



Education des enfants roms en Europe
Education of Roma children in Europe



COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Political and Legislative Framework for the Education of Roma Children

Reference Texts and Support Systems

Directorate General IV
Directorate of School, Out-of-School and Higher Education
European Dimension of Education Division

Political and Legislative Framework for the Education of Roma Children

Reference Texts and Support Systems

Table of contents

List of abbreviations

Executive Summary

1. Introduction
2. Overview of international official texts related to the education of Roma children
 - A. Education and Children
 - B. Discrimination and Education
 - C. Protection of Minority and Education
 - D. Roma and Education
3. Overview of initiatives and programmes of international organisations for the education of Roma children
 - Council of Europe
 - European Union
 - Organisation for Security Co-operation in Europe
 - World Bank
 - Roma Education Fund
 - Open Society Institute
 - United Nations agencies
4. Comparative analysis of national initiatives of CoE member states for the education of Roma children
 - General trends: similarities and differences
 - Good practices
5. Conclusion
6. Bibliography

This publication has been validated at each phase of its development by the aforementioned institutions and organisations . The parts concerning the Council of Europe were adapted from the publication "Texts and activities of the Council of Europe concerning education" which was validated by the various Directorates of the Council of Europe, as well as by the Steering Committee of Education during its plenary meeting in October 2005.

List of Acronyms

CLRAE - Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (of the Council of Europe)

CoE - Council of Europe

CPRSI - Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues (of OSCE-ODIHR)

CSCE - Conference on Security Co-operation in Europe (OSCE since 1992)

DG - Directorate General

EC - European Commission of the EU

ECOSOC - Economic and Social Council (of the UN)

ECRI - European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

ERDF - European Regional Development Fund

ESF - European Social Fund

ESP - Education Support Program

EU - European Union

EUMC - European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia

IGO - International Government Organisation

ILO - International Labor Organisation

IOM - International Organisation for Migration

MS-S-ROM - Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers (of the Council of Europe)

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

ODHIR - Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (of OSCE)

OSCE - Organisation on Security Co-operation in Europe

OSI - Open Society Institute

REF - Roma Education Fund

SIDA - Swedish International Development Agency

UN - United Nations

UNDP - United Nations Development Program

UNESCO - United Nations Education Science and Culture Organisation

UNHCHR - United Nations High Commission for Human Rights

UNHCR - United Nations High Commission for Refugees

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

USAID - United States Agency for International Development

Executive Summary

The problem of low education levels is one of the most pressing issues facing the Roma in Europe since the lack of education creates barriers to employment, healthy lifestyles, and participation in civil society.

Governments and international organisations, mostly the United Nations and its agencies, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the EU, have repeatedly stated and advocated for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination and the promotion of equal access to education through treaties, declarations and recommendations. While the first text on Roma issues was adopted by the Council of Europe in 1969, it is in the early 1990s that the international community started to pay close attention to Roma issues, especially to immediate human rights concerns, including protection from discrimination and persecution, and legal representation. In recent years, the focus has increasingly turned to issues related to economic development, social conditions and education.

International texts have been accompanied with numerous initiatives by governments, nongovernmental organisations, and international organisations to address various issues related to Roma education. The Council of Europe and the OSCE have been the most active supranational organisations engaged in Roma affairs. The EU accession process provides important leverage to influence policy in the accession countries as Roma issues emerge under the political criteria for accession as part of the sub-chapter on Human Rights and the Protection of Minorities.

Between the years of 1999 and 2005, numerous member states, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, have prepared and adopted national strategies to ameliorate the situation of Roma populations. In these national initiatives, some more specific than others, education is always an area of major concern. While there are similarities and differences in their approaches, it is very encouraging that the needs of Roma are starting to be addressed at the national level. Also, these member states are demonstrating adherence to the international agreements they have signed and ratified, as well as showing political will and financial arrangements devoted to improving education of Roma children. However, many other member states have not paid sufficient attention to this issue.

The legal framework and the initiatives undertaken at the international and national level demonstrate that there is political commitment to the amelioration of Roma and that education is considered an important priority. The greatest challenge for the future is the successful implementation of these initiatives and national strategies, with adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, as well as ensuring adequate budgets. This document, together with the

“Reference Framework for Educational Policies in Favour of Roma,” realised in the framework of the Council of Europe’s project “Education of Roma children in Europe” can help governments by providing guidance and examples.

1. Introduction

Roma across Europe are generally acknowledged as a minority that suffers disproportionately from poverty, unemployment and discrimination. A long history of prejudice, negative stereotypes, racism, and social rejection of Roma results in high rates of unemployment and extremely low levels of education.

Numerous assessments of the situation of Roma in both Western and Eastern Europe illustrate that members of these communities continue to experience marked discrimination and social exclusion, and to encounter difficulties in gaining unhindered and equal access to employment, education, social security, healthcare, housing, other public services, and justice. UNDP and other organisations have made efforts to overcome the lack of clear and comparable statistics by undertaking studies¹ on living conditions, comparing the Roma with neighboring majority population groups. Some common characteristics from the studies can be observed: (a) Roma are over-represented among the people living below the poverty line; (b) Low primary school enrolment and high illiteracy are prevalent for Roma; (c) Unemployment rates are higher for Roma populations than others; (d) Roma often lack essential drugs, secure housing, sanitation, and water facilities.

Education levels of Roma children and adults vary within countries, between urban and rural areas, and among different types of Roma communities. Yet huge gaps in the education of Roma are present both in Western and Eastern Europe. With few exceptions, as much as 50 percent of Roma children in Europe fail to complete primary education; in certain countries of Central and Eastern Europe, between 50-80% Roma children enrolled in school are systematically routed into

¹ UNDP/ILO, *The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe: Avoiding the Dependency Trap*. Bratislava, Slovakia: UNDP 2003. This effort is a part of the “Decade of Roma Inclusion” initiative and these statistics are some of the most comprehensive and relevant statistics to date.

UNDP, *Faces of Poverty, Faces of Hope, Vulnerability Profiles for Decade of Roma Inclusion Countries 2005–2015*. 2005.

Save the Children, *Denied of a Future? The Right to Education of Roma/Gypsy and Traveller Children in Europe*. London, UK: Save the Children, 2001. Volume 1, 2, 3, 4.

European Commission, *EU Support for Roma Communities in Central and Eastern Europe*. 2002.

SIDA, *Swedish Assistance to the Roma Population in the Western Balkans*. 2006.

European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Roma and Travellers in Public Education*. 2006.

'special schools,'² which were established in the 1950s and 1960s for children with learning disabilities.

Studies show that for long-term development, the problem of low education levels is one of the most pressing issues facing the Roma as the lack of education creates barriers to employment, healthy lifestyles, and participation in civil society. Therefore the focus on education seems one of primary importance for the Roma. This paper seeks to provide an indication of the main trends in the efforts of the international community to face the challenges related to Roma education, through examining the international framework on the subject as well as the initiatives undertaken by international institutions and governments.

A selection of international texts will provide the legal framework regarding education of Roma. This compilation is not intended to be a commentary on content and value of the texts, but rather a unique collection of relevant texts. A following section analyses the international initiatives undertaken in this particular domain by international organisations. Although NGOs are very active in this area, only International Governmental Organisations will be considered at this time due to a lack of systematic evaluations of and by the NGOs and a multitude of micro-initiatives.

For a complete understanding of the initiatives in favour of Roma education, it is important to review the national policies of the member states of the Council of Europe. The findings of an in-depth comparative analysis of national strategies and action plans are presented in the last section. The analysis highlights general trends, similarities and differences in the various approaches, as well as good practices.

This document, together with the "Reference Framework for Educational Policies in Favour of Roma" (DGIV/EDU/ROM(2005) 8) produced in the framework of the Council of Europe's project "Education of Roma children in Europe," is intended to serve as guidance and stimulus for states to develop strategies in the area of Roma education.

