



## **The Right to Education for Every Child: Removing Barriers and Fostering Inclusion for Roma Children**

International Conference  
Organized under the Serbian Presidency of the Roma Decade  
Belgrade, June 2-3, 2009

### **Conference Outcome Document**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Every child has the right to education: Context of Meeting and Principles**

The Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005-2015, the major international partnership effort to meet the common European challenge of Roma inclusion is approaching its mid-term. The Decade is engaged in four key areas of ending discrimination and reducing inequality: in housing, employment, health and education in the context of a coordinated, open and transparent process.

Hosted under the Presidency of the Serbian Government, this conference brought together Governments, Roma Civil Society, International Agencies, and education experts to share experience and chart a new agenda in breaking down barriers of Roma children to quality education, and foster inclusion.

Education has been widely recognized as a key pathway out of poverty and a major means to overcoming intergenerational transmission of deprivation. Inclusive education has also been a pathway out of social exclusion. Yet Roma, across all Decade countries, continue to face high rates of exclusion from quality education and low education outcomes. Poverty and marginalization of Roma communities, reinforced by segregated schooling, placement in special schools, classrooms and discrimination continue to reinforce such disadvantage. Few Roma children benefit from Early Child Development services. Low quality education does not prepare young people for jobs, so little value is attached to school attendance.

Equal access to quality education, then, becomes particularly salient for Roma children and young people.

The Conference did not aim to describe once again the problems faced by Roma children. Broad consensus exists on the nature of the barriers to be overcome; in particular that segregation of education is detrimental not only for Roma children but for all children. The discussions concentrated on how to make progress in critical areas, what we know and what we don't know about strategies that work in promoting inclusive education, how to accelerate these, and how to make actions happen at a scale that will make a difference.

### **Commitment to remove barriers and foster inclusion needs to be based on a common set of principles:**

- The rights of each and every child should be recognized and respected - all children are entitled to develop to their full potential.
- States are accountable to create equal access to quality, inclusive education, which meets the needs of all children in an integrated setting.
- Roma communities, parents and children themselves need to be actively involved and consulted.

- Discrimination should be monitored, with mechanisms in place to ensure discrimination is challenged and addressed.
- Early years of child's life are critical for later development; particularly 0- 3 years, with rapid expansion of pre-school and support services for parents of young children to disadvantaged groups of population needed.

The principles of improving the quality and efficiency of education and training and promotion of equity, social cohesion and active citizenship, as the key strategic objectives of the European Education Policy (Council conclusions on a strategic framework for European Cooperation in Education and training - "ET 2020") have been recognized among the Conference conclusions.

It was recognized that a growing body of experience now exists in addressing education in each of the Decade countries. At the same time, it was emphasized that we are entering a new phase. The time for more 'pilots' has passed. What is needed is systemic change and making education systems much more responsive to the needs of children, respecting their diversity.

## **2. Agreements from the Conference: Removing barriers and Fostering Inclusion**

**Four critical themes were agreed for focused action:** Providing Integrated Early Education, Ending Segregation and Fostering Inclusion, Supportive Classroom and School Environment and Public Financing of Inclusive Education.

While the focus of the meeting was on these specific areas of action, a number of concerns were identified that cut across each of these areas, and where progress is needed to bring about sustainable change:

**A human rights approach is important** in moving the debate on improving the 'quality' and effectiveness of the education system. This needs to be underpinned by:

- Taking anti-discrimination legislation seriously in education and health, (developing by-laws ensure inspection etc.).
- Much greater education/ awareness on human rights and the rights of the child.
- Schools becoming 'child seeking' (in getting children into school and reaching out to families), 'child friendly' (welcoming in the classroom, humane and safe, non discriminating) and 'child empowering' (preparing children with skills for later life and jobs).
- See financing of education in a rights perspective.

