

# **(Anti)Discrimination of Roma Children in the Primary Schools of the Sarajevo Canton**

*The Situation Analysis*

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Sarajevo, April, 2013.

**Publisher:**

Kali Sara Association – Roma Information Center  
Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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**Design and DTP:**

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**Printing:**

Svjetlost d.o.o.

**Circulation:**

500

**Year of publication:**

June 2013



This project is funded by the European Union.

This study was created as a result of the research conducted as a part of the “Together for inclusive and non-discriminatory education of Roma children” project that is being implemented from January 1, 2013 to August 31, 2014 by Association Kali Sara – Roma Information Center in partnership with COI STEP by STEP and associated partners i.e. B&H Federation Ministry of Education and Science, Sarajevo Canton Ministry of Education, Science and Youth and financially supported by the Delegation of the European Union and B&H Open Society Fund.

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# Summary

Formal legal conditions, for exercising the right to education of Roma national minority, were created in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the adoption of various pieces of international and state legislation. However, unofficial information that only 4-6% Roma children are covered by primary education indicates that, in reality, numerous obstacles still persist that are impeding and preventing the success of this process. This primarily refers to socio-economic conditions but also discrimination of members of Roma population that is generally present throughout.

This study was created as a result of research that was conducted in primary schools in Sarajevo Canton with an aim to collect data on acceptance of Roma children and occurring forms of discrimination. The research included directors, teachers, pedagogues, students and parents of majority population as well as Roma representatives.

By examining social attitudes, we received data indicating that a social distance towards Roma children is greater in schools where there aren't any. On the other hand, discrimination (mostly implicit) is present in schools that are attended by Roma children. Social contact enables interaction and coexistence that fosters development of understanding, mutual appreciation and respect, but this is not the rule when it comes to inclusion of Roma children into regular schools. Namely, rooted stereotypes and prejudice towards Roma represent a significant barrier to the establishment of inclusive climate in a school and are a cause of discrimination. Some of the present forms of concealed discrimination are: exclusion of Roma children in informal settings, during their stay in school, justifying large number of absences from classes and advancing from lower to higher grades without gaining adequate knowledge or developing skills, organizing additional classes exclusively for Roma children on Saturdays, regardless of their academic success, verbal and non-verbal aggression towards Roma children, Roma refusing to declare themselves as Roma in order to avoid labeling and many other.

Results received show that direct discrimination, even though rare, is still present. It is manifested in sporadic cases where Roma children are denied acceptance into schools, where there are demands of parents of the majority population that the Roma child is removed, even expelled from school, and the impossibility to attend classes in mother tongue i.e. Romani language.

Findings of this study are a significant starting point for taking action towards promotion of interculturalism and overcoming existing stereotypes and prejudice in order to create a safe school environment where mutual similarities, not differences, are accentuated.

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# 1. Introductory remarks

**Roma** are the largest national minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but at the same time, a group that succumbs to all risks of **social exclusion**. This is manifested in the inability to exercise rights in areas of education, employment, health protection and housing. Social exclusion signifies destruction of linkages between individual/group and a society at large. However, a fact specific to Roma population is that, for centuries, they were not considered or treated as a part of a certain society and thus social linkages were never established. On one hand, it is due to bad socio-economic status, unemployment, lack of education, poverty and other forms of material deprivation. Apart from that, Roma are exposed to segregation and **discrimination** in all areas of social action. Discrimination is mostly conditioned by stereotypes and prejudice that are often associated with this population.

**Education** is a process that enables overcoming social exclusion. Therefore, it is very important to create an inclusive climate in schools through which differences would be accepted and that would promote multiculturalism as an advantage of B&H society. It is not possible to develop interculturalism if there are negative attitudes present and making an influence among the members of majority population and minorities, as they subsequently lead to basic human rights being disputed and denied.

The first part of this study shows **legal bases** for exercising rights of national minorities, with a focus on Roma, that are followed by results of empirical part of research. We researched **acceptance** of Roma children by the members of majority population namely teachers, parents and peers in primary schools in Sarajevo Canton. We also examined experiences and perceptions of directors, pedagogues and teachers when it comes to **discrimination** of Roma children in schools, but also experiences of Roma themselves.

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## 2. Decade of Roma inclusion 2005 – 2015

Decade of Roma Inclusion is an international initiative that gathers governments, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations as well Romani civil society organizations, with the goal to improve socio-economic status of Roma and their social inclusion. Inclusion is generally defined as *including*.<sup>1</sup> It is not a theory or a concept, but a movement aimed at removal of prejudice that, at the same time, wishes to develop a sense of social community for tolerance and development of positive attitudes of people towards people that are „different“ (Slatina, 2003:75). The inclusion enables each individual to actively participate in all spheres of society in which one lives.



The idea on starting this initiative came about after the first high-level conference on Roma, held in June 2003, in Budapest, under the name “*Roma in an expanding Europe: Challenges for the future*”. All important issues related to the position of Roma in South East Europe were considered at the conference. Organizers of the conference were the World Bank and Open Society Foundation, while the conference was supported by the European Commission, the UNDP, Council of Europe Development Bank and governments of Finland and Sweden.

The host of this conference was the Government of Hungary and was attended by representatives of governments of countries with significant number of Roma national minority members (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Montenegro). Unfortunately, representatives of the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina did not participate, due to which, a part of delegation of representatives of civil society sector of Bosnia and Herzegovina that was present, had only the status of observers.

Prime ministers of eight initiating countries signed the Declaration on Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, in Sofia, on February 2, 2005, pledging to provide full support for full participation and inclusion of Roma communities in achievement of all goals that were set forth. Priority areas of the Decade are aimed at resolving the situation of Roma in areas of education, employment, health care and housing. Apart from the aforementioned priorities, each signatory pledged to consider other issues of importance as well such as poverty, discrimination and gender equality.

Decade<sup>2</sup> is an international initiative that should connect governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations as well as Romani civil society organizations in order to:

- Launch initiatives to strengthen Roma inclusion and place this question high on the list of priorities when it comes to policies at regional and the European level;
- Acquire new knowledge and exchange of experiences;
- Ensure the inclusion of Roma in creation of all policies that affect their lives;
- Use international experience and expertise to ensure progress in solving more complex problems;
- Raise public awareness on the situation of Roma using active communication.

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<sup>1</sup> Inclusion is an act of including, containing, encompassing, understanding, making a part of (Klaić, 1987:591; Vujaklija, 1980:345).

<sup>2</sup> See more on: [www.romadecade.org](http://www.romadecade.org).

## Declaration of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015

(Text of the obligation taken over by governments/members of the Decade)

Building on the conference “Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future”, held in 2003, we pledge that our governments will work to eliminate discrimination and overcome the unacceptable gaps between Roma and the rest of society, as set out in our action plans of the Decade.

We declare the period from 2005 to 2015. The Decade of the Roma Social Inclusion and are committed to ensuring the full participation and involvement of national Roma communities in achieving the objectives of the Decade.

We are committed to participate in the achievement of objectives and to validate the progress made by measuring achievements and experiences of reviewing the implementation of the action plans of the Decade.

We invite other countries to join in our efforts

Sofia, Bulgaria, February 2, 2005.

Bosnia and Herzegovina also joined the countries of Southeastern and Central Europe, gathered around the “Decade of Roma Inclusion”, with a desire to improve the situation of the Roma population. The declaration was signed on September 4, 2008 in Belgrade, as a part of the 14<sup>th</sup> session of the International Steering Board, and was signed by the then Chairman of the B&H Council of Ministers, Nikola Špirić.

*The fight against poverty, exclusion and discrimination against Roma, around which members of the Decade are gathered, is a noble cause, because the Roma deserve a chance. Too much and for too long have they suffered. We will not be wrong if we say that the Roma received much less from the community than what they contributed to it, especially considering the arts, music and other areas of human creation, said Špirić.<sup>3</sup> He stressed that B&H is committed to ensuring the rights of all minorities in accordance with the highest international standards, adding that, considering the fact that the Roma national minority is the largest minority and yet the most endangered in B&H, the Council of Ministers of B&H highlighted the Roma issue as a priority.*



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<sup>3</sup> Taken over from: [www.bhric.ba](http://www.bhric.ba)

The Declaration of the Decade emphasizes a key role Roma have in its development and implementation under the slogan “*Nothing about us without us: Roma participation will make or break the Decade*”.<sup>4</sup> Hence, the representatives of Roma associations and civil society organizations are involved in every phase of the Decade. Representatives of Roma participated in shaping and defining the vision and identifying priorities as well as defining the objectives of the Decade. In order to achieve the objectives of the Decade, the role of Romani organizations is significant especially in monitoring<sup>5</sup> and evaluation activities.

The objectives and the program of the Decade are based on other relevant international documents - the Millennium Declaration of the United Nations and the Policy of Social Inclusion of the European Union.

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<sup>4</sup> Translation from English: “*Nothing about us, without us*”: *Roma participation will make or break the Decade*

<sup>5</sup> Association Kali Sara – Romani Information Center monitors implementation of the Action Plan for Roma in B&H. The first report was published in 2011 – Decade Watch for B&H. The report can be found at: [www.bhric.ba](http://www.bhric.ba).

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### 3. Administrative-legal premise for exercising the right to education for national minorities

One of strategic priorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina's is accession to the European Union, which has been confirmed by adoption of the Strategy of integration of B&H into the EU (2006) and signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (2008) followed by numerous other documents that ensure protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The right to education is one of the basic human rights. It is considered a crucial human right that enables an individual to prosper and enjoy other human rights<sup>6</sup>. It is considered that, through education, human beings are equipped to achieve their own prosperity, by developing and reaching a higher level of social dignity in their relation to other people. This is the reason the education is protected by majority of international norms on human rights as well as political constitutions and laws of various countries.

