



**ROMÂNIA**  
**CONSILIUL NAȚIONAL PENTRU COMBATEREA**  
**DISCRIMINĂRII**  
**AUTORITATE DE STAT AUTONOMĂ**

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**RO 10 - “Children and Youth at Risk and Local and Regional Initiatives to Reduce National Inequalities and to Promote Social Inclusion”**

**The European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2009-2014**

**Strengthening anti-discriminatory measures at national level through large participation of professionals and civil society**

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COPII ȘI TINERI ÎN SITUAȚII DE RISC  
Reducerea inegalităților  
Antidiscriminare  
Incluziune socială



## 1. Introduction – the context of this report within the main project, the aims, methodology and limitations

The present study is a part of the project “Strengthening anti-discriminatory measures at national level through large participation of professionals and civil society” carried out by the Romanian National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD), together with the Council of Europe, Directorate General II – Democracy, Democratic Citizenship and Participation, as a part of the programme “Children and Youth at Risk and Local and Regional Initiatives to Reduce National Inequalities and to Promote Social Inclusion” within the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2009-2014. While the overall programme objective is preventing and combating discrimination at all levels in Romania, this project’s purpose is to contribute to the development of Romania’s national strategy to prevent and combat discrimination for the period 2014-2020. The more specific objective of the present study is to identify and describe European good practices relating to non-discrimination and equality of opportunity within the field of education, which might be relevant for the legal and institutional context in Romania. The underlying understanding of the study is that discrimination is learned and therefore can be unlearned. While discrimination occurs in many different areas, because of its potential impact across the whole of society, the field of education should be an effective entry point for tackling discrimination and effectively building a more inclusive, more equal society.

Education was prioritised as the focus for our research because in which in spite of the ratification by Romania of all relevant international and European human rights standards, and in spite of progressive language in the Romanian legislation and a declared commitment by the NCCD and the courts to respond to discrimination in education (particularly on grounds of ethnicity, including Roma origin, and on grounds of disability), Romania has not yet met the challenge of ensuring substantive equality and guaranteeing the full enjoyment of the right to education in all its aspects and for all children. Segregation is prohibited in an Order and a Notification of the Ministry of Education<sup>1</sup> but not in the framework anti-discrimination or education legislation. Accessibility, though mentioned in the legislation on the rights of persons with disabilities, remains unachieved as positive obligation of the authorities. Discriminatory attitudes in relation to Roma children and

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Education Order no. 1540/2007 on Banning School Segregation of Roma Children and on approving the Methodology on Preventing and Eliminating School Segregation of Roma Children and Notification 28463/2010 regarding Segregation in Education of Roma.

children with disabilities remain pervasive as shown by the complaints filed both with the NCCD and with the courts and by the regular attitudes' and perceptions' surveys conducted by the NCCD.

We looked at different models of pro-actively preventing and combating discrimination in education in other countries across Europe in order to identify successful practices which triggered encouraging results and might provide some food for thought for Romania in the context of the new strategy and of future legal and policy initiatives on education. These are not necessarily 'best' practices, as there are few or no initiatives which had been independently assessed to meet thorough methodological tests which would allow them to be qualified as such. We relied, however, on monitoring which showed improved outcomes following a specific intervention and on the impact of these interventions as perceived by their beneficiary communities – children, parents, teachers. Importantly, we found evidence that these interventions proved to be effective beyond their immediate target, benefitting the society as a whole.

Following a full discussion with NCCD we organised our research along nine different lines to reflect the areas which we understood remain problematic in Romania. Inevitably we often found that these lines overlapped.

- A)** data collection as required step in designing substantive equality interventions,
- B)** mentoring – providing role models external to school raising aspirations and increasing confidence, and homework groups - groups away from school seeking to improve educational achievement and increase confidence,
- C)** citizenship education including eradication of bullying perceived as a form of discrimination,
- D)** training of teachers and education personnel at every level regarding equality and non-discrimination as well as training school administrators and others who exercise power regarding provision of education,
- E)** the provision of kindergarten and the impact on later school experiences,
- F)** work with Roma/other minority parents on supporting their children's education,
- G)** programmes of interventions and positive action to secure greater integration and educational opportunities of Roma children, and
- H)** inclusive education: national legislation and established practices for educational inclusion and non-discrimination of children with physical and/or mental disabilities.

## 2. General overview - what we have found and what we did not find

What is good/promising practice in relation to the education of Roma other ethnic minority children and/or children with disabilities?

The causes of poor educational achievement of Roma children and children with disabilities in Romania and other Council of Europe countries are varied and often complex. In many instances Roma and/or children with disabilities will be subjected to obvious direct or indirect discrimination because of their ethnicity or their disability. In other instances they may face animosity, hostility and/or exclusion by other pupils or the parents of other pupils based on their ethnicity or disability at levels which make school attendance intolerable. In other instances there may be barriers which put Roma pupils or pupils with disabilities at a disadvantage such as lack of suitable school within a reasonable distance and no available transportation within the means of their families, other costs, teachers' lack of understanding of, and respect for, cultural differences, alienation of parents from educational establishments arising from their own negative educational experiences and/or failure of schools to recognise and make arrangements to meet particular needs of individual pupils. Feeding a vicious cycle of prejudice, the lack of understanding shown by teachers can drive or reinforce the general lack of understanding/respect from other pupils, parents and other groups within society, leading to further discrimination in areas beyond education.

Therefore in reviewing practices across the Council of Europe member states we have adopted a three-pronged approach to what could constitute good or promising practice. Drawing on the formulation in the UK Equality Act 2010 in the context of the matters to be taken into consideration by public authorities to meet a statutory equality duty (s.149 Equality Act 2010) we have used the following three broad policy goals as basic benchmarks for good or promising practice in the areas covered by this report.

1. Elimination of discrimination and other forms of prohibited conduct
2. Promotion of equality of opportunity between different groups, which could include:
  - a. Removing or minimising disadvantage suffered by members of a particular group
  - b. Meeting the different needs of members of a particular group
  - c. Encouraging increased participation by a group whose participation is disproportionately low
3. Fostering of good relations between different groups, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

We have found in a number of instances that the practice in a particular country is achieving, or has the potential to achieve, more than one of these goals, for example, the introduction of compulsory teacher training modules on multiculturalism, equality and non-discrimination within education should result in teachers better able to meet the different needs of children from Roma and non-Roma communities and to foster good relations by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding. However every example cited below, in our view, is achieving or has achieved at least one of these goals.

### **3. Areas in which good/promising practices have been identified**

#### **A. Data collection for promoting and achieving substantive equality**

Collection of data on ethnicity or on disability or on other aspects of personal identity protected under anti-discrimination law is one of the topics many times described as a solution as well as a challenge. The EU Data Protection Directive<sup>2</sup> does not preclude collection of equality data but it establishes conditions meant to prevent misuse. Still, the benefits of collecting equality data cannot be overstated when working towards substantive equality, equality of outcomes, by treating different situations differently.

In the particular context of education, by collecting pupil data, segregation can be prevented, or when collecting anonymised data regarding differential educational achievement, it is possible directly to target scarce additional resources to those schools where there are the greatest numbers of pupils of a particular ethnicity with low achievement. Once such measures to raise achievement are adopted, data collection can allow school authorities to monitor more effectively the impact of the measures on the low-achievement group, adjusting them to secure better outcomes and discontinuing them when the desired outcome has been realised.

- **UK**

The following is an example of both policy and practice implemented in the UK as a means of raising the educational achievement of ethnic minority pupils in state maintained schools. Since 1944 there has been a well-articulated national structure for state education provided through local education authorities. When immigrants from India, Pakistan, the Caribbean and elsewhere arrived in their thousands from the early 1950's and by the 1960's, they were sending

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<sup>2</sup> Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 1995 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data .

their children to local schools, issues arose which had not been contemplated under the 1944 Education Act. As described in the authoritative study by E J B Rose and others, *Colour and Citizenship, 1969*:

“Children of West Indian parents, the largest of all the immigrant groups, have been a source of bafflement, embarrassment and despair in the education system... They have often presented problems which the average teacher is not equipped to understand, let alone overcome.”

Laws prohibiting race discrimination in Great Britain were passed in 1965 and 1968. And in 1966 the UK Parliament, recognising that additional resources may be needed to meet the needs of groups with different cultures and different languages, included in the Local Government Act 1966, Section 11, a scheme to provide additional funds to local authorities "to help meet the special needs of a significant number of people of commonwealth origin with language or customs which differ from the rest of the community." The 'Section 11' scheme of funding was replaced in 1999 by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG). This grant was distributed to local authorities on a formula basis relating to the number of English as an additional language (EAL) learners and the number of pupils from 'underachieving' ethnic minority groups in local authorities, combined with take-up of free school meals as a proxy indicator of low income. The EMA grant was intended to *“narrow achievement gaps for those minority ethnic groups who are underachieving and to meet particular needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language.”*

The bulk of this grant was required to be devolved to schools in a local authority area and was required to be spent only on the above purposes, whether by local authorities or by schools. Each local authority had to devise a formula for allocating EMAG funds to local schools which reflected the numbers of bilingual learners and ethnic minority pupils who are underachieving in those schools. Having good data collection systems and regular analysis of data increasingly became essential tools for raising achievement.

For many years schools in England have been required to file information on their pupils through the School Census. Included in the information schools must provide is pupils' ethnicity. The UK passed the Data Protection Act in 1998, amended in 2003, to comply with EU Directive 95/46/EC. The Data Protection Act defines “sensitive personal data” as a sub-category of personal data to which even tighter restriction on processing apply. Included as “sensitive personal data” is

information as to “the racial or ethnic origin of the data subject.” The UK Data Protection Act Schedule 3 imposes the same conditions for the processing of sensitive personal data as in the EU Data Protection Directive, but in Schedule 3 Paragraph 9 provides one additional condition:

“(1) The processing -

(a) is of sensitive personal data consisting of information as to racial or ethnic origin,

(b) is necessary for the purpose of identifying or keeping under review the existence or absence of equality of opportunity or treatment between persons of different racial or ethnic origins, with a view to enabling such equality to be promoted or maintained, and

(c) is carried out with appropriate safeguards for the rights and freedoms of data subjects.”

The guidance for schools published by the Department of Education<sup>3</sup> and the Welsh Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills<sup>4</sup> on the collection of data on pupils’ ethnic background requires strict compliance with the Data Protection Act. Generally schools seek to obtain the consent of the data subject or, where the data subject is a child, the child’s parent. The Department recognises the sensitivity of this issue, stating *“Parents who have experienced racism and prejudice may feel reluctant to identify their ethnicity.”* The guidance stresses that *“Any parent or pupil has the right to refuse to provide this information. If a parent or a pupil actively refuse, schools must not record an ethnic background.”*

Schools are expected to write to parents (or to pupils over age 11) asking them to indicate their child’s (their) ethnicity allowing them a reasonable time to respond and advising that they have a right to refuse to provide this information. The standard form includes an option *“I do not wish my child’s/[my] ethnic group to be recorded in any way.”*

The model letter to parents in the guidance for schools includes a standard form which states:

*“The information you provide will be used to compile statistics on the school careers and achievements of children from different ethnic backgrounds, to help ensure that children from all backgrounds have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. These statistics will not allow individual children to be identified, and the information will not be used for any other purpose.”*

<sup>3</sup> The title of the central government department with responsibility for education in England has changed several times since 1999; for this section of this report we have used “Department of Education” or “DfE” or “the Department” to refer to this department from 1999 to the present day. There is separate department of the Welsh Assembly Government responsible for education in Wales.

