

Analytical Report PHARE RAXEN_CC
Minority Education

RAXEN_CC National Focal Point Slovakia

People Against Racism

Report on National Strategies for Minority Schooling

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1. Executive summary

The report concerns the issue of minority education in Slovak republic, with special regard to the education of Roma minority.

The education of members of minorities is addressed by international documents ratified by the Slovak Republic, as well as the Constitution of the Slovak Republic and other legislative norms partially addressing the issue of education of members of ethnic minorities. However, in practice this means that there is officially a differentiated approach to different ethnic minorities in Slovakia based on the number of members of each minority.

The Constitution of the Slovak Republic which recognises the right of members of ethnic minorities to be educated in their mother tongue, to establish educational facilities for minorities and use the minority language in official communication. However, the Roma ethnic minority does not have similar access to education like other minorities or the majority. At the same time, in practice Roma do not have possibility to fulfil the right to be educated in their mother tongue.

It is education that forms one of significant factors influencing the chances of a successful inclusion of Roma into the society and the ensuing improvement in the social conditions of this ethnic minority. These are the reasons why the educational system should be designed in such a way that would allow the Roma to have equal access to education as is the case with other ethnic minorities in Slovakia.

Presently, there are several projects realising in Slovakia. There are attempts at re-codification of the Roma language. The National Institute for Education prepared the project of Experimental verification of the effectiveness of the curriculum of Roma language and literature at primary school and secondary school level. The experimental verification of the language use represents a basic step that will allow members of the Roma ethnic group to be educated in their mother tongue, since this opportunity has been thus far denied to them.

In terms of pre-school education, the project “Mother and Child” is being implemented in Slovakia. The aim of the project is to engage Roma mothers in the educational process of their children and thus to better prepare children to begin compulsory school attendance.

Another project is the project of zero-grades that has been implemented into practice with the aim of improving in school performance, fostering of positive relations toward school, education and further prospects of personal growth of children. The ministry of education has within the PHARE programme “Better Conditions for Roma – Self Realisation in Education System” prepared material on implementation of the zero-grades in schools with a high concentration of Roma pupils with socially disadvantaged background. At present, in the system of primary education the most important and most effective programme to improve the access to education of Roma pupils is the Roma teacher’s assistants programme. Roma teacher’s assistants should serve as a sort of intermediaries between the Roma community and the school. As was mentioned above, some of the Roma children are not adequately prepared to begin the compulsory school enrolment and

often lag behind other kids in school performance. These exhibits, however, are not caused by their mental handicap, but a sort of a social handicap and cultural differences which are endemic to them. Based on psychological diagnosis, they are placed in special needs schools.

Presently, there are several options available to the Roma students to supplement their education. However, these activities are not coordinated and supported in a systematic manner by the state. There are even less university students of Roma ethnicity, as well as a lack of courses offering Roma studies.

Given the capabilities and opportunities of the Roma minority on the one hand and of the Slovak school system on the other, it is inevitable to support and launch effective alternative methods of education in cooperation of state organisations, NGOs, foreign partners and others. Alternative projects, in their conception, preparation, and realisation, contribute to the education of Roma students and support their general growth and development. They support effective cooperation between the Roma family and the school, and enable their own identity and culture to be applied. During the decade in which alternative education programmes has existed, hundreds of children have been given the chance to enrol in school in a different atmosphere and according to a different philosophy.

We can identify some alternative education projects in Slovakia, which were successfully approved as Good Practices. They still remain in the domain of non-governmental sector. Despite the fact that the most successful of the pilot projects have been incorporated also to state's policies on education (such as the Roma Assistant Project, the Zero-grades in Primary Schools Project), the NGO sector still plays a key role in this area and in a sense substitutes in many areas the role of the state.

We would like to introduce in detail two of them. Each of these two important projects is tackling different problems, the Roma majority face in their access to education – insufficient pre-school education and unfounded enrolment of Roma pupils to special needs schools.

Even though some positive steps in improving of equal chances of Roma children in their access to education have been taken, their results have thus far not been reflected in increasing the level of education of Roma youth. This is a difficult process that will take a long time to complete, and there are persisting problems in this area which need to be overcome. The basic pre-requisite for the further development of Roma students is the use in practice of the basic principles tested by the alternative education projects. This requires further training of teachers and Roma assistants, support for the relationship between the family and the school, and the use of specific educational methods, forms, and tools enabling the specific potential of Roma students to be identified and developed. At all levels of the Slovak school system, it is necessary to respect the rights of the individual – the child – to education according to his/her abilities, thus ensuring their future, independence, self-fulfilment, and satisfaction.