#### 3.1. International documents

**The Universal Declaration on Human Rights** was proclaimed on December 10, 1948 by United Nations.<sup>7</sup> Article 26 is of special importance as it points out to the need to individualize the upbringing and education in schools, i.e. schooling adapted to the potential and abilities of children. Aside from that, it is important to emphasize the part that refers to respect of differences among children, mutual tolerance and friendship regardless of religious, national, racial or any other background: *"Schooling should be aimed at full potential of the personality and strengthening of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It should foster understanding, tolerance and friendship among all people, racial and religious groups (...)"*

**Millennium declaration (2000)** defines eight concrete goals that represent human needs and basic rights that each person should have and enjoy. Millennium Development Goals should be reached, on global level, by year 2015. We would like to especially emphasize the following goals: eradication of poverty and hunger; reaching universal coverage with primary education, improvement of gender equality and support to women, reducing child mortality. The following goals encompass economic, social, civil and political rights that are, as such, integrated into support of people-oriented development, prevention of conflicts and reduction of poverty and social exclusion. In order to examine the social exclusion in a specific country, it is necessary to understand the context as well as to analyze specific characteristics of a given country. Here, first and foremost, we mean social, historical and cultural values, the level of development and efficiency of the social protection system, the existence of formal and informal institutions and agencies, the development level of solidarity as well as the level of social capital.

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<sup>6</sup> Without lessening the importance of other international documents, we decided on the aforementioned as they put emphasis on right to education of national minorities

<sup>7</sup> United Nations or UN is an international organization for preservation of peace and security in the world, development of neighborly relations, economic cooperation, expansion of tolerance and promoting respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Promoting elements of mutual understanding and tolerance, as well as education directed towards it can be further found in **The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (1966.). It has been stated that the goal of education is to enable full development of a human personality, dignity, respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, to enable each individual to participate in a free society, and encourage understanding, tolerance and friendship among all people, all racial, ethnic and religious groups.<sup>8</sup>

**The Convention on the Rights of the Child** from 1989, apart from what was cited from other documents, also states (...) *elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.* This stipulation is especially important for countries where members of the Roma population are denied access to education and thereby a possibility to raise the level of education of Roma population.

**The World Declaration on Education for All**, adopted in Jomtien (Thailand) in 1990 emphasizes the need and obligation to create conditions that allow all individuals – children, youth and adults, to satisfy their basic needs for learning because through fulfillment of them, individuals, in every society, are strengthened and encouraged to take over obligations to respect and build a joint cultural, spiritual and linguistic heritage as well as protect human rights (Article 1.). The Article 3 points out to the need to undertake measures aimed at reduction of differences in order to make quality primary education available to all: *An active commitment must be made to removing educational disparities. Underserved groups: the poor; street and working children; rural and remote populations; nomads and migrant workers; indigenous peoples; ethnic, racial, and linguistic minorities; refugees; those displaced by war; and people under occupation, should not suffer any discrimination in access to learning opportunities.*

Education for all, regardless of individual differences, can be found in the core of a yet another important document: **Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action**. This document was signed in June 1994 at the UNESCO's World Conference on Special Needs Education. The most important points of the Statement are:

- 1) Each child has a basic right to education and must be given a chance to reach and maintain an acceptable level of learning;
- 2) Each child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and needs for learning;
- 3) Education systems should be planned and educational programs implemented in such a way to be mindful of the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs;
- 4) Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools that should be adapted to them by relevant pedagogical efforts that can meet these needs;
- 5) Regular schools with this type of inclusive orientation are the most efficient way of suppressing discriminatory attitudes, creating open communities, building an inclusive society and provision of education to all; moreover, they provide a more efficient education for majority of children and improve the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the entire education system (UNESCO, 1994).

**The World Education Forum** held in **Dakar, Senegal in 2000**, represents a second global evaluation of the international progress towards achievement of goals set forth in Jomtien.<sup>9</sup> We will list some of the principles that the Framework for Action is based upon:

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<sup>8</sup> Article 13, available at: [www.un.com](http://www.un.com)

<sup>9</sup> First evaluation was presented in Amman, Jordan, in 1996..

- 1) All must have an equal access to quality formal and informal primary education in line with the universal human right to education;
- 2) Creation of favorable conditions for learning that will satisfy the needs of the child in line with its capabilities;
- 3) Cooperation with a social community and strengthening of its role in creation, implementation and oversight over primary education programs.

The only legally binding document, on international level, exclusively targeted at rights of minority groups, is **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe**.<sup>10</sup> The Framework Convention promotes full and effective legal equality of national minorities and creation of conditions for preservation and development of their culture and protection of their identity. Principles and program goals, that the Convention is based upon, serve as guidelines to countries during implementation of activities and policies that lead to exercising rights of national minorities. Considering the obligatory character of this document, we find it necessary to point out to articles that refer to the issue of education:

- Article 5. – improvement and development of culture of members of national minorities, preservation of identity, including language and absence of assimilation;
- Article 6. – encouraging a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue, mutual respect, understanding and cooperation;
- Articles 7. and 8. – freedom of association, expression and faith;
- Article 12. – knowledge about minority and majority cultures, history, language, religions, training of teachers and their professional development, equal right to access to education;
- Article 13. – freedom to found private schools;
- Article 14. – language and education.

Obligations of signatory countries that refer to the right to education can be presented in tables as four “A”s: availability, accessibility, acceptability, adaptability, in the following manner:<sup>11</sup>

<b>Availability</b>	Basic education must be obligatory and free for all. Countries must provide an adequate number of functional educational institutions and programs.
<b>Accessibility</b>	Education must be accessible to all, especially to the vulnerable groups, both legally and in reality, without discrimination.
<b>Acceptability</b>	Form and contents of education, including curriculum and teaching methods must be acceptable (relevant, culturally adequate and of quality).
<b>Adaptability</b>	Education must be adapted to the needs of students with regards to their social and cultural differences. Measures that would disable children to get involved and benefit from education must not be undertaken.

<sup>10</sup> Council of Europe: <http://conventions.coe.int//.CETS>; Open for signing as of February 1, 1995. B&H ratified it on February 24, 2000 and it came into effect on June 1, 2000.

<sup>11</sup> UN Commission for Human Rights, Preliminary report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Katarina Tomaševski, accepted in line with Resolution 1998/33, E/CN.4/1999/4913 of the UN Commission for Human Rights Resolution, January, 1999;



Primary education is obligatory and free for all children. Availability of primary education can be viewed in the obligation of countries to ensure that the education system is adapted to each child, including members of national minorities. Accessibility of education includes promotion of equality in exercising the right to education, without discrimination on any grounds. Education is often of crucial importance for exercising rights from other areas such as the right to employment. Therefore, education should encompass contents that will be in line with basic principles of human rights. Curriculum, forms, teaching and working methods, as well as contents of education must be acceptable and encourage appreciation of cultural, national, linguistic and other diversity. Primary education is of great importance for individual child development. The adaptability of the education system to the educational needs and rights of children is, therefore, crucial for their overall action in the community at large.

### 3.2. Legal framework in B&H

Legal framework in B&H is based on the Constitution. Ensuring equal rights to all citizens is emphasized in Article 2: *“The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms provided for in this Article or in the international agreements listed in Annex I to this Constitution shall be secured to all persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.”*

B&H is a signatory of the following international documents that ensure the right to education to national minorities<sup>12</sup>

- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination
- The Protocol 1 of the European Convention for Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
- The Framework Convention on Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe<sup>13</sup>

National documents that protect the rights of national minorities were developed following the signing of the aforesaid international agreements that refer to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The most important document of this kind is the **Law on protection of rights of members of national minorities (2003)**. This law defines members of national minorities as citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina that are not members of any of the three constitutive people, which share the same ethnic background, have the same or similar tradition, customs, language, culture and spirituality (Article 3). The law refers to 17 national minorities that live on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the largest one, the Roma national minority. The law stipulates

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<sup>12</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina became a member of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination through succession from SFRY on September 1, 1993.

<sup>13</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina became a member/signatory of the Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities on July 12, 2002.



that members of national minorities can study language, literature, history and culture in their own language (Article 14), while the authorities are obligated to provide education in the language of national minority if they make up at least one third of school population. If they make up for at least one fifth of the school population, the members of national minorities have a right to have additional classes organized on the subject of language and culture of a particular minority in question. The authorities are also obligated to provide financial means for education of members of national minorities in the language of the national minority including publication of appropriate textbooks (Article 14.). However, the Law is not entirely clear when it comes to financing as it does not define who has a competence to bare costs considering the complex structure of education authorities (B&H Federation, cantons, Republika Srpska and Brcko district B&H).

**B&H Strategy for Resolving Problems of Roma**, from 2005 that is based on international legal documents and instruments for protection of human rights as well as local legislation and other documents, plans and regulations presumes adoption of 15 special programs, from different areas of life that will have an impact on improvement of overall social position of Roma population in B&H.

These areas are: education, employment, housing, health protection, social protection, registration into birth records and provision of other personal identification documents, census, participation in and partnership with public authorities, organizing and networking of their own and other nongovernmental organization that deal with Roma, informing, development of their own cultural identity through nurturing and promotion of tradition, customs, faith, learning Romani language, history, arts and culture and establishment of spiritual and cultural institutions and associations as well as cooperation and exchange of experiences with Roma and other nongovernmental organizations from neighboring and other countries and international organizations, demographic-population policy, family relations, gender equality, rights of children, non-discrimination of Roma and raising awareness on necessity of inclusion of Roma into all social processes in B&H.