<sup>4</sup> Collecting and Recording Data on Pupils’ Ethnic Background available at: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/11263/1/090716circular0062009en.pdf>

*The information will be passed on to any other school to which your child transfers to save you having to be asked for it again. It will also be passed on from time to time to the Local Education Authority and the DfE to contribute to local and national statistics.”*

The letter should state that if the parent (or pupil) does not provide the information or formally refuse to do so, the school may use its best judgment to determine the pupil’s ethnic background. The parent (pupil) would then have the right to see, amend or delete the ethnicity the school has entered on the pupil’s record. The Department in a public consultation document<sup>5</sup> emphasises the benefit of schools, local authorities and the Department having pupil ethnicity data:

*“The new pupil level annual schools’ census means that it will be possible for the first time ever to monitor the achievement of minority ethnic pupils locally and nationally in a consistent way. ...*

*This represents a huge step forward. The Government is committed to publishing this data and this will give schools and local and central government a much clearer picture of the relative performance of particular groups of pupils. This enables school leadership teams and policy makers to ask questions about which groups are doing well and which are doing less well. ...As a result we can focus energy and resources where they are needed most. Above all, it will improve accountability; success or failure will be clear for all to see.”*

The schools inspectorate, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) published in 2004 the study *Managing the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant: Good practice in primary schools*<sup>6</sup> finding that where schools use it effectively, EMAG funding has been a catalyst for the development of high-quality provision for minority ethnic and bilingual pupils, enabling them to achieve well. Main findings of the assessment were that:

- Successful schools routinely monitor the way they use the additional resources to ensure that it results in improved outcomes for targeted pupils.

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<sup>5</sup> Aiming High: Raising Achievement of Ethnic Minority Pupils, Department for Education and Skills, 2003, Paras. 11 – 12.

<sup>6</sup> Available at: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/managing-ethnic-minority-achievement-grant-good-practice-primary-schools>.



- Good-quality partnership teaching between mainstream and EMA staff is one of the most effective forms of whole-school continuing professional development.
- High-quality assessment, tracking and target-setting procedures, for individuals and groups, are a feature of all the schools. The systematic collection and analysis of data enable schools to identify need and deploy resources effectively.

Most of the schools spent all, or nearly all, of their funding on staffing. A few spent some EMAG funds on training and resources such as bilingual books or tapes. Typically, staffing consisted of an EMA specialist teacher plus a bilingual support worker. Two of the primaries had only specialist teachers, two had only bilingual assistants. Four of the schools had a full-time EMA coordinator. In the others, part-time EMA specialist provision ranged from 0.2–0.6, with an average of 0.4 full-time equivalent (FTE). The largest team (in a school with 864 pupils on roll) had 7 staff (4.2 FTE): 5 teachers and 2 bilingual support workers. The smallest had just one teacher working 0.2 FTE.

A wide range of initiatives (well over 20) was identified by EMA primary staff as part of their responsibilities in school. Inevitably, the bigger the team, the more it was able to do. Seven elements were, however, central to their work in the majority of schools:

- partnership teaching,
- curriculum development,
- staff training,
- support for heritage languages,
- work on assessment, needs identification and target-setting,
- home/school liaison,
- additional support (for example, homework clubs, mentoring).

Schools were asked to describe any specific initiatives they had set up over and above the routine teaching, monitoring and advisory work expected of EMA staff. Over 50 different activities were listed by the primary schools. The initiatives could be grouped into the following broad categories:

- working with parents
- use of heritage languages
- extra-curricular activities
- celebration of cultural diversity
- anti-racist work.

A major feature of these schools is, the quality of their monitoring procedures. Not only are they careful to establish the progress of minority ethnic pupils at individual and group level, they are also careful to monitor the initiatives they have set up and to adapt or discontinue them as appropriate. In addition to the careful collection and analysis of data, senior and middle managers monitored teaching plans, carried out lesson observations and undertook regular scrutiny of pupils' work. Issues of inclusion were built into these procedures. If the amount of partnership teaching was, for example, increased in a particular year group or subject area, results were monitored to establish that this had been worthwhile. In this way they were able to state, without hesitation, that the deployment of additional resources had led to increased performance. Improvement in attendance often followed carefully developed home/school liaison initiatives.

School self-evaluation procedures were strong, with several schools inviting feedback from staff, pupils and parents on their policies and practice.

#### **Preliminary conclusion on equality data:**

The UK detailed example of using anonymous data disclosing differential educational achievement levels of different ethnic groups has been chosen to illustrate the benefits of using equality data to allocate additional funding to schools. It was possible, once the learning needs of the ethnic minority pupils in a school or in a local authority area had been identified, funds ring-fenced for the sole purpose of raising achievement of ethnic minority and bilingual pupils, could be used to meet the costs of the targeted inputs discussed in other sections of this report, for example mentoring, specialist teachers, parental engagement, additional teaching resources.

In selecting this as an example of good or promising practice, we are not under-estimating the deep historical resistance in Romania to providing information about ethnicity; we appreciate the origins of such resistance and continuing anxieties at least amongst some groups regarding the possible misuse of such information. However, as ECRI has recognised in its recent and previous reports on Romania, the national data protection legislation, Law No. 677/2001, does not prohibit the processing of such data and ECRI has again recommended the establishment of "a comprehensive system for the collection of data so as to be able to assess the scale of direct and

indirect discrimination of groups of concern to ECRI in various fields of life in Romania.”<sup>7</sup> It is our hope that positive consideration will be given to the above example, which relies on effective collection of pupil ethnicity data used for purposes of anonymised statistical analysis of educational achievement in order to allocate as appropriately as possible additional funds which have been ring-fenced to be used solely to raise achievement of groups defined by ethnicity.

That this approach is relevant to Romania relies on the fact that the low educational achievement of Roma children, that is children of a particular ethnic origin, is, and has been, a matter of concern for many years. If there is real commitment to bring an end to the wide achievement gap between Roma children and non-Roma children, then bold innovative measures are needed.

### **B. Mentoring and homework groups (after school support) - providing role models external to school situation raising aspirations and increasing confidence**

Our research suggests that it is not sufficient only to secure enrolment in desegregated schools or classes and that Roma and other ethnic minority pupils and pupils with disabilities often need additional support outside of the classroom.

From practices surveyed it is obvious that parents have a vital role to play, but it is also clear that external assistance is needed. Projects throughout the EU have been developed granting the possibility to pupils to attend support classes or to benefit from mentoring. These projects have proven to be successful in involving society in raising the chances for the success of pupils, raising self-confidence of these pupils, and improving their results. We discuss two different types of projects: after-school support and mentoring projects. Most of the examples found in other CoE countries do not focus on Roma children but on immigrant children including refugees, who generally face underachievement at school. The practices mentioned below are easily transferable to benefit Roma children.

#### **B.1. After-school support**

The after-school projects involve dedicated locations where pupils can benefit from direct personal assistance in doing their homework. This assistance is not limited to homework and preparation of homework or exams, but also grants the pupils more self-confidence, providing

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<sup>7</sup> ECRI Report on Romania (fourth monitoring cycle) Adopted 19 March 2014, Published 3 June 2014, para. 185

them with role models in the persons of the coordinators/volunteers and developing other skills through activities other than those purely linked to the school.

- **Denmark<sup>8</sup>**

Since 2003, in order to help immigrant children completing primary school with sufficient competencies to complete further education, the Ministry for Refugees, Immigration and Integration supported 'homework cafés' for immigrant children in primary and secondary school. The main aim of the 'homework cafés' was to address the educational underachievement of immigrant children. These cafés mainly relied on volunteers' work (which had an unexpected very positive impact on the pupils including 'outward-reacting' youngsters mainly boys), but some cafés have also had a paid coordinator. The pedagogical approach was focusing on recognition of these pupils, and even if the ostensible purpose was to assist with homework activities, some of the 'homework cafés' developed other activities (excursion, physical outdoor activities etc.). When evaluating the projects, it was shown that specific factors had improved the initial aim of the project including the pedagogical approach focusing on recognition, the role models played by the volunteers/coordinators, the supplementary activities, the involvement of younger pupils and of the parents. The children participating in the 'homework cafés' became better prepared for upper secondary education. The participating girls gained more self-confidence and the boys gained tools to handle conflicts and generally felt better respected and recognised. In total 342 'homework cafés' were supported in the period 2006-2009, granting assistance on a weekly basis to around 3000 children (equal numbers of boys and girls). The support of the Danish Ministry (both on the project itself and financially) played a crucial role in the success of the 'homework cafés'; also valuable was the part played by large NGOs such as for example the Danish Red Cross.

- **Austria<sup>9</sup>**

Again, the goal of the project was to support immigrant children (between the age of 6 and 15) in their studies to enable them to achieve visible success through their own efforts and to continue to higher education. From 2007 until 2010, the 'Lerncafés' functioned with volunteers and provided (for free) assisted studying time as well as supervised afternoon care. The assisted studying time was used to support pupils complete their homework and prepare for exams. Pupils

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<sup>8</sup> Information available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=18632](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=18632) and [http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-](http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/info_til/medarbejdere_i_kommuner/integrationsviden/uddannelse/grundskole/vaerktojer/2011/)

[dk/info\\_til/medarbejdere\\_i\\_kommuner/integrationsviden/uddannelse/grundskole/vaerktojer/2011/](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=13492)  
<sup>9</sup> Information available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=13492](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=13492) and <http://www.caritas.at>

were also taught how to study and were given tools so they could succeed by their own means.. Activities other than homework were also organised (excursion in the city, other leisure activities). Another crucial feature of the project was to work with the parents and parents' education. The evaluation of the project demonstrated that the marks of the pupils involved improved and they were able to complete their school year with success. It also showed that the involvement of the parents not only benefited the pupils but also the parents themselves when participating in activities (such as language course for parents). The success of the 'Lerncafés' encouraged the parents to recommend them to other parents. 130 pupils benefited from the 'Lerncafés' in 4 different locations of the city of Graz. The project was funded through various funders including private ones.