**The Education system can be either the greatest barrier or enabler of social inclusion of Roma.** Transforming education systems will require:

- A decisive shift of policy attention towards early childhood as the crucial stage of lifelong learning. It is imperative to make ECD services widely available to Roma families.
- An end to segregation of Roma children.
- De- segregation has to go along with changes in the school system, including ensuring a supportive classroom and school environment. De-segregation needs to be backed with sufficient financial resources and funding mechanisms that create incentives for local authorities to end separate schooling.

**Teachers become those who can bring the greatest change.** Their capacities need to be built at all levels.

- Teachers' abilities and skills need to be strengthened so that they are able to work in multicultural settings and able to recognize the assets that Roma children and parents bring.
- Multicultural education needs to be systematically embedded in pre- and in-service training - instead of relying on crash courses or optional modules.

- Higher education policies that will ensure teachers, educators, and mediators of Roma origin should be put in place.

**Solutions do not lie in education alone.** It is not possible to bring about social inclusion in a sustainable and effective way by working within one sector alone. Action in housing, employment and health services are also needed. At the same time, education change can be a means to pull in changes in other sectors

**Attitudes of the majority population remain a significant part of the problem** in many countries. One of the most effective ways to address prejudice and reduce social distance is to increase interaction between children of different communities, and by ensuring high standards of schooling.

Lastly, **while partnerships have evolved, there is still an asymmetry, with respect to participation of Roma** in programme design and decision making process. Yet this remains critical for progress.

## **PROVIDING QUALITY INTEGRATED EARLY EDUCATION**

Evidence of the critical importance of 0- 3 years for early child development is now well established. Investing in early childhood services brings the highest returns in later life and yet is still to be widely applied and such services made available for Roma children. A continuum of services has to begin from birth and through formal education.

Including children from vulnerable groups early into the education systems, prior to compulsory education needs to be actively promoted through easy language acquisition, acquiring skills and specific knowledge, boosting self-respect and socializing into the culture of the formal education system. Best practices yield the following recommendations:

1. Development and scaling up of services for children aged 0-3yrs including home visiting programs, early childhood centers within communities, and outreach to young Romani women and mothers. This will require close coordination between agencies, (especially Ministries responsible for day care centres and the Ministries of education); training and awareness raising among Roma activists on the importance of ECD programs.
2. Ensure equal access of Roma children from 4 to 6 years to high quality integrated preschool education, prior to the compulsory enrolment level through:
  - a. Carrying out educational census based on reliable data establishing the number of Roma children to be enrolled in preschool early on, to allow appropriate planning to take place.
  - b. Affirmative action policy measures to ensure high priority early enrollment of children in poor communities , including free of charge access to pre school for Roma children and abolishing enrolment prioritisation of children whose both parents are employed
  - c. Ensuring information to parents and support to early enrolment into preschool through the Roma civil society activities.
  - d. Create an enrolment plan avoiding segregation, ensure funds, and reserve places for Roma children to be enrolled in integrated way,
  - e. Organizing different forms of preschool education on a short-term basis, if needed
3. Motivation, accessibility and enrollment go beyond curriculum and activities for children in school. Comprehensive assistance must be provided through inter-sectoral cooperation and should include:
  - a. Targeted and easy accessible social assistance, to provide support to the families for snacks, didactic materials, clothing and transportation if needed.
  - b. Focus assistance through comprehensive out of school activities, such as home and community environment, health and social status, culture, leisure activities.