As it can be noticed, these areas are intertwined and co-dependent. They also implicitly point to the existence of discrimination of Roma and lack of possibility to enjoy basic human rights. In order to carry out and successfully articulate activities and measures within these areas, they have to be completely harmonized, synchronized and systematized. The end goal of the Strategy is a reduction, and finally, the elimination of discrimination and social distance towards Roma population. Activities planned within the Strategy represent important guidelines and preconditions for full inclusion of Roma into social, political, economic, cultural and other spheres of life of the society in which they live in.

**The Law on prohibition of discrimination (2008)** ensures protection, promotion of human rights and freedoms and creates conditions for enjoyment of equal rights and opportunities and arranges the system of protection against discrimination based on race, ethnic background, color of skin, gender, language, faith, political or other belief, national or social origin, income status or any other basis (Article 1.).

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## 4. Education system in B&H

System for upbringing and education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is conditioned by complex administrative structure, while it is centralized in Republika Srpska, in Federation B&H it is decentralized. The system consists of four tears: preschool, primary, secondary and high education. Out of these, attendance is obligatory for 150 hours of formal preschool education, in the year prior to starting school, primary school and two grades of secondary school. Considering that the primary education is obligatory, the level of coverage of children with obligatory organized upbringing and educational work is the highest at this stage, but still far from satisfactory. For this reason, but also a need to modernize the system for upbringing and education in schools, activities aimed at modernization of education work are continuously implemented.

### 4.1. The Education reform

Education reform in B&H came from a need to align goals and aims of upbringing and education with contemporary demands for development of a society which are: respect for basic human rights and democracy, improvement and modernization of education systems, teaching plans and programs and linking education with the labor market and economic development.

Reform started with a **Strategy**<sup>14</sup> by which five *promises* were made, precisely outlining activities that must be undertaken in preschool, primary, secondary and high education. Promise 1 states: *We shall work to ensure that all children have a possibility to for quality education in integrated, multicultural schools, on all levels, freed from political, religious, cultural and other prejudice and discrimination, where rights of all children are respected. We shall do this in the following manner: We will ensure that all children, members of national minorities (especially Roma children) are, in the appropriate manner, included in the education system, across the country (..).*

**Framework law on primary and secondary education** (2003) ensured a necessary framework, structure and mechanisms for more significant changes and adoption of internationally harmonized norms and standards in education. The Article 3 (I) provides for basic goals of the education that stem from the *generally accepted, universal values of a democratic society as well as national value systems that are based on specificities of national, historic, cultural and religious traditions of peoples and national minorities that live in Bosnia and Herzegovina:*

- a) Enabling access to knowledge as a base for understanding oneself, others and world in which one lives;
- b) Ensuring optimum level of development for each individual including those with special needs, in line with their age, possibilities, mental and physical capabilities.
- c) Promotion of respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms and preparation of each person for a life in the society that respects principles of democracy and the rule of law;

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<sup>14</sup> *Reform of education – Message to citizens of B&H*, 21.12.2002. Available at: [http://www.unze.ba/download/ects/Reforma\\_obrazovanja.pdf](http://www.unze.ba/download/ects/Reforma_obrazovanja.pdf)

- d) Development of awareness on belonging to a state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, one's own cultural identity, language and tradition in a manner appropriate to attainment of the civilization, getting to know and appreciating others and those who are different, appreciating differences and nurturing mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among all individuals, people and communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the world;
- e) Ensuring equal opportunities for education and possibility of choice on all levels of education regardless of gender, race, national background, social and cultural origin and status, family status, confession, psycho-physical and other personal traits;
- f) Reaching quality education for citizens;
- g) Reaching standards of knowledge that can be compared to international and European level and ensure inclusion and continuation of education in the European education system;
- h) Encouraging lifelong learning;
- i) Promoting economic learning;
- j) Inclusion into the process of European integrations.

As we can observe, general goals of education are founded on respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms and nondiscrimination on any grounds including ethnic background. Article 8 (I) carries significant importance in protection of the right to education of national minorities: *Language and culture of each national minority that lives in Bosnia and Herzegovina shall be respected and incorporated into schools, to the extent possible, in line with Framework Convention on the Protection of Rights of National Minorities.* Article 10 (I) prohibits the use and exposure of any didactic and other materials as well as making statements, by faculty members and other employees of the schools that are offensive to members of national minorities. Schools should improve and protect religious freedoms, tolerance and culture of dialogue (Article 9. [I]).

**Strategic directions for development of education in B&H together with the action plan, 2008-2015** define general goals among which are ensuring equality in right to access and participation in the education process, by 2010, at the latest. This includes creating conditions where all children in B&H are included into the education system and implementing the adopted documents on educational needs of Roma and members of other national minorities.

One of the sub-goals in **Action plan for children B&H (2011-2014)**, in the area of primary education, is 100% coverage of children regardless of gender, social, ethnic, confessional or other differences and especially children, members of Roma national minority.

## 4.2. The Action plan on educational needs of Roma and members of other national minorities

The Action plan<sup>15</sup> was adopted in 2004 and revised in June 2010. It defines the following goals:

- 1) Promotion of systemic changes that will lead to fulfillment of educational needs of Roma;
- 2) Removal of financial and administrative obstacles for enrollment into schools and attendance of classes by Roma children;
- 3) Preservation of Roma identity, language and culture;
- 4) Raising awareness on support and participation of Roma parents and communities with regards to the education process;
- 5) Increasing the number of Roma teaching staff and the level of understanding on a side of non-Roma teaching staff with regards to the needs of Roma students;
- 6) Inclusion of history, culture, and literature of national minorities into regular teaching plans and programs.

The institutions and public authorities in charge of protection of human rights, entity and cantonal ministries of education, pedagogical institutions, local communities, preschool and education institutions, Roma associations, social protection services, municipal education services and others, are responsible for achieving goals and implementation of the Action Plan.

## 4.3. The analysis of the current situation in B&H

Situation analysis in the area of education, first and foremost, includes looking at contextual circumstances in B&H that directly or indirectly affect the level of education of a given society. Poverty and social exclusion affect the most vulnerable categories of population and influence the lack of enjoyment of basic human rights. One of the basic findings of numerous studies is a negative correlation between education and poverty. In other words, the higher the level of education, lesser is the likelihood that there will be unemployment and then poverty.<sup>16</sup> Out of all factors that increase the risk of poverty, the level of education is the most significant and is treated as a key mechanism for social inclusion.

Even though Bosnia and Herzegovina signed numerous international declarations, laws and documents, it failed to take concrete steps that would ensure access to the right to education. They are, in reality, short terms actions, while the real problems remain unsolved.

<sup>15</sup> Action Plan on Educational Needs of Roma and members of other national minorities is one of the developed national action plans whose implementation should contribute to the improvement of the status of Roma. Other plans refer to areas of employment, housing and healthcare and contain measures that should be implemented in order to fulfill the goals set forth within. These measures are indicators for monitoring of progress of implementation of foreseen measures, deadlines, database on existing and needed data, budget necessary for implementation of planned activities. The need for inter-sectoral cooperation is also emphasized as well as monitoring as well as proper defining of responsible stakeholders in charge of implementation of measures that are planned.

<sup>16</sup> More in: Bosnia and Herzegovina: Poverty Assessment, World Bank, Report No. 25343-B&H

Primary education is obligatory and free for all children. However, even if there is no tuition, there are many other costs of education that parents are exposed to: buying clothing, footwear, school supplies, school bags, lunch and transportation. It is clear that those who live on the margins of society, fighting for bare existence, cannot secure the needed funds and enable their children to attend schools. This is the reason why problem of dropping out of school is mostly present in rural areas, where parents are unemployed, Roma or where children have development challenges and with other groups at risk of social exclusion. Systemic solution that would remove these barriers does not exist.

The paradox in a promotion of obligatory education can be seen in monetary punishment of parents in case the legal obligation is not met, while on the other hand, education authorities and institutions do not bear any formal responsibility, nor there are any proscribed procedures or sanctions in cases of failure to fulfill certain obligations.

Data on situation in B&H, in the area of primary education, are alarming: the percentage of children that are not enrolled into school continues to increase and has been estimated that it has reached 4% of the total number of children that should be enrolled into school, where the largest number among them are the children with development impediments and Roma children (UNICEF, 2011). The following is listed **as reasons for not educating Roma children**: the inability to enroll into school without identification documents, underdeveloped awareness of Roma on importance of education for improvement of overall socio-economic status, lack of knowledge of other language other than the mother tongue i.e. Romani language and dire socio-economic conditions (UNICEF, 2011: 5).

Another in the series of unanswered questions on coverage of Roma children by primary education is inexistence of an adequate database of Roma children of school age. Due to this reason, the data on enrollment of Roma children into primary schools in Sarajevo Canton, for school year 2009/10 differ extensively, depending on the method of data collection or sources of information.<sup>17</sup> Number of Roma children attending, collected through direct contact with schools, amounted to 499, while the Ministry of Science and Education of Sarajevo Canton (EMIS database<sup>18</sup>) had a number of 387. The difference of 112 children is extremely significant and it is necessary to determine reasons for such large discrepancies between data as well as ensure a more efficient exchange of information between schools and institutions in charge (ministries).

Last, but not least important, is implementation of program of obligatory attendance of preschool education in the year prior to starting school. The Framework Law on preschool upbringing and education (2007) stipulates that each child is obligated to attend at least a 150 hours of formal preschool upbringing and education. However, this obligation becomes a self-serving purpose, as there are no material conditions in place that would ensure its fulfillment.