- **Bulgaria<sup>10</sup>**

The project (2011-2013) targeted children (asylum seekers and refugees) who were accommodated by the Refugee Reception Center of the State Agency for Refugees. As an individual approach seemed essential for the success of the project, 50 Bulgarian volunteers were recruited through competition if they spoke one of the languages spoken in the refugees' countries of origin. The volunteers went through a specialised training under the leadership of two coordinators supervising the project. The Integration Center of the State Agency for Refugees was open for the pupils 5 days a week from 14.00 to 16.00. Volunteers were providing a three path programme: firstly an initial language course, secondly training the children in basics skills (reading and counting) and thirdly assistance with the homework. 50 pupils <sup>11</sup> from 6 to 17 years, benefited from the project that through assistance to their learning process, preparation of the homework but also organisation of other activities such as games, celebrations, creative and cultural entertainment, enabled them to follow the Bulgarian public school curricula. When evaluating the project, it was proven that the pupils not only had increased their level in Bulgarian language, but also received better marks at school and felt better integrated. Again the support of the parents played a role. In addition to helping the children to integrate and to benefit from assistance in their homework, the project draw attention of the public and other volunteers on the problematic faced by these pupils and their families and it created good opportunities for intercultural dialogue between the society and the refugees. The aim of the project was to concentrate on overcoming

<sup>10</sup> Information available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=31180](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=31180) and [http://www.caritas-bg.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=80&Itemid=196&lang=bg](http://www.caritas-bg.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=80&Itemid=196&lang=bg)

<sup>11</sup> Please note that the annual budget for this project benefiting to 50 pupils was of only 12 000€. Most of this budget consisting of the salaries for the 2 coordinators.

the difficulties faced by refugees when they arrive in a new country and wish to continue their education by improving educational and social integration of these children; the practices involved could easily be transferred to meet the situation of Roma children in Romania.

- **Hungary<sup>12</sup>**

This project. 'Step Together' was initially created in order to follow the European Council's recommendation for improving the education of migrant children and young adults from third countries and for preventing their low performance and dropping out from schools. The project took place in the city of Miskolc/Budapest and the results did show that apart from the language courses provided, assistance was also given in relation to other subjects such as mathematics. Specific teaching aid materials were designed that helped the teachers improve pupils' learning skills. The evaluation of the project demonstrated that it not only improved pupils' command of Hungarian language but also offered improved prospects of integration such as notably easier entrance into secondary school and the labour market. The development and use of specific teaching materials is a practice which could easily be transferred to meet Roma pupils' learning needs in Romania.

## **B. 2. Mentoring**

The mentoring projects enabled involvement of individuals from the majority towards other individuals (the pupils/students) in order to help those pupils from the minority through their schooling, training or search for jobs. Mentors are mainly older persons, or persons with experience who closely follow and guide younger persons in their school, studies or professional life in a 'one-to-one' relationship. This relationship guarantees the involvement of each party and improves the desired success of the mentoring. A mentor can also be considered as a 'coach' or 'tutor'. The European Network for Educational Support Projects issued a publication on the issue of mentoring<sup>13</sup> that explains what mentoring is and describes some of the practice. Some of the examples are listed below.

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<sup>12</sup> Information available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=28152](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=28152) and <http://www.egyutthalado.uni-miskolc.hu>. This project was funded at 75% by the European Union Integration Fund and 25% by the Hungarian Ministry of Interior.

<sup>13</sup> Available at: [http://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/ENESP-Brochure\\_VDEF\\_LR.pdf](http://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/ENESP-Brochure_VDEF_LR.pdf).

- **Belgium**<sup>14</sup>

For years, Refugee Action Flanders has been providing refugees, asylum seekers and other newcomers with information, advice and counselling when they wished to study at Flemish colleges and universities. In order to promote the social and academic integration of this target group, since 2007 the Refugee Action Flanders and the Ghent University have together formulated a new methodology for introducing mentorships. The mentoring follows a peer to peer approach and is carried out by fellow students principally concerned with everyday problems.

Mentoring consists of a form of counselling in which a volunteer with experience (the mentor) guides a less experienced person (the mentee). The mentor, often an older, more senior student in the same degree programme, serves as a personal, approachable contact for the mentee. This guidance goes from helping the refugee student to familiarise her/himself with the university, supporting him/her socially and emotionally and supporting him/her in working through course material to referring the mentee to specific university services or departments when there is an obvious need for professional support. In evaluating the project, 72% of the mentees declared that feeling better at the university was also due to the support they receive from their mentors and developed their cognitive and social communicative skills. The majority of the mentors evaluated their mentoring as a unique successful experience. The rate of success has not yet been provided by the university.<sup>15</sup>

- **Belgium**<sup>16</sup>

The City of Leuven in 2007 in cooperation with the Catholic University of Leuven initiated the 'Buddy programme'<sup>17</sup> which aims at assisting pupils in primary and secondary education. The buddies (mentors) are chosen among students trainees from teacher training, other students and retired teachers and their task is to guide the pupils after school time in primary and secondary education in small groups of 3 or individually. The project takes place in 8 primary schools and 5 secondary schools in Leuven. The general aim of this mentoring programme is to provide vulnerable pupils with more success opportunities, to increase these opportunities through

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<sup>14</sup> Information available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=15612](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=15612) and <http://www.vluchtelingenwerk.be/projecten/mentorenwerking.php>

<sup>15</sup> The Ghent University funds all the costs of Refugee Action Flanders with funds from the Aanmoedigingsfonds voor beleidsspeerpunten (an incentive fund for spearheading policy).

<sup>16</sup> Information available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=15612](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=15612) and <http://www.leuven.be/leven/onderwijs/buddy-project/index.jsp>

<sup>17</sup> The project is funded by the Flemish Integration Ministry, the King Baudouin Foundation and the city of Leuven.



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motivation and training, to achieve better school results and self-confidence, to provide extra support for secondary education, to teach learning methods and to help pupils choose the right study direction. Another goal of the project was to provide extra support to parents and teachers, to make the buddies aware of the problems faced by vulnerable children and to train future teachers in how to handle diversity

- **Belgium<sup>18</sup>**

The Prisma Education and Youth Centre in Brussels was created in 1998 by students who wanted to help children in their studies at the primary, secondary and high school level. Prisma works with volunteers dedicated to help children by offering support in quality education. The project believes that quality education is crucial for social development and also for establishing equal educational opportunities. The specificities of each pupil are taken into account and contacts are established between the pupil, the volunteer, the parents and also the teachers of the school. Children are offered the possibility to improve their knowledge in specific courses, but also their motivation. Socio-cultural activities are seen as an active part of education. There are currently 30 qualified mentors and 230 registered pupils coming from 35 partner schools. The individual mentoring has proven to have a positive effect on not only the academic performance of the pupils but also on their behaviour and well-being.

- **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>19</sup>**

The project 'Scholarship, mentoring and tutoring for secondary Roma students' aims at improving the retention and achievement rate of all Roma students enrolled in secondary schools. It is supported by the Ministry of Education and Sciences, and it is divided into two strands: the students' scholarship and the Mentoring and tutoring. Roma students in secondary schools were provided mentors and tutors in order to help them with the learning process and also to assist in a better socialisation. The mentors are mathematics teachers, as this course was determined as being the most problematic for the students, and the tutors are professors of other courses in which the students experienced difficulties. Mentors and tutors meet with the parents of the students and receive a monthly fee of 50€ for a period of 9 months. They follow the students in their curricula, assist them in planning their homework, advise them concerning their tasks and

<sup>18</sup> Information available at: <http://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/prisma-education-centre/>

<sup>19</sup> Information available at: [http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ref\\_external\\_evaluation\\_mac052-finalmarch\\_21\\_2012\\_2.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ref_external_evaluation_mac052-finalmarch_21_2012_2.pdf)



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activities, and eventually provide the students with additional classes in specific subjects. The project was assessed to be very successful for the students who were receiving a scholarship and benefiting from mentoring. The case was different for students who did not benefit from the scholarship; the process of including them in the mentoring programme and having them fully participating was challenging; these students did not feel obliged to attend the mentoring classes. One explanation could be that being selected for a scholarship might have influenced the scholarship students' sense of responsibility. This suggests that an incentive may be needed for this type of intervention to have the desired impact on groups that encounter greater challenges in relation to education. Nevertheless half of the students who did not receive a scholarship and attended the mentoring classes had reached satisfactory results that gave them the possibility to apply for a scholarship the following year.

- **Germany<sup>20</sup>**

From 2009 until 2013 the Commissioner of the Federal Government for Migration, Refugees and Integration funded a diversity mentoring project led by the NGO Life e.V. This mentoring project aimed at empowering and strengthening young pupils with a migration background through higher education. Pupils are engaged for one year in a one-to-one mentoring where the mentors (who follow a special training) help them to develop a realistic academic perspective for their educational future through the transfer of knowledge regarding the educational system and universities, workshops, regular meetings, etc. The project helped the mentees to understand the asset of intercultural competence as a value and benefit and strengthened their self-confidence and independence. The project was evaluated as an 'extraordinary positive measure' for both the mentors and the mentees.

- **Germany<sup>21</sup>**

The 'Junge Vorbilder' (young examples/models) is a mentoring project founded in 2004 that targets pupils from grades 8 to 11 in Hamburg. The mentors are university students with an immigrant background who often share with their mentees a similar social and cultural background and sometimes also the same language. The mentors are trained through a basic

<sup>20</sup> Information available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=35504](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=35504) and <http://www.life-online.de>

<sup>21</sup> Information available at: [http://www.verikom.de/projekte/junge\\_vorbilder/](http://www.verikom.de/projekte/junge_vorbilder/)

training at the beginning and are regularly offered additional training focusing on more specific topics such as learning techniques or specialist subjects. The mentors meet every month in order to share their experience. As the mentoring takes place at the mentees' home, it allows the mentor to establish relations with the parents and to know the specific family environment of the mentee. Research shows that children with an immigrant background who have older siblings do perform better at school than if they are the first child at home (older siblings often replacing the parents as they do know the school system). The Junge Vorbilder aims at creating this 'sibling relationship' in the apprentice of pupils. There are currently 300 qualified mentors.

- **The Netherlands**<sup>22</sup>

Following the recognition of a Mentor project initiated in 1998 as a centre of expertise and knowledge, especially regarding youth in a socially disadvantaged position, to ensure the continuity of this project, the Foundation for Knowledge and Social Cohesion (SKC – Stichting voor Kennis en Sociale Cohesie) was established in Amsterdam in 2005. It aims at achieving social cohesion among the city's inhabitants through the development of educational programmes. The goal of the Mentor project is to encourage young children to maximise their attention regarding the transition between primary and secondary education. The mentors (high school and university students) act as role models and transfer their experience and know how regarding the learning skills and social skills that are so important when pupils transfer from primary to secondary schools. Pupils are followed during the last two years of primary and the first two years of secondary. The project aims at avoiding early school leaving (after primary school) by helping and assisting the pupils.

### **Preliminary conclusions on after-school support and mentoring :**

The analysis of the different projects identified as promising or confirmed good practices shows that successful interventions not only help the pupils through their curricula (getting better marks, successfully completing primary education and going into secondary education) but also improve their self-confidence and raise awareness about their own potential and opportunities. To have positive role models in the volunteers/mentors has been shown to be very valuable for the pupils as well as the increased involvement of their parents. .Over all, the more individualised,

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<sup>22</sup> Information available at: <http://www.skcnet.nl/v2/>

the mentorship or school support is, the better for the pupils. All these projects are also a source of better integration not only within the school but also within society at large and help not only the target group but also the volunteers, mentors, teachers etc. who, in giving recognition to pupils from the target group become more aware of their situation and the problems they experience within society.

