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INCLUSIVE APPROACH – GOOD PRACTICE AND THE WAY
FORWARD**

***CROATIAN POLICY ON SOCIAL INCLUSION OF ROMA
THROUGH EDUCATION***

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Introduction

Croatian policy on national minorities, including Roma, is based on democratic values developed in relevant United Nations' instruments for human rights protection which Croatia has ratified, such as the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Furthermore, Croatia ratified all the conventions and recommendations of the Council of Europe addressing human rights and has concluded bilateral agreements on protection of national minorities with neighbouring countries.

In addition, it has put in place a number of relevant legislative provisions, such as the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities (CLNM), the Law on the Use of Language and Script of National Minorities, the Law on the Education in the Language and Script of National Minorities and the Discrimination Prevention Act.

The term of national minority is defined in Article 5 of the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities (CLNM). According to that provision, a national minority is a group of citizens whose members have traditionally inhabited the territory of the Republic of Croatia and whose members have ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and/or religious characteristics that are different from those of other citizens and who wish to preserve these characteristics. The CLNM sets the domestic legal framework for minority rights in Croatia.

The national minorities are guaranteed the right of having up to eight representatives in the Parliament, and to be reserved seats on a proportional basis at local government level. The census and any recent electoral registers are used to calculate this allocation.

Additionally, the CLNM establishes Councils of National Minorities at local, regional and state level as consultative bodies that provide opinions and proposals on relevant minority issues. These councils are also established for Roma minority and for the first time there is a Roma representative as the Member of Parliament.

According to the last census in 2001 the population of Croatia is 4.437.460 inhabitants and about 10% belong to one of 23 national minorities. Taking into account the mentioned definition of a national minority, the Croatian society encompasses as it follows:

Croats - 3.977.171 (89,63%); Albanians – 15.082 (0,34%); Austrians – 247 (0,01%); Bosniacs 20.755 – 0,47%); Bulgarians – 331 (0,01); Czechs – 10.510 (0,24%); Germans – 2.902 (0,07); Hungarians – 16.596 (0,37%); Italians – 19.636 (0,44%); Jews – 576 (0,01%); Macedonians - 4.270 (0,10%); Montenegrins – 4.926 (0,11%); Poles – 567 (0,01%); Roma – 9.463 (0,21%); Romanians – 475 (0,01%); Russians – 906 (0,02%); Ruthenians – 2.337 (0,05); Slovaks – 4.712 (0,11%); Slovenians – 13.173 (0,30%); Serbs – 201.631 (4,54%); Turks – 300 (0,01%); Ukrainians – 1.977 (0,04%); Vlachs – 12 (0,00%); others /related to the listing/ - 21.801 (0,49%); undeclared according to the definition – 89.130 (2,01%); unknown – 17.975 (0,41%).

Although officially there were 9.463 persons belonging to Roma minority, unofficial estimations count the number of Roma to stand at around 30.000 to 40.000. In June 2011, the

first results of this years' census will show, hopefully, a more realistic picture of Roma minorities living in Croatia than the results ten years ago.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the comprehensive National Programme for the Roma in 2003 and the Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 in 2005. These strategic documents, which are composed of the main fields important for social inclusion of the Roma, such as social welfare, health, education, employment, housing/infrastructure and the preservation of Roma culture, are seen as the key legal basis for improving the situation of the Roma in Croatia.

The actual Prime Minister, Ms Jadranka Kosor, is in charge of the commission for monitoring the implementation of the National Programme for Roma and is also the National Coordinator for the Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

The education component aims to include Roma children and youth in all level of education system and support them in order to improve their inclusion in society.

Roma minority inclusion in the education system

The enrolment of Roma children in all levels of the education system has increased during the last six years. Most evidently in primary education; from just over 1.000 children in 2005 the number of children increased to 4.435 in 2011.

