

# Key issues and approaches in in the education of Roma

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# Access to education

- High share of **Roma never enrolled in the education system:**  
est. 15% in Bulgaria and Romania, up to 25% in Serbia (i.e. in one study case location)
- Extremely low participation in **preschool education:**  
under 7% in Serbia, 20% in Romania, 20% less than majority in Hungary, 35% in Bulgaria
- Very low transition to **higher secondary education:**  
in Hungary only 20% go on to secondary schools providing a baccalaureate
- Consistently high **drop-out rates:**  
esp. in lower secondary education; higher in segregated educational settings; from 4 to 6 times higher than the national average in Bulgaria and Romania, to 15 times higher in Serbia
- **Total years spent in the education system:**  
on average about half the national average

# Quality of education – segregation issue (1)

- Disproportionate placement in **special education**: in Hungary, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro Czech Republic and Slovakia
- Deliberate placement in **separate classes** (mainstream schools): in all countries (in remedial and catch up classes in Hungary)
- Placement in **majority Roma “neighboring schools”**: mostly in Romania and Hungary

Other types of segregation:

- Bulgaria*: in social-pedagogical / correctional boarding schools
- Serbia*: school-age children placed in adult education schools
- Hungary*: home schooling (as ‘private pupils’)

# Quality of education – segregation issue (2)

- In all types of segregated educational settings attended by Roma the **quality of education received is invariably lower:**
- by the design of lower curricular standards
- by the poor human and material resources allocated, and
- the low expectations of teachers

# Constraints in access to quality education

- **Structural constraints** are most evident at the pre-school level (insufficient places) and low quality ECEC
- **Misplacement of Roma in special education** remains in most of the Roma Decade countries.
- The **burden of incidental costs** incurred by a regular and full participation to school activities affect an important segment of Roma

# Policy issues (I)

- A very loose connection between the assumed goals in different **policy documents** and the **local-level implementation** of these measures
- **Decentralisation** of the education systems: jeopardizes implementation of targeted educational policies on Roma, especially desegregation.
- **Progress on integration** of Roma in mainstream classes and schools: in *Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria*: slow and uneven

## **Roma NGO involvement:**

- in *Romania and Hungary*: only few Roma NGOs involved in the desegregation process
- in *Bulgaria*: desegregation is funded and implemented only by Roma NGOs

# Policy issues (II)

- Only a **very small number of Roma pupils study Romanes** except in Romania, where almost 10% of enrolled Roma pupils study Romanes
- Information about **Roma minority history and culture** and the contribution of this ethnic group to the national heritage is missing from the mainstream school curriculum.
- Very small number of persons employed as **Roma Teaching Assistants / Mediators**.
- **Pre-service teacher training:** courses dealing with tolerance, diversity, multicultural education, and anti-bias training are missing from the curricula
- **In-service teacher training:** the impact of the programmes developed in various projects on **changing classroom pedagogy** has not been systematically evaluated

# Approaches in overcoming the educational issues (I)

- **Roma participation** in all phases of the project: baseline surveys, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. REF is stimulating Roma employment (including Roma mediators, teaching assistants and school councilors) in the financed educational programs and projects.
- **Desegregation is a mean** toward Roma access to quality education, better life chances and increased social cohesion. External evaluations of desegregation programs in Bulgaria and Hungary demonstrate better school achievements and good levels of social interactions between Roma and non Roma students.
- **Intercultural education in ethnically mixed educational settings** is a prerequisite for desegregation projects. The social support of the poorest Roma children, the additional educational support for catching up with the level of the new school and **parents motivation** are among the conditions of a successful desegregation process. As early the Roma inclusion occur as higher the chances to be successful. Preventing segregation is essential.



# Approaches in overcoming the educational issues (II)

- The way of preventing Roma segregation, especially in special school or classes is consisting on increasing the Roma enrolment in quality ECEC services, at least one year of enrolment in pre school before school enrolment.
- Increasing Roma women employment would result in an increased demand for ECEC services. The example of free of charge compulsory pre school classes is a good practice.
- *Empirical data* about the enrolment and participation of Roma in education and especially early education is *scarce and outdated in many cases*. More research is needed to update and to inform about Roma participation in preschool education. Understanding from an unbiased rational choice perspective the reason of low participation in education is also needed.
- There are perverse incentives for Romani parents enrolling children in special schools: free meals, textbooks, a safer environment for children. These incentives should be made available in the mainstream schools in order to offer a real choice.

# Approaches in overcoming the educational issues (III)

- Up to date only few small scale experimental projects in Romania tried to introduce bilingual kindergartens with the usage of Romani language for learning the official language of instructions. Bilingual kindergartens should be further explored for overcoming the language barriers.
- Scholarships for tertiary level Roma students (5000 scholarships in 7 years) and secondary school pupils are an efficient mean in improving the education profile of the Roma community.
- Carefully designed and implemented affirmative action policies targeting the enrolment of Roma in secondary and tertiary education could be an effective mean of reducing the gap between Roma and non Roma. Targeting of affirmative action policies should be specifically oriented towards Roma communities from rural areas with a high proportion of Romani language speakers and towards larger families. Affirmative action policies could be corroborated with conditional cash transfers benefits for secondary education in order to improve in efficiency.

Thank you!

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