This primarily relates to the lack of premises, qualified staff, inability to finance employment of teachers specialized for this group of children and for us, the most important, the lack of support to the marginalized groups of children, especially of Roma decent who, due to multiple material deprivation, are not included into programs of obligatory preschool upbringing and education. The consequences are far-reaching and are manifested early in the beginning of education. Teachers,

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<sup>17</sup> More in: Hodžić, L. (2010): *Pedagogical implications of social exclusion of Roma*, unpublished Master thesis, presented on October 13, 2010.

<sup>18</sup> EMIS (*Education Management Information System*)

themselves, recognize differences in school achievements, behavior and social development between children that attended kindergartens and those who did not. Roma children, therefore, do not have equal access to the right to education as early as in preschool period and thus lack the equal starting point for inclusion into regular education.

We can observe a multitude of barriers to enjoyment of the right to education of Roma that range from administrative i.e. bureaucratic through multilayered material deprivation to negative attitudes of the majority population.

5



## 5. Methodology of the baseline study

The baseline study is based on the quantitative and qualitative research methodology.

**The quantitative indicators** on acceptance of Roma children into regular schools are taken over from research done in 2010 in primary schools in Sarajevo Canton.<sup>19</sup> The research sample was made of schools that have the highest numbers of enrollment of Roma children and those who do not have any Roma students, in order to compare data collected. We wanted to examine whether or not the variable of presence of Roma in schools affects the attitudes towards them. Results of the aforementioned research represent a certain starting premise in examination of relationships between members of Roma and majority population.

**Through qualitative research**, however, we tried to obtain data that relate to experiences of teachers and pedagogues in implementation of inclusion of Roma children. **Research was conducted between April – May of 2013.** These data indicate the presence of difficulties and obstacles that impede inclusion, on one hand, as well as positive experiences and examples of good practices, on the other. Data were collected through focus discussions with teachers as well as interviews with school pedagogues. This part of research included ten partner schools from the Sarajevo Canton that are participants of the Project:

PS “Porodice ef. Ramić”

PS “Musa Ćazim Ćatić”

PS “Isak Samokovlija”

PS “Edhem Mulabdić”

PS “Avdo Smajlović”

PS “Čengić Vila I”

PS “Hrasno”

PS “6. mart”

PS “Mirsad Prnjavorac”

PS “Hilmi ef. Šarić”

The goal of this baseline study is to, using research results, offer guidelines and recommendations for creation of anti-discriminatory program, its alignment with needs and implementation of education of all stakeholders that participate in the education process.

In the narrower sense, the research methodology included the following:

- 1) Theoretical analysis that ascertained legal preconditions for enjoyment of the right to education for Roma national minority;
- 2) Scaling technique: Likert’s 5-tier scale was used in order to examine attitudes of teachers and non-Roma parents, as well as modified Bogardus social distance scale to examine social distance between Roma and non-Roma children;

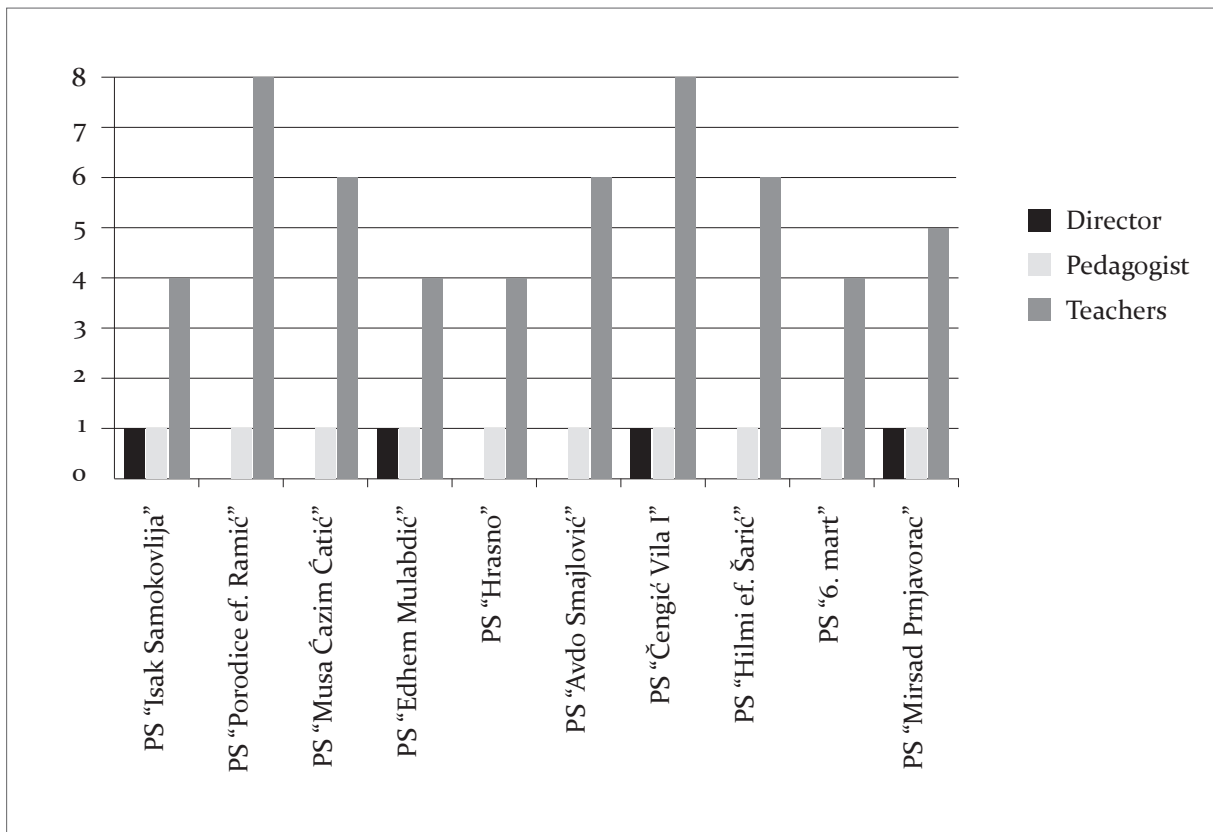
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<sup>19</sup> More in Hodžić, L. (2010): *Pedagogical implications of social exclusion of Roma*, unpublished Master thesis, presented on October 13, 2010 at the Faculty of Philosophy, Sarajevo

- 3) Interview technique: interviews with school pedagogues on experiences in implementation of inclusion and potential discrimination;
- 4) Focus groups with teachers in order to examine their experience in working with heterogeneous groups that include Roma students regardless if they are difficulties they face or examples of good practices.
- 5) Interviews with representatives of Roma population in order to examine their experiences with regards to discrimination in primary schools.

**The sample for qualitative research** was made of directors, pedagogues and teachers of schools included in the project. The sample structure is presented in the tables below.

<b>Name of the school</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Pedagogue</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Total</b>
PS "Isak Samokovlija"	1	1	4	6
PS "Porodice ef. Ramić"	/	1	8	9
PS "Musa Ćazim Ćatić"	/	1	6	7
PS "Edhem Mulabdić"	1	1	4	6
PS "Hrasno"	/	1	4	5
PS "Avdo Smailović"	/	1	6	7
PS "Čengić Vila I"	1	1	8	10
PS "Hilmi ef. Šarić"	/	1	6	7
PS "6. mart"	/	1	4	5
PS "Mirsad Prnjavorac"	1	1	5	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>69</b>



6

## 6. Theoretical premise and definitions

**The inclusion**, as an omnipresent movement in education, represents a contrariety to any form of discrimination and exclusion. It entails ensuring access to enjoyment of rights and not only existence of formal legal conditions. Inclusion in education is an open process that can hardly be completed swiftly and simply, which actually strives to remove and to continue to remove barriers to equal learning and participation of all children in the school system (Pašalić-Kreso, 2003:15). In order to be successful, inclusion must be based on the entire system of moral values and ethical principles such as **equality, respect for differences and human rights that must be incorporated, not only into policies, but also culture and practice in schools across B&H.**

Inclusion of Roma children into a regular education system represents a specific problem considering a multilayered deprivation and social exclusion, both objective and subjective. Roma are (mostly) unemployed, poor, uneducated, and live in poor material conditions. In addition, they are often exposed to **segregation and discrimination** based on existing **stereotypes and prejudice**. The Roma often succumb to **assimilation** due to social pressure made by majority population. It is a process where a human being is forced to denounce his own culture and cultural identity and it is a process of poor educational value (Slatina, 2005:107). Teachers stated that parents of Roma children do not wish to declare their children's ethnic background thinking that in that case a child will not be subjected to ridicule and mocking. Research made in Bosnia and Herzegovina shows that there is a lesser and lesser number of young Roma who speak mother tongue i.e. Romani language<sup>20</sup> which represents an additional indicator of assimilation considering that the language is a basic precondition for preservation of the cultural identity.

Whether we are dealing with direct or implicit forms of discrimination, where members of Roma population are pushed aside to social margins, they are present and do slow down the improvement of the situation of Roma population. Therefore, it is very important to put efforts into removal of causes of discrimination which are, first and foremost, stereotypes and prejudice.

