 Norway crowns as *ex-gratia* compensation for the historical injustice they endured (*ibid.*).

In the following section we present official proposals aimed at improving the situation for Romani students in Swedish schools, presented by The Delegation for Roma Issues (SOU 2010:55 2010).

### **2.1.2. The Delegation’s Proposals**

The delegation proposed that:

- the State School Inspectorate should examine the quality of native language teaching in the preschools and primary schools as well as the quality of study guidance for students with a Romani language and cultural background;
- the National Agency for Education, in cooperation and consultation with Romani representatives, should describe and analyse the situation of Romani children in preschools;
- the government should establish grants to municipalities, which will then be expected, in consultation and cooperation with the Romani minority, to implement various measures in preschools and elementary schools in order to improve the Romani school experience;
- the Equality Ombudsman, in collaboration with Child and School Student Representatives, Children’s Ombudsman and the Work Environment Authority, should lead a unified effort to create safe conditions for Romani children in school;
- the government should establish grants to enhance the competence of municipal staff who have experience with the Romani language and culture;
- the National Education Inspectorate should examine the basic skills of students with a Romani language and cultural background to assess how effective are local support programs for Romani students;

- the government should establish grants for training in local study associations (*“studieförbund”*), folk secondary schools and municipal adult education, for courses designed for Romani students;
- the possibilities for cancelling student debt for basic adult education and the introduction of full grants for study for the Roma should be investigated;
- a special state subsidy for the production of teaching materials in Romani čhib for all levels of the school system should be established. The Language Council and the Romani Language Committee should collaborate with the National Agency for Education to plan and be responsible for providing teaching materials at the right levels and in sufficient quantities (SOU 2010:55 2010, 303–304).

In sum the aims of these proposals are to examine the actual situation and needs; to secure safe conditions for Romani children in schools; to create not only good preconditions for the education of these children within the regular education system, but also to stimulate the adult Romani population to complete their education within the framework of some adult educational programs; and particularly importantly, to improve the competence of teachers and other municipal staff with a Romani cultural background; to improve production and supply of teaching materials (text books, dictionaries, teaching tools for distance teaching, etc.) in Romani čhib.

But this is not all. The Delegation pointed out that where reference to national minorities is made in other text books and teaching material the descriptions are often rather stereotyped (Karlsson 2004; SOU 2010:55 2010). It is therefore essential to include more information about the national minorities in general, and Romani people in particular, in text books within other subjects such as history, social studies, and religious studies.

## **2.2. Measures for culture and language**

### **2.2.1. *Romani čhib in Sweden***

Historically, the Romani people and their language have often been viewed in rather simplistic ways. Dividing the Roma into groups, “Tattare” (or travelers) and “Swedish, Finish and Non-Nordic Gypsies” was significant in this context, and contributed to the stigmatising and discriminating strategies towards the Romani population. Unfortunately, this kind of simplification and un-nuanced knowledge about the Roma and their language and culture still significantly characterises not only public and media discourse on the Roma in Sweden, but also policy makers’ views on the Roma and Romani čhib. This is unfortunate because having the majority population well-informed about minority groups is, as we have already mentioned, a necessary precondition for achieving the political ambition of improving the position of these groups in society.

In particular, with regard to Romani čhib, knowledge of which varieties of the Romani language exist in Sweden and how they relate to each other is of importance in the design of the mother tongue education, interpreting and translation activities and the development of Romani media, such as language tools (dictionaries and grammars) and textbooks. This knowledge is, according to Bijvoet & Fraurud (2007), also important for the development of the Romani written language, and in the long run for the future harmonisation of different variants of the Romani čhib in Sweden.

The oldest variants of Romani čhib<sup>8</sup> which are still in use in Sweden, are Swedish Travelers Romani and Kaale. These two variants come from the same roots in Romani čhib which was first spoken by Romani groups immigrating to Scandinavia 500 years ago, but they are considerably influenced by long contact with Swedish or, in the case of Kaale, with the Finnish language.

From the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century new groups of Roma who spoke Vlach varieties of the Romani language (Kelderash, Lovari and Tjurari) immigrated to Sweden. Through centuries-long contact with the Swedish language, these varieties developed into what was called “Swedish Gypsy”.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Roma from many continental European countries arrived in Sweden. They spoke different varieties of Romani, with roots in France, Spain, Poland, Russia, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, including Kelderash, Lovari, Arli and Romungri.

The most recent immigration since the 1980s and 1990s is mainly a result of the Balkan wars. This is a rather heterogeneous group, which is often called “newly arrived Roma”, and they speak, apart from varieties that already exist in Sweden: Arli, Bugurdji/Kovatji and Gurbeti/Djambazi.

In addition to the above-mentioned varieties of the Romani language, others that are commonly spoken today include Chaladitki, Manuschi and Sinti. Regarding the mutual intelligibility of these varieties, speakers of Kelderash, Lovari and Tjurari can understand each other. Likewise, speakers of Arli, Bugurdji/Kovatjki and Gurbeti/Djambazi have no major problems communicating with one another. Interestingly, this problem of mutual intelligibility does not hold for Swedish Travelers’ Romani, which during the last 500 years has been affected by the dominant Swedish and Kaale, (which in itself has similarly been affected by Finnish). Swedish Travelers’ Romani is today in terms of grammar very similar to Swedish, and even lexically Swedish has almost taken over.

This fact has an important consequence for actual language support policy measures. Bijvoet & Fraurud (2007) pointed out that the language support measures need to be suited to each Romani group’s current needs. The heterogeneity among groups requires a different but similar treatment. For example, for those who have almost lost their language, the language support measures need to include efforts towards revitalisation of the language, while those whom for the varieties of Roma are very much alive, policy measures are needed to increase the opportunities to use the language in more situations, both in speech and writing.

Apart from this, extensive policy measures need to be implemented in order to increase knowledge about the Roma and their language and culture among the majority of the population. In this respect they propose a list of concrete policy measures for maintaining and developing the Romani language in Sweden, as well as for increasing knowledge about Romani culture and history:

- Systematic monitoring and evaluating of the various types of concern about the Romani language;
- Investment in targeted courses that increase the Roma’s opportunity to influence and have power over their own situation, such as courses in media production, knowledge about being in charge of associations and minority rights;

---

8 This short presentation of the variants of Romani čhib in Sweden relies on Bijvoet & Fraurud (2007).

- Increased funding for Romani media: increased broadcasting time and dedicated editorial staff of Radio Romano, TV broadcasting in Romani, as well as increased cooperation with the UR (the Swedish national educational broadcasting company);
- Increased funding for magazines and newspapers, of different varieties and for different audiences;
- Production of Romani teaching materials for all levels from preschool to adults and of different types: textbooks, exercise books, teachers' guides;
- A clarification of which authority is in charge of development of teaching materials and improvement of international cooperation and exchange in the production of teaching materials;
- Earmarked funds for the publishing of Romani literature – for all ages – and support for cooperation with the International Writers Association (IRWA);
- Coordination of advice and recommendations to the libraries in terms of purchasing this literature (Bijvoet & Fraurud 2007, 27).

Knowledge about the complexity of Romani čhib in Sweden is not only important in terms of language support, but also in terms of effective improvement of the school situation for Romani children. For example, as was argued in SOU 2010:55 2010, within the same school or the same class there may be Romani students who speak Arli as native speakers and whose parents came to Sweden from the Balkans, along with other Romani students who have Finnish as their strongest language and therefore have the right to education in and about Kaale, a language that they are only vaguely familiar with. The school administration must realise that they may need to provide different instruction and different teachers in Romani čhib for these two groups.

This example also highlights the imperative of close cooperation between those making policies and those who are charged with helping the Romani people achieve an education which respects their culture and language. Mother tongue learning requires competent teachers, which in its turn necessitates including Romani čhib and Romani history and culture in the academic curriculum and as an academic research field. One of the more concrete measures in this respect that has already been undertaken in Sweden is the grant which was given in 2006 to Linköping University in order to establish and develop higher education programs in Romani čhib. The result was two 7.5 courses,<sup>9</sup> one in Romani čhib and the other Romani culture.

The objective of the first course was to describe the Romani čhib, its history, dialects and contemporary usage; to relate the words and phrases on Romani čhib to Romani speaker's culture; and to analyze the chosen texts and songs in Romani čhib.

The other course focused on identity formation processes at individual and group level. The course is built around four elements. The first part deals with identity and ethnicity in a general perspective. The second part focuses on minorities, their rights and responsibilities, and discrimination. In the third and fourth stages cultural expressions of identity formation are discussed, with special emphasis on history and historiography and the role of music.

---

9 In Sweden, high school studies are measured in points: 30 per semester constitute a full time course. They are most often divided into four 7.5 courses or two 15 courses.

Beside these courses, at Uppsala University there is currently a 7.5 course in Romani culture, and at Södertörn University a 7.5 course in Romani history.

An additional measure that has been proposed by the Delegation for Roma Issues (SOU 2010:55 2010) was the establishment of authorisation requirements, including an examination, for interpreters and translators of Romani čhib.

I have chosen to finish this report with a quotation from the “European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” (Council of Europe 1992), which in a meaningful way shows the importance of the protection of the Romani culture in general and their language in particular: “There is a link between protection of the Romani language and the Roma’s integration in the countries where they live. Protection and promotion of Romani teaches both the Roma and their non-Roma neighbours that [the] Roma have a place in that society.”