### **C. Citizenship education including eradication of bullying**

Specific projects have demonstrated the success of early intervention to challenge negative stereotypes and to tackle prejudice and develop mutual understanding.

- **Greece**

The organization Antigone initiated a project called 'schools for change' in 2012.<sup>23</sup> Through the implementation of educational workshops based on non-formal education methodology the project aims to inform the pupils and change mentalities on the following issues: fighting stereotypes, discrimination and racism; fighting bullying and school violence; human rights; children's rights; gender equality and fighting disability or social exclusion. The workshops are led by trainers who need to have a background in teaching and education, experience and expertise in non-formal education methodology and techniques and knowledge in the field of human rights. The activities that are carried out in the workshops are tailored to the needs of the specific age group, interest of the students or to the specificities of the schools. Antigone collaborates with the teachers in order to identify these needs and design specific workshops using various educational toolkits (such as those recommended by the Council of Europe: 'Compass', 'Compassito' and 'All different, all equal'). Workshops can include role play, simulation games, theatrical plays, storytelling, brainstorming, circle discussion etc. all performed through non-formal educational techniques. Pupils are pushed to be creative, to identify problems and are challenged to come up with effective solutions. So far approximately 150 workshops were carried out and approximately 1200 students and 115 teachers were reached.

Antigone evaluates the workshops through questionnaires from participants after every workshop. The project was initially funded by the Heinrich Boll Foundation<sup>24</sup>. However due to the success of the project, while the funding ended, the organization Antigone decided to keep up

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<sup>23</sup> Information available at: <http://www.antigone.gr/en/projects/projects/2/>

<sup>24</sup> The funding for 16 months amounted to 16 432€.

with the implementation and continued to deliver workshops with its own resources (with the assistance of volunteers).

- **Sweden**<sup>25</sup>

Since June 2012 the organization Friends together with the UNHCR have worked on campaign materials for students and teachers of secondary schools to combat and prevent bullying and children's rights' violation. They initiated the project 'Hello Sweden' that aims to convey stories of unaccompanied minors with the aim to change negative attitudes and prejudices and to increase the understanding/awareness and benefits of diversity. The project does not only relate to unaccompanied minors but to anyone who left her/his home country. (The project could easily be adapted to minority children who are also nationals, such as Roma or children with disabilities). The ultimate aim is to create a safer environment in schools. The campaign relies on different tools such as a comic book that addresses the story of a young Afghani boy flying to Sweden.<sup>26</sup> The comic book is accompanied with supplementary materials for the teachers. There is also a movie telling the story of a young girl separated from her mother and who struggles with her new life in Sweden.<sup>27</sup> There are plays and lectures focusing on alienation and identity addressing the difficulty to be new in a school, to belong to the minority, and cultural differences. Other tools are specific material for teachers including identity, prejudices, integration, narratives from persons who are not ethnic Swedes and writing exercises. 'Writing towards empathy' aims to develop imagination and expression of students by writing the story of a child seeking refuge. Some of these stories will be published in the summer 2014.

The project has so far visited 66 schools and reached more than 6000 secondary students who participated in the activities. Visits to 90 other secondary schools are foreseen starting in the spring 2014. The project was funded by the Swedish Post Code Lottery's surplus. The project met with great success. Well known and recognized publishing companies, actors and agencies have been engaging throughout the project.

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<sup>25</sup> Information available at: <http://www.hejsverige.nu>

<sup>26</sup> The comic book title is 'We shall meet again Sanam'.

<sup>27</sup> The movie title is 'Shadi'.



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- **United Kingdom**<sup>28</sup>

The Downhall Primary school in 2006 developed the TEAM project<sup>29</sup>. TEAM stands for Together Everyone Achieves More. The aim of the project is the promotion of harmony and understanding of cultural differences in the school but also in the local community. It allowed pupils to have more confidence in sharing their own religious and cultural history and experiences. In order to do this the school looked at opportunities to bring together families from different faiths and cultures to promote understanding. The specific aims are the following:

- creating opportunities for families to develop understanding of each other's faith and beliefs,
- organizing learning events enabling different groups to share and celebrate multi-culturalism,
- bridging the gaps between generations, the wider community and promoting inclusion,
- raising self-esteem and sense of inclusion of pupils that resulted in improvement in their education.

The Ethnic Minority Achievement Coordinator works together with a group of older pupils in order to identify from the beginning of the school year the major cultural or religious dates for the different groups. It has to be noted that if it was difficult in the beginning to attract volunteers among the older pupils, the success of the project demonstrated a greater involvement and willingness of the pupils themselves to engage. Families and parents are heavily engaged as well and participate to the assemblies, prepare specific exhibitions, demonstrations, multi-cultural buffets, music etc. The school acknowledges the fact that the greater the involvement of the families in the pupils education and activities the greater the success. The school also works with local stakeholders and religious leaders. Both pupils and parents have become very pro-active in programming new events and activities for the school. One example is dedicating Black History month to a whole range of activities such as celebrating Kwanzaa, knowing about the history of the black community, the music dance and food.

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<sup>28</sup> Information available at: <http://www.cohesioninstitute.org.uk>

<sup>29</sup> The costs needed for this project are quite low as time has been allocated by the school from staff training to reframe the curriculum changes. An effort is made to fundraise and to attract local business to make donations in order to support the costs of the project.

## **Preliminary conclusions on multicultural citizenship education including eradication of bullying:**

Even if the above mentioned examples are targeting different communities than Roma and children with disabilities, they could easily be adapted and transferred to the Romanian reality. These projects were not necessarily costly but all needed dedication and involvement from the school and school teachers. The involvement of parents and families but also the local community definitely contribute to the success of these projects. The aim of these projects is greater than purely achieving good results at school. They intend to increase respect across different groups, reduce prejudice, achieve better school inclusion and thereby greater societal integration. Through these projects minority pupils gain recognition and greater self-esteem, which undoubtedly contributes to their improved attendance and achievements at school.

### **D. Training teachers at every level regarding equality and non-discrimination; training administrators and others who exercise power on provision of education**

Teachers are in the front line in education systems around the world; hence they have a vital role in turning exclusion, prejudice and alienation into inclusion, intercultural understanding, trust and confidence.

The following examples, all of which could contribute to meeting the goals of eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations, illustrate practices from which useful lessons can be gained in terms of the preparation of teachers to work in schools serving culturally diverse communities in Romania.

- **United Kingdom - England<sup>30</sup>**

Unless teachers feel confident that they have the knowledge and skills to teach in ethnically or culturally diverse communities or schools with diverse pupil intake they are unlikely to be successful in teaching pupils from minority backgrounds. In England where teacher education has included training on multi-cultural education, there remains a problem of a majority of white teachers continuing to lack confidence in their ability to teach ethnic minority pupils. While in a classroom setting a school with a majority of non-white pupils the teacher may be formally in a minority; however, the white teacher remains a member of the dominant group and can leave the classroom and revert to a situation in which s/he is again part of the majority. (From Martin

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<sup>30</sup> Information available at: “‘It is a way of life’ – Notions of Good Multicultural practice in initial teacher education and curriculum delivery in England” in Ross, A. (ed) Citizenship Education: Europe and the World. London, CiCe 2006 pp 37 – 52.

Kaleja, “Social Equality through Multicultural Education – a Means for Reducing Prejudices and Stereotypes in the Educational Process”, University of Ostrava)

Recognition of diversity is part of the Award of Qualified Teacher Status in England, and teachers are expected to challenge stereotypical views and encourage the effective teaching and learning of pupils from all ethnic, social, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds.

A college located in a predominantly white area provides initial teacher education with a mainly white British intake from white communities. The college sought to challenge students’ view that cultural/language diversity is an ‘exception’ and to encourage them to question myths and stereotypes regarding different ethnic groups. The college introduced a *Culturally Diverse Teaching Placement* project. First year student teachers were expected to spend fixed periods in schools within a 70 km radius that may have culturally diverse leadership, teaching and support staff and/or pupils from diverse backgrounds.

The college carries out development work with the students, during and after their placements, in which the students reflect on their experience with their college tutor. The college is keen to ensure that student teachers appreciate the value of diversity rather than a tokenistic view from the ‘outside’. The students must also relate to their studies of teaching and learning what they had observed during their placement including measures to address minority ethnic achievement, incidents of racism, how children learn English as an Additional Language and how schools respond to their social emotional, physical and intellectual needs.

- **Slovakia**

The lack of preparedness of Slovak teachers for instruction of children of migrant background, and the absence within the education of teachers of programmes to increase teachers’ qualification in this area were met by a Ministry of Education accredited project involving development of a specialised curriculum by a team of experts. We found parallel gaps within the training of teachers in many parts of Europe in particular with regard to the teaching of Roma children.

The project was funded for one year (2010 – 2011) by the European Fund for Integration of Third Country Nationals and was carried out by the Milan Smecka Foundation.<sup>31</sup> Twenty-two primary school teachers were recruited and trained to improve their knowledge and skills for inclusive instruction of migrant children. During residential trainings they developed their preparations for general class instructions with individual plans for long-term instruction of migrant children in their schools. Teachers with a team of experts then assessed these tools; the experts also visited

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<sup>31</sup> European Web Site on Integration [http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practicae/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=20070](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practicae/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=20070).



schools as non-participative observers. At the end, teachers presented their finalised educational plans to the experts' commission. One objective of the project was to disseminate the educational tools to the broader pedagogical public. There is no information that this has yet taken place.

It is likely that with slight modification the educational tools developed under this project could be of equal value for the improved access, attendance and attainment of Roma children in the educational systems of other CoE states in which teachers are inadequately prepared to teach Roma children.

- **Greece<sup>32</sup>**

A national programme “Linking School and Community” involved ‘pioneering’ ways to get immigrant families involved in various dimensions of local school’s life. The main elements of the programme were actions directly involving immigrant parents with teachers. This project, targeted to benefit migrant parents and children, could easily be a model for teacher training on intercultural issues where the minority culture is that of Roma.

Teachers were mindful of limited support from the Ministry of Education; there was a need to respond to school failure and social exclusion of immigrant students, lack of public knowledge and understanding of specific migrant groups, their needs and rights and lack of understanding of key discrimination problems migrants are facing as well as lack of specific training of key public officials to deal with specific groups of migrants in order to ensure proper access to their rights and prevent discriminatory practices.