### 6.1. Stereotypes and prejudice

Behavior of each individual, relationships and interactions with other people are conditioned by a strain of factors, one's own experience, core beliefs, culture and subsequently, attitudes. According to Kreč and associates (1973) **attitudes are permanent systems of positive or negative rating, feelings and tendency to act for or against**, in relation to different objects. They are made of three

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<sup>20</sup> More in: ERRC, *The Non-Constituents*, 2004:195; Save the Children UK, *Denied a Future*, 2001:53;

codependent components: intellectual, sensitive and conative<sup>21</sup>. Components of this position are interlinked but do not have to, necessarily, go together. We can have a bad opinion or belief with regards to a certain group but without it being accompanied by a negative emotion or desire to act upon it. Attitudes are formed either by learning or simply by adopting attitudes of the social environment in which the individual lives in or works. However, an individual does not adopt attitudes in a passive manner, but in accordance with one's needs, own experiences and information received about a certain object or occurrence.<sup>22</sup>

**Stereotypes** are rooted images and preconceptions that we have about certain occurrences, objects or people. They are a mental image or belief that what we believe about one member of a certain group, characterizes the entire group. In that sense, it signifies a consequence of **simplification, generalization, distorted thinking and representation of cultural attributes as a given**. Allport emphasizes (1954) that stereotypes make it easier for the observer to respond to a potentially complex social environment, due to which people inevitably categorize objects and people in their world thereby making stereotypes a typical reaction to the surroundings. It results with the neglect of differences between individual members of one group and overemphasizing differences between different groups. This is exactly the reason why stereotypes can lead us to "see" traits that an individual does not have, and fail to see those do they do have!

Stereotypes are not necessarily emotionally charged but if we are not able to see and appreciate individual differences, it often leads to injustice and discrimination.

Each group stereotype that contains purely emotionally negative/positive evaluation of a certain ethnic, racial, religious or social group is interpreted as **prejudice**. These are **positions that are not based on factual or logical arguments**. Prejudice is, in reality, a negative attitude towards an object that strives towards an ultimate stereotypical reasoning, emotionally burdened and not easily changed when influenced by exposure to opposite information (Kreč and associates, 1973). Therefore, it is this emotional characteristic, in itself, as well as resistance to change, that makes a prejudice different from any other attitude or position.

Social categorizations i.e. stereotypes and prejudice often lead to discrimination. Discrimination is prejudice in action, even when we act upon our own personal preconceptions.

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<sup>21</sup> *Intellective* (cognitive) component relates to belief of an individual about a certain object of perception. The most significant are evaluative beliefs with which we assign good or bad, desirable or undesirable qualities to an object. *Sensitive* (*affective, emotional*) component of attitude refers to emotions for a certain object. Thus, an object can be felt as pleasant and non-pleasant, likeable and not. This emotional characteristic, in itself, gives him the driving, motivational dimension. *Conative* (*action*) component of the attitude entails propensity to take action with regards to the object. If an individual abides by the positive attitude towards the object, it will be inclined to reward or support the object; if he abides by negative attitude he will be in the mood to damage or destroy the object (Kreč and associates; 1973).

<sup>22</sup> Attitude can be formed about any object that surrounds us: people, occurrences, institutions... This, by all means, does not mean that each individual has to have an attitude about a certain object. Therefore, it necessary to ascertain, prior to any surveying of attitudes, whether or not the attitude exists, because, if not, surveying of it would be senseless.

## 6.2. Discrimination

Discrimination (lat. *discriminare*) signifies limitation of rights, division according to different characteristics, legal inequality (Klaić, 1987). It denotes a position void of rights and offensive attitude towards e.g. national minorities. The notion of discrimination is often used to indicate any form of violation of human rights. However, the discrimination **is a violation of a specific right, which is a right to equal treatment in all areas**, such as education, employment, access to goods etc.

According to the B&H Law on prohibition of discrimination (2009), the discrimination is defined as any different treatment **that entails exclusion, limitation or giving advantage based on real or assumed traits to any individual or group of individuals** based on their race, skin color, language, religion, ethnic background, national or social background, ties to national minority, political or other belief, property status, membership in the union or any other association, education, social status and gender, sexual expression or sexual orientation as well as any other circumstance that results with an individual being prevented to, enjoy or exercise rights and freedoms, on equal basis, in all areas of public life.

**The exclusion** denotes denying a certain group an access to certain rights and freedoms while not to others.

**Limiting** means that, to a certain group of persons, due to their characteristics, the enjoyment of certain rights and freedoms is made possible, but with limitations and not to the same extent as to others.

**Giving advantage** is a situation in which one group is in privileged position, even though when there are no legal conditions for it.

It is possible to talk about different types of discrimination, but for the purposes of our study, it is important to understand the direct and indirect discrimination (explicit and implicit). According to the European Commission (2000), a direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favorably than what another person was or would be treated in a similar situation, based on racial or national background, example of which is preventing enrollment of Roma children to schools for different reasons, transferring them to so-called special schools etc. Indirect discrimination occurs when seemingly one neutral stipulation, criterion or practice brings members of certain race or national minority into extremely unfavorable position, compared to others, unless that stipulation, criterion or practice of behavior are not objectively justified by a legitimate cause and means for its achievement are appropriate and necessary. One of examples is the lack of possibility to test children prior to enrollment in their mother tongue i.e. Romani language etc.

Prohibition of discrimination creates a legal basis for ensuring legal equality among all members of society. However, a special, primarily preventative, role in occurrence of the discrimination can be attributed to a continuous effort on raising public awareness and changing attitudes, where education plays a significant role.

7



## 7. Research results

### 7.1. Attitudes of teachers towards Roma children

The teachers play a very important role in the creation of the inclusive climate and culture in a school class and school, in general, and do influence social cohesion. Booth and associates (2003) emphasize that, for inclusion in education, it is of crucial importance that teachers understand each student individually and understand and accept their needs. In that sense, they emphasize that:

- 1) the teachers should be generous with words and tolerate differences in abilities, culture and behavior;
- 2) all children in school are *persons* and, as such, must be heard, seen;
- 3) each child must feel that his/her presence in school important to others (students and teachers);
- 4) it is important that the child is met by positive expectations of teachers.

School i.e. the teachers are responsible to create an atmosphere in which Roma children will be accepted and welcome. This inevitably includes their positive attitudes towards Roma children, that, among others, can be formed through learning about Roma culture, tradition, history and language but also meeting each child and family and a specific context in which the child lives in.<sup>23</sup>

Majda Bećirević (2007) speaks in support of the claim that teachers are the most responsible for a successful inclusion of Roma children into schools where she points out to strategies and techniques that can contribute to a more successful inclusion of Roma children into regular education system.<sup>24</sup> They are based on readiness for inclusion and acceptance of Roma children by school management, teachers and other school staff, involving community at large into the process of inclusion, cooperation with international and local non-governmental organizations as well as the need for individual/tailored approach in the implementation of the teaching process. It is important to emphasize that their application does not require additional funds, amendments to legislation nor does it increase a burden on teachers or school management. Their core is made of positive attitudes towards members of Roma population and genuine concern for the welfare of children stemming from belief that each child can learn and advance, and that each child is unique and special.

The teachers carry the teaching process and its success greatly depends upon teachers' skills and their attitudes, as well. As the attitudes are determinants of behavior, we can state that the very success of inclusion of Roma children into schools depends on them, too. Positive attitudes are a precondition for creation of climate in which Roma children feel accepted. On the other hand, attitudes of teachers

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<sup>23</sup> Not knowing Romani history, culture and tradition are often a cause of negative attitudes towards Roma. Considering that they are a largest national minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is important for teachers to become familiar with specificities of Roma life and culture. Up to date, no large amount of effort has been put into this, so the largest milestone achieved is development of a teachers' manual about culture, heritage and tradition of national minorities in B&H, "Let's get to know each other – national minorities in B&H", author Leonard Valenta, presented in March 2009. The manual depicts culture, tradition and origin of 17 national minorities, and can be used in history classes as well as geography, mother tongue, environment as well as work of school clubs or thematic workshops.

<sup>24</sup> More in: Bećirević, M. (2007):

do influence formation of students' attitudes, so mostly we can see proportional relationship between teachers' and students' attitudes, regardless of them being positive or negative.

Research results have shown that a general profile of teachers' responses expresses relatively positive attitudes towards inclusion of Roma children. **Teachers state that they are willing to improve their work with Roma children through additional training and familiarization with Roma culture, tradition and customs, acceptance of possibility of cooperation with Roma colleagues in school, participation in development of teaching plans as well as creating teaching contents that contain information about Roma culture.**

Comparing attitudes of teachers in relation to their years of service in education, we came to results that indicate readiness on a part of **younger teachers to work on improvement of relationship between Roma children and their peers from the majority population, through their familiarization with Roma culture, tradition and customs as well as building upon common interests and needs of children, thereby providing children with a meaningful interaction in which they are all equally treated.** Surveyed teachers, with larger number of years of service in education, do not consider these activities to be of extreme importance. We believe that enthusiasm and willingness of younger teaching staff to improve dire conditions of Roma children, through development of intercultural relationships within school classes, even school in general, should be used and supported by offering additional education on specificities of Romani life. This, of course, means **engaging educated Roma teaching assistants as well as members of family and local community.**

## **7.2. Social distance of non-Roma peers towards Roma children**

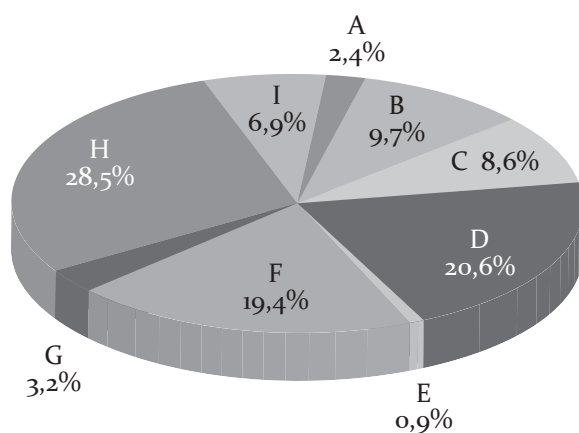
Social distance denotes a degree and measure of understanding and intimacy that characterize pre-social and social relationships. Bogardus (1925) reformulated this definition by introducing new concrete relationships in which members of different groups can engage in. These relationships are hierarchical in terms of closeness and meaning of social contact in which members of different ethnic, religious, national or other groups can find themselves in (depending on the subject of research). In that sense, the closest relationship that students of majority groups can choose in relation to Roma students is to sit together with them at the school desk, while the most distant one is that Roma children attend schools outside of borders of B&H. The social distance or taking a stand with regards to closeness of the relationship that is created represents a significant indicator of acceptance of Roma children, in regular schools, by their peers. Therefore, examining it is immensely important in order to identify potential barriers in relationships between Roma and non-Roma children, in order to be able to act towards removal and prevention.