- c. Create inter-sectoral teams at local level to ensure cooperation between responsible bodies and coherence and synergy of comprehensive assistance.
- 4. Mechanisms should be established for increased parent participation, and preschool-family connections:
  - a. Increase parental skills and encourage their involvement in their children's development and learning at home and in kindergartens or community based services through parental counseling services offered by the preschool institutions' professional team, through parent-to-parent counseling, mother-child clubs, or civil society outreach through house to house visits.
  - b. Ensure gradual and respectful inclusion of parents into preparation of children for schools; the beliefs and needs of local families must be taken into account, social values and experiences must be respected. Increase number and enhance design of parent meetings and open doors prior to enrolment and in the first months of attendance.
  - c. Ensure participation of Roma parents in parent councils or other governing bodies at institutional level.
  - d. Support early enrolment into preschool through the joint action of preschool institutions and Roma civil society organizations.
  - e. Engage Roma pedagogical assistants and/or mediators.
- 5. There should be close monitoring of attendance, and vigilance for problems in adaptation of children, parents and teachers:
  - a. Ensure tailor made training, targeting cultural and developmental sensitivity and understanding of the rights of the child, is provided to teachers and preschool management prior to increased access
  - b. Develop and introduce intercultural curriculum policy ensuring that Roma identity is accepted and nurtured along with other identities, and enable children to learn about different cultures and traditions.
  - c. Ensure professional support to preschool institutions, accessible in flexible ways, and capable of assisting in solving specific problems
- 6. In areas lacking access to existing preschool facilities alternative solutions need to be set up.
  - a. Mobile preschools
  - b. Non-formal kindergartens in Roma settlements
  - c. Flexible programs 2-3 times weekly, for children and parents jointly
  - d. Community-based or family-based preschool education for children aged below 4 years
  - e. Visiting preschool teachers to families
  - f. Preschool provision accompanying literacy courses for parents

In all of these solutions it is essential to ensure training of staff working with the children, either Roma or non-Roma, in order to provide quality education and to ensure links and regular visits to the formal preschools in the vicinity. Teachers should have important role in ensuring enrolment in the formal preschools once the age for compulsory enrolment is reached.
- 7. Enrolment often needs to be facilitated through provision of additional services not always easy accessible to Roma families
  - a. Obtaining birth certificates
  - b. Health check-ups and vaccination

- c. Providing information on the availability of social assistance in the way accessible to parents (language wise – in Romanes, sources of information, culturally sensitive information etc.)
  - d. Providing information on other community issues, usually not available for Roma
- These should be planned and organized in cooperation with the Roma community

8. Preschool provision needs to be quality-assured and include:
  - a. Open, sensitive, attractive curriculum
  - b. Romanes as mother tongue introduced and fostered
  - c. Well trained, sensitive and caring teachers
  
9. Create a teaching force which is well equipped with knowledge, skills and values for working in multicultural settings, through :
  - a. Create possibility that teacher-student practice can be conducted in Roma NGOs
  - b. Open university programs for pedagogical assistants
  - c. Introduce affirmative action for Roma intake at teachers' faculties
  
10. Ensure governmental support to local government actions through:
  - a. Adoption of an explicit Government policy on early inclusion
  - b. Upstream policies concerning employment, housing and enhanced funding of children from deprived backgrounds within more opened comprehensive programmes should be combined with other affirmative measures for supporting early inclusion
  - c. Guidelines for transition from community preschool to integrated preschool from age 4
  - d. Financial incentives for integrating Roma children
  - e. Ensuring that antidiscrimination legislation has clear implications in respect of education

## **ENDING SEGREGATION AND FOSTERING INCLUSION**

Segregation of Roma takes different forms and its scope differs by municipality, region and country, but it must be eliminated by government action. Segregation happens in different ways: the result of placement into special schools or classes with adjusted programs and curricular demands; enrolment policies which directly or indirectly serve the purpose of creating homogenous educational environments; the lack of capacity in the school to prevent or overcome non-Roma parents' bias (and sometimes the schools' alignment with those biases); residential segregation of Roma settlements and the accompanied lack of transportation services to other schools contributes to the segregation in education. All segregation patterns are multiply embedded in existing practices, mental patterns and financial schemes. For example, in many instances that there are many hidden incentives encourage Roma to enroll into special schools.

There are also financial disincentives for a more heterogeneity on the school level, since it costs more to provide good quality education to an impoverished Roma population. On the incentive side these might vary from the network of special education institutions being overdeveloped, the institutions themselves staffed by a bigger number of special educators than needed, there are financial incentives for school, staff and families enrolling the children in this provision, the school curriculum is less demanding, horizontal and vertical mobility is not ensured, and testing procedures are biased and misused. Yet one of the key reasons for enrolment to special schools is the lack of capacities of education professionals to support inclusion and foster culturally sensitive and anti-biased classroom environment and a lack of overall vision on how to make the education systems more equitable.