² OSCE, *Report on the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area*. High Commissioner on National Minorities, The Hague, Netherlands: 2000. P 6.
European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Roma and Travellers in Public Education*. 2006. Pp46-61.

2. Overview of international official texts related to the education of Roma children

Governments and international organisations, mostly the United Nations and the Council of Europe, have repeatedly stated and advocated for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination and the promotion of equal access to education. To convey and to stress these necessities, international texts have been written, ratified, and, hopefully, implemented. It is unfortunate however that most of these international texts are not sufficiently known and are largely ignored by policy makers, state authorities and citizens in general.

While the general rules on human rights education are laid down in treaties, practical guidelines are to be found in recommendations. Resolutions, recommendations and declarations are not legally binding documents; but regardless of the legal character of international texts, they are of great importance because they are a common standard of achievement that can serve as yardsticks of accountability and responsibility. Therefore, the guiding principles presented in these international texts should be widely reflected upon and discussed at different levels. Most importantly, international texts are written to generate policy changes to be implemented at the national and at the local level.

Several international texts address the issue of Roma education or issues directly related to it. First, to the extent that Roma children are prevented from even enrolling in ordinary primary schools, they are denied or are not exercising the right to education as guaranteed by several international texts on the rights of children and of education, presented in section A. Education and Children below³. Second, the pervasive and varied forms of discrimination encountered by Roma children in the realm of education violate the fundamental right of non-discrimination in the enjoyment of protected minority rights, as the texts point out in section B. Discrimination and Education and C. Protection of Minority and Education⁴. Finally, some international texts are

³ Batelaan et al., *International Basis for Intercultural Education including Anti-Racism and Human Rights Education*. International Association for Intercultural Education (IAIE), 1999.
Save the Children, *Denied of a Future? The Right to Education of Roma/Gypsy and Traveller Children in Europe*. London, UK: Save the Children, 2001. Volume 3: *International Legislation Handbook*.

⁴ Batelaan et al., *International Basis for Intercultural Education including Anti-Racism and Human Rights Education*. International Association for Intercultural Education (IAIE), 1999.
Danbakli, *Roma, Gypsies: Texts Issued by International Institutions*. Hertfordshire, UK: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001.
Save the Children, *Denied of a Future? The Right to Education of Roma/Gypsy and Traveller Children in Europe*. London, UK: Save the Children, 2001. Volume 3: *International Legislation Handbook*.
OSCE/ODIHR, *International Actions Against Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Intolerance in the OSCE Region*. 2004.

specifically related to Roma issues. However, those in which education was the subject or was specifically mentioned were chosen; see section D. Roma and Education⁵.

While there are several compendiums of international texts related to Roma issues, there are none specifically related to education of Roma children; hence, the following is an effort to combine important texts relating to education of Roma. The selection of international texts is not exhaustive or fully complete, but it presents the most relevant texts, arranged by the four topics outlined above, in chronological order. Most of the texts include brief summaries or quotations.

A. Education and Children

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948, Article 26, Paragraph 2:**

“Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.”

The basis for all international texts on education can be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which in principle is a non-binding instrument, but since its adoption has gained wide approval and acceptance.

- **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 19 December 1966, Article 13:**

“The State Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further agree that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.”

- **The Convention on the Rights of the Child, General Assembly of the United Nations, 20 November 1989, Article 29:**

State Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; [...]

⁵ Danbakli, *Roma, Gypsies: Texts Issued by International Institutions*. Hertfordshire, UK: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001.

Ailincai, Amar, *Official texts of the Council of Europe and Activities in the field of Education*. Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe Press, 2006.

Save the Children, *Denied of a Future? The Right to Education of Roma/Gypsy and Traveller Children in Europe*. London, UK: Save the Children, 2001. Volume 3: *International Legislation Handbook*.

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.

- **UNESCO Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All, 2002, Regional Framework for Action, Europe and North America** ⁶

Although the document is not a binding international text, participating members of the regional conference agreed to ensure the principles of equality and non-discrimination and allocate 6% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for education.

B. Discrimination and Education

- **UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, 15 December 1960, Article 5, Paragraph 1(a)**: same as Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26, Paragraph 2 (see above)

- **The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 21 December 1965, Article 7:**

“State Parties undertake to adopt immediate and effective measures, particularly in the fields of teaching, education, culture and information, with a view to combating prejudices which lead to racial discrimination and to promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations and racial or ethnical groups as well as to propagating the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and this Convention.”

- **Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, General Conference of UNESCO 18th session, 19 November 1974**

Article 3: “Education should be infused with the aims and purposes set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, the Constitution of UNESCO and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [...]

Article 4: “[...] the following objectives should be regarded as major guiding principles of educational policy:

(a) an international dimension and a global perspective in education at all levels and in all its forms;

(b) understanding and respect for all peoples, their cultures, civilizations, values and ways of life, including domestic ethnic cultures and cultures of other nations;

(c) awareness of the increasing global interdependence between peoples and nations;

(d) abilities to communicate with others;

⁶ UNESCO, *Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All*. World Education Forum April 26-28 2000. Pp. 63-68.

- (e) awareness not only of the rights but also of the duties incumbent upon individuals, social groups and nations toward each other;
- (f) understanding of the necessity for international solidarity and co-operation;
- (g) readiness on the part of the individual to participate in solving the problems of his community, his country and the world at large."

Article 17: "Member States should promote, at various stages and in various types of education, study of different cultures, their reciprocal influences, their perspectives and ways of life, in order to encourage mutual appreciation of the difference between them. Such study should, among other things, give due importance to the teaching of foreign languages, civilizations and cultural heritage as a means of promoting international and inter-cultural understanding."

Article 33: "[...] member states are recommended to constantly improve the ways and means of preparing and certifying teachers and other educational personnel for their role in pursuing the objectives of this recommendation and should, to this end: [...]

(33 e) develop aptitudes and skills such as a desire and ability to make educational innovations and to continue his or her training; experience in teamwork and in interdisciplinary studies; knowledge of group dynamics; and the ability to create favorable opportunities and take advantage of them."

- **Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, General Conference of UNESCO, 20th session, 27 November 1978**

Article 5.2: "States, in accordance with their constitutional principles and procedures, as well as all other competent authorities and the entire teaching profession, have a responsibility to see that the educational resources of all countries are used to combat racism, more especially by ensuring that curricula and textbooks include scientific and ethical considerations concerning human unity and diversity and that no invidious distinctions are made with regard to any people; by training teachers to achieve these ends; by making the resources of the educational system available to all groups of the population without racial restriction or discrimination; and by taking appropriate steps to remedy the handicaps from which certain racial groups suffer with regard to their level of education and standards of living and in particular to prevent such handicaps from being passed on to children."

Article 6.2: "So far as its competence extends and in accordance with its constitutional principle and procedures, the State should take all appropriate steps, inter alia by legislation, particularly in the spheres of education, culture and communication, to prevent, prohibit and eradicate racism, racist propaganda, racial segregation and apartheid and to encourage the dissemination of knowledge and the findings appropriate research in natural and social sciences on the causes and prevention of racial prejudice and racist attitudes with due regard to the principles embodied in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights."

- **Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, General Assembly of the United Nations on 25 November 1981, Article 5, Paragraph 3:**

"The child shall be protected from any form of discrimination on the ground of religion or belief. He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, respect for freedom of religion or belief of others,

and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men.”

- **Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting of the CSCE⁷, 1989**

Paragraph 63 affirmed that CSCE participating States would “ensure access by all to the various types and levels of education without discrimination as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

- **OSCE Helsinki Document - The Challenges of Change, 10 July 1992, Chapter VI, Paragraph 34:**

“The participating States will consider developing programmes to create the conditions for promoting non-discrimination and cross-cultural understanding which will focus on human rights education, grass-root action, cross-cultural training and research.”