Research included 759 students of Sarajevo schools and results of it can be read in the table below.

**Table 1:** Results that refer to scale of social distance (frequency and percentages)

Answer	F	%
a) To sit with him/her at a school desk	18	2,4
b) To have them in my class	74	9,7
c) To have them in a special class within my school	65	8,6
d) To attend my school	156	20,6
e) To attend school on my street	7	0,9
f) To attend school in Sarajevo	147	19,4
g) To attend school in Banja Luka, Tuzla or Mostar	24	3,2
h) To attend school in B&H	216	28,5
i) To attend school in countries bordering with B&H	52	6,9
<b>Total</b>	<b>759</b>	<b>100,0</b>

**RESULTS THAT REFER TO SOCIAL DISTANCE SCALE**



- A) To sit together with him/her at the school desk
- B) To have him/her in my class
- C) To have him/her placed in special class within my school
- D) To attend my school
- E) To attend my school on my street
- F) To attend a school in Sarajevo
- G) To attend school in Banja Luka, Tuzla or Mostar
- H) To attend school in B&H
- I) To attend school in countries bordering B&H

Results shown indicate a relatively high social distance considering that 28,5% chose a relationship in which they do not mind Roma children attending a school in B&H, 19,4% in town in which they live in. The closest relationship of sitting together at a school desk with Roma students was chosen by only 2,4% of students. This data indeed points out to the necessity of introduction of activities that would change social attitudes of students from the majority groups towards their Roma peers.

Very significant variable in the research was inclusion of Roma children in which attitudes were surveyed. Results have shown that **students who have daily contact with Roma children tend to choose a closer relationship and show a lower level of social distance compared to schools where there are no Roma children attending.** So, we came to the conclusion that direct socializing and interaction of majority population and Roma children contributes to the improvement of relationships between them. This type of contact enables children to exchange experiences, get to know and understand each other regardless of national background. If that kind of relationship is absent, it is quite understandable that children will experience confusion and have difficulty accepting those “different” to themselves. Therefore it is very important to organize studying of contents that refer to Roma culture, tradition and customs. Such contents can be integrated into existing subjects (history, geography, religious classes etc. or offered as part of additional school activities. Knowledge about what is different will contribute to the emotional aspect of relationships which is a precondition for inclusive action.

### 7.3. Social distance of parents of the majority group towards Roma children

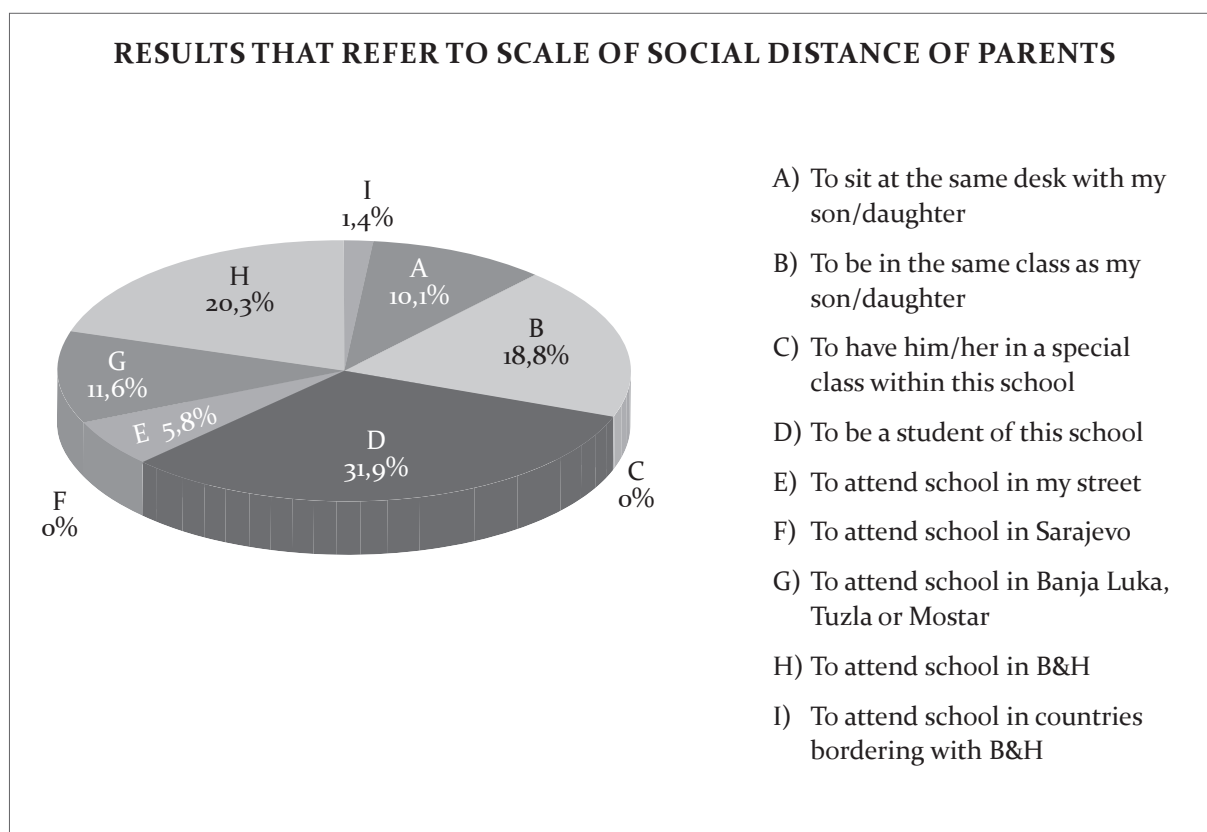
Parents play a very significant role in modeling children’s attitudes. If parents express a high level of social distance towards Roma, most probably, their children will have similar attitudes. Even though in this work we did not compare results of parents and children on a scale of social distance, we are of the opinion that surveying attitudes of parents is of great importance for creation of positive school climate towards Roma children. If parents do not accept that their children establish close relationships with members of Roma group in school environment, i.e. to sit together with Roma children, the very process of inclusion of Roma children into regular school will not have a positive outcome.

There are examples of pressures, where Roma children were transferred to different classes, or even segregated to special classes, under the pressure of parents of majority groups. Unfortunately, there is insufficient evidence for these cases, because they are rarely formally monitored and recorded. However, the largest problem is that schools agree to violate the rights of these children in order to accommodate pressures of parents and majority population, to which they, themselves, belong to, and mostly without any consequences whatsoever. So, parents, on one hand, can contribute towards creation of positive attitudes towards Roma children and their successful inclusion into regular schools or they can, on the other hand, completely obstruct it thereby preventing their social inclusion in general. This is why examining social distance of parents towards Roma children is of importance.

The Table No. 2 shows results that refer to social distance of parents towards Roma children.

**Table 2:** Results that refer to scale of social distance of parents (frequency and percentages) are shown

Answer	F	%
a) To sit with my son/daughter at a school desk	7	10,1
b) To have them in the class	13	18,8
c) To have them in a special class within the school	0	0
d) To attend that school	22	31,9
e) To attend school on my street	4	5,8
f) To attend school in Sarajevo	0	0
g) To attend school in Banja Luka, Tuzla or Mostar	8	11,6
h) To attend school in B&H	14	20,3
i) To attend school in countries bordering with B&H	1	1,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100,0</b>



A high level of the expressed social distance towards Roma children is visible with more than a third of parents (33,3%). Namely, a total of 31,9% considers that Roma children should be schooled in other cities in B&H while 1,4% of parents think that they should attend schools outside of B&H. A close relationship between Roma students and their own son/daughter was chosen by 28,9% which was expressed by claims *To sit at the same desk with my son/daughter* (closest relationship chosen by 10,1% parents) and *To have them in the same class as my son/daughter* (chosen by 18,8% parents). Third of parents accepts that Roma children attend the school together with their children (31,9%).

Data collected indicate that **acceptance of Roma children as fellow students to their children prevails**. As high as 60,8% replies is on the positive part of scale that denotes low social distance. However, information that 33,3% parents chose replies that indicate negative attitudes and very high social distance when it comes to relationships of their children with Roma peers, is very disconcerting. We believe that the lack of knowledge about Roma culture, tradition and customs, as well as rooted prejudice towards Roma, contribute to it which is often perpetuated, or at least tolerated, by the very education system itself.