## References

- Barnombudsmannen rapporterar, 2005. "De vill att jag ska vara osynlig" Romska barn och ungdomar berättar om sin vardag. br2005:07, <http://www.barnombudsmannen.se/Global/Publikationer/Romska%20barn%202005.pdf> (30. July 2012).
- Bijvoet, E. & Fraurud, K., 2007. *Det romska språket och romsk språkvård i Sverige*. Stockholm.
- Broberg, G. & Tydén, M., 1991. *Oönskad i folkhemmet: rashygien och sterilisering i Sverige*. Gidlunds, Stockholm.
- Council of Europe, 1992. *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. Strasbourg, 5 November 2005.
- Council of Europe, 1995. *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and Explanatory Report*. Strasbourg, 1 February 1995.
- DO, 2004. *Diskriminering av romer i Sverige – rapport från DO:s projekt åren 2002 och 2003 om åtgärder för att förebygga och motverka etnisk diskriminering av romer*.
- ECRI (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance), 2003. *Second report on Sweden*. CRI (2003) 7. Adopted 28 June 2002. Strasbourg, 15 April 2003, [http://hudoc.ecri.coe.int/XMLEcri/ENGLISH/Cycle\\_02/02\\_CbC\\_eng/02-cbc-sweden-eng.pdf](http://hudoc.ecri.coe.int/XMLEcri/ENGLISH/Cycle_02/02_CbC_eng/02-cbc-sweden-eng.pdf) (30 July 2012).
- Fraurud, K. & Hyltenstam, K., 1999. Språkkontakt och språkbevarande: romani i Sverige. In K. Hyltenstam (ed.) *Sveriges sju inhemska språk: ett minoritetsperspektiv*. Studentlitteratur, Lund.
- Hagerman, M., 2006. *Det rena landet: om konsten att uppfinna sina förfäder*. Prisma, Stockholm.
- Horvatne, I., 2009. *Förändringar i romers utbildningssituation i Sverige*. Malmö.
- Karlsson, T., 2004. *Exotiska renskötare och trolltrummans magi. Samer och samiska frågor i grundskolans läromedel för de samhällsorienterade ämnena*. Institutionen för barn- och ungdomspedagogik, Umeå Universitet.
- Liedholm, M. & Lindberg, G., 2010. *Romska barn i skolan – rapport från Malmö, stencil, underlagsrapport till Delegationen för romska frågor*, Department of Sociology, Lund University, Lund.
- Malmö Stadskontor, 2008. *Romers situation i Malmö. En rapport om Malmös minoritetspolitik utifrån romernas perspektiv*, Malmö Stadskontor Avdelning för Integration och arbetsmarknad, Malmö.
- Montesino Parra, N., 2002. *Zigenarfrågan. Intervention och romantik*. Lunds Dissertations in Social Work 6. Lund, Socialhögskolan, Lunds universitet.
- Rodell Olgaç, C., 2006. *Den romska minoriteten I majoritetssamhällets skola: Från hot till möjlighet*. HLS Förlag, Stockholm.
- Skolverket, 1999. *Romer och den svenska skolan*, Dnr 98:2652.
- Skolverket, 2002. *Flera språk – fler möjligheter – utveckling av modersmålsstödet och modersmålsundervisningen*, Dnr 01-01:2751.
- Skolverket, 2005. *De nationella minoriteternas utbildningssituation*, Rapport 2005:272.
- Skolverket, 2007. *Romer i skolan – en fördjupad studie*, Rapport 2007:292.
- Skolverket, 2008. *Med annat modersmål – elever i grundskolan och skolans verksamhet*, Rapport 2008:321.
- SOU 2010:55, 2010. *Romers rätt – en strategi för romer i Sverige*. Fritzes, Stockholm.
- UN CERD (Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination), 2007. *Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 9 of the Convention – Sweden*, CERD/C/SWE/18, 22 December 2006, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G07/416/18/PDF/G0741618.pdf?OpenElement> (30 July 2012).



# The Education of the Roma in Croatia: Statistical and Empirical Insights

## 1. Introduction

The Roma are a specific ethnic group, significantly different in their characteristics from other ethno-national groups in a society. The difference between this ethnic group and others is the result of a subcultural way of living and the tradition of adopted and transferred social patterns. Their arrival in Europe from India in the 9<sup>th</sup> century marked the arrival of radically Others, whose way of living, language, and skin colour are significantly different from the other local ethnic groups. According to Hrvatić (2004, 369), the Roma came to Croatia in the 14<sup>th</sup> century: “The Roma have been living on the territory of today’s Croatia for more than six centuries. The first written document in which the Roma are mentioned dates back to 1362 in Dubrovnik. Some ten years later (1373), they are mentioned in Zagreb...” The Roma are always and everywhere “Strangers”. They are a distinct entity within a system, and their modest capacity, be this material, financial, cultural or political, leads members of this ethnic community to an almost permanent apprehension about their own identity and additionally reinforces their marginalisation and segregation. Numerous Romani destinies are created and disappear in this inter-relationship (identity-diversity-capacity) (Pusić 1995), while their social position and status are defined, for a longer period of time, in a negative way. For the Romani identity in these new circumstances, in which they should be more included in a society on the normative as well as on the functional level, education is of first-rate importance. Without a better education, the Roma will remain on the margins of

social events, as a kind of European pariah,<sup>1</sup> segregated from other citizens of the countries they live in.

Although, as empirical research analysed in this work will show, often not even education can end the inferior Romani relationship to and their exclusion from society. Obstacles remain even after education is finished, which has a very enervating effect on the rest of the Romani community. In Croatia, 22 national minorities, among them the Roma, are recognized and explicitly mentioned in the Constitutional law on the rights of national minorities that regulates the education of national minorities, and in school practice 3 educational models function for national minorities' members: A, B, and C (see below). National minorities' members realize the right to education in their own language and script, based on the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities from 2002 and the Act on Use of Language and Script of National Minorities from 2000.

What do the three models, according to which young members of national minorities participate in classes and acquire the norms and values of civilisation in kindergartens, elementary and high schools and at the universities, look like and how do they differ?

Model A is surely the optimal one from the standpoint of preserving language and culture, and thus also the identity of a national minority. It consists of the kind of programme which in its entirety is implemented in the language and script of the national minority in question, with obligatory learning of the Croatian language taught during the same number of school hours in which the minority language is taught. The most numerous and traditionally well-organised national minorities (Italian, Serbian, Hungarian, and Czech) implement this model in Croatia.

Model B is foreseen for situations in which a national minority is less homogeneous and more mixed with others in the country. According to this model, classes are held in two languages, so that natural science subjects (mathematics, physics, biology, chemistry, etc.) are taught in the Croatian language, and social science subjects (history, languages, literature, sociology, etc.) are taught in the language of the national minority.

According to model C, classes are held in the Croatian language with an extra two to five school hours intended for learning and nurturing the language and culture of the national minority. An extra two to five school hours per week include learning the language and literature, geography, history, music, and art of the national minority.

There are also special forms of education for members of national minorities, such as summer and winter schools, correspondence classes, long-distance learning, etc., which are organised first and foremost for those students who do not have the possibility to attend regular classes according to models A, B, or C.

This article analyses the Republic of Croatia Ministry of Science, Education and Sports Report on the education of the Roma, from nursery school education to higher education, in the last few years. Moreover, by analysing and interpreting the results obtained with the focus group method among members of other ethno-national minorities in the city of Zagreb, a method that was also conducted with Romani representatives, opinions on education, national identity and employment of the actual actors in the Romani com-

---

1 In the Indian caste system being a member of the Pariahs means being of the lowest kind of human being and not belonging to any caste. Hancock, a Roma himself, with the notion of Pariah in the title, implied the content of his whole work (Hancock 2006).

munity will be presented. In this analysis, Romani identity and the connection between education and employment are the central themes.

## **2. Education of the Roma in Croatia: Statistical and Empirical Data**

The education of the Roma in Croatia is part of the Croatian educational system for national minorities. Except for the A, B, and C models (see above), special programmes for the inclusion of this population into Croatia's educational system are particularly important for the Roma. The educational goals of the Roma are linked to the fight against discrimination and poverty. In the framework of the educational programme and the set goals, among other needs mentioned, is that of educating associate staff for work with Romani parents, who would visit the Romani settlements and encourage parents to have better and more successful cooperation with schools and greater care for their children's education. The Ministry of Education until the school year 2008–09 supplied free textbooks (the measure was abolished due to the shortage of financial funds), while units of local and regional self-government (municipalities, cities, counties) supplied the means for transportation of elementary school students. The goal is also to create the pre-conditions for staying in school after class hours and to increase the number of classes in which Romani students are integrated. For a quality education, the state provides, on different levels, scholarships<sup>2</sup> and accommodation of students in student dormitories.

There are many obstacles to the education of the Roma, from the extremely low educational level of the parents<sup>3</sup>, and a poor or insufficient knowledge of the official language of the country they live and work in, to the hard socio-economical circumstances in which their families live. The marginalisation of this ethnic community, as Šućur (2000, 216–222) writes, has three basic dimensions: economic, spatial and political. Economic marginalisation is manifested through dependence on others (welfare help), low respectability and meagre incomes from traditional Romani occupations. Poverty is constantly reproduced, as Đurić (1987) would say, like “vicious circles of hell”. Spatial marginalisation is manifested in a reduction to ethnic ghettos, particularly in the larger cities where the Roma inhabit the periphery. Political marginalisation is manifested as a low level of Roma inclusion in government and power structures, although relations are here gradually changing (a Roma was elected into Croatian Parliament, Councils of the Romani National Minority are being organised, etc.) (Šućur 2000). All of these handicaps make it hard for Romani young people, right from the start, to follow the school curricula and these handicaps create significant obstacles to their integration into Croatian society.

The Romani population in Croatia have characteristic language/dialects differences, which also carry religious markers. Mišetić (2005, 120) says:

---

2 Every high-school student receives a scholarship in the amount of 500 Kuna per month (around 70 EUR), i.e. 5,000 Kuna per year, under the condition that he/she declares himself/herself a member of the Romani national minority.

3 According to 2001 Census, the educational standard of the Roma in Croatia is very low and is significantly different from the average. Only 18.8% of the Roma older than 15 have finished elementary school (all eight grades). When to this is added the 41.7% of the Roma who have not completed elementary school education and the 33% who have not finished a single grade in elementary school, the total is 74.3% with no or minimal education. In comparison, in Croatia as a whole, 15.7% of the population who have not finished elementary school (Pokos 2005).

The members of the dialect group *Romani Čhib* are statistically significant members of the Islamic religious community and most often live in Istria, Zagreb and the Zagreb county, and Primorsko-Goranska county. Members of the *Ljimba d' bjaš* dialect group mostly come from the Christian religious circle (mostly Catholics, there are some Orthodox), and most often live in Međimurje county.