- **Resolution 1992/65 on the Protection of the Roma (Gypsies), United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, March 1992**

UNHCHR turned its attention to the Roma for the first time in 1977 but it was not until 1992 that a resolution was adopted asserting that the UN could not remain indifferent to the fate of any people facing racial discrimination and urging member states to implement measures to improve the Roma’s conditions and eliminate discrimination against Roma.

- **Directive 2000/43/EC on Implementing the Principle of Equal Treatment between Persons Irrespective of Racial or Ethnic Origin, Council of the European Union, 2000**

Directives are binding on all pre-2004 EU member states and transposition has also been required of new Member States and accession states. This particular directive builds upon Article 13 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, and includes, among other provisions, bans on both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ discrimination, and the requirements of legal remedies for victims of racial discrimination through ‘judicial and/or administrative procedures.’ The Race Directive, as it is called, covers a wide range of areas where discrimination (against Roma and others) may take place - employment, training, education, social protection, access to goods and services, and housing. Arguably, together with Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam, these are both the only and the most important measures taken by the European Union to combat discrimination and racism.

C. Protection of Minority and Education

- **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 18 December 1990, Article 45:**

(2) “States of employment shall pursue a policy, where appropriate in collaboration with the States of origin, aimed at facilitating the integration of children of migrant workers in the local school system, particularly in respect of teaching them the local language.

⁷ The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe was called Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe until the 1st January 1992.

(4) States of employment shall endeavour to facilitate for the children of migrant workers the teaching of their mother tongue and culture and, in this regard, States of origin shall collaborate whenever appropriate.”

- **Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, General Assembly of the United Nations, 18 December 1992, Article 4, Paragraph 4:**

“States should, where appropriate, take measures in the field of education, in order to encourage knowledge of the history, traditions, language and culture of the minorities existing within their territory. Persons belonging to minorities should have adequate opportunities to gain knowledge of the society as a whole.”

- **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Council of Europe, 1 February 1995**

Article 6: (1) “The Parties shall encourage a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue and take effective measures to promote mutual respect and understanding and cooperation among all persons living on their territory, irrespective of those persons’ ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, in particular in the fields of education, culture and the media. (2) The Parties undertake to take appropriate measures to protect persons who may be subject to threats or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence as a result of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity.”

Article 12: (1) “The Parties shall, where appropriate, take measures in the fields of education and research to foster knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority. (2) In this context the Parties shall *inter alia* provide adequate opportunities for teacher training and access to textbooks, and facilitate contacts among students and teachers of different communities. (3) The Parties undertake to promote equal opportunities for access to education at all levels for persons belonging to national minorities.”

This is the first legally binding multilateral instrument devoted to the protection of national minorities in general. While most East European and post communist countries have signed and ratified this convention, several Western European⁸ states have yet to become signatories.

- **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Council of Europe, 1 March 1998**

This text has significant implications for the education of Roma and for the instruction in Romani language. Yet as Roma are not recognised as a national minority in all 46 member states of the Council of Europe, the application of the Charter in the ratifying countries is not synonymous with protection of Romani as a national minority language.

D. Roma and Education⁹

- **Recommendation 563 (1969) on the Situation of Gypsies and other Travellers in Europe, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

⁸ France, Finland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and Portugal.

⁹ Documents related to persons without fixed abode, nomads and travellers are included in this section, as these texts were usually directed also to Roma, who are misunderstood as being all nomadic.

This was the first official text on Roma ever written. This text deals with children's education in addition to the other aspects discussed. It recommends the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to encourage "special classes [...] to facilitate the integration of children from travellers' families into normal schools."

- **Resolution 13 (1975) on the Social Situation of Nomads in Europe, Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe**

The resolution recognises "that the low level of school attendance of the children of nomads endangers seriously their chances of social and occupational advancement" and suggests more appropriate ways of encouraging travellers' children to attend school and of promoting general education for adults. The resolution stresses the need for children and adult education, and literacy, with emphasis on vocational guidance and training.

- **Resolution 125 (1981) on the Role and Responsibilities of Local and Regional Authorities in Regard to the Cultural and Social Problems of Populations of Nomadic Origin, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRAE) of the Council of Europe**

This Resolution calls upon local and regional authority to cooperate, among other things, on education and vocational training issues, as well as intercultural education and Romani language instruction. Similar information, with a focus on integration, is included in the Resolution 249 (1993) of the CLRAE.

- **Resolution 104/144, 16th April 1984, on Education for children whose parents have no fixed abode, European Parliament**

- **Resolution A2-379/88, 17th March 1989, Illiteracy and education for children whose parents have no fixed abode, European Parliament**

The second resolution builds upon the first and deepens its scope.

- **Resolution 89/C 153/02 on School Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Children, Council of the European Union, May 1989**

- **Document of the Copenhagen meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, 1990, Article 40:**

The participating States clearly and unequivocally condemn totalitarianism, racial and ethnic hatred, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and discrimination against anyone as well as persecution on religious and ideological grounds. In this context, they also recognize the particular problems of Roma. They declare their firm intention to intensify the efforts to combat these phenomena in all their forms and therefore the participating states will:

(40.3) -take effective measures, in conformity with their constitutional systems, at the national, regional and local levels to promote understanding and tolerance, particularly in the fields of education, culture and information;

(40.4) -endeavour to ensure that the objectives of education include special attention to the problem of racial prejudice and hatred and to the development of respect for different civilizations and cultures.

- **Resolution 249 (1993) on Gypsies in Europe: the Role and Responsibility of Local and Regional Authorities, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) of the Council of Europe**

The Standing Conference asks the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe “to encourage member State governments to ratify [...] the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, to implement the Charter articles dealing with non-territorial languages, to instruct the Council for Cultural Co-operation, to step up the work pursued over the last ten years [...] in the field of schooling and training for Gypsy children and young people and to organise training seminars for teachers and other staff.” The idea of a European Roma Route was launched. The CLRAE set up a Network of Cities to encourage the circulation of information on cultural, housing and education issues and facilitate the implementation of various joint projects.

- **Recommendation 1203 (1993) on Gypsies in Europe, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

This recommendation, among other things, covers education and recommends the Council of Europe to continue and extend its training programs, together with strengthening the focus on women education. Finally, the role of Roma mediators is encouraged.

- **Recommendation 11 (1995) Towards a Tolerant Europe: the Contribution of Roma (Gypsies), Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) of the Council of Europe**

CLRAE takes up a number of proposals made by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in its Resolution 1203 (1993) and recommends that the Committee of Ministers, among others, “lend its full support to the urgent efforts of the Council for Cultural Co-operation aimed at instituting a ‘Roma (Gypsy) Cultural Route,’” and support its activities in the fields of education, training and information.

- **Resolution 16 (1995) Towards a Tolerant Europe: the Contribution of Roma (Gypsies), Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) of the Council of Europe**

CLRAE takes up a number of points relating to education mentioned in Resolution 249 (1993). The CLRAE also aims to improve the reception of Roma in cities by expanding the Network of Cities and organising hearings with other partners; education, training, employment and culture were to be discussed in greater depth at these hearings. One of the operating principles of the Network of Cities on provisions for Roma in municipalities is the cultural approach; this approach aims at enhancing Roma language, culture and history, and developing education.

- **General Policy Recommendation 3 on Combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), 6 March 1998**

In this text, with respect to education, ECRI recommends that member states “vigorously combat all forms of school segregation towards Roma/Gypsy children and [...] ensure the effective enjoyment of equal access to education” and “introduce into the curricula of all schools information on the history and culture of Roma/Gypsies and [...] provide training programmes in this subject for teachers.” These general policy recommendations are addressed to the governments of all member states of the Council of Europe.

- **Recommendation (2000) 4 on Education of Roma/Gypsy Children in Europe, Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe**

This recommendation is the most specific and relevant to the topic because it provides the guiding principles of an education policy for Roma children in Europe, setting out priorities in terms of structures, curricula and teaching material, recruitment and training of teachers, information, research and assessment, consultation and co-ordination. This text recalls the fundamental text adopted by the Council of the European Union of 1989 on School Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Children stressing that it is urgently necessary to have a text covering all of the member states of the Council of Europe.