Analyzing the difference in social attitudes between parents of children from different schools in relation to the presence of Roma children, we were able to obtain information that parents from different schools differ significantly according to their results on a scale of social distance. On average, **a larger social distance is chosen by parents from those schools attended by a larger number of Roma children. This information is important because of the fact that students of these same parents choose closer relationships that they would establish with Roma children.** As we did receive low scores on a scale of social distance, which is an indicator of acceptance of Roma children by their peers, a highly expressed social distance of parents cannot be brought into relation with the attitudes of their children. It is possible that parents of majority population do not engage in close cooperation with Roma parents, and even if it exists, it is not a favorable one. Also, we are of the opinion that existing prejudice and stereotypes could be a cause of highly expressed social distance of parents. Therefore, familiarization with specificities of Roma way of life and Roma culture should be organized for parents as well, considering the influence they have, not only when it comes to forming attitudes of children, but also influence on the work of the schools and participation in other spheres of social life. Seemingly, it is important to facilitate as many opportunities for cooperation among parents, through activities that will include both them and the children.

#### **7.4. Discrimination in Sarajevo Canton schools – experiences and perceptions of directors, pedagogues and teachers**

The research on experiences and perception of discrimination in the school environment was conducted in ten primary schools in Sarajevo Canton. The focus was on children of Roma descent but, nonetheless, any information that would've indicated discrimination on any other grounds, was collected as well. As the questions were structured and grouped into four areas, the results of research obtained through interviews and focus group discussions, will be interpreted in the same manner.

**Understanding the notion of discrimination** is of crucial importance for its recognition and subsequently for the antidiscrimination action. Therefore, those surveyed were asked to provide a definition or association to the word "discrimination". The most frequent answers were

that it is *belittling, exclusion, suppression, rejection and underestimating*. Those surveyed perceive discrimination as differentiating on different grounds, but they fail to understand that it is a violation of a specific right. This is the reason why their answers primarily addressed acceptance of others and different i.e. the social distance and attitudes towards Roma. Considering the fact that stereotypes and prejudice are preconditions for discrimination, this type of understanding of the discrimination is also a basis for its recognition.

### **Presence of discrimination in the school and its occurring forms**

In order to discuss the results of research that refer to experiences and perception of discrimination in the school, it is necessary first to emphasize two aspects. The first aspect refers to direct, explicit discrimination which would mean inability to enroll Roma children into primary schools or transferring them from one class to another due to a low-level of preparedness of teachers to work with Roma students (because they don't want to, somebody is exerting pressure on them etc.). Experiences of teaching staff indicate that discrimination in a sense of denial or rights, or limitation of them, is rarely present in schools unlike implicit i.e. indirect forms of discrimination.

We do have positive examples as well where the school management reacted to the inappropriate requests made by parents that a Roma child is expelled from school (even though we cannot say that it is a regular practice). Recognizing the need to react and protect the rights of a student, the director undertook the necessary measures which resulted with a positive outcome for a Roma child.

*The parents petitioned that the child is expelled, and we were dealing primarily with parents who are of a high socio-economic status. I explicitly refused and I was summoned to answer to the Ministry. I addressed the Ombudsmen for Human Rights in order to protect the right of the child to education and the case was positively resolved. (Director)*

We also have examples where schools put efforts into keeping Roma children in schools when they are dealing with failures to attend certain classes or school entirely. The question is whether this is actually an attempt of the school to "meet the quota", due to a decreasing number of enrolled children, in order to preserve jobs for the teachers, and not the fulfillment of its primary, educational, function. This, too, would constitute discrimination, wrongly interpreted as positive discrimination.

*Roma children often fail to attend classes, and in most cases, unjustifiably. Our numerous attempts to bring them to school rarely succeed. I see my student on a street, around the school...it is clear to me that they are not sick. But, I do justify the absence which other children see. Sometimes they complain that they are not treated equally. (Teacher)*

Despite the fact that it seems to have a positive prefix, this type of discrimination does put a child in an unequal position that directly violates his/her rights. Even though positive discrimination (or affirmative action) is often needed to ensure somewhat equal chances to each child, in cases of tolerance of failure to attend regular classes, and thereby enabling the child to advance from lower to higher grades, without gaining necessary skills and knowledge, represents an example of implicit discrimination, i.e. the failure to ensure the right to education. We are speaking about formal "advancement" without fulfillment of conditions and as an outcome we get "a Roma student in IV grade of primary school that cannot read or write" (The director of the school). This is a frequent



occurrence in the primary schools and teachers claim that not only Roma children succumb to it. The education will indeed have an instrumental role in the process of social inclusion of Roma, once the same possibilities and right to learn and advance are in place, and when each child is given an access to quality education. A very interesting remark was made by a teacher that is of the opinion that Roma children are discriminated against because she “cannot address them in Romani language” whilst they do not speak the language of this area. This indeed, is a one form of discrimination, because the attendance of classes in a mother tongue is legally guaranteed.

*I work with Roma children. I think that the discrimination is my inability to establish the communication with Roma students, because I do not speak the Romani language. I think it is necessary to engage a Roma teaching assistant. (Teacher)*

In the majority of schools that were surveyed, Roma children do not speak Romani language, and even if they are familiar with it, they do not wish to speak it in a school environment, mostly out of fear of being ridiculed by other children. This is a very important indicator of Roma assimilation, especially when we know that schools are not taking any meaningful measures to overcome it. The teacher at one school attended the course of Romani language and pointed it out as a significant positive experience:

*When I get a new Roma student in my class, first I address him with a few words in Romani language. This is the way I open their hearts and gain their trust that is very important to me in my work with children. (Teacher)*

When we are talking about the language discrimination, it is necessary to mention that not a single school (that was surveyed) does not conduct assessment of child’s readiness to attend school in a Romani language, even when children do speak it, nor do they have an interpreter that would mediate during this consultation process.

The second indicator of assimilation of Roma refers to Roma not declaring their ethnic background during enrollment into schools and tendency (for some Roma) to declare themselves as members of either of the B&H constitutive people.

The acceptance of Roma children in primary schools in Sarajevo Canton varies despite the existing trend of increasing mutual understanding and respect. At schools that are adjacent to larger Roma settlements, such as Primary School “Avdo Smailović” and PS “Hilmi ef. Šarić”, Roma children are considered a domicile population and there are no significant cases of rejection among children. The quantitative indicators showing a very low social distance among children in schools attended by larger numbers of Roma children, speak in favor of this. Teachers mostly state that they do not observe grouping of children based on ethnic background and that “cliques” are formed based on interest or the level of knowledge. Some teachers stated that there is labeling of less successful students who are more often socially isolated.

*Children separate on grounds of common interests, knowledge, experiences and not on basis of ethnic background. (Director)*



However, in one of the suburban schools the teacher recognized segregation of Roma students from the rest of the group, especially in informal situations, such as preparations to mark the school day, celebrate the New Year etc. She is of the opinion that they group in such a way because they do not have a sense of belonging to a school class:

*They separate themselves, even though they are not explicitly thrown out of the group, but they don't feel accepted either.*

Teachers state that one of the key obstacles to the acceptance of Roma children by their peers, is personal hygiene. In case when Roma children come messy to school, neglected and dirty, other students avoid any contact. Having in mind that housing issue is not resolved and that life in a very non-hygienic conditions is often a problem for Roma population, certain schools make their premises available for Roma families (during weekends) so that they could use amenities and prepare children for attendance of school (give them a bath, wash laundry etc.)

According to the opinion and statements of teachers, pedagogues and school directors, children are mostly ready to accept the differences and understand the needs of others and those who are different. They claim that the children show a high level of tolerance when it comes to the time that the teacher devotes to any Roma student, a child with development impediments or any other student that requires individual program of work, they help a student in a wheelchair to move around school hallways, call the teacher when the fellow student has an epileptic attack while no adults are present etc. They state that the students in lower grades of primary school mostly do not engage in labeling, on any ground, which indicates that negative attitudes and prejudice develop gradually and depend on environment in which the children grow and live. Therefore, it is very important to continuously promote interculturalism and mutual appreciation. One of the school directors agrees with this and states:

*We mark every holiday in our school. We organize school recitals in different languages as well as school plays to mark the holiday. We implement projects and each one of them has to have an intercultural aspect to it. The pedagogue and I received training in intercultural education, then we started promoting it in a school and involving all teaching staff. Interculturalism is always one of the themes in our faculty meetings. (Director)*

All schools included in this research were involved in different projects in which diversity and interculturalism were promoted as they significantly influence the school culture and climate. It has been recognized that the teaching staff derives ideas and possibilities from positive project experiences and incorporates them into the education practice. For example, in one of the schools, each year a fair is organized where 17 classes are given a task to present one of the recognized B&H national minorities. This process first introduces them to a different culture, tradition and customs and then, in a creative way, allows them to represent them at the fair (traditional meals, music, literature etc.).

These and similar activities should start as early as in the first grade of primary school, emphasized the school director.

*Long ago we had cases where children were ridiculing each other, rejection of parents that their children have contact with children that are different. However, many activities that we are implementing, including continuous education of ourselves but also work with parents and children, contributed towards our school becoming filled with understanding. We start working with children from the first grade. (Director)*

However, teachers in some schools stated that labeling by students is done on material, i.e. socio-economic status. This is more pronounced in urban areas and less pronounced in suburban areas where differences in socio-economic and education status are less visible. Thus, the pedagogue of one of the school states:

*Children do not label each other based on material status, because they are all the same. Here, we have mostly children of the unemployed parents, from families where only one family member is employed and other families in social need. Children here do not wear designer clothing and labels; they don't even know what that is. We, the teachers, having this in mind, try to show them that even a second-hand clothing (that they get or buy) can be very pretty as long it is neat and clean. (Pedagogue)*

In city schools, however, this occurrence is manifested through the acceptance of a student into a certain group that is of a similar social standing. In one school, student in worn-out sneakers was teased and called offensive names. Recognizing this, the school management provided funds for the purchase of new sneakers. This type of assistance is present in all schools. It does not matter whether these are Roma children, children of single or unemployed parents, it has been observed that there are efforts to create a fund that would service the needs of the indigent children. The willingness of parents to participate in raising funds is commendable, as well. Schools tried to solve the problem of labeling that is based on clothing that children wear by introduction of school uniforms for students, as well as teachers. They believe that, this way, differences in socio-economic status are not that visible. However, there is a question whether or not concealing somebody's status is the solution of the problem or the solution is the promotion of values and creation of environment where mocking and humiliation are unacceptable.