Data on Schooling of Roma Children/Youth in Croatia

Level of education	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Pres-school education	345 (no data on male & female)	518 (no data on male & female)	810 (346 m, 401 f)	692 (350 m, 342 f)	824 (422 m, 402 f)	799 (394 m, 405 f)
Primary education	1013 (no data on male & female)	3010 (no data on male & female)	3786 (1934 m, 1852 f)	3940 (1980 m, 1960 f)	4186 (2176 m, 2010 f)	4435 (2246 m, 2189 f)
Secondary education	72 (no data on male & female)	172 (no data on male & female)	186 (117 m, 69 f)	224 (129 m, 95 f)	304 (166 m, 138 f)	341 (177 m, 164 f)
Higher education	7 (no data on male & female)	10 (7 f, 3 m)	12 (8 f, 4 m)	20 (8 f, 11 m)	25 (13 f, 12 m)	26 (15 f, 11 m)
Total	1437	3710	4794	4876	5339	5601
All secondary school and higher education Roma students get the scholarship.						

Source: database of Ministry, Science, Education and Sports, 2011

Ministry of Science, Education and Sports developed an electronic database for monitoring the implementation of the measures from the Action plan on the Decade for Roma Inclusion. Twice a year the data base is updated – at the beginning of the school year and at the end of the current school year. It includes the numbers and other data as it follows:

- Number of Roma children in the preschool program, according to the kindergartens in which the children are included, gender, duration of program per day, monthly and per year, in integrated or Roma only groups, on the level of preschool institutions, county/city and State;
- Number of pupils in primary schools on the level of state, counties, schools and classes, according to the gender, in mixed or Roma-only classes; the number of those who repeat the year, drop-out, after school activities, how many pupils get the additional support in Croatian language learning, on the level of class, schools, counties, State;
- Number of Roma pupils in secondary education, vocational and general, on the level of State, counties, duration and sort of programs, drop-out, on the level of schools, classes, and according to the gender;

The number of students in higher education is collected according to the number of scholarships for those who declared themselves as belonging to the Roma national minority.

For adult education of Roma, which includes the literacy program and vocational training (which is also the measure from the Action Plan on Decade of Roma Inclusion) the data is collected according to the expenses ensured from the State budget for this purpose.

Pre-school education: The programme of pre-school education is intended to encompass as many of Roma children as possible and thus create the preconditions for their successful learning in primary school. Preschool education is not compulsory and it is not free of charge in Croatia; it is decentralized and transferred to municipalities and in some counties there is not enough necessary infrastructures for accommodating all the children, including the Roma. According to the social policy on the local/regional level, it can be co-financed for socially disadvantaged groups by the municipalities or local government.

In 2009 the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports introduced the new measure of co-financing the price of the preschool program for Roma parents if it is not completely covered by municipalities or local government. In the last three years 361 children (198 m, 163 f) have participated in this kind of financial support for integrated preschool program.

The duration of the preschool program depends on financial, structural and human resources. For example, the Roma children are included in the preschool program of 150 hours realized in 9 months (Popovača, Sisačko-moslavačka county), or 250 hours realized in 7 months (Bjelovar, Bjelovarsko-bilogorska county), or 350 hours realized in 8 months (Vodnjan, Istarska county) to 1.386 hours in 10 months (Čakovec, Međimurje county). These are examples which show diversity of possibilities.

In order to implement the judgement of the European Court for Human Rights in case *Oršuš and the others against Croatia*, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in cooperation with Međimurje county ensured the inclusion in the preschool program from September 15, 2010 to June 30, 2011 all Roma children who will enrol in first grade of primary school in 2011/2012, i.e. for 253 children (125 m, 128 f). The children are included in the program 5 hours a day; they have two meals and ensured transport.

Primary education: As already mentioned the enrolment in primary schools has increased four times since the Action Plan is adopted in 2005.

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports set up the network of Roma assistants whose main task is to intermediate between the Roma community and the school in joint efforts for the improvement of education of Roma children in schools and their integration into the school environment. There are 23 Roma assistants whose salaries are paid by the Ministry and two are employed by the local government.

The very important element for the success of Roma in primary education is the after school activities inclusion within the school environment, which includes among other activities, the help in domestic tasks, subject and language learning. According to the data that we have at our disposal, there is a lack of financial resources for these programs and it is very difficult to ensure the financial support cautiously and to make a sustainable program. It differs from 349 pupils in 2006/2007, 183 (104 m, 79 f) in 2007/2008, 229 (124 m, 105 f) in 2008/2009, 563 pupils (287 m, 276 f) in 2009/2010 and 340 (183 m, 157 f) in 2010/2011.