One of the difficulties of social integration is also a lack of “mediators”, those who can introduce other Roma into society. Or, as Štambuk (2005, 22) notes, “the Roma community does not have its prominent autochthonous social and cultural élites which would serve as mediators in the relations between the ‘global’ society and their small, minority society.” Given that the goal is the social integration of the Roma into Croatian society, it is necessary to invest in Romani education, from nursery school to higher and adult education. For the education of the Roma, due to their specific situation, it is important to include more actors working in mutual cooperation: students, parents, schools, local governments, scientific institutions, non-governmental organisations, and the Roma community (Hrvatić 2005). With this cooperation, it is possible to gradually include the Roma into school systems, but also into other forms of functional integration (jobs, responsibility towards the community/state, etc.) As Hrvatić (2005) argues with reference to the Roma, it is possible, in this way, to avoid this peculiar approach, a style built in constant conflict between isolation and assimilation.

## **2.1. Statistical Data**

Within the framework of the action plan Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015<sup>4</sup>, the inclusion of Romani children and students into Croatian education is being implemented at various (pre-)school levels. The government’s reports issued in 2011 provide information on the nursery school, elementary school, high-school, and higher education of the Roma in Croatia. By analyzing and interpreting these data, this text will offer an insight into the methods and the range of solution of the problems involved in Romani education in the Republic of Croatia.

### *Nursery school Education (2009–10, 2010–11)*

As far as Romani nursery school education is concerned, the number of Roma enrolments is gradually increasing. In programmes for which financing has been approved, in 2009, 113 Roma children were included, and 123 children in 2010. In 2009, there were 14 such programmes, while a year later there were already 23. Within the framework of the Action Plan Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015, the state co-finances the parents’ share<sup>5</sup> for members of the Romani national minority in programmes of nursery school

---

4 With the aim of taking measures for the improvement of the living conditions of the Roma national minority and their inclusion in social and public life, parallel to implementing the National Program for the Roma from 2003, the Republic of Croatia expressed its readiness to access the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015, together with some other countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Montenegro), which was initiated by the World Bank and the Open Society Institute. In this way, the basic goals of U.N. Millennium Development and EU Program of Social Inclusion are implemented in a programme intended for the most sensitive minority population in Europe, namely the Roma.

5 Co-financing of the parents’ share is a measure which has been implemented since the fiscal year 2009, i.e., the 2008–09 school year.

education. However, the overall number of Romani children in nursery school training and in nursery school classes, in 2008–09, amounted to 692, of which there were 378 in nursery school training and 314 in nursery school classes. In 2009–10, 550 children were registered all together, of whom 370 were in nursery school training and 180 in nursery school classes.

#### *Primary School Education (2009–10, 2010–11)*

At the beginning of the school year 2009–10, the number of Roma children entering primary school amounted to 4,186 students, of whom 2,176 were male and 2,010 female. At the end of the same school year, there were 4,172 students registered (2,131 male and 2,041 female). In the school year 2010–11, a total number of 4,435 Roma students were registered, of whom 2,246 were male and 2,189 female. In primary schools in 2009–10, there were 23 Romani instructional associates financed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, and 2 more financed by the local government.<sup>6</sup> With respect to communication with parents, in 2009–10, parent interviews as a pedagogical measure were not realized. 2 teacher-parent meetings were held per year in each department.

Romani children are included in primary school education in the same way as all other children. The aim of this measure is to include all child members of the Roma national minority into the educational system. Over previous years there was a continuous rise in the number of students who are members of the Romani national minority in primary schools. Equality in numbers of male and female students is the result of mandatory primary education, so in this phase of schooling there is none of the difference which is traditionally present in the different status of Romani men and women.

#### *Secondary Education (2009–10, 2010–11)*

The number of Romani students enrolled in secondary education, although increasing overall, is rapidly decreasing in relation to the number of those enrolled in primary schools. At the beginning of school year 2008–09, the overall number of Romani students in secondary schools amounted to 244, of whom 145 were male and 99 female. At the end of that school year, there were 224 students (129 male, 95 female). At the beginning of 2009–10 school year, there were 304 students (166 male, 138 female) and at the end of that year there were 290 students (154 male, 136 female.) At the beginning of the following school year, 2010–11, 341 students were enrolled (177 male, 164 female). The relative decrease of Romani students enrolled in secondary schools can be explained by the fact that secondary school education is not mandatory, and also by the lack of motivation and of financial means in the Romani population. Moreover, traditional early entrance into adult life, from work at a young age in traditional and new Romani occupations to early marriage, also influences the significant decrease of young Roma participating in secondary school education compared to primary education.

---

6 In the PHARE Program of support to the Roma, which was realized in 2008, three training seminars for assistants were held (8 modules with an overall duration of 30 hours); after the first and the second seminar the assistants had two-month practical work in a school with the help of a designated teacher-mentor.



In the report issued by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (chapter: Higher Education), it is emphasized that progress in the increase of the number of Roma national minority students is apparent. The cited data come from requests for scholarships, and this source, due to ethno-mimicry or other reasons for unreliable self-identification, makes this number not accurate enough. In the academic year 2006–07, there were 10 Roma students at Croatian higher education institutions, of whom 7 were female and 3 male. Furthermore, in the next academic year, 2007–08, there were 12 students (8 female and 4 male). In the academic year 2008–09, the number increased to 20 (11 male and 8 female). The data for the academic year 2009–10 show that there were 25 students (12 male and 13 female), and in the current academic year 2010–11 there are 28 Roma students registered. Compared to high school, the Roma interest for university education is significantly lower. However, progress has also been registered here, as well as a constant increase in the number of Roma students and a decrease in the initial lack of balance between male and female students from the Roma population.

Table 1: Nursery school and school institutions and Romani registrations, school years 2009–10 and 2010–11

Educational institution	School year 2009–10	School year 2010–11
Nursery school	550	No data available
Primary school	4,186	4,435
Secondary school	304	341
Higher education	25	28

What do these data on the education of the Roma in Croatia show? If one follows the yearly progress, it is evident that the number of Romani students is increasing. The programmes which the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Croatia organises and implements in the Romani population give results. However, differences between certain school systems are still quite large and the inclusion of young Roma in education is still insufficient in both numbers and quality. Nursery school education involved a smaller level of attendance, which is the consequence of material poverty and insufficient parental care for the inclusion of children in nursery school programmes. With the state financing at this level the situation in that segment of education is gradually improving. The situation is significantly better in primary school education, which is mainly connected to the fact that education at this level is mandatory and also to logistical support by the Croatian government at all levels, from local and regional to central state government. The participation of the Roma in the educational system decreases already in high-school, and especially at universities, exactly where, from the standpoint of their inclusion into the Croatian society, their education would be functionally the most important.



## 2.2. Empirical results

In the spring of 2011, with the use of focus group<sup>7</sup> method, materials were gathered from which one can find out what the opinions of Roma representatives about education of the Roma in Croatia are. In an extensive interview we found out about many problems which the Roma face, not only those from the corpus of national minority issues, but also some very specific ones that are encountered only by the Roma. It is exactly these specific details that show us all the hardship of Romani existence and the many difficult obstacles which are present in the process of inclusion of the Roma into the Croatian society. In the premises of the Council of the Romani National Minority of the City of Zagreb interviews were held with Romani representatives. We here single out a few questions that are important for the education of the Roma in Croatia, the answers of the focus group's participants and comments on these opinions.

Question 1: *Should Romani students go to special classes or be taught together with other students in Croatia?*

Participant 1: In no way is it good for them to be separated, because we want to respect both Croatia and the state constitution. If we are not among those people, we can't really know the world we live in. We have to be in harmony with everyone, because we feel we are also a part of Croatia. We belong to Croatia, identify with Croatia and are Croatia's citizens.

Participant 2: We have made significant progress here, but there are still some problems left. They have now started separating children and if there are more than three or four Roma children in a class, they try to separate them or to make classes with Roma children only. This neither suits nor benefits us.

Participant 3: Listen now. I want to ask you something. I have been in the war from 1990 to 1995. There were no Romani communities in the war. We were all together when we were fighting for this state. And now they try to separate us. The Serbs will have a special class, the Macedonians, the Roma, and the Slovenes. How many schools should we have in that case? Back then, during the war, we were all good.

Question 2: *How much is education important for the Romani identity, and how much is Romani identity an obstacle for their inclusion in Croatian society?*

Participant 1: The problem is identity. Society, with its stereotypes about the Roma, excludes them, so that they are afraid of being the Roma. The best example is World Roma Day. We have on our list, with first and last name, 28 students financed by the Ministry of Education. None of them agreed to publicly speak about how they struggle in school, what school means for them. The identity of these young people is a problem of the entire Romani community.

Participant 2: Do you know how this happened? The young experience what we are also experiencing, that this discrimination is being carried out. They run away from it and they feel it most on their own skin. We, the older ones, don't feel it, we are not interested in that. And it's difficult for them, because they don't want to be laughed at, pointed at and told: He's a gipsy, a Roma.

---

7 Focus groups were held with 9 ethno-national minorities of the city of Zagreb. Those are the ethno-national minorities which have their own councils in Zagreb, because of their size in number and organisation (the Slovenes, Czech, Serbs, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Bosniaks, Hungarians, Albanians, and the Roma).

Participant 3: The best example: The Centre for Peace Studies and the Association filed a suit against two or three companies in Varaždin. These companies signed an agreement with the Secondary School Expert Centre. They go to do their practical work there. A memo was sent to a school saying they needed four candidates in a Benetton store. And a teacher sent four girls, two Roma and two non-Roma. First came these two non-Roma, and there were no problems. Then the two Roma came and they said, "You know, we don't need four, but only two girls". The school asked why, and the answer was because they were Roma.

Question 3: *How much does education help the Roma students, when they finish school, to find employment?*

Participant 1: The emphasis in the Constitutional Law is put on education and other features of national programmes. However, I wonder how much these young people who finish secondary school have a real possibility for employment. They are a bad example in the context of education. He finishes secondary school, he spends a certain amount of time getting an education, he should, according to a clause in the Constitutional Law on National Minorities, be given priority at employment, i.e., self-employment. This doesn't function.

Participant 2: Look what's happening. Let's say a Roma student graduates in pharmacy. He cannot find employment anywhere. Our children are not given jobs. They should be doing their practical work, for example, in a store to work as assistants. When they hear the student is a Roma, they say no. They wouldn't be given the position. This is so problematic that hairdressers and pedicurists will not be accepted. As long as he is a Roma, they won't accept him.