More than 400 primary and secondary school teachers trained to become more effective in dealing with ‘multicultural’ classes, and in establishing stronger ties between immigrant families and the hosting communities. One essential element was the training of teachers in intercultural communication skills; this was provided through teacher training seminars. Teachers learned to become more effective in dealing with multicultural classes; they also became more effective in establishing stronger ties between immigrant families and host communities. The project raised teachers’ awareness of a number of everyday problems in the classroom and provided intercultural materials for future use. Resources of school units were used. Funding, mainly for operational costs (eg transportation) was provided by the EU Operational Programme “Education and Lifelong Learning”. Training seminars took place either in the participating schools or university premises or in various conference venues across Greece. The ‘Xenia’ network was

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<sup>32</sup> Information available at <http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID-ITEMS=40279>.



established for cultivation of dialogue between teachers who participated or wish to participate in intercultural activities. The project report states that “Time pressure and bureaucratic barriers discouraged many teachers from participating, and significantly delayed the launch of pioneering initiatives”; teachers commented that they wished there had been more time for project implementation and better institutional support from the Ministry of Education or local authorities.

- **Czech Republic**<sup>33</sup>

The problem of education of foreign pupils and their integration into Czech society was tackled through the development of a web portal [www.inkluzivniskola.cz](http://www.inkluzivniskola.cz) focusing on issues of education of foreign pupils and their integration into Czech schools. The web portal tries to explain the complexity of integration of foreigners. The organisational part of the portal focuses on themes for integration of foreigners and pedagogical work with, diversity based on principles of inclusive education. Teachers can use the portal to find examples of best practices, illustrative case studies, downloadable files, study materials and links. The portal, offering information on different practices from Czech Republic and abroad, will assist teachers when solving individual cases.

From March 2010 to June 2011 the web portal had more than 50,000 visits of which nearly 40,000 were unique visitors. The web portal was supported by the Ministry of Education and funded by the European Integration Fund. Although the report does not indicate the cost of developing, establishing and maintaining the web portal, over time it is likely to prove to be a far more economical way of informing teachers on crucial matters that have not been included/are not included in the teacher training curriculum. It would appear to be a useful resource which ought to be easily reproduced in other countries.

### **Preliminary conclusions for training of teachers and educational personnel:**

Each of the projects above can easily be a model for teacher training on intercultural issues where the minority culture is Roma. If teachers in Romania and in other parts of Europe are to meet the challenges associated with cultural diversity as well as the widely different needs of individual pupils, they need to acquire relevant knowledge and skills. Many teachers were educated at a time when little attention was given to evidence of discrimination, and in most cases teachers’ own

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<sup>33</sup> Information available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=21034](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=21034).

experiences were within the majority cultures. In order to make sure that teachers themselves are able to cope and to manage diversity, there are a number of important stages when interventions are required: at the entry level, through the curricula in the university, for tenure examinations and as part of continuing professional development. The training should equip teachers with the enduring personal and practical resources they need in order to bring intercultural information to the classroom and to feel confident in sharing it with their pupils and their pupils' parents.

#### **E. Provision of kindergarten and its impact on later school experiences**

Early childhood education programmes, especially those for very young children, can include activities to improve mothers' parenting skills and self-confidence and build positive relationships between parents and educational institutions. All of the following are examples of practices which have the potential to advance equality of opportunity.

- **Bulgaria<sup>34</sup>**

This project sought to respond to the high rate of Roma children dropping out of school, the high rate of infant mortality and the poor status of Roma children's health by providing community health and social services. The project involved psychologists, medical staff, social workers and trained Roma outreach workers working with families with children in two age groups: 0 – 3 and 4 – 6

For children 0 – 3, the focus is on improving parenting skills for mothers; activities include assessment of parenting knowledge, attitudes and skills, eight three-hour sessions on improving parenting skills while children are cared for; health consultations, age appropriate incentives for regular attendance (small packets of pampers, baby shampoo, etc.) Results include improvement in children's mental health, mothers' parenting skills – maintaining daily routine, non-violent reactions to misbehaviour, regular playing with the child for development of cognitive, language, social and motor skills. Improved self-confidence, help-seeking behaviour, family planning skills and commitment to invest efforts in successful development of their children. There was also improvement in children's health status – parents were able to learn about healthier pregnancies, child care and nutrition with access to an open kitchen.

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<sup>34</sup> International Step by Step Association (ISSA), 2009, Showcasing Successful Investments and Partnerships in ECD Services - Handbook of ECD Experiences, Innovations, and lessons from Central and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States.

For children 4 – 6 the focus is on development of children’s cognitive, social, language and motor skills. Activities include diagnostic needs assessment, motivation programme by Roma outreach workers, 3-hour daily sessions to build capacity (with a healthy snack), monthly parenting skills training sessions. Results include increased number of children receiving early childhood development services, improved cognitive, language, social and motor skills and coping with being at school; reduced number of drop-outs. Improved parental attitudes and skills to support their children in preparing for school.

No information is provided by ISSA regarding the costs of the project which was developed by the Health and Social Development Foundation. It is described as suitable for large Roma settlements where public funds are limited and building the requisite number of kindergartens is not economically justified.

- **Serbia**<sup>35</sup>

A Serbian National Development Goal adopted in 2006 is to ensure by 2015 that 70% of all children aged 3 to 7 years are attending preschool, with particular emphasis on children from vulnerable populations, children living in rural areas, Roma children, children with disabilities, etc. The Action Plan for Roma Education Improvement (2005) also explicitly recognised the need to expand inclusion of children in preschool institutions. The *IMPRES* project, supported by EU funding, from February 2011 to May 2015, is implemented jointly by the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development with SOFRECO, an international consultancy with offices in Belgrade.

The Law on Preschool Education (2010) outlines principles of preschool education (Art.4): availability – equal right to access without discrimination; democracy – appreciation of needs and rights of children and families: transparency; authenticity – holistic approach toward a child; appreciation of diversity; and development – continuous improvement. For enrolment at state preschool institutions, children from vulnerable groups shall have priority (Art. 13); a personalised approach requires additional support to children with disabilities, children from socio-economically or otherwise disadvantaged areas etc. (Art. 16). A bylaw in 2011 prescribes criteria for determining priorities of enrolment, with first priority for children from ten different socially vulnerable groups.

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<sup>35</sup> Information available at: [www.impress.rs](http://www.impress.rs).

Based on surveys and data analysis, 15 municipalities were identified; at the start of the project, preschool services were being provided and approximately 5,700 children were enrolled in some form of preschool across the 15 municipalities that were selected for the project. Advice was provided on organising of preschool networks involving preschool education system, health services, social services, NGOs, institutions working with marginalised children, local government representatives and parents. Networks were given methodology and ‘toolkit’ to plan and manage preschool services at municipality level. Guidelines for self-evaluation of preschools were developed. Inclusive and holistic approach to education methods aimed for vulnerable children were developed.

EU funds were used, in part, to finance additional capacities: purchase and equipping of new kindergartens in six municipalities and vehicles which would be used as ‘travelling kindergartens’ for nine remote municipalities.

Strong participative methodologies with commitment and involvement of local stakeholders enabled reform to be developed based on local testing and ownership. More than 1,000 marginalised children previously not enrolled in preschool benefited from development of special and specialised education programmes; nearly 300 socially excluded, vulnerable children from remote areas were able to access preschool through ‘travelling kindergarten’; seven new kindergartens created opportunity for 450 more children to have access to preschool. Overall more than 1,700 additional children in the 15 municipalities benefited from the project - an increase of nearly 30% in access to preschool in these municipalities.

This *IMPRES* project benefited from involvement of the EU – not only as a funder, which created an opportunity for consideration and planning of a reformed programme of preschool education – but also, supported through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, an inclusive, holistic approach which prioritised children from vulnerable groups. The project demonstrates that the momentum which led to new primary and secondary legislation intended to increase access to quality preschool education especially for the most vulnerable children can also be harnessed at the level of preschool service provision to plan and implement new and improved local services.

- **Armenia**<sup>36</sup>

In Voskepar Village, Noyemberian region, there had been no kindergarten since Soviet times. The village has 1150 inhabitants, 43 preschool age children and no services for children under 7. The village is in one of the most disadvantaged regions in the country.

The Step by Step Benevolent Foundation (SbS) is a community- based education project. It works to help families educate their children in a home-based environment and prepare them for school. To gain local government support, several meetings were organised with village administration to discuss critical importance of early years and to explain the project; as a result the head of the village administration provided a room in her office for organising monthly parenting sessions.

SbS centres organised monthly sessions for families that did not send their children to kindergartens. Once a month a group of parents from the community met to discuss issues related to child care, development and learning. Families were provided with educational materials to be used at home while working with their children.

The priority is to ensure that when children reach school age they are physically and psychologically healthy, well nourished, intellectually curious, socially confident and equipped with a solid foundation for life-long learning. The SbS commented “Through the project we learned that investing in parents’ education is as important as investing in teachers’ training. Also it is important to have the community’s alliance and support to ensure the sustainability of child care and development initiatives.”

- **Bosnia Herzegovina**<sup>37</sup>

Children living in remote areas in Goradze and Mostar regions had no possibility to attend regular kindergarten as there was none in the area; Parents could not take them to kindergarten because they were unemployed or did not have money to pay for transportation. The solution was to establish free mobile kindergartens – teachers work with children 2 times per week, for 2 to 3 hours each time. Primary schools in villages offered space, cleaning, heating, electricity and furniture. SOS Kinderdorf International provide toys, didactic materials and employ the teachers who travel to the teaching locations. After its initial success SOS Kinderdorf proposed to expand

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<sup>36</sup> International Step by Step Association (ISSA), 2009, Showcasing Successful Investments and Partnerships in ECD Services - Handbook of ECD Experiences, Innovations, and lessons from Central and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States.

<sup>37</sup> <sup>37</sup> International Step by Step Association (ISSA), 2009, Showcasing Successful Investments and Partnerships in ECD Services - Handbook of ECD Experiences, Innovations, and lessons from Central and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States.



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the project. Local government supplied a bus to transport the teachers, local kindergartens loaned their teachers and SOS Kinderdorf employed a project coordinator and covered costs of teaching materials and fuel. When local government was in crisis and could no longer afford to pay the maintenance and registration costs of the van, partners of the project took over the obligation. Goals included increasing the number of children in the area attending preschool, developing partnerships with public kindergartens, primary schools, town governments and donors; preparing for school children who otherwise were denied education, fostering their development to appropriate age levels and referring to additional professional services (speech therapist, paediatrician, orthopaedist etc.) and give parents knowledge about child development and parenting skills and provide opportunity to communicate with relevant education and health professionals. Activities included meetings with individual parents to discuss developmental issues of their child, educational workshops for parents on issues relating to child development and parental meetings and for professionals trainings and workshops and good practice exchanges. As a consequence when tested by school administrators on enrolment the children got good test results. Parents were more competent and more confident helping their child prepare for school. Primary school teachers exchanged good practices with teachers working in mobile kindergartens.

**Preliminary conclusions on increasing participation of Roma and other marginalised communities in early childhood education/kindergarten:**

The above projects, all of which were initiated by NGOs, demonstrate the multiple benefits which well-planned and well-coordinated early childhood education can have. Projects for very young children have been able, with participation of relevant professionals, to incorporate important lessons for Roma parents on child health and development and the value of education. Kindergartens for older pre-school children both permanent and mobile, have been effective in preparing otherwise educationally deprived children for successful entry into primary school. Further, the establishment of a kindergarten can be a catalyst for closer school-community relations.