- **Recommendation (2001) 17 On Improving the Economic and Employment situation of Roma/Gypsy and Travellers in Europe, Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe**

Although this text focuses on economic factors, it contains a section on training and education, and another on information, research and assessment.

- **Recommendation 1557 (2002) on the Legal Situation of Roma in Europe, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

Although this text was drafted from a legal standpoint, as its title indicates, there are significant implications for education and school attendance.

- **Decision No. 566, Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Permanent Council, 27 November 2003**

Both the participating States and OSCE institutions are called upon to implement the Action Plan. Roma and Sinti communities in the participating States are invited to draw upon and contribute actively to the implementation of the Action Plan's provisions. The Action Plan includes a section called 'Improving Access to Education,' which builds upon a Resolution adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE in 2002 devoted to Roma Education¹⁰ and states:

"Education is a prerequisite to the participation of Roma and Sinti people in the political, social and economic life of their respective countries on a footing of equality with others. Strong immediate measures in this field, particularly those that foster school attendance and combat illiteracy, should be assigned the highest priority both by decision-makers and by Roma and Sinti communities. Educational policies should aim to integrate Roma and Sinti people into mainstream education by providing full and equal access at all levels, while remaining sensitive to cultural differences."

- **Resolution P6_TA (2005) 0151 on the Situation of the Roma in the European Union, European Parliament**

This is the latest international text adopted, and while general in scope, it contains information on education:

(P) "having regard to the racially segregated schooling systems in place across several Member States, in which Roma children are taught either in segregated classes with lower standards or in classes for the mentally handicapped; recognising that an improvement in access to education and opportunities for academic achievement for Roma is crucial to the advancement of Romani communities' wider prospects,"

¹⁰ OSCE, *Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area*. 2003. Pp. 30-31.

Article 2: "Calls on the Council, the Commission, the Member States and the candidate countries to consider recognising the Roma as a European minority;"

Article 15: " Calls on Member States in which Roma children are segregated into schools for the mentally disabled or placed in separate classrooms from their peers to move forward with desegregation programmes within a predetermined period of time, thus ensuring free access to quality education for Roma children and preventing the rise of anti-Romani sentiment amongst schoolchildren;"

Before 1990, European institutions had not been particularly involved with Roma; but since the end of the Cold War there has been a dramatic and ongoing expansion in the Roma related activities of the European institutions. In fact, the list of numerous international texts pertaining to the education of Roma is evidence that this issue is one of great concern to international organisations.

These texts can provide useful guidance to national and local governments, and their endorsement by European institutions can help increase the authority of those wishing to develop and implement policies in accordance with them. However, the texts are also inevitably vague and, especially in the case of those related to education of Roma, are not legally binding in nature. Hence the political concern expressed at the international level needs to be seconded by political will and interventions at the national level. Furthermore, in order to concretely address these concerns, policies have to be translated into practice by the relevant authorities, and then regularly monitored and assessed.

3. Overview of initiatives and programmes of international organisations for the education of Roma children

The texts of international organisations listed above have been accompanied with numerous initiatives by governments, non-governmental organisations, and international organisations to address various issues related to Roma, from combating human rights violations and racial stereotyping in the media to promoting education and employment.

There are hundreds of projects at the local and regional level that seem innovative and successful; despite the high number, few initiatives have been evaluated or monitored. It is hard to determine the long term and large scale impact of the initiatives.

The Council of Europe and the OSCE have been the most active supranational organisations engaged in Roma affairs. The Council of Europe has adopted guidelines and resolutions pertaining to the Roma since 1969 – as seen above. In the 1990s, together with the OSCE and other international bodies, it has established standards for government policy, created a mechanism for increasing the political visibility of issues related to the Gypsies, discussed the various facets of the Roma's predicament, and sponsored research on Roma issues.

It is very significant that Roma issues have become an integral part of the European Union accession process. The European Union—founded to build economic cooperation in Europe –has not historically engaged directly in minority policies; in fact, education, culture, and language have predominantly remained the policy concerns of member states. However, more recently, beyond direct funding, the European Union has dramatically shaped the policy context through the accession criteria that have led all candidate countries to establish institutions and legislative mechanisms to address Roma issues.

Some international organisations have been more involved than others in issues related to the situation. Some of the most important ones exemplify the activities and initiatives at the international level specifically related to education of Roma, and are presented and grouped according to the different international organisation.

Council of Europe (CoE)

The Council of Europe has been one of the frontrunners in tackling Roma issues since 1969 when the first resolution was written on the subject. In 1993, The Council declared the Roma to be “a true European minority,” and hence established a Specialist Group on Roma and Travellers (MG-S-ROM), a consultative body of the Council that consists of representatives from countries

(including Eastern and Western Europe), NGOs, academia, and international organisations. Approximately one-half of the members of the group are Roma. It is important to mention that this Specialist Group (together with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities) produced the Guiding Principles for Improving the Situation of Roma, a document adopted by the EU in 1999 as part of the accession process. The principles served as influential guidelines in shaping EU relations with post-communist countries regarding the Roma issue, as well as being a document marking the convergence in CoE, OSCE, and EU approaches to Roma policy areas, including education, housing, employment and health.

The Council of Europe facilitated, founded and supported the creation of a consultative assembly to give Roma and Travellers a voice at the international level. In 2003, the joint French and Finnish proposal was adopted and the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) was created in 2004. The 22 founding members representing 16 countries function as advisers and contact persons for their national election campaign, assisting and advising the national Roma and Travellers organisations on conducting fair elections.

Although the Roma and Travellers Division of the Directorate of Social Cohesion deals with Roma issues, following the Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2000)⁴ on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe, the Directorate of Education has established a project on Education of Roma children in Europe which has been implemented since 2002 by the Division for the European Dimension of Education. The project aims at building new foundations for future educational strategies towards the Roma people in Europe which actively involve the representatives of Roma communities in the process, as well as finding practical means of achieving the objectives of the Recommendation (2000)⁴.

For example, the Council has been and is developing teaching material; conducting seminars and workshops on the training of Roma school mediators and assistants, as well as intercultural trainings for teacher of Roma children¹¹. Finally, policy recommendations and consultations are provided to implement the recommendation.

In addition, meetings and conferences are organised in co-operation with relevant institutions (World Bank, European Commission, and OECD), European Roma organisations (European Roma and Travelers Forum) and sectors within the Council of Europe (Directorate of Social Cohesion - Roma and Travelers Division, Language Policy Division, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, etc.)

¹¹ Trainings have been organised on this topic long before 2001, but they are now one of the activities of the project on Roma Children Education.

Finally, another instrument relating to the Roma is the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), which is a body of the Council of Europe that monitors and evaluates policies and current situations related to racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism, anti-gypsism, and intolerance. Established in 1998, this is an independent body that provides general policy recommendations, proposes measures to combat racism and intolerance, and publishes annual reports, including with specific reference to the Roma in individual countries.

European Union¹²

The process of EU accession has been an important impetus in focusing international attention on Roma issues, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. Accession involves an in-depth process of discussion with each client country to ensure that each country's laws are consistent with EU legislation, as embodied in the laws and regulation of the *acquis communautaire*. In 1993, the European Union's Heads of State and Government gathered in Copenhagen for the European Council and agreed upon a set of criteria for countries wishing to join the EU. These are referred to as the Copenhagen Criteria and state the following: "Membership requires that the candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities."

Roma issues emerge under the political criteria for accession as part of the sub-chapter on Human Rights and the Protection of Minorities when negotiations for new acceding countries began in 1998¹³. On the subject of respect for minorities, the Agenda 2000-2006 published by the European Commission pointed out and repeatedly stressed that the situation of the Roma minority in a number of applicant countries gives cause for concern.

