

Social inclusion policies for Roma communities.

Roma representation within the education system

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Education

Within the Decade on Roma Inclusion, one of the most important areas of intervention, which was agreed upon by the participating countries, is education area. Romania considers the area of education a core one, this vision being sustained and highlighted since 2004, when all the structures involved in the Decade process agreed by consensus upon the necessity of setting up The Roma Education Fund.

1. Ministry of Education

In this context, a number of measures and strategic programmes were put in place or continued, in Romania, by the responsible structure, aiming at increasing the access to quality education of Roma children:

- Providing annually special places in high-schools and arts and trades schools for Roma children. If, in 2002, 1350 places were allocated for Roma children, in 2007 there were more than 3000 special places;
- Providing annually special places in universities for Roma children that graduated high-school. If in the academic year 1998 -1999, 149 special places for Roma were offered in 8 universities, in 2007 there were 454 special places in 39 universities. Additionally, 200 places for training Roma people to become primary education teachers were allocated at the Open Distance Learning Department CREDIS of the Bucharest University, as a result of the partnership between the Bucharest University, UNICEF and the current PHARE Programmes "Access to education for disadvantaged groups" implemented by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth. The Roma students will acquire also the competence to teach Romani language or/and Roma history and tradition;
- Financing, by county school inspectorates, Roma language and history teachers positions (420 positions in September 2007). In 2006 - 2007 school year, a number of 25.000 pupils, out of 250.000 Roma pupils which have assumed their Roma identity, have chosen to study Romani language and literature and Roma history and traditions;
- Starting with March 2004, the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, in partnership with UNICEF and "Save the Children" organisation, has initiated a multi-annual national programme of training non-Roma teachers, that work in classes or kindergartens with Roma children, so that they become aware of the Roma pupil's specific needs, inter-cultural problems etc. (ROMANIPEN training topic).
- In 2007 the Ministry of Education adopted the Order 1540 which prohibits any form of segregation in the pre-university education system. Subsequently, the Ministry of Education approved the Methodology for Preventing and Eliminating School Segregation of Roma Children. Furthermore, the Ministry issued an internal regulation outlining that schools and school inspectors must take action to identify and eliminate any segregation practices.

2. PHARE Projects seek to address the issues of consolidation of a framework of service provision designed to enable the Roma to participate fully in the social, economic and cultural life of Romania.

Thus, the 2006 PHARE project will make a national evaluation, covering all counties, regarding the impact of the measures and good practices piloted and designed in previous PHARE projects (2001, 2003, 2004 and 2005).

The access to lifelong learning is also ensured by the training programmes that are delivered under those projects for the professionals working in the educational field: directors, inspectors, trainers, teachers, school mediators, teachers, students coming from targeted communities.

Good results and success stories related to PHARE projects "Access to education for disadvantaged groups" show us, since 2001 (starting point), that:

- approximately 850 teacher trainers from all 42 counties were trained on themes like inclusive education, active teaching methods, school based curricula development and implementation, second chance and remedial education programs;
- local training programs have been developed in all counties and the Teacher Training Houses support it;
- approximately 4000 Roma pupils, youngsters and adults have been enrolled in the *Second chance program* (for primary level and for lower secondary level);
- after school/remedial teaching program and intensive kindergarten program have been developed in 25 counties with a good participation and are currently developed in 11 new counties;
- approximately 381 school mediators have participated or are participating currently in the mediator training program;
- 36 Resource Centers for Inclusive Education have been established in participating counties;
- approximately 300 participating schools and another 150 schools, currently selected, have developed and develop activities for parents participation in education;
- Counties participating in the project have financed works and procurement activities and approximately 300 schools from disadvantaged communities already ensure a friendly educational environment.

3. Social Inclusion Program seeks to improve the living conditions and to increase the social inclusion of Roma in four prioritized areas, inclusively education. The component regarding Inclusive Early Childhood Education Program is financed with 6 million Euros and it will be implemented through a partnership between National Agency for Roma and the Ministry of Education. The program is targeting 120 of Roma communities that were selected in which kindergartens would be built or rehabilitated in order to ensure a good quality early education for Romani children.

4. **Based on the European Social Fund**, National Agency for Roma in partnership with Roma Education Fund, Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, Resources Centre for Roma Communities and Pakiv Association from Romania, will implement, during 2008-2011, a trans-national project **“EDUCATION OF ROMANI CHILDREN- THE WAY TO A GUARANTEED EMPLOYMENT”**

The main objective of this project is to increase the level of education of Romani children in the rural and urban area for developing human resources, which later will participate on the flexible and modern labour market as the result of the improved quality of education and reduction of the school abandon.

Specifically, the expected results of the project are the following:

- Equal access to education of 1200 Roma pupils from VII and VIII grade which are most exposed to the early abandon of school. The result will be achieved by offering additional education preparation for passing the national tests.
- 600 Roma students from grade VII will continue their studies in the secondary stage as the result of the mentorship, personnel development, and orientation and guidance activities
- Retention of 750 Roma students in the 9th grade in the secondary school by facilitating their adaptation to the new educational environment.
- Preparation of 450 students of Arts and Crafts School to gain access to labour market throughout scholarships programs for excellence in studies.
- Preparation of 2400 Roma adults who early abandoned school to benefit of programs such as “Second Chance” which have as aim to support Roma adults to gain access to labour market by ensuring them basic education.

During the same period, 2008-2011, National Agency for Roma in partnership with International Association Step by Step, Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, the Centre for Education and Personal Development- Step by Step and Agency for Community Development “Together”, will implement another trans national project: **“SCHOOL A CHANCE FOR EVERYONE”**

The project proposes several measures to prevent the early abandon of school of vulnerable groups in 20 counties of Romania. The activities implemented during 2008-2011 would contribute:

- To improve participation of Roma children, poor and disabled children at primary and secondary level.
- To diminish school abandon
- To realise a collaboration and networking mechanisms among the actors implicated in educational issues