**F. Increasing Roma parents' engagement in their children's education**

One of the most frequently mentioned reasons for the under-achievement of Roma children in school, their poor school attendance and their low participation in early childhood education is

Roma parents' alleged lack of interest in the education of their children. There is wide consensus that this is a major barrier that needs to be overcome if Roma children are to gain and enjoy the same educational opportunities as their non-Roma counterparts.

- **Hungary**

Under the Meséd (translated: “our story”) Project<sup>38</sup>, small pilot projects were set up in five regions of Hungary. Each pilot project involved Roma mothers in groups of between 8 and 15 meeting together weekly with a trained Roma facilitator for two-hour sessions. At the beginning of each session group members received a new children’s story book; books are chosen that convey messages to children about their feelings, behaviours and other ‘life lessons’. The mothers take turns reading the story aloud; the facilitator guides the reading and encourages discussion about the story and the illustrations. The facilitator is able to engage the women with the text and at the same time develop a model teaching technique which the mothers can use with their own children. The facilitator by also encouraging the women to express their feelings and struggles as a parent, in a supportive non-judgmental environment, helps to develop a collaborative system of mutual support between members of the group.

Most of the mothers taking part had no education beyond primary school; some had not completed primary school, leaving for reasons including pregnancy or financial barriers. A demographic survey of households involved in the pilot in two areas showed, for example, differing access to household services, nearly all having electricity and television but most of the homes in one area being without running water. Reported outcomes include mothers’ increased positive attitudes towards the value of education, new self-confidence, supportive relationships between the women and establishment of a common meeting place. Mothers gained skills to facilitate their children’s learning. Books, which the families had not previously had the opportunity to purchase, became a source of pride for both the mothers and their children.

The Roma Education Fund (REF) in its report<sup>39</sup> emphasises the importance of working with local authorities; REF seeks, wherever possible to choose locations for its projects where there are

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<sup>38</sup> Meséd was initiated under the broad framework of ‘A Good Start’ (‘AGS’) developed by the Roma Education Fund (REF) with three international partners and ten implementing local partners in Hungary, FYROM, Romania and Slovakia. AGS aims to address major disparities in Roma access to early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. Kavanagh, Dr. M., *Case Study of the Meséd Project*, Roma Education Fund, “Closing the Gap in Educational Outcomes between Roma and non-Roma”, July 2011; available at: [http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/documents/case\\_study\\_of\\_the\\_mesed\\_project-corrected.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/documents/case_study_of_the_mesed_project-corrected.pdf).

<sup>39</sup> *A Good Start: Mainstreaming the Access of Disadvantaged Romani Children to Quality Early Childhood Education and Care*, Roma Education Fund, 2013, available at: [http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ags\\_pp1\\_screen.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ags_pp1_screen.pdf).

already positive attitudes towards education on which an externally supported project will be able to build.

- Greece

A national level programme “Linking School and Community” in Greece is based on increasing the role and level of involvement of parents in school to improve the academic performance of children and better to promote various socio-cultural and intercultural competences.<sup>40</sup> The aim of the programme is to combat school failure and social exclusion of immigrant students through innovative ways to engage their families involved in various dimensions of the school’s life. Across all regions of Greece over three years (2010 – 2013) a total of 278 primary and secondary schools, involving 462 teachers, took part. More than 1,000 immigrant families were informed about the project and invited to take part.

The project included the following interventions:

- a) Introduction of ‘intercultural mediators’, i.e. an immigrant fluent in Greek who would strengthen the relationship between the school and immigrant families; this element was evaluated as working well but it was delayed due to the time required to create the database of immigrant families.
- b) Introduction of a ‘foster parent’, a native Greek who would ‘adopt’ a parent from an immigrant family and help improve her/his contact with the local school; this element was less successful as most native Greek parents were very cautious about ‘adopting’ immigrant parents.
- c) Mobile ‘counselling units’ which visited immigrant families and regular teachers-parents meetings; this element was not very successful; the mobile units did not work out as planned. Time pressures and bureaucratic barriers discouraged many teachers and immigrant parents from participating.
- d) Encouragement of immigrant parents to help their children with homework.
- e) Encouragement of immigrant parents to participate in school activities and to bring to school cultural material from their country of origin.

The programme was organised by the University of the Aegean; it was funded by the EU Operational Programme “Education and Lifelong Learning”: national Strategic Reference

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<sup>40</sup> “Linking School and Communities” European Web Site on Integration, available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=40279](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=40279).





Framework, 2007-2013, for operational costs; two part-time administrators were employed. Resources of the individual schools were used.

Teachers and immigrant families who participated expressed positive comments about the implementation of the project; both wished there had been better institutional support by the Ministry of Education or the local authorities. Recommendations, following evaluation, included combating of unnecessary bureaucracy, with greater freedom given to individual schools; institutionalising intercultural practices; creating permanent structures and procedures for enhancing school-family ties; better financial and administrative support for future similar projects; more frequent teachers-parents meetings. The organisers recognised that ultimately the methods they were testing would need to be institutionalised by the schools, local authorities and Ministry of Education, with agreement regarding provision of adequate funding.

It is reasonable to expect that some immigrant parents will have arrived in Greece having had a good education in their home country and will retain positive attitudes regarding the education of their children; the task of increasing their engagement is likely to be a simpler one, involving issues of culture and overcoming xenophobia but in the context of parents already convinced of the value of education for their children. Other migrants, not dissimilar to Roma, may themselves have had negative school experiences, and to encourage their engagement will involve not only tackling issues of culture and language difference and xenophobia but also building their confidence and appreciation of the benefits of good education for their children.

- United Kingdom

Case studies undertaken in 2009 in ten secondary schools, five primary schools and five alternative education provisions in England and Wales describe ways in which schools were able to develop positive relationships with parents of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils so that these parents became more supportive of the school and the benefits which the school is able to offer their children. The following summaries describe five different methods adopted by different schools.<sup>41</sup>

School A: School staff visited Roma parents at home. They made particular efforts to encourage them to attend the Roma parents' evening for which community transport to the event was provided. At the parents' evening Roma parents were welcomed to the school and given insight

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<sup>41</sup> "Improving the outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils: final report", National Foundation for Educational Research, published by Department for Education, October 2010  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/181669/DFE-RR043.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/181669/DFE-RR043.pdf).

into the ways in which the school operates, the education system and the examinations and expectations for the pupils.

School B: The school cancelled lessons for a whole day so that all parents could come in at a time convenient for them and staff had sufficient time to engage appropriately with different families.

School C: Because of many Roma and Gypsy parents' own negative school experiences, the school felt it necessary to engage in outreach work. Rather than expecting Roma and Gypsy parents to come into the school, school staff visited them in their homes accompanied by a community worker whom the parents would already know. The school wanted to help the parents to appreciate their children's potential and how this could be fulfilled at the school.

School D: The school set up parents' forums for parents of different ethnicities/nationalities. Parents could come into the school to talk about issues affecting them (for example children not attending school) and what the school could do to try to improve the situation.

School E: The school achieved an increase in the quantity and quality of Roma and Gypsy parental interaction with the school by demonstrating an understanding of their cultures and the reasons for their particular worries and concerns; the school ensured that all parents received relevant information about the school and their children's progress in a timely manner and in an appropriate form.

The above brief summaries of steps taken by different schools omit the pre-conditions within a school for any of these steps to be taken, namely that the school is prepared to allocate staff resources for this purpose, that staff have an understanding of the culture and past experiences of the parents, that the school is prepared to listen and respond to the concerns of parents and to ensure that communication with parents in suitable forms is maintained throughout a child's time at the school.

**Preliminary conclusions on increasing Roma parents' engagement with their children's education:**

None of the projects discussed except those in the UK are fully institutionalised within state education systems. Some are school-based initiatives, others are the initiative of external organisations concerned to improve educational chances of Roma or other minority children; one has grown out of what was basically a policy research exercise. Projects to increase parental engagement in education may also include actions to improve the development outcomes of their children by increasing knowledge and confidence of parents in relation to the health and well-being of their children. One project described above has sought to help Roma mothers to overcome the personal and social barriers which have inhibited their engagement in their child's

education, including lack of self-confidence, personal isolation, negative school experiences, low levels of literacy, lack of knowledge regarding health and nutrition.

The exception are the UK examples. It should be noted, however, that since 2001 all publicly maintained schools in England and Wales have a statutory duty in carrying out all of their functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate race discrimination and to promote/advance equality of opportunity between members of different racial groups. To comply with this legal duty, a school which recognises relative disadvantage of its Roma and Gypsy pupils would be expected to consider the steps it could take to improve the attendance and educational attainment of these pupils. The obligation of schools, education authorities, Ministers and government departments to comply with this statutory race equality duty (now s.149 Equality Act 2010) is a significant factor which distinguishes initiatives by state bodies in the UK compared to other European states.

Overall these models offer useful examples of different methods which could be used to increase engagement of minority parents in the education of their children. Certain methods were considered as less successful; the main reason appears to have been an under-estimation of the preparatory steps that were required. Potentially good ideas to achieve the stated aims were impeded by bureaucratic barriers, unrealistic expectations of the amount of time which teachers or minority parents would be willing to give, especially without better introduction to the intended benefits.

#### **G. Programmes of interventions and positive action to secure greater integration and educational opportunities of Roma children**

Most countries in Europe now recognise that without some form of intervention, including measures targeted to meet their particular needs, Roma children will continue to be educationally disadvantaged. While there have been and continue to be specific projects in Romania, often funded and/or resourced by external organisations, which are intended to improve the educational opportunities of Roma children through a range of different school and community-based inputs, there is little evidence of either state or local authorities incorporating the lessons from such projects in their educational policies and practices.

We include below an example of measures aimed to remove or overcome some of the main barriers to successful educational achievement of Roma pupils.

- **Greece**

The Centre for Intercultural Studies of the University of Athens developed a comprehensive program of interventions to secure greater educational integration of Roma children.<sup>42</sup> The program had the following targets: a) increase Roma enrolment pre—primary and primary; b) reduce dropout during first years of schooling; c) increase number of Roma completing basic education; d) increase number of Roma moving on to secondary education; e) information and awareness of Roma parents convinced of necessity to facilitate and support enrolment and continuation of school attendance of their children; f) increase in acceptance level of Roma origin children by educational administration, local government and local communities.

The programme involved 274 preschools, 706 primary schools and 81 secondary schools and totals of 2,119 preschool students, 21,189 primary school students and 1,884 secondary school students. The actions to strengthen access and attendance to preschool education was primarily through encouragement of the parents to secure enrolment and maintain attendance as well as related issues such as vaccination of young children.

To achieve increased school integration and regular attendance, the programme used local Roma mediators and established special units within schools that encouraged cross-cultural understanding and communication. Work included all stakeholders in the educational process: students, parents, teachers, headmasters, administration staff and members of the academic community. Intervention at school units included parallel support for Roma students, cooperative teaching programmes, very small group – individualised teaching, portfolios per student. Specialised textbooks were provided with school bags, pencil cases and other relevant supplies.