In order to ensure movement towards the criteria, the Commission submitted annual regular reports toward accession to the Council of the European Union. These reports underlined the importance of dealing with human rights issues concerning Roma. The situation of minorities such as the Roma is therefore being taken into serious consideration in assessing the capacity of candidate countries to become members of the European Union. To support the negotiations on the *acquis*, the EU provides financial and technical support to the applicant countries. EU support

¹² European Commission, *EU Support for Roma Communities in Central and Eastern Europe*, 2002.

European Commission, *The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union*. DG for Employment and Social Affairs, Fundamental Rights and Anti-discrimination. 2004.

European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. *Roma and Travellers in Public Education*. 2006.

¹³ In March 1998, the European Commission began detailed accession negotiations with five countries in Central and Eastern Europe: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia. Following the EC's Helsinki Summit in December 1999, full negotiations were also launched with Romania, the Slovak Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, and Bulgaria. To this day, Romania and Bulgaria are acceding countries, Croatia, Macedonia, Turkey are candidate countries, and Balkan countries are potential candidates.

comes through its programs, some of which are applicable to Roma issues and in particular regarding education, through not specifically or exclusively for Roma education.

The PHARE Program¹⁴ is the main channel of EU support for Roma populations in the candidate countries. This program is the responsibility of Directorate General of Enlargement, and between 1999 and 2002, € 32.2 millions were contributed to Roma projects in education in the accession and candidate states, covering a range of infrastructure, public awareness and sector-specific projects. PHARE's assistance takes the form of grants rather than loans; however, many of the interventions were project specific, implying that many more resources need to be committed over a long period of time in order to make a real impact.

The Directorate General for Education and Culture manages programs for co-operation between EU member states and candidate countries in the field of education, training and youth. Projects for Roma are supported both within the Socrates and the Youth for Europe Programs. The promotion of an intercultural dimension of education is one of the general objectives of Socrates II (2000-2006), in which 30 European countries are currently participating, including all candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The education of children of occupational travelers and Roma remains a priority for projects in school and pre-school education, under the Comenius Action of the Socrates program, including the training of school education staff.¹⁵ The Youth Program of the European Community, which supports youth exchanges, initiatives developed by young people, and transnational voluntary service, aims at contributing to the integration of young people as socially, professionally and politically active European citizens. The Youth Program is open to all young people (aged 15 - 25 years), regardless of their background - social, economic, geographic or otherwise. The European Commission has taken measures to encourage and develop the participation of young Roma in its Youth Program.

The Union has also adopted a Community Action Program to combat discrimination (2000-2006), managed through the Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs of the European Commission. One of the eight priorities to combat discrimination of the Community Action Program was specifically targeted at Roma integration into education and employment.

¹⁴ European Union, *PHARE Programme Website* <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/pas/phare/>

European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Roma and Travellers in Public Education*. 2006. P. 102.

¹⁵ In Danbakli, *Roma, Gypsies: Texts Issued by International Institutions*. Hertfordshire, UK: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001. Community Action Program 'Socrates' on pp. 28-9, Decision No. 189/95/EC of 14th March 1995, as well as Decision No. 253/2000/EC of 24th January 2000 (second phase of the community action program in the field of education 'Socrates').

Two components of the EU Structural Funds¹⁶, although not explicitly and solely for Roma, are directly relevant to Roma populations: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The ERDF is the principal instrument of regional policy, and it is managed by the Directorate General for Regional Policy. This fund may finance a number of activities of interest to Roma populations, including basic infrastructure for Roma settlements, social inclusion measures, and lifelong learning facilities. The European Social Fund finances activities aimed at improving involvement in the labor market, including women's participation, lifelong learning, social inclusion, labor adaptability, and an active labor market. This fund has already been used to finance activities of relevance to Roma, for example, the National Program for the Spanish Roma Community.

European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)

The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) is a body relevant to the Roma within the EU. Established in 1997 by the Commission, the primary objective of the EUMC is to provide the Community and its member states with objective, reliable and comparable data on the European level on the phenomena of racism and xenophobia in order to help them take measures or formulate courses of action. The EUMC produced several reports on the Roma, and one of the most recent ones (May 2006) was specifically on education¹⁷. Other reports on the situation of Roma in Europe have been recently written by different bodies of the EU.

The EUMC publication "Roma and Travellers in Public Education" is a comprehensive report that gives an overview of the situation in the EU member states. The report also comments on the national policies in this area and states that "most Member States have no specific educational policies or measures targeting Roma and Travellers, but address their needs in a wider anti-discrimination and/or intercultural education policy framework." But it additionally states that "Few Member States have integrated effectively intercultural education into the national education programmes and curricula, although there are many specific projects targeting Roma and Travellers."¹⁸

Organisation for Security Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

The main activities carried out by the OSCE are relative to the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, which was adopted in 2003 by 55 participating

¹⁶ European Commission, *The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union*. DG for Employment and Social Affairs, Fundamental Rights and Anti-discrimination. 2004. P.14.

¹⁷ European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. *Roma and Travellers in Public Education*. May 2006.

¹⁸ European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. *Roma and Travellers in Public Education*. May 2006. Pp. 93-94.

States. OSCE has played a major role in supporting governments in elaborating national strategic plans and in establishing Roma Councils and executive offices for Roma issues.

OSCE's activities focus on the following areas: Discrimination and racial violence (Discrimination in the media, Police discrimination); Addressing social issues (Legalizing informal settlements, Civil registration, Anti-trafficking); and Political participation. While not extensive, some activities regarding the three foci include education initiative; however, education is a high level priority as it is included in the Action Plan.

Of particular importance is the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues (CPRSI), established in 1994 within the framework of the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The CPRSI organises conferences – often in collaboration with the Council of Europe – as well as publishes a regular newsletter and serves as a clearing house of information about the Roma situation across Europe. The role of the Contact Point is to “oversee, coordinate and advise on legislative and policy developments affecting Roma (and Sinti) both at the European and state levels¹⁹.” In doing so, the Contact Point co-ordinates closely with other international organisations and NGOs and seeks to involve Roma and Sinti in all its activities.

ODIHR organised its first Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE in 1989 in Paris. Since then, Roma issues are always a concern and topic during these periodic meetings. The High Commissioner on National Minority has also showed great interest in Roma issues. This figure has been introduced in 1992 within the OSCE to prevent conflicts involving national minorities and to provide early warnings, identify problems and encourage solutions for ethnic conflicts. Since then the Commissioner has produced two reports (in 1993 and in 2000) on the situation of Roma in Europe.

World Bank

Relative to other international organisations, the World Bank is new to Roma issues, and its involvement started with the compilation of two reports in 2000 and 2004²⁰. Unlike prior analyses that largely focused on questions of human rights, the Bank reports addressed Roma issues from the perspective of economic and social development. More recently, the World Bank, together with the Open Society Institute and Soros Foundation, launched a regional initiative Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 with four priority areas: Education, Housing, Employment and Health.

¹⁹ OSCE, *OSCE/ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti: An Overview*. (No Date)

²⁰ Ringold, *Roma and the Transition in Central and Eastern Europe: Trends and Challenges*. Washington, DC: World Bank Press, 2000.

Ringold et al., *Roma in an Expanding Europe: Breaking the Poverty Cycle*. Washington, DC: World Bank Press, 2004.

The Decade was launched at the regional conference 'Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future' held in Budapest in 2003²¹. Since education was identified as the most important way to create opportunities for Roma and improve their living conditions, participating governments (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro²², and Slovakia) and representatives at the conference promoted the idea of the Roma Education Fund (REF) to provide support in improving educational outcomes for the Roma minority. It is possible that over time additional countries, both from Eastern and Western Europe, beyond the initial eight, will participate in the Fund.