Groups of students sometimes spontaneously form among those that do not feel equal and exclude themselves. Interests and hobbies of children of higher socio-economic status are more versatile and frequent because parents can afford it.

We can say that examples of selection and labeling, according to the statements of teachers and pedagogues, are present mostly in higher grades of primary school, namely from V to VII grade. This is the period where insults are mostly based on physical appearance.

*Puberty is a tumultuous period when appearances are the most important to children as well as belonging to a certain group within the school. You can hear that they call each other offensive nicknames such as "Big ears", "Fatso", "Big nose" etc. We consider this to be a normal development phase but we do react to these types of incidents. We try to implement activities that would prevent but also suppress it. (Director)*

Later, they also state, children are somewhat more mature and start to understand the needs of others but also differences that are conditioned by various factors. However, perceiving these occurrences as “the normal development phase” is unacceptable. Children at this age, more than ever, need the support of their peers and a sense of belonging, so it is necessary to work much more on developing social skills and instilling values of mutual respect and appreciation.

Educators recognize other forms of discrimination as well such as segregation. A pedagogue in one school warns about such examples in schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

*The discrimination is present in a form of “two schools under one roof”, schools are becoming mono-ethnic... Such a thing is not the case in this school but there is something else, prejudice that, for example, prevent excursions to Banja Luka, or school from East Mostar visiting Western and vice versa. This is an obstacle to the coexistence that we used to know. (Pedagogue)*

These words clearly indicate that it is necessary to change attitudes and build a bridge of trust among people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thus, actively promote interculturalism in the community, at large. Considering the role the schools have in the development of a particular society, we are of the opinion that education of teachers as well as parents, could contribute to the strengthening of social cohesion and promotion of values of social justice.

## 7.5. Roma on discrimination in primary schools

The complete picture on the presence of discrimination in schools can be portrayed only if we take into consideration experiences of those who are being included and in whose name different anti-discrimination activities are being implemented. The following information was collected in preliminary conversations with Roma parents and representatives of schools and represent concrete examples from the education practice.

One of the examples of direct discrimination relates to the inability to enroll Roma child to school that is in close proximity to a place of residence. In reality we are talking about two area schools that refused to accept a child stating hygiene as a reason. In doing so, schools firstly neglected a legal obligation to accept the child to school regardless of its appearance, ethnic background or socio-economic status followed by failure to show understanding for difficult living conditions of a child. This is a Roma family with a fairly large number of children that live in a shabby, ramshackle and devastated house, without infrastructure, struggling to survive. This case would go unnoticed if one of the Sarajevo schools did not find out about it, react and enable enrollment of a child, subsequently notifying authorities and representatives of Roma non-governmental sector. A Roma child was enrolled into a school but the one school that “would” accept him is significantly far away from child’s place of residence thereby adding additional burden in terms of regular attendance. We cannot refrain from asking how direct violations of right to education can go (almost) unnoticed and without sanctions and accountability. The aforementioned indicates that Roma do not know their rights and thus are not fighting for them what we consider to be a consequence of a hundred years of oppression by the majority population.

An interesting example of discrimination that refers to the failure to create conditions for optimal development and advancement of each child according to its needs and abilities happened in one suburban school that participates in the implementation of project “Instructive classes for Roma children”. The purpose of the project is to enable Roma children, who are progressing at a slower pace, to attend additional classes from Bosnian language and Mathematics. However, during the process of selection of children, the only criterion was ethnic background, which resulted with excellent students being chosen to participate as well. This example illustrates a flawed understanding of inclusive education but also stereotypical behavior of teachers toward members of Roma population.

In one of the central schools in Sarajevo, brother and sister continuously bullied a Roma student by degrading actions forcing him to eat out of a garbage bin, cursing at him etc. The boy asked a teacher for assistance but did not receive any. Therefore, in one of the many disturbing situations, he decided to physically defend himself. This altercation resulted with a Roma student being transferred to a different school, even though, according to statements of the pedagogue, his behavior was always exemplary and his grades were good. The pressure exerted on the school was made by parents of the majority population, instigated by the mother of a student who was „beaten up“ that happens to be a teacher herself, but in a different school. It is evident that discrimination is present among students, but more disconcerting is the information that it is supported both by parents as well as the school.

One Roma female student, today a successful business woman, testifies about a difficult position Roma students are in and constant need to prove themselves: *I always had to put twice as much effort to prove my value and achieve good results as all other children. Our road to success is filled with hardship so much so that only a few persevere. Of course, I am talking about Roma who do not relinquish their own identity.*

A positive discrimination that enables Roma students to advance from grade to grade without conquering basics of reading and writing has enormous consequences not only on individual level but on a level of the entire Roma community. If we speak about education as an instrument for the improvement of socio-economic status of Roma, how can a (non)educated Roma individual, who graduated from primary school, then secondary school, without gaining knowledge and skills, be competitive in the labor market, gain employment and overcome poverty?!

Proper pedagogical motivation and creation of motivational environment for learning are important preconditions for successful educational work. Some teachers and pedagogues, under the excuse of “stimulation”, give out coloring pens and other school supplies to Roma children, each month, expecting that, in return, they would attend school classes on regular basis. Lead by prejudice that Roma “always want something” they try to coerce them into regular attendance, which has a completely opposite effect.

In certain schools, in settlements where Roma with average living standard reside, Roma students are resented for having expensive mobile phones, clothing and footwear and asked about the origin of it. The distrust towards members of the Roma population stems from stereotypical way of thinking that Roma can only steal or beg, but not work in order to acquire certain property.

There are many more examples that would corroborate presence of discrimination in schools. Some implicitly point out to discrimination while others explicitly, whilst either one of these affects dignity and integrity of a person regardless of ethnic background or anything else.



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## 8. Conclusions and recommendations

In order to implement the Roma inclusion, much more is needed than formal legal conditions. This is an issue that demands structural changes not only in education system but community at large. However, speaking about the education as a process that enables breaking of a “vicious circle”, that, aside from education, is made of unemployment and poverty, we would like to emphasize that the greatest efforts should be put exactly into this very area.

Creation of the inclusive climate, in which each child is welcome and develops individually its own potential, while differences in the pace of progress, complexity of tasks that are overcome are appreciated, is a complex work and demands a full engagement and commitment of all that are involved in the education process. The first step is overcoming the gap between the majority and the Roma population that is evident in polarization and shifting blame from one side to another. It is clear that Roma need additional information and education on the importance and the role of education in the improvement of the socio-economic status. However, it is even more important to create a climate that will contribute to social cohesion and overcoming inequalities in all spheres of social life and action.

We recognized that the schools in Sarajevo Canton (and probably the entire B&H) need antidiscrimination education that is, in reality, a conscious action to increase knowledge and skills that affect attitudes in order to neutralize discrimination and prejudice-motivated violence and promote equality and diversity.

It is important to emphasize that the proposed activities refer to school environment and culture, but not to all systemic changes that are necessary in order to fully implement the inclusion. The purpose of the proposed suggestions is to develop a model of antidiscrimination education and promotion of its application in planning of education on all levels.

### **Activities that should be undertaken:**

- Education of teachers on quality inclusive education that promotes interculturalism, values of pluralistic society in which all children enjoy equal rights and have equal chances for development of their own potential. Education does not refer to a mere introduction and gaining of knowledge on elements of inclusive education, but development of skills and competences needed for action in this area.
- Introducing teachers to a phenomenon of social exclusion and its dimensions with a focus on Roma national minority that is susceptible to all its risks. That is a precondition for understanding the situation of Roma and subsequently taking action with the aim to contribute to social inclusion and fight for social justice.
- Incorporation of appropriate and verified contents on history, culture, language and customs of Roma national minority into the education process as well as into school and community activities.
- Improvement of school rulebooks and other regulations that will portray respect of rights of each child and family and clear determination to fight discrimination on any grounds.
- Development of the anti-discrimination program for education institutions.

- Development of more efficient mechanisms for continuous monitoring of effects of education for each child, and different models of inclusive education on a level of a class and subsequently the school.
- Development of partnerships between schools and parents, both Roma and the majority population with a goal to jointly make decisions and implement activities that refer to improvement of educational work.
- Education of parents of the majority population and other forms of actions aimed at reducing prejudice and stereotypes towards Roma, and improvement of the mutual understanding and respect.
- Providing support to families and Roma community on the importance and the role of education in overcoming social exclusion and the improvement of the socio-economic status.
- Encouraging Roma parents to actively participate in the work of the schools and creation of conditions where representatives of Roma communities and families are involved in School Boards and Parents' Councils.
- Planning and organizing activities with children that will contribute to a higher level of mutual appreciation, development of social cohesion and promotion of interculturalism.
- Development of the antidiscrimination rulebook for recognizing all forms of discrimination, by all actors involved in the education process.
- Development of mechanisms for monitoring, reacting and potential sanctioning of occurring forms of discrimination, on any grounds. This activity should include all those involved in the education process (directors, pedagogues, teachers, parents).





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