Best practices for eliminating segregation yield the following recommendations:

11. All Decade countries should develop a specific action plan to eliminate the segregation of Roma children. This plan should address the necessary financial, legal and administrative steps needed; provide a way for monitoring its implementation and have specified time frame and responsibilities. Roma participation is essential in the formulation of the plan it's monitoring and the evaluation of the impact.
12. Develop a set of indicators for monitoring segregation; for example, based on the proportion of Roma children per school and per class in a given geographic area, as well as on the proportion of Roma in special schools/classes and adjusted programs as compared to the proportion of non-Roma under the same type of education provision. Where legal or other considerations make it impractical to gather ethnic data, proxy measures (for example, socio-economic status) should be developed and used as the basis for indicators. Baseline data should be gathered against the indicators and procedures put in place for regular updates.
13. Prevent placement of Roma children into special schools and classes. In order to enhance inclusive education and downsize the number of those already enrolled in special schools, the following mechanisms are needed:
  - a. Abolish the current testing procedures which result in too many Roma children being placed in special schools and classes. A baseline assessment of children when entering compulsory education can be an effective tool for teachers to plan their instruction. However, any such assessment should be based on reliable and valid instruments which are fair to students of all backgrounds, should be used to assess all students not just those considered to have special needs, be conducted in an objective way without incentives for a particular outcome, and be done in a transparent way involving the informed participation of parents. If these conditions are not met, no testing regime should be used.
  - b. Conduct detailed analysis to determine the decision making bodies, financial incentives in special schooling, staffing needs in special education and characteristics of the network of special needs schools. Governments should take action to ensure that these systemic features do not create an incentive for Roma parents or for schools to maintain or increase the level of Roma enrollment in special schools and classes. Align financial mechanisms, by creating incentives for mainstream education to include all students and providing resources for families in need to cover additional costs of schooling in heterogeneous school environments.
  - c. Develop plans to ensure transition of Roma children that have been miss-categorized from special to mainstream schools.
  - d. Introduce legal provision for individualized approaches to teaching in mainstream education, which result in meeting the standards by all children.
  - e. Provide targeted training for all teachers on how to work in diversified and multicultural classes and on human rights. Integrate that training module in the education programs for both in-service and pre-service.
  - f. Introduce policies that will ensure new roles of special education staff within mainstream schools focused on improving the academic performance of the weakest students and on helping teachers develop effective teaching practices which address the needs of all students.
  - g. Examine standards and curricular options in mainstream and special education, examination systems and possibilities for horizontal and vertical mobility in the education system.
  - h. Develop a clear governmental policy on inclusive education.

14. In many countries there are schools which have become predominantly Roma schools due to the avoidance of non-Roma parents to enroll their children in schools with a considerable percentage of Roma and to population changes. School based assistance programs have also often contributed to the increased intake of Roma students and consequently “white flight”. In order to prevent such outcomes the following mechanisms need to be utilized:
- a. Re-examine targeting of development assistance needs in the light of segregation and, instead of school based programs, wider units (municipalities, regions) should be addressed.
  - b. Condition development assistance upon a clear integration/desegregation plan of municipalities/regions and its due implementation.
  - c. Development assistance should cover the integration activities (planning, busing, coordinators, monitoring, capacity building of municipal/regional authorities, facilitating etc) rather than the pure education work in schools/preschools or Roma education centers, which should be the responsibility of the education authorities through their regular budgets.
  - d. Use these principles not only for education projects but for other regional or municipal development projects and programs as well.
  - e. Develop and implement a strategy for building political support for desegregation.
15. Roma communities and schools in geographically segregated areas face particular problems. These problems will only be resolved in the long run by policies in housing, employment and regional development which tackle the underlying geographical segregation. In the meantime, ministries of education and social welfare can take action to:
- a. Provide free transportation and snacks for those in needs and for the purpose of integration in heterogeneous school and class environments.
  - b. Informing Roma parents of the benefits of good quality schooling in integrated school environment and support active engagement of Roma parents to sustain their children in attending remote schools.
  - c. Organize meaningful preparation of schools for intake of children from the settlement.
  - d. Strengthened parent-school liaison.