Roma Education Fund (REF)

The Roma Education Fund (REF) is an organization designed to provide additional assistance to countries to push improvements in the educational opportunities of Roma. The REF is not designed to substitute for government resources but rather to supplement and push ahead efforts undertaken by governments, NGOs and other organisations. The REF funds projects and programs from public entities – including local, regional and national governments – private or non-profit entities, and combinations of public and private organisations. Different bilateral donors are also involved in different projects of support for the Roma, for example USAID, the Swiss Development Cooperation, The Netherlands, Nordic countries, Germany, etc.

According to the Decade of Roma Inclusion, participating governments are supposed to plan and implement adjustments in policies and regulations, annual recurrent spending, targeted investments for Roma, support remedial or 'catch-up' assistance to Roma, and increased public awareness and acceptance of Roma. The first annual report of REF²³ declares that 35 grants have been approved for a total of EUR 6, 603, 898. Eleven of the funded projects have been transferred by OSI as part of its financial contribution to REF. Up to the present date, about 57% of REF grants have gone to support projects in South-East European countries, 28% to EU accession countries and 15% to two EU member countries. Most of the funded project activities are aimed at improving education quality and outcomes. Funds have also been distributed for technical assistance projects, pilot interventions and projects that would boost effective demand for education by Roma.

Open Society Institute and Soros Foundation

²¹ The conference was co-financed by the World Bank, the Open Society Institute, the European Commission, UNDP, the Council of Europe Development Bank and the governments of Hungary, Finland and Sweden.

²² Montenegro was not independent yet (22 May 2006).

²³ Roma Education Fund, *The First Year 2005*. Budapest, April 2006.

Although there are many Western foundations that have financed Roma-related project in Europe, none have done more than the Open Society Institute established and bankrolled by George Soros, a Hungarian – American financier and philanthropist. Aside from recently joining efforts with the World Bank for the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the Roma Education Fund, the Open Society Institute and Soros Foundation has provided innumerable minority scholarships, meetings, and self-help programs, in addition to funding the Budapest-based Romani News since its creation in 1995 as well as several schools for Roma students.

The active involvement of the Open Society Institute in Central and Eastern Europe and the Roma has been particularly focused on education. The Education Support Program (ESP) and its network partners support education reform in countries in transition, combining best practice and policy to strengthen open society values. Support is focused in South Eastern Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Mongolia. Although concluded, the Open Society Institute also ran the Roma Education Initiative (REI) from 2002 to 2005 to tackle the situation in education for Roma children in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe. The initiative sought to increase national programming, to ambitiously mobilise national agendas and resources, and to advocate strongly and consistently for systemic policy changes that work against segregation and all forms of racial discrimination of Roma children in the school systems.

United Nations agencies

Various United Nations agencies have been involved in Roma-related issues in their different areas of competence. UNICEF and UNHCR are involved with refugees' issues especially in the Balkans, and the International Organisation for Migration²⁴ has also been active in issues related to the movement of Roma between countries. UNDP and UNICEF, framing their initiatives in the context of the Millennium Development Goals, have made attempts to improve government statistics on the Roma and socially excluded groups, including education. Similar research initiatives have been undertaken by Save the Children.

UNICEF and UNESCO have taken steps to encourage, and at least partially finance, pragmatic programs – such as business courses and university scholarship – for Roma in several Eastern European states. In 2000, UNESCO²⁵ supported a project for the educational and social promotion of Roma minority in Hungary. The overriding objectives were: (i) to reduce the number of Roma children dropping out of school; (ii) to improve school results of Roma children; (iii) to increase

²⁴ IOM is not part of the United Nations agency, but it is still an important international governmental organisation.

²⁵ The following information was provided by Ms Florence Migeon, Programme Specialist, Division of Basic Education, UNESCO.

the chance of further education beyond primary among Roma children; (iv) to raise the awareness of parents of the importance of studying beyond primary school. The project covered the educational system from early childhood to secondary education. UNESCO also organised with the Hungarian authorities a regional seminar aimed at improving the education and the social and professional integration of Roma children and young people of Roma origin. Representatives from five countries of the region - Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia - shared information and experiences concerning the education of these children.

The UN encompasses different bodies that are relevant to Roma Children. The UN Commission on Human Rights has several Sub-Commissions: the Sub-Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, under the authority of ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council), studies, reports and make recommendations to the commission; this Sub-Commission has four working groups, one of which concerns minorities. Other bodies include: The Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance; the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education; the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This last Committee is the first UN monitoring and autonomous body to review actions by states to fulfill their obligations under the international convention on the elimination of racial discrimination.

4. Comparative analysis of national initiatives of CoE member states for the education of Roma children

After a description of international initiatives undertaken by international organizations in the area of Roma education, it is important to address initiatives at the national level aimed at improving the schooling levels of Roma children.

In order to understand general trends of education policies for Roma in the Council of Europe member states, about 46 documents prepared by a total of 22 countries²⁶ have been studied, for an in-depth comparative analysis. The analysis included the documents that are available to the Secretariat of the Council of Europe and that cover nation-wide initiatives; these are listed in Appendix I.

The documents have been carefully read and interpreted; the collected data on education has been coded and disaggregated for an accurate analysis. The analysis highlighted general trends occurring in the various countries and revealed the similarities and differences of the various approaches.

It is important to note the diversity of the document under consideration. While about 20 countries have already adopted national strategies on Roma, three countries are in the process²⁷. In those cases, final strategy documents or action plans are not available yet. In general, the strategies included in the analysis have been prepared between 2000 and 2005, but some of the documents available are outdated. Because the documents have been written and adopted within different time frames, some governments find themselves in the design stage of the national strategy, others in the implementation stage. Although some member states are already implementing their programmes, monitoring reports, mid-term evaluations, progress updates are very rare.

The breadth and depth of the strategies and plans vary significantly. In fact, some countries have adopted guiding principles or concept papers that outline the general approach that the government will use on Roma issues²⁸; conversely, some countries have adopted specific action plans²⁹, including specific initiatives. Finally, other countries have prepared only action plans for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015³⁰, discussed above. At times, the same country has both a

²⁶ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, "The Former Republic of Macedonia", Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom and Ukraine.

²⁷ Moldova, Montenegro and Kosovo.

²⁸ "The Former Republic of Macedonia", Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Serbia, and United Kingdom.

²⁹ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Lithuania, Romania, Poland, Ukraine and Slovakia.

³⁰ Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, "The Former Republic of Macedonia", Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia.

national strategy document and an action plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Similarly, some countries have both a long-term and mid-term strategy.

Since members states of the Council of Europe greatly vary in size, wealth, Roma presence, capacity and resources, the national strategies and plans vary significantly in level of details and amount of information provided. Furthermore, the attention devoted to education is also vastly disparate. In fact, some governments have adopted sectorial strategies, dedicated only to employment, health, or language, for example³¹. However, the focus of this analysis will be solely on education.

General trends: similarities and differences

The national initiatives on Roma developed in the past 5 years or so are a definite sign of interest and intention from governments to improve the situation of Roma. Generally, the challenges encountered by Roma populations have been identified, priorities have been set, and well-thought out strategies have been proposed. The national strategies and plans reflect profound thinking and thoughtful analysis. For governments, the undertaking of this exercise consisted in translating political will into concrete attainable actions; this is a fundamental step and initial achievement for member states on Roma issues.

It is particularly encouraging that the countries in which Roma populations are more numerous, in Central and Eastern Europe, are countries that have adopted strategies and started initiatives to improve the situation of Roma in the region. This however, highlights also how this problem has been largely ignored by many Western European countries. Understandably, the political pressure exercised by the European Union in the accession process, together with the available funds from the Roma Education Funds and the EU Structural Funds, provides excellent incentives and opportunities to work on Roma issues. Ideally, similar initiatives will be undertaken by all member states of the Council of Europe that have some relevant Roma presence.