Participant 3: Now I have a detail and an example for this. My daughter-in-law graduated in agriculture, in Dubrava. She came to Žitnjak and was supposed to work there. Write this, she writes everything down. They told her no, that they had already accepted someone. Why? I went there to meet the boss and she told me: "Have you seen what she's like? Black!!!"

## **2.3 Comment**

The Romani representatives are against special Romani classes in schools. They explain this attitude by the need to include the Roma in Croatian society, while they see special schools for the Roma exactly as their being segregated from other students. They see the attempts at creating special Romani classes as exclusion and segregation of the Roma in relation to other citizens. And while the established and long-term organised national minorities (the Czech, Hungarian, Italian and to some extent the Serbian ones), afraid of losing their national identity, prefer schooling in the language and script of their own national community, the case with the Roma is different. In their long history of living in Croatia, as well as everywhere else, the Roma have more often been excluded from a society than included into it. Problems of Romani identity are very clearly present, and participants in focus groups are not optimistic concerning this issue. In the near future, they only see repetitions of the already established socio-psychological and structural forms of conduct towards the Roma. The Romani identity is a negative one, and this motivates actors from this ethnic group against declaring themselves as Roma. How is Romani identity constructed in a social reality? In my work on the Roma in Kozari Bok (a city on Zagreb's periphery), I write:

It is in the interaction of the non-Roma's perception of the Roma and the Romani self-perception, that the social construction of the Romani identity is created, and this provides an answer to the question of who the Roma are, what their relation to the non-Roma is, as well as

the possibility of action of that group's members within local communities, but also within a wider societal frame (Babić 2004, 315).

Avoidance of Romani identity is present in the public sphere, and this is often manifested as ethno-mimicry. Problems in employment are related to descent, skin colour, ethnic and cultural markers, so not even education helps the Roma to enter the world of employment. The examples given by the Romani representatives show this occurring, and in them discrimination of the educated Roma while seeking employment can be recognized. Even skin colour is a barrier to the offering of employment. The question arises: how is the integration of the Roma into Croatian society possible, if the obstacles are so enormous and obviously present in every-day social interaction of this population's members? Particularly if one takes into account that "... social integration is neither negation of the specifically Romani characteristics nor erasure of their socio-cultural identity. The concept of integration should be understood as acceptance and inclusion into the usual processes which happen in the social milieu," (Hrvatić 2004, 381). In order to, at least somewhat, decrease a majority in a society rejecting the Roma, the constant education of Croatian social actors is needed: education about the acceptance of differences, respect of the rights of others and the sanctioning all forms of discrimination, especially those which are part of the school and work environment.

### **3. Concluding remarks**

The Roma are a marginal group in Croatian society, and are for the most part poorly or not at all integrated in its main currents (economic, cultural, and political). Members of this ethnic group are everywhere thought of as "Strangers" and obvious examples of "Others". The Roma in Croatia are "Others" in a different way from Albanians, Bulgarians or Rusyns. What are the implications of this status and social position? The most important implication is (self-)exclusion from society and ethnic ghettoisation, and this only generates further marginalisation and distancing from other actors in the society. The weak educational structure is one of the biggest handicaps of this ethnic group's members in the process of integration, and the Roma are different from others exactly because of their occupations and their education. Any escape from the pariah syndrome presupposes education of Romani community members, above all of its youngest members. Within the framework of national minority education, the Ministry of Education implements education for the Roma. Increased concern for Romani education coincides with the action programme Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005–2015.

What can be concluded from the data provided in the government report for 2009 and 2010? In nursery school education, the number of children compared to the previous year (2009–10) has increased, but the number of programmes in which the Roma are included increased much more. At the elementary school level one can notice a high rate of inclusion of Roma students (elementary school in Croatia is mandatory), with a small increase in the two years observed. What is certainly significant is equal representation of both the male and the female student population. Such an approach shifts the limits of freedom and gender equality and has a positive impact on the status of Romani women in their ethnic community. The secondary school level is the best indicator of all Romani handicaps and long-term social isolation. Compared to the number of students enrolled in elementary schools, there is a rapid decrease. Furthermore, the proportion between male

and female students changes, in that there are more male than female Romani students in secondary schools. However, if we observe the changes over three years, an increase in the number of students in secondary schools can be noticed, and also a decrease in the lack of balance in the relation between male and female attendees. As far as higher education is concerned, data on Romani students are almost no more than symbolic. However, although the numbers are low, a continuous rise in the number of Romani students can be noticed year after year. Observation of Romani students from the beginning of registration shows that there were at first more female students, but the number of male and female students from this ethnic community gradually became equal. Research results obtained with the *focus group* method with representatives of the Roma in the Council of the Roma National Minority in the City of Zagreb point to many problems which the Roma encounter in education, but even more in everyday work and life. Problems of ethnic identity present themselves as a priority issue. Romani identity is still extraordinarily stigmatised in Croatian society. Although numerous, far-reaching initiatives for the inclusion of the Roma have been taken, their structure, and even more their symbolic position, show that the Roma are still much more excluded than included into Croatian society. Even education very often does not help here, and according to their statements employers are reluctant to accept the Roma for school practical work or employ them after school, simply because they belong to the Romani ethnic group.

## References

- Babić, D., 2004. Stigmatizacija i identitet Roma - pogled "izvana": slučaj učenika Roma u naselju Kozari Bok. *Migracijske i etničke teme* 20(4) 315–338.
- Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 Action Plan of the Republic of Croatia, 2005. Zagreb, <http://www.romadecade.org/files/downloads/Decade%20Documents/Croatia%20AP%20Decade-EN.pdf> (26 July 2012).
- Đurić, R., 1987. *Seobe Roma*. BIGZ, Beograd.
- Hancock, I., 2006. *Sindrom parije: priča o ropstvu i progonu Roma*. Ibis grafika, Zagreb.
- Hrvatić, N., 2004. Romi u Hrvatskoj: od migracija do interkulturalnih odnosa. *Migracijske i etničke teme*, 20 (4) 367–385.
- Hrvatić, N., 2005. Obrazovanje Roma u Hrvatskoj: pretpostavka za bolju kvalitetu života? In M. Štambuk (ed.) / How do Croatian Roma live? Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, Zagreb, Biblioteka ZBORNICI, knjiga 30, 177–200.
- Mišetić, A., 2005. Sociokulturna obilježja romskoga stanovništva. In M. Štambuk (ed.) *Kako žive hrvatski Romi?* / How do Croatian Roma live? Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, Zagreb, Biblioteka ZBORNICI, knjiga 30, 111–132.
- Pokos, N., 2005. Demografska analiza Roma na temelju statističkih podataka. In M. Štambuk (ed.) *Kako žive hrvatski Romi*/ How do Croatian Roma live? Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, Zagreb, Biblioteka ZBORNICI, knjiga 30, 35–52.
- Pusić, E., 1995. Identitet – Diverzitet – Kapacitet. *Erazmus – Journal for Culture of Democracy* 11, 2–10.
- Štambuk, M., 2005. Naseliti se i ostati svoj. In M. Štambuk (ed.) *Kako žive hrvatski Romi?* / How do Croatian Roma live? Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, Zagreb, Biblioteka ZBORNICI, knjiga 30, 11–28.
- Šućur, Z., 2000. Romi kao marginalna skupina. *Društvena istraživanja*, 9 (2–3) (46–47), 211–227.
- Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities*. Official Gazette 155 (2002) Zagreb, 13 December 2002.
- The Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, Strasbourg, October 10, 1995.
- The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia. Croatian Parliament, <http://www.sabor.hr/Default.aspx?art=2405&sec=729> (24 July 2012).
- Act on Use of Language and Script of National Minorities. Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia 51 (2000).

# Policy and Practice of Romani Inclusion in the Education System of the Republic of Serbia<sup>1</sup>

*There will be no benefits for the Roma without massively raising the level of education, acquiring higher education in the majority of professions, and creating an élite layer for preservation and development of their own language and culture.*

Dragoljub B. Đorđević

## 1. The Serbian Roma

A relatively long time ago I wrote:

The Roma are an indigenous ethnic minority in Serbia and they share the general historical fate of the majority population. They have lived there for centuries: in remote villages, in suburbs, on the outskirts of towns, in secluded quarters or deeply woven into the urban core; ethnically and culturally diverse, Orthodox and Muslim, Catholic and Protestant, wealthy and poor, educated and illiterate, famous and anonymous, master musicians and common collectors of scrap paper, employed in heavy industry and tenant farmers, production line workers and small second-hand dealers, quiet citizens and noisy hooligans. Serbs see them at every corner, having some or no direct contact, but do not know them well enough: they do not know where they are from and when they first settled here, where and how they live, how and to which God they pray, why they are in a hurry and what they do, why they are like “this” and not like “that”... There is only one step from lack of knowledge to prejudice. Even though many Serbs have not yet done so, a number of them have crossed the line of stereotyping the Roma, some of them becoming xenophobic, while few even turned to open racism (Đorđević 2003, 95).

---

<sup>1</sup> Prepared as a part of the project *Sustainability of the Identity of Serbs and National Minorities in the Border Municipalities of Eastern and Southeastern Serbia* (179013), conducted at the University of Niš – Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, and supported by the Ministry of Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.



According to the 2002 census, there are 108,193 Roma in Serbia.<sup>2</sup> These are far from accurate data, since, as it has been proven, Romani demonstrate ethnic mimicry and usually self-identify as Serbs. Romani nationalists exaggerate and claim that there are around a million Roma; reasonable activists talk about 600,000 people; while well-known demographers who are to be trusted, offer estimates of between 400,000 and 500,000 “swarthy people”.

If the Roma had declared themselves truthfully in the 2011 census, i.e., as being Romani, the result would undoubtedly have been that they are just behind Albanians as far as their numbers are concerned, that is, the second largest minority community in Serbia. Furthermore, since the territory of Kosovo is currently outside the borders of the Republic of Serbia, they would become the largest national minority. It is certain that this would predetermine their political situation in the first place, and, would eventually determine all the other conditions of their life.