Transportation was provided from Roma camps to the schools. There were after school tutorial classes which offered customised teaching support services to cover cognitive and cultural gaps. Summer courses were successful in motivating students; their main purpose was to support transition to next level of school and to discourage drop-out. Creative workshops including Roma cultural practices enhanced the interest of students in school. Social workers were involved to identify educational needs of families of Roma pupils, encouraged adult participation in literacy programmes

The programme involved in-service training on pedagogical issues including interculturalism. Training was provided for education managers, directors, teachers and teaching staff creating an informed and committed ‘cadre’ which would attempt collectively to remove negative

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<sup>42</sup> University of Athens, School of Philosophy, Centre for Intercultural Studies, “Programme: ‘Education of Roma Children’ 2010 – 2013: Intervention actions for the educational integration of Roma children” April 2013.

stereotypes and the refusal by some managers to register Roma children as well as refusal by some teachers to accept Roma children in their classrooms. The programme offered intra-school training practices and general training practices for all working in education. Models of diverse teaching practices were developed as well as new teaching and learning materials.

Psychologists and social workers offer learning and psychosocial support to students, Roma parents and a major role supporting teachers' training aimed at improving functionality of communication and cross-cultural understanding. Roma mediators recorded Roma population of the settlements/camps and conducted an inventory of school-age children not at school. Increased communication and cooperation between school units and Roma parents was developed through Roma parents and children cooperating in school activities.

Notably, a part of the programme was publicity, disseminating "project" action results with the aim of informing and sensitising society and public opinion. Dissemination took place at central and regional levels regarding the purpose, guidelines, priorities and actions – different means and methods to ensure consensus of public opinion.

A thorough evaluation was carried out with the aim of influencing the Ministry of Education to provide the necessary structural measures for the future continuation of the project. This large scale national project, funded jointly by the EU European Social Fund and the national Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, Culture and Sport in its own evaluation has indicated some degree of success in meeting all of its targets.

### **Preliminary conclusions on interventions and positive action to secure greater integration and educational opportunities of Roma children:**

This case provides a useful example of good practice because of its comprehensive approach. It was acknowledged from the outset that the education of Roma children is affected by factors in other sectors which were outside the scope of this programme including housing, health and hygiene and linguistic diversity. Similar external factors are likely to influence the education of Roma children in Romania.

Within the framework of education, the project identified the barriers at each stage, the relevant stakeholders who should be engaged and the changes that were needed to remove those barriers. It did not allow problems to be deferred to a different stage or to be passed on to different agencies or individuals. In our view this programme should contribute to meeting all three of the aims described above: eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.

## **H. Inclusive education: national legislation and established practices for the educational inclusion and non-discrimination of children with physical and/or mental disabilities**

Gradually within the field of education across Europe the medical approach to children's disabilities is being replaced by principles of normalisation and inclusion. By treating each child as a unique individual, with particular abilities and learning needs, it is possible to ensure real equality of opportunity in the access to the education system and continued participation, allowing flexibility as necessary. The state expects the learning goals for disabled children to be the same as those set for all pupils.

Fundamental to the two examples below is the expectation that most children with special educational needs, due to physical or mental disabilities or behavioural problems, will be educated in mainstream schools, with individualised programmes of support from the beginning of their school career or as soon as they are diagnosed as having special needs; only where there is reason to believe that a child's learning needs cannot be suitably met in a mainstream school will the child be transferred to a special educational unit or institution. National legislation provides for the assessment of children's special educational needs and the specifying of any additional support or adjustments by professional experts in consultation with teachers and parents at the time of enrolment in primary school and at any later stage as the child progresses through the education system. The mainstream school will be expected to make the arrangements and provide the support which professional experts identify as needed to meet the child's individual learning needs.

- **Slovenia**<sup>43</sup>

Slovenia has abolished the medical approach to a child's disability which had been in use during the 1970's. Still, the challenge remained to meet the needs of children with disabilities/special educational needs: the deficiencies, barriers and/or disorders that require changes or adjustments in the child's environment or adaptation of the latter to the needs of the child.

Slovenia has national primary and secondary legislation which creates a structure for the education of children with special educational needs. The Guidance of Children with Special Needs Act states the principles and objects in education of children with special educational needs which

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<sup>43</sup> European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education Complete national overview – Slovenia, available at: [www.european-agency.org/country-information/slovenia/national-overview/complete-national-overview](http://www.european-agency.org/country-information/slovenia/national-overview/complete-national-overview).

include: equal opportunities taking account of diversity of children; integration of parents in the education process; appropriate conditions for optimum development of the individual child; education at a location nearest to the child's home. This Act provides that a child's needs must be recognised as soon as possible and early childhood intervention must occur simultaneously.

Children with special educational needs may attend:

- Mainstream schools and nursery schools,
- Schools offering adapted programmes,
- Units at mainstream schools that follow the adapted programme,
- Units at special institutions – mainly children with one or more deficiencies aside from their main disability – requiring specially adapted work, care, rehabilitation which cannot be provided during inclusion into mainstream schools.

The majority of children with special educational needs attend mainstream schools where they receive additional professional assistance as decided by the guidance commission – including additional hours to overcome deficiencies or barriers, tailored forms of learning, a permanent or temporary assistant to assist pupils with severe physical impairments. The assistance to pupils with more severe deficiencies or physical disabilities to support their integration in education is paid for by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. The guidance order for each child with special educational needs specifies the child's entitlement to additional hours of professional help to overcome the barriers, deficiencies or disorders. Schools are able to reduce the number of pupils in a class which includes special educational needs pupils.

Among the groups of children with special educational needs integrated in mainstream schools are:

- Children with deficiencies in specific fields of education,
- Children with emotional/behavioural problems; those who have additional problems, often as a result of dysfunctional domestic environment, attend schools within a specialised institution,
- Children with speech and language problems - if severe may attend schools offering an adapted programme,
- Children with physical disabilities attending at an institution that corresponds to their intellectual abilities,
- Majority of deaf/hearing impaired and blind/visually impaired children.



Preschool children may attend nursery schools providing adapted programmes or may attend regular nursery schools where they are provided with professional assistance.

The number of children assigned to mainstream schools and nursery schools is constantly increasing. Co-operation has been established at national level between mainstream schools and specialised institutions where there are examples of good practice. Special institutions organise teacher training and provide practical advice for work with children with special educational needs, and mobile teachers from special institutions provide individual and professional group aid in mainstream schools for overcoming deficiencies, barriers and disorders.

The project group Pathways to Inclusion (P2i) with the European Association of Service Providers to Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) published in 2011 a Barometer of Inclusive Education in Selected European Countries.<sup>44</sup> Slovenia was one of the ten countries for which national experts assessed achievement of inclusive education. Three separate aspects were assessed: A. Statutory legislation and prescriptions, B. Practice of inclusive education and C. Progress towards inclusive education; each country was given a rating in respect of each.<sup>45</sup>

- **Spain<sup>46</sup>**

Inclusion of pupils with disabilities and providing suitable education for children with special educational needs (referred to as “those who require, certain support and specific educational attention due to disability or serious behavioural disorders, either for a period or throughout the whole of their schooling”) was tackled in Spain both through legislation and policies.

Organic Law of Education 2/2006, 3rd May. Preliminary title Chapter I. Principles and Aims of Education. Article 1 provides for the following principles which underpin education in Spain:

- a) Quality education for all students, regardless of their condition and circumstances.*
- b) Equity that guarantees equal opportunities, educational inclusion and non-discrimination and that acts as a compensating factor for the personal cultural, economic and social*

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<sup>44</sup> EASPD (2011): Dissemination Executive Summary Paper: EASPD-Barometer of Inclusive Education in Selected European Countries, Brussels/Siegen, ZPE, University of Siegen

<sup>45</sup> Slovenia scored more than 70% positive answers with regard to statutory legislation, but a lower score for current practice and less than 50% for progress towards inclusive education. While Slovenia is ahead of many European countries by having enacted legislation based on the social model of disability and builds into each stage of education rights to equality and inclusion and a holistic and individualised approach, there appears to be a lack of leadership to ensure full and effective implementation of these laws.

<sup>46</sup> European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education Complete national overview – Spain, available at: [www.european-agency.org/country-information/spain/national-overview/complete-national-overview](http://www.european-agency.org/country-information/spain/national-overview/complete-national-overview).



*inequalities, with special emphasis on those derived from disabilities.*  
*c) The transmission and application of values that favour personal liberty, responsibility, democratic citizenship, solidarity, tolerance, equality, respect and justice and that also help to overcome any type of discrimination.”*

Royal Decree 696/1995, of 28 April, establishes the conditions for educational provision for pupils with special educational needs. These pupils are educated at mainstream schools and under mainstream curricula; only when it is objectively established that their needs cannot be properly met at a mainstream school, is a proposal made for them to be educated at special schools

The Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport has the responsibility for central administration. Public funds earmarked to finance Spanish education are provided mainly by the Ministry as well as the Education Authorities of the corresponding 17 autonomous communities into which Spain is divided. The budget for special education, from the national budget and the budgets of the 17 autonomous communities cover the following spending lines:

- Staff expenses,
- Operational expenses,
- Furniture and inventoried equipment expenses,
- Expenses for alterations,
- Grants to NGOs,
- Grants to private schools with an educational co-operation with the Ministry,
- School Canteens,
- Hostels located inside the schools,
- Financial support for mainstream schools with integration of pupils with SEN,
- School transportation,
- New building improvement,
- Removing architectural, physical barriers.

According to the Organic Law of Education from 2006, special education is no longer conceived as education for a different kind of pupil, but is conceived as a combination of material and personnel resources available to the education system in order to be able to meet the needs (either transitory or permanent) that pupils may have. This requires the education system to have the necessary resources so that pupils with special educational needs may achieve the general

goals set for all pupils. The principle of normalisation, with the aim of promoting school inclusion, underlies this Law. This law stipulates that, in the case of pupils with special educational needs, the identification and evaluation of their needs will be carried out by teams of professionals with different qualifications. These professionals will establish performance plans with regard to each pupil's educational needs, taking into account both parents' and teachers' opinions, as well as the management team of the corresponding establishment.

The educational system will arrange the necessary resources in order for pupils with temporary or permanent special educational needs to achieve the objectives established within the general programme for all pupils. The public administrations give pupils the necessary support from the beginning of their schooling or as soon as they are diagnosed as having special needs. School teaching is adapted to these pupils' needs. The schools develop the curriculum through didactic plans, which have to take into account the pupils' needs and characteristics. At the end of each year, the evaluation team will assess the extent to which the objectives set out in the plan have been achieved. This will facilitate the introduction of the necessary adaptations, including the most suitable type of schooling according to pupil's educational needs.