## **SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

Classroom and school environment shape children’s perceptions of self and others and contribute to immediate and long-term learning aspirations and outcomes. Roma children have lower rates of enrolment and far higher rates of drop-out not only because of poverty, but also because of inability of education systems to create enabling and supportive environments where children’s voices are heard, their participation is encouraged and where the cultural differences are celebrated.

Across Decade countries, a high percentage of Roma children drop out of school early, primarily the consequence of different type of barriers within the education system and society. There is a wide evidence that Roma children, even when enrolled in mainstream education programs, do not get the same quality of education as others do, as they get less feedback, their homework is less often monitored, they sit in the back of the classroom, etc. Teachers usually hold low expectations of their capabilities and motivation which, in turn influences teachers’ behavior and confirms the low expectation results. Instead of offering additional support to children for mastering the curriculum, the schools require parental support which Roma parents seldom can offer. Roma parents are commonly under-represented in school boards or parent councils, so their concerns are rarely heard.

The evidence of successfully removing one or more of the barriers and creating child friendly and enabling school and classroom environments proves that such changes are possible. However, the education systems must do much better in ensuring that Roma children get the appropriate support to learn and thrive than they have done until now.

Best practices yield the following recommendations for creating schools which provide quality education for all children:

1. Develop school managers and management teams with the capacity to promote inclusive and quality education for all.
  - a. Provide training in inclusive education.
  - b. Ensure inclusive enrolment policy, heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity, socio-economic status and school achievements; adequate and diversity sensitive pedagogical tools.
  - c. Ensure the accountability system (financial incentives, student assessment, and inspection) promotes inclusive education.
  - d. Promote the whole school team as focused on the goal of inclusive education for all.
2. Adequate in-service and pre-service training for teachers, based on the latest research findings:
  - a. Train teachers to apply active/interactive child centered education methods, which are focused on quality education outcomes.
  - b. Prepare teachers and other education professionals for work in multi-cultural environments requiring respect and sensitivity for other cultures and ensure broader coverage of teachers with existing training programs.
  - c. Increase awareness on responsibilities of teachers and other educational professionals for ensuring equal access to education for all children.
  - d. Establish an oversight mechanism to monitor and investigate equal access for all children.
  - e. Increase awareness on responsibilities of teachers and schools for preventing early drop-out of children in risk.
  - f. Increase capacities of schools and teachers to recognize children with exceptional abilities and interests and to enable them to develop their potentials.
3. In order to ensure stimulating class-room environment teachers should:
  - a. Provide frequent, timely and constructive feedback, development and find ways to engage and motivate students.
  - b. Create cooperative learning opportunities involving Roma and non-Roma children.
  - c. Provide challenging but achievable tasks.
  - d. Adjust teaching and assessment processes to characteristics of students in the classroom.
  - e. Apply different models of formative evaluation which will support all children throughout the year.
  - f. Involve parents in participative way.
  - g. Support team work among teachers who work with Roma children.
  - h. Ensure school safety
  - i. Ensure the curriculum and textbooks and other educational materials promote inclusive education.
  - j. Promote active student participation in the learning process.

Good practice also shows that specific measures are needed to address the needs of Roma children;