The Roma are slowly emerging from a hard life, breaking the links of the vicious circle of misery with difficulty, and remain the only people in the world with the status of an ethnic class. The conditions are the same in Serbia as elsewhere. Several strategies for Romani integration have been offered in order to improve their situation as much as possible.

## **2. Model of Integration**

Since 2000, there have been several models of Romani integration in Serbia. Some were commissioned by the state (Serbia and Montenegro Draft Strategy for the Integration of the Roma 2002,<sup>3</sup> Romany Settlements. Living Conditions and Possibilities of Integration of the Roma in Serbia 2002<sup>4</sup>), while others resulted from independent work of romologists (Đorđević 2002). Strategists recommend a simultaneous improvement of the position of the Roma in three large areas of general society: in the socio-economic sphere, the legal-political field, and the domain of culture; they agree on the following:

Integration – without assimilation, not to mention segregation – i.e., the interculturalisation of life and voluntarily abandoning the ethnic class state must be done by the Roma themselves, whether they are up to it or not. They will mostly carry the burden of self-consolidation and self-qualification so that they can access and use social goods with more success and more comprehensively, demonstrate power in the social area, and gain the respect of the wider community. Certainly, the *state* is obliged to endorse the path to integration in any way it can, primarily through legal and material support, while the majority should do the same thing through an honest wish for intercultural contribution, giving and receiving. The state and the surrounding majority should act in such a manner not only out of remorse, since they are to blame, whether some like it or not, for the historically unworthy position of the Roma, but also because that would be a legacy for the future (Đorđević 2002, 19).

---

2 Distribution according to education qualification shows that the following levels of education are most represented: no schooling and 1–3 grades of primary school 32.5%; 4–7 grades of primary school 29.4%; primary education 29.0%. Among the Roma older than 10 years of age 19.65% are illiterate, and their average age is 41.91 years (Ministarstvo za ljudska i manjinska prava Srbije i Crne Gore 2004, 445).

3 The team for creating the Strategy was managed by Stephan Müller from Germany.

4 The team for creating the Strategy was managed by Božidar Jakšić and Goran Bašić.

Romologists agree on the fact that education is the main problem inherent in the position of the Roma, and that the improvement of education among the Roma is the link that needs to be broken in order to free them from this vicious circle of misery. Therefore, the Strategy for Improvement of Roma Education in Republic of Serbia has been adopted, among other strategies. It will be enough to simply mention the titles and subtitles of its chapters here (Đorđević 2004, 141–152): 6.1. Including the Roma in the education system and ensuring continuity in schooling; 6.1.1. Creation of systematic conditions for the inclusion of the Roma in the education system; 6.1.2. Development of special enrolment policy for Romani children; 6.1.3. Preparation of education institutions for the inclusion of the Roma in education; 6.1.4. Preparation of Romani children for school; 6.1.5. Material support for the Roma in education. 6.2. Ensuring quality education; 6.2.1. Creation of systematic conditions for ensuring and controlling education quality for Romani pupils; 6.2.2. Providing education programmes which follow the needs of Romani children and youth; 6.2.3. Finding competent staff for work with Romani children; 6.2.4. Transferring children who are incorrectly enrolled in special schools to regular schools; 6.2.5. Developing motivation for schooling. 6.3. Developing tolerance and respecting diversity. 6.3.1. Developing the sensibility of the professional public and the wider social community for educational needs of the Roma; 6.3.2. Developing an education environment that is based on tolerance and intercultural values; 6.3.3. Preventing segregation and desegregation; 6.3.4. Applying anti-discrimination measures. 6.4. Nurturing cultural identity; 6.4.1. Supporting the development of cultural identity in children and youth; 6.4.2. Creating experts on the Romani language and culture; 6.4.3. Introducing elements of Romani culture in working with children programmes.

Are there any results from pursuing this policy?

### **3. Preschool Education**

For Romani children, as a highly vulnerable group, it is very important that they are included in nursery schools since these are the places where, apart from the care of children while parents are at work, initial socialisation, upbringing and education occur. However, the inclusion of Romani children in the nursery school system is unsatisfactory, or to be more precise, it is extremely low.

It has been on the rise only since 2000, because purely Romani nursery schools are being opened as parts of various projects supported by UNICEF and other international organisations and foundations. Such nursery schools can be found in the majority of Serbian towns – for example, in Niš, Pirot, Prokuplje – and they play an important role in teaching children the Serbian language as a basic condition for inclusion in primary education. Since donations will undoubtedly stop at some point in time, it would be logical for the state to take over the total sponsorship of such institutions from non-governmental organisations.

The enrolment of Romani children in state nursery schools, which are “reserved” for the children of the majority, is experiencing a mild increase, even though local governments are trying to change this situation. Previously, the main obstacle was the fact that a certificate of the child’s and its parents’ domicile was needed to admit the child to a nursery school, and this was often impossible to provide given the conditions that the Roma lived in. Today, such a certificate is no longer demanded, but numerous other obstacles

are still present: the culture of poverty and unemployment, difficulties in participation and lack and distance of facilities, stereotypes and discrimination by the surrounding society, and so on.

The third type of nursery schools – the private, commercial ones – are naturally completely unavailable to the Roma and the author has not yet recorded a single case of a Romani child in such a nursery school. It is a far-fetched possibility.

What opens wider possibilities for Romani children is preparatory education which lasts for one year, the year before the start of the first grade of primary school. It is compulsory and prescribed by the Law on the Foundations of the Education System (2003). As often happens in Serbia, this law is neither observed nor administered sufficiently, all with the excuse that society is poor and lacking in capacity with respect to nursery and other schools. Not all children of the majority population are even included, let alone national minorities, and especially the Roma.

#### **4. Primary Education**

The primary education of the Roma has significantly improved (Macura-Milovanović 2001).<sup>5</sup> Enrolment is very high, and pupils are leaving the school in much smaller numbers than before, which has been occurring especially after the fifth or sixth grade. Apart from raising the awareness in parents about the necessity of education, this is largely due to the institution of Romani assistants.

At first only experimentally introduced in schools, primarily in Vojvodina,<sup>6</sup> they are today working on the entire territory of Serbia in accordance with the Law on Primary Education and are called pedagogical assistants. They are employed full-time, with a full length of service, and are on the payroll of the Ministry of Education.<sup>7</sup> They can be employed when they have completed three years of secondary education, although at least four-year secondary or college, if not university, education is striven for. Currently, there are 178 of them employed – which is an impressive figure – in schools with substantial numbers of Romani pupils.

Pedagogical assistants give excellent results, and this can be seen especially in the increased enrolment of Romani pupils in secondary schools, apart from the aforementioned decrease in pupils leaving school having completed only the first four grades.

Their key task is to act as intermediaries between schools and pupils' families, although they are often employed in the teaching process itself. They follow the provisions concerning what they should do in *the* classroom, in the school, and in *the* settlement.

---

5 Fewer and fewer Romani children are being automatically sent to special schools after the results from primary school enrolment testing; this practice was the worst form of discrimination.

6 In some schools in Vojvodina the subject Romani Language and Culture is taught; this is not the case in the rest of Serbia.

7 This year they are funded through the DIS programme which encompasses three ministries: education, health, and social protection.

## 5. Secondary Education

The secondary education of the Roma has improved in a similar manner. Only a few years ago, it was almost impossible to imagine the current situation where thousands of Romani children are entering secondary schools of various kinds: from trade schools through medical schools to grammar schools. (People are no longer surprised, as they used to be – since such instances were exceptional – when they see a young Romani woman in a tavern, drugstore, bank, or hospital working as a waitress, saleswoman, economist, or nurse.)

One instrument of positive discrimination is employed upon enrolment, namely affirmative action. This means that a Romani pupil who passes the entrance exam receives a bonus of 30 points and has the opportunity to enrol in one of the first three secondary schools from his or her list of priorities.

The instrument of affirmative action is not prescribed by the Law on Secondary Education, but it is implemented successfully. Its foundation can be found in the famous Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, passed in 2002 (Krivokapić 2002).<sup>8</sup> The law should be commended for two reasons. The first is that the Roma are the only ethnic group to be mentioned separately in it. As an active participant in expert discussions immediately before its enactment, I can corroborate how leaders of almost all other minorities quickly agreed upon it. They have thus acknowledged the peculiar and difficult position of the Roma and directly showed that they have additional understanding for the solution to this problem, which is an honourable thing to do and which should never be easily forgotten by the Roma. The second is the introduction of the institution of positive discrimination or, formulated in more modern terminology, affirmative action. Not commendable is the fact that it has not been legally adopted for any other ethnic minority, and it looks as if it will be mostly demonstrated with the Roma. Indeed, being an ethnic class, they are unlikely to rise much closer to the majority population and its surrounding minorities – not to say become equal – without the use of affirmative action.

Romani leaders, such as Osman Balić, fight for it to become a legal matter, a norm, since it needs to be applied for at least ten more years. The question is, they say, what happens later with the education of Romani youth when affirmative action ceases to be implemented and when they become subject to the regular enrolment procedure, that is, enter an open contest in the knowledge market.

That Romani leaders perhaps have an excessive, innate fear the “industry of knowledge” can be seen from the fact that the percentage of Romani pupils not asking for the measure of affirmative action is already higher than the percentage of those insisting upon it.

## 6. Higher and University Education

Higher and university education of the Roma is improving surprisingly. If previously there were only a few higher educated Roma, usually military officers, doctors, or engi-

---

<sup>8</sup> It was this law that granted the Roma the status of national minority for the first time in the history of Serbia and Montenegro, which then comprised the FR of Yugoslavia.

neers – many of them demonstrating the success of mimicry – nowadays hundreds of the Roma study at this level (Savić & Mitro 2006).

The number of Romani students increases every year, especially at the University of Novi Sad. The Universities of Niš<sup>9</sup> and Belgrade are catching up. A record 150 students were enrolled in the academic year 2010–11, and there is reliable information confirming that the actual number is higher – it is just that those students do not wish to be recognised as Romani.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly to the case of enrolment in secondary schools, the affirmative action measure is also used here. At the seven state universities students are divided into the so-called budget students, those being funded from the state budget, and self-financed students, those who annually pay the tuition fees, which are in fact not low.