Specialised support is meant to be provided in accordance with non-discrimination and educational normalisation principles, and with the purpose of achieving the pupil's inclusion. In ordinary infant, primary and secondary education establishments students with special educational needs are enrolled as part of the mainstream pupil body. These schools are expected to adapt the physical and material conditions to the needs of the pupils enrolled there and should have the necessary teaching and other professional resources; these schools must take the pedagogical, organisational and operational measures for accommodating pupils with special educational needs within their programmes. Specific support measures which mainstream schools are expected to provide include:

- alterations to school building facilities,
- special adaptations to the curriculum (either to enable access to the curriculum or to modify the contents, methodology and assessment procedures),
- additional support provided by specialist teachers,
- special teaching methods and materials according to the types of pupils' special educational needs,
- reduced class sizes,

- special arrangements for evaluation of progress – using suitable assessment tools.

Special education schools are intended for pupils who are unable to be integrated into mainstream schools but who follow compulsory teaching. Where there are no special education centres in the area pupils attend units for special education within mainstream centres. There are also specific special education establishments that enrol pupils with special educational needs associated with very specific disabilities. According to the Organic Law of Education the objectives set for pupils attending special education establishments are the same as those for all pupils. An aim is for special educational establishments progressively to become open educational resource centres for professionals working in mainstream establishments.

**Preliminary conclusions on educational inclusion and non-discrimination of children with physical and/or mental disabilities:**

The approach to inclusive education based on principles and procedures laid down in legislation offers a very helpful model. The principles for education both in Spain and in Slovenia, which apply to the education of all children and young people are strong and clear: principles of quality for all students, equal opportunities, educational inclusion and non-discrimination. Whether the Ministries or an education authority are developing procedures for the education of children with disabilities or children from marginalised communities or children vulnerable for other reasons or children with exceptional abilities, these principles must shape the decisions and policies and practices.

A useful development which further strengthens the ability of mainstream schools to meet the learning needs of disabled children and enables reduced reliance on special educational institutions for most disabled children is the training and sharing of expertise between professionals in special education institutions with professionals in mainstream schools.

The inclusive approach to the education of children with disabilities in these examples would contribute to the elimination of discrimination, the advancing of equality of opportunity.

**4. Conclusions - lessons relevant in the Romanian context**

While conducting our research and trying to compile encouraging models of good or promising practices we saw that many other Council of Europe countries are facing problems similar to those in Romania, although in some of these countries it is children with an immigrant background rather than Roma children who are the potential victims of hostility, exclusions and discrimination

and for these or other reasons may have disproportionately low levels of educational achievement. We noted that some countries had recognised that before adopting measures intended to improve educational achievement of Roma children or immigrant children they needed to identify the barriers -- the reasons for under-achievement -- which could be social, economic, political, geographic or combinations of these. Special measures to overcome barriers to equality of opportunity need to be formulated with the overall aim of increasing integration; measures should be proportionate, well targeted, their impact monitored and measures terminated when their aim is realised. Certain institutions and/or formal or informal groups or communities may need to be engaged at an early stage to establish a broad understanding of the aims, to consider relevant options and to remove fears of permanent enforced privilege for particular groups. A key to effective positive action is robust committed leadership by senior politicians and other respected public figures who are able to see such measures in the context of overall gains for wider society.

We have tried to describe ways in which different entities have developed solutions which involve the incorporation of equality and non-discrimination as ongoing obligations in their systems of education.

What our research into practices outside Romania has demonstrated is that to secure real and enduring equality in education for Roma and other ethnic minority children and for children with disabilities necessitates comprehensive institutional change, with co-ordinated input by all relevant stakeholders. There needs to be commitment, investment and action at every level, starting at the top and enforced through every tier; a tokenistic or piecemeal approach will not bring about lasting change.

In many of the examples we have identified, non-governmental organisations, often supported by international foundations, have worked, or have tried to work, with the national Ministry of Education or, more frequently, with local education authorities. In those countries, as well as in Romania, there is a clear need for governmental commitment (political and financial) and leadership to continue and expand the practices which have had positive outcomes after being piloted by NGOs.

We have learned from the UK examples that the political commitment of national and local authorities does not necessarily entail added financial burden; instead what is required is the incorporation of equality and anti-discrimination as core elements in the way each authority

operates. In UK where promising examples have been identified, there has evolved since 2001 a public sector equality duty.<sup>47</sup> This duty applies to all public authorities in the carrying out of all of their functions, including procurement contracts with the private sector or grants to NGOs, when they must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act, to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a particular protected characteristic and others, and to foster good relations between persons who share a particular protected characteristic and others. Thus in any steps it takes, a public body must take into account the likely impact of what they are proposing on each of these non-discrimination/equality obligations as they affect characteristics such as race/ethnicity, disability, gender, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation etc.

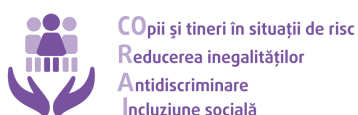
Our research has highlighted for us the different stakeholders whose role in education of children cannot be ignored; without input from all relevant stakeholders innovative projects intended to create fairer, more inclusive provision of education are unlikely to achieve their desired aim. For example, if the national parliament enacts new legislation specifying inclusive education for Roma and children with disabilities, without official ministerial guidance to local authorities and schools, provision of suitable resources, training for teachers and engagement with parents, the legislation will make little difference. Or, the adoption of a new pedagogical approach to interculturalism/multiculturalism in the training of teachers is likely to have little impact if the school authorities maintain discriminatory/ exclusionary practices and, to be employed, a teacher will be expected to comply with the ethos of the school. Work within communities to engage with Roma parents to encourage them to value education and want to become involved in their child's education will only achieve its aim if the school welcomes their involvement and works to overcome prejudice of non-Roma parents. Establishing homework clubs or mentoring will only make a real difference to Roma/minority or disabled pupils if the school and the class teacher are supportive and if necessary resources are provided.

From our research we have been able to extract the following lessons which have been learned elsewhere and could be applied in Romania along with certain concrete steps which can be taken by relevant responsible institutions in Romania to combat discrimination and to promote equality of opportunities in education in relation to Roma children and children with disabilities:

### ➤ **The Romanian Parliament**

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<sup>47</sup> Now section 149 Equality Act 2010



- Adopt amendments to Anti-discrimination legislation to include the statutory duty for public authorities, including schools, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination on all protected grounds and to promote /advance equality and recognition of diversity.
- Adopt legislative measures recognizing the principle of normalisation, with the aim of promoting school inclusion, supported by legislation which is compliant with a social approach to disability.
- Amend the Education Code and legislation on rights of persons with disabilities or adopt special legislation recognising as priority mainstreaming children with special educational needs and developing individualised programmes of support in mainstream schools, including by allowing the schools to reduce the number of pupils in a class which includes SEN pupils.
- Amend the Education Code to include a clear prohibition of school segregation and provide for dissuasive sanctions.
- Adopt legal provision regarding priority for school enrolment in their preferred school for children from vulnerable groups.

➤ **The National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD)**

- Develop guidelines on additional budgeting for schools based on pupils' needs.
- Assuming the Parliament amends the anti-discrimination legislation to include a statutory equality duty, as well as in the context of the use of European funds carrying such conditionalities, develop and issue guidelines, monitor compliance, take enforcement action where there is evidence of non-compliance and impose sanctions.
- With universities, develop training packages for teachers' training and mentoring as well as continuing professional development on diversity and inclusion.
- Collaborate with the Ministry of Education, universities and research centres to develop pro-active pedagogical methods targeting majority children and raising awareness with them of non-discrimination, diversity and inclusion.

- Use investigative and enforcement powers to tackle direct and indirect discrimination and segregation based on race/ethnicity and/or disability by kindergartens, schools, colleges and universities.
- Develop check lists in order to assist school authorities and teachers to make sure that they observe the equality and non-discrimination principles regardless of the protected ground at enrolment, during the school year, when assessing pupils' progress and when interacting with parents and tutors of children
- Encourage/enable/assist legal challenges and claims for redress by parents and/or pupils where educational institutions are perceived to have committed acts prohibited under anti-discrimination legislation.
- When finding that any institution within the education system has discriminated, require them to carry out remedial measures and non-discrimination and diversity training for all relevant staff.

### ➤ **The Ministry of Education**

- Establish a duty for faculties of pedagogy and teacher training programmes, including programmes of continuing professional education to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and to promote /advance equality and recognition of diversity, including in tenure examinations.
- Provide and make mandatory training packages and continuing professional development on diversity and inclusion.
- Adopt and issue detailed guidance regarding priority for school enrolment in preferred schools for children from vulnerable groups.
- Establish procedures for systematic collection of relevant anonymised data regarding achievement, attendance and other factors of all pupils enrolled in education from kindergarten/pre-school through university by race/ethnicity, disability/special educational needs and gender in order to monitor relative rates of progress.
- Where there is persistent evidence of low achievement by particular groups then, in conjunction with local authorities and individual schools, to comply with the equality duty (see Romanian Parliament above) the Ministry should be expected to develop, or to support and provide resources for, measures targeted at overcoming



barriers and meeting different needs of these groups; these positive measures themselves require regular monitoring to assess effectiveness and to discontinue when the aims of the measures have been realised.

➤ **Local authorities**

- Conduct in depth mapping of the specificity of pupils in their areas of jurisdiction and develop focused interventions in consultation with local communities, representatives of NGOs and school authorities. Monitor the impact of such interventions and adjusting where impact could be improved.
- Support the establishment of kindergartens/early childhood education ensuring priority access for children from vulnerable groups.
- Initiate mobile units for early childhood intervention in areas where there are no kindergartens or schools.
- Adopt a holistic approach to early intervention combining access to education with health and social services, parenting support.

➤ **Universities and faculties preparing future teachers and professional schools for kindergarten and primary school teachers**

- Develop and implement training packages together with the NCCD for teachers' training and continuing professional development on anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion.
- Conduct continuing research on the challenges of inclusion and integration in order to inform future educational policies; on the basis of research findings develop adapted methodological tools to be piloted and, where they prove effective, adopted generally.

➤ **Schools and schools inspectorates**

- Establish an ethos for the school based on equality of opportunity for all pupils and ensure that all school staff understand and carry out their work consistent with this ethos.



- In all decisions or actions relating to enrolment refrain from any form of discrimination or segregation and instead adopt policies and practices that value and respect the cultural and/or other differences of a diverse school community.
- Take suitable disciplinary action where any member of the school staff commits acts of unlawful discrimination in respect of pupils, parents or other staff.
- Adopt policies and practices demonstrating a holistic approach with identical educational goals for every pupil.
- Take necessary steps to facilitate maximum inclusion of children with disabilities enabling their special needs to be met within mainstream schools.
- Demonstrate the school's respect for cultural or other diversity by increased engagement with all members of the community served by the school; encourage and make resources available to increase involvement of Roma parents and parents of other vulnerable children in their child's education and in the general life of the school.
- Enable teachers trained as indicated above to contribute to creating attitudes of respect for cultural and other differences within the school and to combating of prejudice, hostility and bullying.
- When requested by the Ministry of Education or the local authority, collect anonymous pupil data to enable local or national monitoring of educational achievement, attendance or other factors based on particular pupil characteristics.



COpii și tineri în situații de risc  
 Reducerea inegalităților  
 Antidiscriminare  
 Incluziune socială