There is a problem of repeating the class and in 2010/2011 school year there is 587 pupils (348 m, 239 f) who repeat the school year program. In 2009/2010 school year 638 pupils repeated the class (372 m, 266 f). Although there is an almost balance according to the gender in primary education (2246 m, 2189 f in 2010/2011 and 2131 m, 2041 f), the number of boys who are repeating the class is much higher than the number of girls.

The primary education in Croatia is compulsory until 15 years of age. After that age many Roma pupils quit school but the system does not recognize it as dropping out. In 2009/2010 there are only 144 pupils who left primary school (69 m, 75 f). On the other hand, there is a serious problem of Roma pupils not completing compulsory education. According to some assessments, 27% or less of Roma pupils complete the primary school.

It is very important to stress out the issue of completing the primary education because it is the precondition to raise the number of Roma students in secondary and higher education.

Concerning the implementation of the already mentioned judgement of the European Court for Human Rights, Article 43 of the Law on Education in Primary and Secondary School has been changed in July 2010, thus obliging schools to help the children with the Croatian language. This is organised in 2010/2011 for 865 Roma pupils (435 m, 430 f) in Croatia. In Međimurje county 342 pupils (180 m, 162 f) get this kind of help. The Croatian language classes have been integrated into mainstream programmes and Roma-only classes are increasingly rare. The implementation of the new developed measures has been solving the problem of Roma only classes.

In 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 academic year the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports ensured the textbooks free of charge for all primary school pupils and pupils in first two years of secondary school. The lack of financial resources changed the measure in a way that free textbooks are reserved for economically and socially disadvantaged groups, according to the criteria of social welfare system.

Secondary education: As already mentioned, the Action Plan has provided scholarships for all Roma secondary-school students and students of higher education institutions who have applied for a scholarship. The accommodation in students' dormitories has been secured.

The number of pupils in secondary education also has increased during the last six years almost five times, from 72 in 2005/2006 to 341 (177 m, 164 f) in 2010/2011. Although the number of pupils who attend the 4-years secondary education program has been increased, the Roma pupils mostly attend 3-years vocational program.

In 2010/2011 there are 341 Roma pupils in secondary education (177 m, 164 f); in gymnasium there are 6 pupils (3m, 3 f); in 4-years vocational program there are 67 pupils (20 m, 47 f); in 3-years vocational program there are 231 pupils (133 m, 98 f); in 1/2-years vocational program 5 (4 m, 1 f); in vocational programs for disabled children within the special schools there are 29 pupils (16 m, 13 f) and in fine arts & design program there is 1 girl.

In 2010/2011 there are 19 (14 m, 5 f) pupils who repeat the school year program; in 2010/2011 it was 37 pupils (21 m, 16 f) who quit the secondary school and 14 pupils (10 m, 4 f) who repeated the school year program.

Taking into account that there is an almost balance according to the gender in number of secondary school pupils, it is evident that the girls are more successful because the higher number of boys repeat the school year program or quit the school. On the other hand, the girls are choosing the 4-years school program in much higher number than boys who are mostly in 3-years vocational program.

Allocation of resources

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport provides the largest financial support to the education sector, which includes the national minorities' education as well. The regional/county and the local governments also allocate funds for education. The special attention is given to the minorities' education on the state budget level which include besides regular financing, the means for the textbook development in minorities' languages, for the implementation of the National Program for the Roma and the Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion, for distance learning in minorities' language and culture, the summer and winter schools for minorities, seminars, workshops, NGOs projects realised in partnership with schools and other.

The possibilities for funding have been opened through pre-accession projects encompassed by Human Resources Development Operational Programme within the scope of the *Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)* for Component IV programme.

Among priorities for 2010 is the project on **Integration of disadvantaged groups in regular education system** with the aim to improve the social inclusion of persons at disadvantage in educational institutions. The national minorities, with special focus on Roma national minority are encompassed by the project. Any day now the Guidelines for Applicants will be available to the public.