It is understandable that the Roma cannot cover the expenses of self-financed students. It is up to them to pass the entrance exam in the normal way, after which they will be automatically enrolled as budget students if they apply for the application of affirmative action. This application is also not defined by the Law on Higher Education (2005), but it is founded in the aforementioned Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities and over five years of practice.

For the present it is still a matter of rare exceptions, for which reason Romani students are not a burden on the enrolment and budget quotas, nor is the activation of positive discrimination inconveniencing anyone. Therefore, with an eye to the future, Romani leaders strive for the legalisation of affirmative action.

It is expected that the Bologna process will encourage the Roma to study and complete their studies in colleges and faculties in larger numbers, enabling them to access various international student scholarships and bring them into the position which suits them culturally – to become “wandering students”, students beyond borders.

## 7. Studies of Romology

There will be no benefits for the Roma without massively raising the level of education, acquiring higher education in the majority of professions, and creating an élite stratum for the preservation and development of their own language and culture.

This élite layer can only be shaped in the studies of *Romology*.<sup>11</sup> The language, literature, culture, customs, and history of the Roma are not studied at any group or department of the universities in Serbia, which is not the case with the language and literature of other national minorities. At the private Belgrade University for Peace established by the UN the work started at the top of the education pyramid in Romology beginning with some sort of doctoral romological studies, without any bachelor's or master's studies. That is not what we have been advocating for years. On the other hand, at the state Preschool Teacher Training

---

9 In his thirty-four years of university career at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering in Niš, the author has taught at least one Romani student, almost every year, in the first year of studies, even though previously many of them used to hide their identity. Even though the majority of them would leave the studies in mechanical engineering, since it is a very “difficult” faculty, there have been those who have completed their studies and acquired the engineering diploma.

10 In Novi Sad and Niš there are strong associations of Romani students that fight for their existential conditions, primarily for receiving scholarships and accommodation in student dorms.

11 We felt privileged preparing the at least in the Balkans, first, textbook for the studies of Romology entitled *On a Horse with a Laptop in Saddlebags: Introduction to Romological Studies* (Đorđević 2010).



College “Mihailo Palov” in Vršac, within the profiles – professional preschool teacher and preschool teacher of infant children, teaching is conducted in Romani and ten and five Roma, respectively, are enrolled and funded from the state budget.

At the universities in Belgrade, Novi Sad, and Kosovska Mitrovica, groups and departments for the study and research of the language and culture of Hungarians, Slovaks, Rusyns, Romanians, Bulgarians, Albanians, etc. have existed for decades. The majority of people do not know that there are departments for romological studies in the neighbouring countries and farther afield (Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Italy, Germany, Great Britain, USA, etc.). In both cases, apart from undergraduate studies, master and doctoral studies are also developed.

We have already mentioned (Đorđević 2004, 64):

Even though numerically prevailing, the Roma are not the only students at all three degrees of specialisation. There are always enough students from the majority population and other national minorities. This is in line with a twofold need: firstly, the need based on the necessity for education and cultivation of, up till now very narrow, Romani élite; and secondly, the need for a qualified elite in non-Roma, which would work on studying and spreading the Romani culture, and emancipation and integration of the Roma. Without a harmonised cooperation of both elites, it is simply impossible to expect long-term success from any one state policy towards the Roma no matter how much quality it possesses.

Serbia, and the University of Niš in particular, meets all conditions to become well-known, achieve international results, and, at least, become the Balkan centre by introducing Romology and favouring romological research.<sup>12</sup>

## 8. Conclusion

The Republic of Serbia, with such a numerous Romani national minority and many open issues related to it – among which the inclusion in education system is of primary importance – is moving ever so slowly towards the European Union. Whether it wants it or not (and the majority is in favour) it has to address the practical aspects of general integration of the Roma with even more responsibility. Because their integration is one of the conditions that the Republic of Serbia has to fulfil in order to join the European Union – it is number five on the list of ten proposed priorities, and the year 2015 is looming as a deadline for achieving the goals of the Decade of the Roma (Živković 2005). For their integration is one of the conditions for joining the European Union – it is number five on the list of ten proposed priorities, with the time for achieving the goals of the Decade of the Roma running out in 2015 (Živković 2005). There is still so much to be done by the state, the majority population, the non-governmental sector, and the Romani community itself. Many of the Serbian politicians are not aware of this.

---

12 Rajko Đurić defines Romology in the following manner (2009, 542): “Thus, romology is similar to the conceptual titles such as, for example, Albanology, Indology, Turkology, etc. Its subject of research are Roma and their life. Namely, its subject is a group of people, who according to their ethnic and historical origin, social, cultural, language, and other characteristics and historical fate and consciousness represent a single specific social community... Within Romology, Romistics has already been distinguished as a separate academic discipline. *Romistics* studies the language and Romani literature in its historical and contemporary apparent form, documents it and mediates it. To put it simply, it is divided into Romani philology and Romani literature.”



## References

- Dorđević, D. B. (ed.), 2004. *Romi: od zaboravljene do manjine u usponu*. OGI, Niš.
- Dorđević, D. B., 2002. Prema modelu integracije Roma: promenimo život. In Dorđević, D. B. & Živković J. (eds.) *Romi na raskršću*. Punta, DDA, KSS, Bahtalo drom, Niš, 9–19.
- Dorđević, D. B., 2003. Roma in Serbien – Vergangenheit, Gegenwart, Zukunft. *Ost-West. Europäische Perspektiven* 4, 93–102.
- Dorđević, D. B., 2010. *Na konju s laptopom u bisagama: uvod u romološke studije*. Prometej, MF, Novi Sad, Niš.
- Đurić, R., 2009. Romologija u procesu samoosvešćivanja. *Teme* 38, 541–549.
- Krivokapić, B., 2002. *Act on the Protection of National Minorities*. Institute of Comparative Law, Belgrade.
- Law on the Foundations of the Education System. Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 62/2003.
- Law on Primary Education. Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 22/2002. Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities. Official Gazette of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia No. 11/2002, Official Gazette of SM, No. 1/2003, and Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 72/2009.
- Law on Higher Education. Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 76/2005.
- Macura-Milovanović, S., 2001. *Romska deca i škola: kako istopiti grudvu?* Zadužbina Andrejević, Beograd.
- Ministarstvo za ljudska i manjinska prava Srbije i Crne Gore, 2004. *Etnički mozaik Srbije*. Ministarstvo za ljudska i manjinska prava Srbije i Crne Gore, Beograd.
- Ministry of Human and Minority Rights – Serbia and Montenegro, 2002. *Romany Settlements. Living Conditions and Possibilities of Integration of the Roma in Serbia*. Ministry of Human and Minority Rights – Serbia and Montenegro, Belgrade.
- Serbia and Montenegro Draft Strategy for the Integration of the Roma*, 2002. Ministry of Human and Minority Rights – Serbia and Montenegro, Belgrade.
- Savić, S. & Mitro, V. (eds.), 2006. *Škola romologije*. Futura publikacije, Novi Sad.
- The Strategy for Improvement of Roma Education in Republic of Serbia – Proposal*, 2003. Ministry of Education and Sports Republic of Serbia, <http://academos.ro/sites/default/files/biblio-docs/243/str-improv-roma-educ-rep-ser-yug-srb-enl-t02.pdf> (24 July 2012).
- Živković, J. (ed.), 2005. *Izazovi dekade Roma*. Bahtalo drom, Niš.

# Romani Cultural After-School Activities as an Instrument for the Better and Easier Inclusion of Romani Children and Youth in the Formal Educational Process

## 1. Introduction

The Romani Cultural and Educational Center [RCEC] *Darhia* (Roots) was established in 1998, in Skopje, by a group of writers, artists and experts in the field of the culture, language and literature of the Roma in Republic of Macedonia. As a non-governmental organisation (NGO), *Darhia* included, in their plans and programmes (and later on in the full Work Strategy created in 2001), the promotion, nurture and development of the Romani culture, language, art and literature through appropriate innovative methods. These innovative methods are applied in the work of youth as participants in this organisation. The wide range of activities is found in the field of culture and education, as part of the following five core programmes:

1. Romani language programme;
2. Creative educational programme;
3. Publishing and library;
4. Public promotion of Romani culture programme;
5. Programme for support and assistance in the education of young Roma.

The activities have extended across the borders of the Republic of Macedonia and in a short time they have become a good example of work in the field of Romani culture in the countries of Southeastern Europe. The activities are taking place in the local communities, on both a national and international level. The RCEC *Darhia* provides a base for cooperation with NGOs and Governmental institutions, artists, artist groups and experts from Macedonia and the region. This cooperation enables projects that, aside from the basic activities, enable interdisciplinary research, art work and fine-tuning in the field of culture, language and art. The members of the organisation design, develop and implement interactive and participatory activities.

These activities are based on methods that allow the social integration of Romani children and youth, and thus help improve their integration and better inclusion in society. These processes and methods are of special significance at the present time, in which children and youth grow and mature burdened with numerous risks, and when families and the existing educational institutions do not always succeed in responding to the specific needs of the young population. Therefore, the efforts made by *Darhia* are of enormous significance in the enabling of quality support by making it possible for the vulnerable population of Romani children and youth to participate in cultural activities outside school (in which different theoretical concepts are put to use); and these activities later are reflected in their formal education and their easier integration into society.

In this paper, I will not concentrate on the detailed work curriculum (cultural and educational programmes), or on the contents of specific youth programmes, but will describe the basic knowledge and skills necessary for work with the Romani children and youth that are used by *Darhia*.

## 2. Development Cycle

At the beginning of its work the RCEC *Darhia* created its own development cycle of youth programmes, as well as the basic elements that constitute the very basis of practice, that may prove effective in the realisation of everyday work with Romani children, their families and institutions, facilitating the process of cultural, social, educational and personal development of the Roma in and outside Macedonia.

This specific plan has individual stages in the cycle of programmes designed to achieve better efficiency and achievements of the planned goals.

The plan highlights the methodology of both individual and group approaches that allow the monitoring of the groups' development and at the same time that of the individual through informal (after-school) programmes. In order to achieve this, experiences are used which come from organisations that have previously worked on the same issues in the region and systematically analysed their practice models.