Among all countries that adopted national cross sectors initiatives, education has been always identified as a key priority for the long term solution to the challenges faced by Roma populations. The low education levels of Roma have been stressed in every document analysed; therefore, significant attention was generally devoted to education strategies and initiatives. While there are significant differences in the general approach to improve the situation of Roma populations, education is widely and uniformly recognised as one of the main areas of intervention. This is a

³¹ Ireland, Austria and Slovenia. These of course have not been included in the analysis of education strategies.

confirmation of the validity and the importance of the international official texts and initiatives of international organizations, discussed earlier in the document.

While education is a major area of concern for the improvements of Roma living conditions, the approaches to go about finding solutions and actions can vary. There are commonalities found throughout the approaches of the national strategies: access to pre-school and elementary school; quality of education; intercultural education; and integration. On the other hand, there are major differences in approaching the following areas: vocational, adult, and higher education; desegregation; affirmative action and benefits; and language training. The findings of the analysis provide interesting and rich information that will be summarised below.

A priority found across all strategies analysed lies in ensuring Roma children access to, and attendance of, pre-school and primary/elementary school. A great number of activities are devoted to monitoring Roma attendance in school, in addition to facilitating attendance through small benefits and incentives (i.e. free meals, free transport, free teaching material, etc). While primary education is usually the focus, higher education, including secondary education and university, is mentioned in some national programmes but not in others. Similarly, vocational training and adult education are also sparsely considered. Understandably, some countries intend to, and can afford to work across the whole education system for Roma, and other countries, due to financial restraints, are focusing their efforts on certain priorities, in this case pre-school and primary school.

Another recurrent focus of attention is on improving the quality of education offered to Roma children. Governments have highlighted the need to provide a favourable and positive environment in which Roma children can learn and feel comfortable. In order to make schools a favourable environment, the following initiatives have most typically been mentioned or encouraged: train teachers on Roma issues, establish Roma mediators or assistants, train teachers of Roma origin, foster dialogues with Roma parents on the importance of school and encourage Roma parents' participation in school activities and administration.

Intercultural education is a major area of importance, which can be found in national strategies. Intercultural education can have different components and take forms of teacher trainings on diversity, cultural activities within and outside schools, and inclusion of Roma history and culture in national curricula. It is common to find in national strategies and action plans references to the idea of multiculturalism to reduce stereotypes and discrimination against Roma populations.

Finally, it seems that integration is a general objective of various governments. Integrated schools would replace the current situation in which a very high percentage of Roma children are assigned to special schools or to vocational schools, often of low quality. However, it is not always clearly stated how the transition would take place and through which measures.

On this particular aspect, it is interesting to note the different approaches of various governments. While integration seems to be desired in all schools, desegregation is usually considered a long-term objective that has been specifically addressed only by a small number of countries; often, the practice of segregation is discouraged, but there is a lack of a specific desegregating strategy. In some national action plans, the aim of desegregation is intended to be achieved through temporary preparatory classes and through new tests and placements for children that have been wrongfully assigned to special schools. Progressive measures of integration are directed to gradually abolish the practice of placing Roma in special schools. However, in some countries the idea of specific all-Roma classes is not discouraged at all, especially for language, culture and history classes.

Another area, in which national strategies significantly vary, is affirmative action for Roma in the education system. Most governments refrain from using affirmative action policies; with very few exceptions, this concept, also referred to as positive discrimination, is not mentioned in the analysed documents. When mentioned, affirmative action generally applies to higher education; quota systems are advised or adopted at the university level, but not in the lower grades of the education system.

Somewhat related to affirmative action are benefits and monetary subsidies used by governments in their national programmes to help Roma afford education. As mentioned earlier, relatively small benefits and incentives are generally included in national programmes for young Roma school children. However, more generous financial aid and scholarships are only at times included in national programmes for higher education students. These scholarships are usually based on ethnicity and merit. Finally, another area in which national programmes differ is the optional instruction of Romani language; this has been frequently suggested in some action plans, but not consistently.

The paragraphs above highlight the general similarities and disparities found in the approaches to address Roma education in the analysed documents. As mentioned above the documents analysed vary greatly. Because of the diversity of these documents, they have been also disaggregated and analysed separately, according to the type of document (general approach, specific action plan,

action plan for the Decade). An analysis of the different types of documents allows for an understanding of the process, format and reasoning used for the formulation of national programmes.

Seven member states of the Council of Europe have adopted documents that provide guiding principles, recommendations, or a general approach. These usually tend to be narrative in nature, describing the current situation and possible solutions. These documents do not provide a great number of details (initiatives, actors, deadlines, monitoring and evaluation plans, or budgets), but they do frame the national approach on Roma issues in the context of national and international laws and agreements. In doing so, the level of authority, legitimacy and accountability is greatly enhanced. Serbia and Hungary provide a good example of strategic document.

National action plans for the support and improvement of Roma living conditions have been produced by ten member states of the Council of Europe. The level of details and information vary to a great extent, but in general, action plans include specific measures, implementing actors, time frames, and some budgetary information. Most of the countries that prepared national action plans are either accession or candidate countries to the European Union, and others are undergoing negotiations. While the framework for the different plans is similar, the actual strategies and approaches vary in several ways. For example, some include Romani language instruction, and some focus on primary versus higher education, but none include affirmative action. Croatia and Lithuania have produced documents that are examples of detailed and accurate national action plans.

More uniform are the national strategies and action plans for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. As education is one of the four priority areas of the Roma Decade, all countries participating in this international initiative have adopted detailed plans on the education strategies. The nine countries have made great use of logframes, most likely after consultation and negotiations with OSI and REF. Logframes do not present a narrative, of course, but include a great amount of details on measures, actors, timeframe, monitoring and evaluation plans, and budget information. In terms of approaches, the nine plans are consistent across borders: integration is always addressed, affirmative action is not mentioned, and NGOs are always included in the action plan.

Some member states have produced both a national strategy and an action plan for the Decade. Usually, these two documents do not vary from each other, except in regards to language instruction and higher education and vocational training. When documents have been updated, or when there are long term and mid term strategies, interesting comparisons can be made that

highlight the evolution of national strategies. Throughout the years, national programmes have included increasing amounts of details about education; furthermore, they are becoming more uniform and consistent with international standards. However, some plans did not change much across time. Interestingly, in earlier documents, the concepts of affirmative action and desegregation were used more frequently and with more ease than they are in more recently approved documents.

There is a final type of document not frequently available, national NGOs strategy. This type of document has been produced and shared only in “The Former Republic of Macedonia” and in Bosnia; here the focus is also on education and recommendations and agreements on actions outlined. NGOs can be fundamental players in education strategies for Roma, especially in countries in which there is limited capacity or resources. NGOs can support government in their efforts to improve the situation of Roma populations, and such documents are an important proof of it.

Good practices

Throughout the analysis, several good practices emerged; these, together with the measurements suggested in the ‘Reference Framework for Educational Policies in favour of Roma’ can serve as an example and inspiration for future strategy developments. Looking forward, it seems useful to develop a concept paper that includes a descriptive narrative of the context, the situation and the current initiatives for Roma education. The concept paper created by, or with substantial consultation of, Roma representatives and experts on education gains more credibility and accuracy. It is important to frame the national programme in the legal context of national and international laws and agreements that strengthen the authority of the programme. When the concept paper is then coupled with specific and detailed action plans, the national strategy appears even more complete. The national action plans could be expressed in a logframe, in which the general goals, objectives and activities are logically connected. Corresponding to each activity, it is important to identify implementing actors or institutions, as well as a time frame, and intended results. Pilot tests³² conducted before the national programme starts are helpful to check that the intended results are achieved through the implementation of the strategy.

Monitoring and evaluation plans, including indicators and monitoring actors, are an essential component of national education strategies for Roma populations. Initiatives must be carefully monitored and evaluated as they are implemented. Since national strategies have been approved

³² Poland undertook a pilot test in a province before extending the programme to the whole country.

in many countries and are being implemented, it is important to track the progress achieved and to be able to demonstrate measurable results. For this reason, it is ideal if baseline data are available and collected before the programme implementation phase, so that progress can be measured more significantly. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms ensure accountability and result based management. However, the most critical reason for monitoring and evaluating the work on education of Roma children is that the lessons learned can be used to improve future programmes. It is worth mentioning that while national strategies are in place in 20 member states of the Council of Europe, there are very few monitoring reports, mid-term evaluations, or progress updates available (with the exception of Romania, Bulgaria and the United Kingdom³³).