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3. Introduction

The Constitution of the Slovak Republic guarantees equal access to education to all citizens of the Slovak Republic. At the same time, the Constitution grants the right to develop their culture and to have the opportunity to be educated in their mother language to all members of ethnic minorities.

Each ethnic minority in Slovakia, however, is in a different situation in terms of size, concentration and location. In practice this means that more numerous minorities enjoy greater opportunities to be educated in their mother language. Out of all the minorities living in Slovakia, the situation of the Roma minority is highly specific. The censuses conducted in the past have shown that the Roma population represents only 1.67% of the whole population. In reality, however, in terms of numbers the Roma minority is comparable to Hungarian minority.¹ However, in terms of access to education, the opportunities of members of the Roma minority to be educated in their mother language are markedly lower than is the case with Hungarian minority.

Interest of the state in providing education to Roma in their mother language has for a long time been merely on a declaratory level – this approach has been reflected in the average educational level attained by the Roma, which is markedly lower than that attained by the majority population. Many government adopted documents, concepts and legislative norms were never implemented.

The fact that in comparison with the majority population the Roma on average reach a lower educational attainment has had an effect on their social standing, position on the labour market and often can be attributed to the fact that members of Roma minority are subject to social exclusion. Domestic and foreign experts place emphasis on education of the Roma as a basic factor that would assist them in their integration into society.

In this report, we will focus primarily on education of Roma ethnic minority. The first part of the report contains an overview of legislative norms that define and regulates education of minorities in the Slovak Republic. The next part focuses on education of the Roma; the overall situation in education with focus on programmes and projects of governmental and non-governmental organisations. The part titled "Good Practices" describes several important projects that have served as models for implementation of various educational projects on a nation-wide level.

In the conclusions, we will attempt to evaluate the overall situation in education, and point out shortcomings and challenges in this area.

¹ A big portion of the Roma population has not declared affiliation with Roma ethnic group. This is caused by several factors. One of such factors are the policies of the state prior to 1989, which has not officially recognised the Roma as an ethnic minority and by adopting specific measures was attempting to assimilate it into society. Persisting crisis of ethnic identity of Roma is also a consequence of these policies. Yet another factor is the low educational level attained by Roma and the resultant fact that the Roma often do not differentiate between their ethnic and state affiliation. Furthermore, it can also be in part due to a worry by the Roma over misuse of personal data against them. In 2001, approximately 89, 920 Roma have affiliated themselves with Roma nationality in a nation-wide census. According to some estimates, this number is somewhere between 350,000 – 500, 000 (approximately 8% of the population).

From a theoretical and methodological point of view, we consider as relevant to not only describe the legislation that provides rights of individual ethnic minorities to education, but also the practical level of the issues at hand, i.e. how the possibilities of education as they are defined by the legislation translate into practice. Due to the fact that the provisions of legislation on rights of ethnic minorities can be considered as sufficient, in the part detailing with its practical implementation we have focused on the areas where the conditions for education exist de jure, but de facto are not fulfilled. Aside from these two levels of analysis, we focus in the report on documents activities and events which, in our opinion, have significantly influenced the improvement in terms of access of minorities to education. Based on analysis of the legislation, the functioning of the system of education as it occurs in practice, and developments that have led to the improvement of access of minorities to education, we formulate in the final part of the report several recommendations for education of minorities. In the process of analysis of education of minorities we have utilised a variety of information sources available and drew on sociological research carried out in Slovakia, legal analyses, legislation, governmental materials, expert findings and various statistical data available on the topic.

4. Legislation and policies in the area of minority schooling

4.1. LEGISLATION

The education of members of minorities in Slovakia is not addressed specifically by any law that would focus primarily on this issue. It is however addressed by international documents ratified by the Slovak Republic, as well as the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. Further, there are other legislative norms partially addressing the issue of education of members of ethnic minorities.

Among the international documents ratified by the Slovak Republic, it is necessary to mention two of them that make such provisions: **Framework Agreement of Council of Europe on Protection of Ethnic Minorities** signed by the Slovak Republic on 1 February 1995 in Strasbourg and ratified by the National Council of the Slovak Republic on 21 June 1995 and **European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages** (hereafter referred to as Charter), signed on 20 February 2001 in Strasbourg and effective 1 January 2002. Moreover, in December 2002, the ministry of foreign affairs of the Slovak Republic released the first report on the implementation of the Charter.