We chose models that we considered compatible for the Romani community in the Republic of Macedonia, and which in addition contain standards, ethics, segments of culture and methodology that are closely connected to the cultural practices and offer organised work with children and youth. In addition, by using these programmes, we wanted to show the Romani community and the official institutions in Macedonia that work with the Romani children and youth is of great significance for both society and their local communities. Our main goal was to show that our work with the children and youth will contribute to the development, quality and systematised integration and inclusion of Roma in society and their inclusion in national politics for children and youth in Macedonia.

In the preparation of our developmental cycle of programmes for children and young people, we used the following data:

1. The experiences of the youth;
2. The experiences of the parents;<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> These data were especially important, and perhaps the most crucial factor in the creation of a successful development cycle.

3. The experiences of volunteers and leaders in the communities;
4. The opinions of the institutions and individuals concerned (teachers, professors, professional services and experts in the field, as well as social workers).

In 2001, opportunities were presented for high quality and practical after-school education based on programmes created by the RCEC *Darhia*. A base was formed consisting of 300 experts involved, volunteers, Romani children and youth and Romani parents, as well as school representatives who had started with the implementation of the programmes. The programme was put into effect in close cooperation with the community; during the work, it was adapted to the context of the local communities in which it was implemented. Its participants actively carried out and developed their work, and at the same time developed themselves.

### **2.1. The Developmental Cycle Adjusted Using Effective Practice Models<sup>2</sup>**

This plan as outlined contains the following individual, mutually dependent stages:

1. Analysis of the community context;
2. Consultation with the community and defining its needs;
3. Identification of the resources available;
4. Agreeing on goals and objectives in consultation with the community;
5. Establishment of programmes;
6. Implementation and monitoring of programmes;
7. Evaluation of programmes;
8. Assessment and modification of programmes in consultation with the community.

### **3. Elements in the Planning and Preparation of *Darhia's* Programmes for Children and Youth**

- Selection of the target group: analysis of the needs of target groups based on their characteristics (age, number, location, values, specific behaviour, whether they have participated and which programmes they have participated in, etc.). The analysis made by *Darhia* was based mostly on the context in which the Romani children and youth have participated in programmes that others have made for them; also, on their rights as implemented, their problems, as well as their needs. A research project was conducted on the state of the language, culture and art among the Romani population in the Republic of Macedonia. The aim of the research was to explore the influence of the socio-economic conditions on the status and development of the Romani culture and language. The themes of the programmes were designed to be suitable and interesting to the target group, and the question was posed: What did we wish to achieve with this programme? Also, what was especially important was the opportunity the children had to openly express their needs. This was achieved

---

<sup>2</sup> One model for effective practice is *Youth Work NI*, adapted by the RCEC *Darhia* experts in 2001, and defined by *Darhia* Strategy created during the Kultura Nova (European Cultural Foundation + Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia).

with the use of an equal opportunities approach where the whole target group was able to share their opinion and views on their current status in the society and how they saw the possible solutions for their problems and situations.

- Establishment of a team that would lead the programmes, bringing attention to motivation and the need for additional training if certain competencies and division of tasks within the team were required;
- Selection of topics, goals and objectives, programmes and methodologies;
- Time schedule of activities in phases;
- Required resources (budget preparation, work space search, necessary technical equipment, etc.);
- Consent of the parent or of a certain institution;
- Analysis of possible difficulties in the implementation of programmes;
- Programme evaluation plan and reporting.

In the context of the above elements we paid particular attention to the following:

- Before the finalisation of the contract for the programme, we realistically assessed the resources needed (i.e., we used only what was necessary for implementation).
- Each programme had its own clear goals which were compatible with the results expected, as well as a clear goal as to how they could enable the childrens' involvement in formal education or an entry into the institutions of the system. Above all, we took into consideration the use of the programme and the way Romani children and youth could continue applying the experiences that they acquired in *Darhia*.
- We realised the necessity to align the goals of a specific programme for young people with the broader set of goals – those of the local community and of the local, national and regional action plans for children and youth. We succeeded in creating the basis for developing action plans wherever they lacked specific targets. It was very clear to us that by working with the Roma, we would be able to achieve progress in their community and small changes in the wider community.
- Our plans were to be in accord with the plans of the wider community and the way in which these plans could be made sustainable.
- We actively involved the young people in the planning of the programmes by using a different approach regarding their age, level of maturity and independence. A special approach was made among Romani children and youth in order to develop personal and group responsibility in the implementation of each programme and they were included as its creators, which in turn led them to become active and regular participants who make efforts for the programme to be successful.

#### **4. Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Programmes**

Each programme was composed of several parts and stages. This was done in order for us to have the opportunity to adjust it and incorporate methods, reflections and discussions with the Romani children, youth and parents about the difficulties they faced. They were given the opportunity to consult us about every change in order for their original expectations not to be betrayed. It was made clear to them that their role in the implementation of the programmes was a great one and that they had a significant effect on the programme. They knew that the programmes on which the projects were based were not simply pieces of paper and that they could be waived (in situations where it was necessary to be flexible),

and that the most important thing that could help all of us become included in Macedonian society was our commitment. Quality should be cherished, not quantity. In order to best meet and maintain quality, we should always give our maximum no matter how long a specific programme or project would last.

RCEC *Darhia*'s programme evaluation is made monthly, quarterly, biannually, and annually, as well as the final evaluation that is made at the end of each programme.

*Darhia* sees the evaluation as an opportunity to have an overview of the goals achieved, as well as to determine the effectiveness of the working methods and to assess our success. It is with the help of the evaluation and monitoring that we realise our mistakes and we have the chance to correct them.

## **5. The Impact of Culture and Art on the Integration and Inclusion of Romani Children and Youth in their Formal Education**

What has been especially important for the work of RCEC *Darhia* in the past is the use of culture and art in the integration and inclusion of Romani children and youth in their formal education. The method by which they initially participate in the activities of programmes which are created for them and by them (as a part of the informal education in the field of culture and art), has proved successful and has resulted in:

- Personal satisfaction;
- Developing skills to recognise different cultures and art forms;
- Developing and expressing ideas and feeling through the use of materials, sounds and movements;
- Engaging in the preparation and realisation of cultural events, performances, exhibitions, etc.;
- Achieving high standards for their own personal development;
- Opportunities to travel internationally, for youth exchange and participation in cultural camps, etc.;
- The use of those activities later on as a part of teaching activities in their schools.

The cultural and artistic activities have also made an impact on the parents of the children, including the following opportunities:

- To continue their education;
- To better understand the local and global questions associated with their condition;
- To find a solution to their low socio-economic position and to bring better care for their children and their position in society.

The after-school activities outside formal education have prompted bigger involvement of children and youth in cultural activities related to the needs of the Romani community. Also, *Darhia* has offered easier inclusion in the formal education of Romani children and youth by bringing about the acquisition of the following social skills, which to us represented a basis for assessment of the progress that we made (Huskins 1996):

- Awareness and self-esteem (a sense of self);
- Communication skills (effective communication with others);
- Interpersonal skills;
- Research and management of emotions (being aware and open for one's emotions);
- Understanding and identification with others (empathy, compassion);



- Development of values (what is right and what is wrong);
- Solving problems;
- Negotiation skills (making decisions with others);
- Action planning (ability to plan in advance);
- Assessment of one's own skills (learning experiences).

The successful work of *Darhia* showed that formerly-held views that the issues of children and young people were an exclusive obligation of the formal state institutions were completely wrong. The changes we have brought about in these children have imposed a need for a different approach that offers an efficient response to the complex questions that are connected to Romani children and youth, as well as to the whole Romani population.

The multi-sector approach provides a solution in which we get a systematic and comprehensive network of care for the children and youth. A part of that network includes the work of the RCEC *Darhia* with children and youth that is implemented in the framework of informal education. The new concept that *Darhia* offered in the past is simply emphasising that the work with Romani children and youth in the Republic of Macedonia plays an important role in the development of society through providing support for their development.

Unfortunately for us there is still no formal recognition of this kind of work with the children and youth in their formal education, and that work is therefore marginalised.

However, in its strategy, *Darhia* has set new ways for formal education and participation of Romani culture, language and art in that formal education. Specific examples (to give just a few) can be seen in the following table:

Programmes of the RCEC <i>Darhia</i>	Examples of projects with afterschool activities of the RCEC <i>Darhia</i> (informal education)	Influence on formal education (examples)
Romani language programme	- Romani language and culture courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Affirmation of Romani language among young Roma, leading to the selection of elective course in Romani language and culture in elementary schools</li> <li>- Increase in the number of Romani language and culture classes and the number of elementary school teachers</li> <li>- Curriculum developed by the Bureau of Educational Development for Romani language and culture as a school subject for grades 3–9</li> <li>- Accredited Romani Language a university subject at the Faculty of Philology</li> <li>- Accredited Methodology of teaching Romani language a university subject at the Faculty of Pedagogy</li> <li>- School curricula developed for teaching Romani language and culture in Kosovo</li> <li>- Strategy for Romani culture in Kosovo</li> <li>- Lectures on culture and language in official institutions and universities in and outside Macedonia</li> </ul>