In summary, many member states, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, have adopted national strategies to improve the condition of Roma populations. Almost all of the national initiatives include education as a priority. This is an encouraging sign indicating that the needs of Roma are starting to be addressed. Also, these member states are demonstrating adherence to the international agreements they have signed and ratified, as well as showing political will and financial arrangements devoted to improving education of Roma children. The national plans should now be implemented and show results, and this is probably the greatest challenge to national policies.

Many other member states have not paid sufficient attention to the issue of Roma education. This analysis, together with the “Reference Framework for Educational Policies in Favour of Roma” (DGIV/EDU/ROM(2005) 8) produced in the framework of the Council of Europe’s project “Education of Roma children in Europe,” is intended to serve as guidance, and stimulus for states that have not developed a strategy, and for states that have developed generic and broad strategies.

³³ Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance “Amalipe,” and Hot Line Agency. *The Roma Strategies in Bulgaria on the Eve of EU Accession*. August 2006.

“Impreuna” Agency for Community Development, and Roma Centre for Social Intervention and Studies. *Overview of the Roma Situation in Romania for European Commission consideration at the 2006 Country Report*. August 2006.

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UK Department for Communities and Local Government. *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society: One year on – A Progress Report on the Government’s Strategy for Race Equality and Community Cohesion*. 2006

Commission for Racial Equality. *Common Ground: Equality, good racial relations, and sites for Gypsies and Irish Travellers. Report of a CRE inquiry in England and Wales*. 2006

5. Conclusion

In the early 1990s, the international community started to pay close attention to Roma issues, especially to immediate human rights concerns, including protection from discrimination and persecution, and legal representation. In recent years, the focus has increasingly turned to issues related to economic development, social conditions and education.

The Council of Europe and OSCE have been the most active in creating a legal framework for a common European Roma policy, demonstrating interest and political will in ameliorating the education and general condition of European Roma. Undoubtedly, the changes governments have implemented regarding minorities in general and the Roma in particular are motivated in large part by external factors, such as the desire to join the EU, or concerns over a good international image.

Between the years of 1999 and 2005, numerous member states, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, have prepared and adopted national strategies to ameliorate the situation of Roma populations. In these national initiatives, some more specific than others, education is always an area of major concern. While there are similarities and differences in their approaches, it is very encouraging that the needs of Roma are starting to be addressed at the national level. Also, these member states are demonstrating adherence to the international agreements they have signed and ratified, as well as showing political will and financial arrangements devoted to improving education of Roma children. However, many other member states have not paid sufficient attention to this issue.

Despite the number of initiatives of international organisations and governments, the educational situation of Roma pupils remains unsatisfactory and worrisome. It is clear that more systemic changes have to be introduced to remedy the present situation. National action plans and initiatives designed for the amelioration of the Roma populations should be seriously monitored and evaluated as they are implemented. The importance of building monitoring and evaluation mechanisms into projects and policies cannot be overstated, because they ensure accountability and result-based management³⁴. Finally, it is fundamental to ensure that the policy changes are applied by local authorities, institutions, teachers, students, and NGO, because these parties have an important role in the implementation and in the daily application of policies to ameliorate the situation of Roma. Hence, awareness raising and consensus building are key components for the education of Roma children.

³⁴ Ringold et al., *Roma in an Expanding Europe: Breaking the Poverty Cycle*. Washington, DC: World Bank Press, 2004. Pp. 129-130.

The legal framework and the initiatives carried out by international organisations clearly shows the political will and great concern on the issue of education of Roma children, and national governments ought to implement at the national level what seems to be a clear priority at the international level. This document, together with the “Reference Framework for Educational Policies in Favour of Roma,” can help governments by providing guidance and examples.

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Appendix I: List of national programmes

Country	Title of the Document	Year
<i>Albania</i>	Albania Roma National Programme 2003 – Project Strategy for Improvement of Living Conditions of Roma Minority	2003
<i>Bosnia and Herzegovina</i>	BiH Roma Strategy	2005
	BiH Roma Education Action Plan	2004
	Roma NGO Platform - Assembly Meeting of Romani Non-Governmental Organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina	2001
<i>Bulgaria</i>	National Action Plan - Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015	2005
	Action Plan for the Implementation of the Framework Programme for Roma Integration	2003
	Program "For Equal Participation of Roma in Life of Bulgaria"	1999
<i>Croatia</i>	National Action Plan - Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015	2005
	The National Program for the Roma	2003
<i>Czech Republic</i>	National Action Plan - Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015	2005
	The Roma Integration Policy Concept	2005
	The Roma Integration Policy Concept	2003
<i>Finland</i>	Finland Roma Strategies	2004
	Finland Roma Strategies	2003
	Finland Report on Romani Issues - Strategies of the Policy on Roma	1999
<i>Greece</i>	Integrated Action Plan for the Social Integration of Greek Roma (2002-2008)	2002
<i>Hungary</i>	National Action Plan - Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015	2005
	Guiding principles of the long-term Roma social and minority policy strategy: Discussion paper	2001
	Government resolution on Roma Medium-term strategy 1999	1999
<i>Ireland</i>	Ireland Traveller Health National Strategy Part I 2002-2005	2002
<i>Latvia</i>	Summary of National Action Plan "Roma in Latvia" 2007-2009 http://www.integracija.gov.lv/index.php?id=1014&sadala=199	2006
<i>Lithuania</i>	The Roma Integration programme 2000-2004	2000
<i>"The Former Republic of Macedonia"</i>	National Action Plan - Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015	2005

	Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia	2004
	Strategy for Development of Roma NGOs in the Republic of Macedonia	2002
<i>Moldavia</i>	Initial Roma National Programme 2001	2001
	Government Decision on Roma 2001	2001
	Roma Action Plans 2001-2010	2001
<i>Montenegro</i>	National Action Plan - Roma Inclusion Decade 2005-2015 - Education	2005
<i>Poland</i>	National Action Plan - Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015	2003
	Poland Malopolska Roma programme 2001-2003 – Pilot Government Programme for the Roma Community in the Malopolska Province for the years 2001-2003	2001
<i>Romania</i>	National Action Plan - Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015	2005
	National Programme & Action Plan 2001 – Strategy of the Government of Romania for Improving the Condition of the Roma	2001
<i>Serbia</i>	First Draft for Discussion Purposes, Serbia: Country Situation and REF Working Strategy Note	2006
	Policy Note, Preschool Education of Roma Children in Serbia	2006
	National Action Plan - Roma Inclusion Decade 2005-2015 – Common Action Plan for Advancement for Roma Education in Serbia	2005
	Draft Strategy for the Integration and Empowerment of the Roma, Discussion Paper	2002
<i>Slovakia</i>	Slovak Republic - National Action Plan - Roma Inclusion Decade 2005-2015	2005
	Elaboration of the Government Strategy for Addressing Problems of the Romani National Minority into a Package of Concrete Measures for year 2000 - Stage II	2000
	Strategy of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Solution of the Problems of the Roma National Minority and the Set of Measures for Its Implementation - Stage I	1999
<i>Slovenia</i>	Slovenia Roma Employment National Strategy 2000 - EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ROMA	2000
<i>Spain</i>	COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE GYPSY COMMUNITY OF ANDALUSIA	1996
	Spanish Programme for the development of the Gypsy people (adopted in 1985)	1985
<i>UK</i>	Gypsies and Travellers: A strategy for the CRE, 2004 - 2007	2004
<i>Ukraine</i>	Roma National Programme 2004-2006	2004
	Roma NGO Programme	2004