4. Additional investments are needed to enable Roma children to achieve better learning outcomes. Such measures include:



- a. Provide financial support for obtaining textbooks, all school materials and transportation if needed.
  - b. Provide in-school meals.
  - c. Provide support for homework and additional learning opportunities.
  - d. Provide support for engaging in extracurricular activities offered by the school.
  - e. Address the particular challenges that Roma girls face in completing education.
  - f. Give Roma parents support to enable them to help their children improve their learning outcomes.
  - g. Provide incentives for Roma to become teachers.
  - h. Provide bi-lingual education, especially in the early grades.
5. Improve the liaison between the school and community
- a. Regulate and define the task of Roma assistants/mediators so that it is clear who is responsible for supporting students in class, providing out of school academic support, and working with parents and the Roma communities.
  - b. Raise awareness on their role/importance so their work is appreciated by the school and accepted by the Roma parents.
  - c. Develop the network of Roma assistants, mediators or coordinators so that they work with mainstream schools, in order not to contribute to the creation of segregated Roma schools or Roma classes.
  - d. Make the position attractive for Roma interested in education and ensure it provides possibilities for further education.
  - e. Promote inter-sectoral cooperation of education and other institutions and NGOs.
6. Ensure participation and cooperation of both, Roma and non-Roma parents, in the school life:
- a. Schools should organize frequent parents' meetings, thematic workshops, open doors, etc.
  - b. Involve Roma parents as members of school boards or parent councils, ensure their proper training and information for their roles and school associates
  - c. Increase awareness of Roma parents on importance of education
  - d. Build trust with Roma parents through dialogue, visit to Roma settlements, respect for their tradition and their specific needs
7. Reflect the diversity of the population in the school curriculum:
- a. Immerse all minorities', including Roma, history and culture into the mainstream curriculum
  - b. Introduce Roma language teaching
  - c. In case of insufficient mastery of the language of instruction, additional language instruction needs to be provided for the Roma students
  - d. Provide compensatory classes for children that due seasonal works, early marriages, pregnancy or other reasons do not attend school regularly
8. Develop effective monitoring system to assess progress at school, municipal and national level. The education system should be accountable for collecting reliable data on children who are out of school as well as to analyze reasons and scope of drop out. Professional guidance and support to schools with high rates of drop-out should be provided. The basic set of indicators that should be monitored include:
- a. Achievement level of Roma compared to non-Roma
  - b. Dropout rate for Roma as compared to non-Roma
  - c. Set of discrimination- in- education indicators

## **PUBLIC FINANCING OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

The Decade of Roma Inclusion advocates for increased access to quality education for Roma. This requires interventions both on the side of demand (parents and pupils seeking more and higher quality education) and supply (the state/municipalities offering high quality schooling for all, including Roma) children. Public financing, and the way it is allocated, is the key policy lever for governments to achieve better education outcomes in terms of higher attainment and better learning for Roma children. If allocated inadequately, public funding not only fails to reduce educational disadvantage, but may actually worsen it if there are built-in incentives for segregation or lower quality education for Roma. Moreover, there are hidden costs of education borne by the individual, for example through additional tutoring costs which are unaffordable for poor families, which implies that education may in fact not be free for all.

The education reforms introduced in Central and Southeastern Europe should ensure that financing systems are set in a way to support better learning outcomes for all, with a move towards per-pupil financing, school-based management and budgets delegated to schools as well as an expansion of high quality integrated system. Public service for children should start with early childhood services. Decentralization shift could create an opportunity to address the adverse effect of social disadvantage on education, including for Roma or if not carefully designed could support growing institutional segregation.

Helping socially disadvantaged children achieve better learning outcomes will require additional financing for schools. However, if allocated well, these additional investments can be expected to yield substantial returns in the future – ultimately contributing to a more educated and productive population. Allocating financing per pupil opens the opportunity to make up for initial educational disadvantage by accommodating these additional costs associated with a good education. Experience from developed economies on education financing can provide orientation for further reforms in Central and Southeastern Europe. For example:

1. Design public financing model that would enhance supply side and tackle social disadvantage:
  - a. Replace the system of funding per posts/number of staff to per capita funding with the purpose of achieving integration
  - b. Consider create an equal opportunity-based public funding system (including for EU Structural and Social Fund and IPA financing), based on the adoption and implementation of municipal and school-based equal opportunity action plans, to promote equity and educational integration.
  - c. Introduce earmarked funds for restructuring the central education management of information system for tracking the use of resources: such a system should include information about student and teachers in order to accurately follow the educational career of students and the professional development of teachers.
  - d. Introduce categorical (ear-marked) grants for specific programmes to raise attainment of socially disadvantaged children, such as extra financing to pay teachers more or provide more teachers per 100 pupils. Such programmes should recognise the additional costs of providing good quality integrated education to students from diverse backgrounds.
2. Per pupil funding is equitable across all pupils (i.e. stops any under-funding of socially disadvantaged pupils). Additions for educationally disadvantaged pupils are making them more attractive to enrol and retain. At the same time, schools have more flexibility in how to use resources to combat educational disadvantage.
  - a. Introduce per pupil funding as a part of system-wide funding of pre-school and basic education using a formula in which the main element is per pupil funding. Allocate budgets to schools and give them responsibility to manage funds. Per pupil financing should come together with well designed system of efficiency measurement and quality control and

procedures of avoiding the conflict of interest in the educational systems. Ensure that the capitation formula does not favor either the special education or segregated education track on the expense of integration of children into mainstream education.

- b. Adopt national indicators for social disadvantage comparable across country such as those already developed by OECD (e.g. PISA) and EGREES.
  - c. Set considerably higher per pupil funding for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in integrated schools to provide good quality teaching over a longer sustained period (instruction hours, attendance and retention).
  - d. Provide adequate funding for early childhood services and for integrated kindergarten and preschool services with group sizes, child-staff ratios, qualified staff and curriculum based on best European and international research.
  - e. Introduce regular control at school maintainer and the school level of use of finance and resources to improve the attainment of socially disadvantaged pupils
  - f. Regularly collect transparent and reliable information on how pupils of different social backgrounds progress through the education system - used for evaluation, monitoring and accountability
  - g. Provide sufficient information and training to school leadership and teachers so that they can value advantages of this way of funding, have knowledge of how best to use resources, and are provided with information on their pupils' progress in relation to socio-economic status and prior attainment compared with other schools (e.g. through external student assessments).
3. Introduce additional financial support systems to stimulate demand and counter pressure for early school leaving.
- a. Develop community outreach and information programs focused on parents and youth that can stimulate demand for more and better education
  - b. Provide easy accessible information of the available programs of support to education (transfers, scholarships, mentoring, provision of school –books etc)
  - c. Make available scholarship programs targeted at Roma children – ensure they are accompanied with adequate teachers' support/ mentoring and close monitoring of pupil's educational attainments
  - d. Keep the Roma education issues as priority within existing funding sources (budget, EU funds).

One of the possible additional mechanisms to raise the demand for education which were introduced in Latin America, the US and UK are Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs). CCTs have been shown to raise enrollment and attendance. However, CCTs have not necessarily improved learning outcomes or promoted integrated schooling. They require good quality schooling (supply) and better outreach and information for parents and children (demand) to improve learning achievement.

## THE WAY AHEAD

All Decade Countries have engaged in promoting Social Inclusion. Education systems are being reformed to be more human capital centered. Social Protection systems are under scrutiny in the face of the economic crisis. Each of these represents opportunities to be linked to in promoting an inclusive education agenda for children.

Demographic and economic pressures underline the need to see education of Roma children as an investment not a cost. At the same time, maintaining parallel systems are both costly and ineffective.

Concrete action on the each of the 4 focus areas could contribute to transforming the lives of Roma children.

Specifically, it was agreed that all Decade countries would review and revise their National Action Plans in the light of the Conference recommendations. That each country would develop time- bound targets set against the main strategic goals of promoting inclusive education. All the steps in this process will be made in close consultation with the Roma community. It was agreed that a major effort would be made to take these actions to scale in the coming period.

New partnerships need to be organized and supported within the Decade, linking to existing networks (around ECD, around desegregation, classroom practice, public financing and monitoring). Furthermore, the informal European Platform for Roma Inclusion, which aims at disseminating good practices within Member States and other partners can be used as one of the mechanisms for communication and coordination of efforts.

Better coordination inside countries and between international agencies is urgently needed -both in sharing expertise and building the capacity of public administrations.

It was agreed that countries would meet again within 12 – 18 months to review progress towards these goals, linking to the next EU Roma Summit.