Programmes of the RCEC <i>Darhia</i>	Examples of projects with afterschool activities of the RCEC <i>Darhia</i> (informal education)	Influence on formal education (examples)
Creative-educational programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Drama, music and puppet theatre workshops</li> <li>- Puppet theatre and Youth theatre</li> <li>- Establishment of <i>Darhia</i> orchestra</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of programmes for arts and culture</li> <li>Increase of number of Romani children in elementary school activities</li> <li>Application of methods for working with children and youth in elementary and secondary schools</li> <li>Increased interest among non-Romani (children and teachers) for Romani culture and art</li> <li>Sensitisation of teachers with respect to the problems and need of Romani children in schools</li> <li>The study of Romani culture as an elective course</li> <li>The introduction of elements of Romani culture as a part of the country's cultural heritage</li> <li>Use of <i>Darhia</i> materials as a part of teaching materials</li> <li>Improvement of the relationship between the Romani community and the schools</li> </ul>
Programme for the public promotion of the Romani culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concerts in institutions and Romani communities</li> <li>- Exhibitions</li> <li>- Events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased number of Romani parents attending cultural events in the schools</li> <li>- Direct participation of parents in public school events and in the realisation of the teaching contents (Romani culture workshops)</li> <li>- Lectures on Romani culture topics in educational institutions</li> </ul>
Publishing and library development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- History of the Roma</li> <li>- Romani-Macedonian-Romani dictionary</li> <li>- Grammar of the Romani language</li> <li>- Auxiliary materials for teaching the Romani language (traditional stories, children's poetry, new fiction, etc.)</li> <li>- The cultural magazine <i>Horizonto</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of published works in formal education</li> <li>- Use of <i>Darhia</i>'s library for educational and scientific purposes in institutions</li> </ul>
Programme for support and assistance in the education of young Roma	Applied education for young Roma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education for parents who continue their education in official institutions</li> <li>- Involvement of parents in school boards</li> <li>- Acceptance of assistants and mediators in institutions of formal education</li> <li>- Increased cooperation between schools, NGOs and the Romani community</li> <li>- Increased coverage of Romani youth and reduction of drop-outs</li> <li>- Increased interest of young Romani drop-outs to attend courses and professional training and to acquire certificates from official educational institutions</li> </ul>

## 6. A Good Practical Example: the Romani Mentor Project (Macedonia)

The Romani Mentor Project is a regional initiative supported by the OSI Budapest Art and Culture Network Programme. It is being implemented in Macedonia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. The project in Macedonia is realised in partnership with 15 schools and involves 300 children (Roma and non-Roma) in afterschool activities

with cultural content and a focus on Romani culture. The activities are carried out by 15 successful and well established Romani professionals who act as role models to the children with their personal example and experience.

## **6.1 Aims of the Romani Mentor Project**

### **6.1.1 Aim**

The long-term aim is to generate change in Romani children's self-awareness and self-esteem by presenting them with a Roma role model whose personal example and experience increases their knowledge about Romani culture and conveys to them a sense of hope and purpose in life.

### **6.1.2 Objective**

To connect successful and established Romani professionals with groups of children in marginalised schools and community centres, and to provide them opportunities to develop personal skills as well as social competence via a series of regular and structured afterschool activities with cultural content and focus.

### **6.1.3 Expectations from the Arts and Culture Programme (ACP)**

1. To fund the project long-term which requires:
  - The empowerment of the Country Coordinators (CC);
  - The promotion of the Romani Mentor Project (henceforward: RMP) as a best practice to a wider public including the authorities: regional expansion and inclusion in the education system.
2. To emphasise the arts and culture content of the activity, which requires:
  - Clarification of what we understand by arts and culture;
  - Competent mentors capable of delivering appropriate activities.
3. To consider the RMP as a methodological research platform for educational and integration purposes, which would involve:
  - Finding appropriate approaches and collaborators;
  - The documentation, analysis, and sharing of achievements.

### **6.1.4 Series of Activities with Arts and Culture Focus**

The following aspects should be considered as essential during the implementation process:

1. Coherence of the Series of Activities as:
  - a comprehensive whole,
  - consisting of 16 units;
  - a series of meetings thematically linked to each other; systematically paving the way to deliberately planned goal

*(There are external and internal conditions that influence on achieving this aspect: The schools are those that enable appropriate place and time available for realization of these after-school activities due to what they are considered as an external conditions for achieving such regularity of holding the meetings with the mentors (same time, same place, for ex. Every second Tuesday at the music cabinet); the internal conditions refer to the mentors qualities and commitment to the work with the groups of children)*

2. The hierarchy of the educational goals of the Series of Activities is as follows:
  - the basic goal: spending time together in a constructive atmosphere, witnessing positive examples;
  - the knowledge-related goal: equipping children with knowledge they do not obtain in school;
  - the development-related goal: children experiencing their own culture and capacity by becoming involved in a creative process.
3. The concept of culture in its complexity and broader sense which includes
  - a number of activities related to arts and culture (traditional and also contemporary);
  - a dynamic process of cultivating the way of life of a community.

The Series of Activities should contribute to human development by enhancing capability and capacity. Therefore the means and tools of experience-based pedagogy should be deployed.

Rather than simply explaining what culture is, the aim is for individuals to explore what their own cultures are and how they relate to a wider context. The wider context can be:

- team building in classroom sessions between Roma and non-Roma;
- conceptualisation of a common project (planning, implementing, debriefing);
- inviting and working together with a guest mentor;
- realisation of outdoor activities (thematic excursions, visits to cultural sites, joint efforts with cultural organisations, etc.);
- conducting community events with schoolmates and/or families and the local community.

## **6.2 Methodological Issues**

### ***6.2.1 Composition of the Groups***

Target group: elementary school students. Within one group, different classes or years can be mixed, taking into consideration that each programme has to be planned in such a way that each participant is able to follow, enjoy, and benefit from the activities. An effort should be made to create mixed groups enabling Romani and non-Romani children to work together. In the case of segregated schools this may create problems, therefore contact with the majority population should be facilitated through the structure of the activities. The ideal number of children per group is 20.

### ***6.2.2 Content of the Activity Series and its Structure***

The goals of the work with the groups can be put into three major categories:

1. The first one covers the basic goals, which are achievable by realising the programme without any special effort. The basic goals are: organisation of high quality after-school activities that are motivating for children; creation of a good atmosphere; learning how to work in a team; practising social skills; seeing positive examples with the mentor's help; and developing a plan for the future.

2. The second contains knowledge-related goals, which are achievable by any dedicated mentor with a little extra preparation. The knowledge-related goals can be achieved primarily through the transfer of actual knowledge, which supposes a receptive group and a mentor capable of transferring knowledge in an enjoyable way. The basic goal of the programme is to acquaint children with Romani culture and history, thus strengthening their Romani identity; and, with respect to the members of the majority population, to make them more open and tolerant toward that identity. Additional targeted knowledge-related goals can be: developing writing and reading skills, learning about healthy lifestyles, environmental protection, crime prevention, career choices, etc.
3. The third and most important entails development-related goals which can be achieved via a methodology with a special cultural and artistic focus. Development-related goals can be achieved in accordance with the artistic profile of the mentor and the choice of the school. Depending on the mentor's background, development-related activities may focus on the so-called traditional arts such as music, singing, dance, theatre, film, fine arts, literature, or alternatively on culture understood in a wider sense such as media, informatics, sport, nature, gastronomy, etc. In addition, goals can also target the development of social skills such as communication, trust, and working in a group.

It is worthwhile developing year-long activities that enable the children to be creative, because the public presentation of their work (whether in an exhibition, or in a performance) ensures a concrete final aim of the year-long activity and provides the most direct and effective feedback to them – i.e., having success in front of their classmates, teachers and parents. Of course, the above-mentioned categories can be mixed and merged, but their clarification may offer help to the mentor-teacher pairs when developing the structure and outcome of their work. The goal of the Arts and Culture Programme should be kept in mind: namely, to contribute to the integration of disadvantaged children using the means of arts and culture. Accordingly, when developing the year-long activity plan, it is important to try to direct attention toward the development-related goals. Without underestimating the basic goals and the knowledge-related goals and while admitting that their realisation is also very demanding, it is important to clarify that in the long run the ACP can only support programmes which use the arts and culture as a means. At the same time, we are completely open to considering variations to this approach, taking into account the mentors' and the teachers' experiences.

It is recommended that the following elements be included in the activity series:

- team-building games;
- familiarisation with Romani culture and history, and its relation to the majority culture;
- holidays (Romani, national and religious);
- periodical involvement of guest mentors;
- activities involving the parents;
- excursions, visiting cultural venues;
- presentation of the results in a public event at the end of the term;
- elements understood in a wider sense, such as media, informatics, sport, nature, gastronomy, etc. In addition, goals can also target the development of social skills such as communication, trust, and working in a group.

## 7. Conclusion

The Romani Cultural and Educational Center *Darhia*, a nongovernmental organisation (NGO), in its plans and programmes (and later on in the full Strategy of Work created in 2001) promotes, nurtures and develops the Romani culture, language, art and literature through innovative methods that apply in these fields. It uses innovative methods in its work especially with young people as participants. The activities have crossed the borders of Macedonia and in a short period of time have become a good example of work in the field of Romani culture in the countries of Southeast Europe. The activities take place in the local communities, on a national and on an international level.

These activities are based on methods that facilitate the social integration of Romani children and youth and their better inclusion in society. *Darhia* provides quality content to support the vulnerable population of Romani children and youth and allows them participation in after-school cultural activities, in which various theoretical concepts are applied, and those activities later on reflect on their formal education and their easier social integration and inclusion in society.

In the beginning of its work *Darhia* created its own development cycle of youth programmes, as well as some basic elements. The latter represent the basis for a practice that may be shown as effective in the realisation of everyday work with Romani children and youth, with their families and with the institutions that assist the cultural, social and educational process, and the personal development, of Roma in and outside Macedonia.

These after-school activities in formal education have brought about the inclusion of activities related to the needs of the Romani community as a whole.

Also, *Darhia* has offered an easier inclusion into the formal education of Romani children and youth by the acquisition of social skills, which to us represent a basis for the assessment of the progress that we made.

Specific examples and the good practical example of the Romani Mentor Project – (Macedonia), which is described in this paper, show a successful way towards the inclusion of the Romani culture, language and art in formal education, and hence the integration of Romani children and youth in Macedonian society.



## References

- A Model for Effective Practice*, 2004. Curriculum Development Unit, Youth Work, NI, Antrim.
- Akcioni planovi za razvoj na RKEC Darhia, 2002. Skopje.
- Demir, L., 2009. Model za boljše vključevanje Romov v družbo, Skopje: Darhia.
- Gaspar, M., Gruber, A., Kubicko, S., Liddle, M., Rozsa, M., Demir, Lj., Demir, F., Nunev, I., 2011. *Roma Mentor Project-Training Manual an Innovative Approach to Culture, Tradition, and Modernity*, Budapest: Arts and Culture Program, Open Society Foundations.
- Huskins, J., 1996. *Quality work with young people: Developing Social Skills and Diversion from Risk*.
- Young, K., 1999. *The Art of Youth Work*, Dorset: Russell House Publishing.
- Strategija za razvoj na RKEC Darhia, 2001. Skopje.