Individual articles of the Charter were ratified. In practice this means that there is officially a differentiated approach to different ethnic minorities in Slovakia based on the number of members of each minority. Factors that have entered into consideration in this classification included namely the size of the minority, as well as its regional distribution. According to the extent of individual ethnic minorities' rights on the usage of their native language, minority languages are divided into the following three groups²:

² Out of 26 possible provisions of Article 8 of the Charter related to the following: nine provisions (Article 8, paragraph 1 letter a/ iii; b/ iii; c/ iii; d/ iii; e/ ii; f/ ii; g/; h/; i) for the languages Bulgarian, Czech, Croatian, German,

- Hungarian language;
- Ukrainian and Ruthenian languages;
- Bulgarian, Czech, Croatian, Polish, German, and Roma languages.

In terms of education, this division of languages into groups translates into unequal opportunities for members of certain minorities to be educated in their native tongue. It also means that the right of the Hungarian minority to be educated (on all levels of the education system) in the native language has been recognised. In regards to the third group of languages, the Charter guarantees the minorities the right to be educated in their native language *if* the members of the minority request it. The broadest rights in native language usage were afforded to the Hungarian minority.

Reports on the implementation of the Charter for the year 2002 and 2003 submitted by the Slovak Republic on education of minorities do not contain any mention of problems and/or shortcomings that would be necessary to address. Many experts, however, take a view that the implementation of individual articles of the Charter into practice would not be unproblematic. There have been concerns expressed specifically in terms of its effect on education of members of Roma ethnic minority in their mother tongue. The Centre for Legal Analysis (CLA) affiliated with Kalligram Foundation has prepared an alternative report on the implementation of the Charter. In regards to education, the report states that its implementation is problematic in terms of upholding the rights of the Roma minority. The report states the following on this issue: “The right for education in the native language for members of all national minorities in Slovakia is secured by the Constitution of Slovak republic. Even though this rule is valid for all minorities, including the Roma minority, the Act no. 29/1984 on the network of primary and secondary schools does not include the Roma as a minority with the right for education in their native language. In Slovakia, there is no network of primary or secondary schools supported by the state that would provide education in the Roma language. There seem to be two main reasons for this – first, a general doubt about the effectiveness of education in the Roma language and, second, uncertainty related to the state of codification of the Roma language. The Slovak government states that there is a lack of interest on the side of Roma parents as well. Even though the Roma language is not used as an official language of education in any schools, it is used by Roma assistants and as a second language in kindergartens and pre-school education in areas with large population of Roma children.”³

The rights of members of ethnic minorities are guaranteed also by the **Constitution of the Slovak Republic** (Part 2 – Fundamental Rights and Freedoms), which in article No. 34 recognises the right of members of ethnic minorities to be educated in their mother tongue, to establish educational facilities for minorities and use the minority language in official communication (for an exact citation of the article in the Constitution, see Annex 1).

Polish, and Roma; 9 provisions (Article 8, paragraph 1, letter a/ ii; b/ ii; c/ ii; d/ ii; e/ ii; f/ ii; g/; h/; i/) for the languages Ruthenian and Ukrainian and nine provisions (Article 8, paragraph 1, letter a/ i; b/ i; c/ i; d/ i; e/ i; f/ i; g/; h/; i/) for Hungarian.

³ Center for Legal Analyses - Kalligram Foundation (2003), Implementation of European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages in Slovak Republic, available at: http://www.cla.sk/projects/project.php?melyik=language_policy&nyelv=en, (29.1.2004)

It is necessary to mention the following legislative norms of a lower legal force touching on education of minorities:

LAW NO. 184/1999 OF THE LEGAL CODE ON USAGE OF LANGUAGES OF ETHNIC MINORITIES

The usage of languages of ethnic minorities is described and regulated by provisions of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic and several laws and legislative norms, as well as binding international agreements. The adoption of law No. 270/1995 of the legal code on official language represented a negative development in this area. Despite the fact that in 1999, law No. 184/1999 of the legal code on usage of minority languages was adopted allowing and regulating the usage of ethnic minorities in official contact, all deformations and limitations on usage of minority languages which were introduced in the Law on official language were not eliminated.

LAW NO. 29/1984 OF THE LEGAL CODE ON PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS (AS CONTAINED IN LEGISLATION ADOPTED THEREAFTER)

A law on the system of primary and secondary education that has undergone several amendments defines also the right of members of ethnic minorities to be educated in minority languages. It clearly guarantees this right only to members of Czech, Hungarian, German, Polish, Ukrainian and Ruthenian nationality.⁴

LAW ON ETHNIC MINORITIES

This law on the status of ethnic minorities has not been adopted so far, even though in the plan of legislative tasks of the government for the year 2003 a proposal for a legislative amendment on the status of ethnic minorities in the society has been outlined, providing adequate legal environment for the development of their national identity and defining the status of ethnic minority. At the time of writing this report, the proposal of the legislative amendment has not been released.

ANTIDISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION

Discrimination of minorities in education is not defined and regulated by any legislative provision in effect in the Slovak Republic. This area should be regulated by antidiscrimination legislation whose adoption by the Slovak Republic is also a requirement imposed by the European Union. Discrimination in education should be addressed along with other areas of public and private life where it has occurred and can occur in the future. Adoption of antidiscrimination legislation is complicated by various political positions of the parties of ruling coalition – namely the row between the Christian Democratic Movement (*Kresťansko-demokratické hnutie* – KDH) and liberally-

⁴ Law No. 29/1984 of the legal code on primary schools and secondary schools (as contained in legislation adopted thereafter) defines and regulates the education of minorities. Paragraph 3, Article 1 contains the following provisions: Upbringing and education take place in official language. 1) Citizens of Czech, Hungarian, German, Polish and Ukrainian (Ruthenian) nationality are afforded the right commensurate with their interest in national development to be educated in their mother tongue.

oriented Alliance of New Citizen (*Aliancia nového občana* – ANO). At the same time, the issue has brought to surface a discourse on an expert level and has resulted in a part of the ruling coalition and opposition pushing for the adoption of a kind of anti-discriminatory law in opposition to a proposal by the Minister of Justice to amend the existing legislation and include in it anti-discriminatory provisions. In the middle of January 2004, the Minister of Justice Daniel Lipšic has come to an agreement with Vice-Prime Minister Pál Csáky to formulate and present in the parliament an anti-discrimination law and other proposals of amendment to 14 existing legislative norms⁵.

4.2. CONCEPTS AND POLICIES IN THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION OF MINORITIES

Basic conceptual materials of the ministry of education addressing education include the *Conception of development of upbringing and education in the Slovak Republic for the next 15-20 years (Project Millennium)* and the *National Programme of Upbringing in the Slovak Republic*. Both conceptual materials address the issue of education in general and do not specify in detail the possibilities of development in the area of minority education. Despite the fact that these are conceptual materials on the development of the educational system in Slovakia, they do not pay attention to the fact that Slovakia is gradually moving from being a transit country for refugees on their way to western countries toward becoming a country of destination of these refugees. Thus, it is possible in the future to expect increases in the number of various ethnic groups.

The ministry of education has not elaborated a conceptual material yet that would be devoted to the issue of education of ethnic minorities. Presently, the Department of Ethnic Groups Education at the ministry of education is in the process of elaborating the *Concept of Education of Roma Children and Pupils* scheduled to be submitted to the cabinet for discussion in February 2004. It is expected that the concepts will provide guidelines for the development of education of Roma children, since at present time it is not clear whether a network of Roma schools should be created (a model similar to Hungarian minority schools), or whether measures such as affirmative action will be adopted to eliminate the handicap of Roma children in education.⁶ The latter option – i.e. implementation of “equalising” measures – is discussed in the conceptual material *Basic Concept of policies of the Government of the Slovak Republic in Integration of Roma Communities* that was elaborated by the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities and approved by the government of the Slovak Republic in April 2003. The document focuses on measures that would level the chances of Roma children with those of other minority and majority population in their access to education.⁷ The document also contains a mention of the right of members of Roma

⁵ Csáky a Lipšic chcú spolu predložiť antidiskriminačnú legislatívu (Csáky and Lipšic Plan to Submit to the Cabinet Antidiscrimination Legislation), in: Slovenská tlačová agentúra SITA, (15.1.2004)

⁶ Kumanová, Z. (2003) Do Európy konečne s novou koncepciou vzdelávania rómskych detí? (Entering Europe (at last) with the new Concept of Education of Roma Children?), in: Romano Nevo Lil, (10.11.2003), p. 11

⁷ Slovakia, Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky (2003), Základné tézy koncepcie politiky vlády SR v integrácii rómskych komunit, uznesenie vlády č. 278/2003 (Basic Principles of the Policies of the Government of the Slovak Republic on Integration of Roma Communities, Resolution of the Government, No. 278/2003), available at: http://www.government.gov.sk/orgovanova/dokumenty/4zakladne_tezy.rtf

ethnic minority to be educated in their mother tongue; however, the process of exercising this right will be a gradual and a long-term.⁸

4.3. SYSTEM OF EDUCATION OF ETHNIC GROUPS

As was mentioned above, in Slovakia there is a system of differentiated approach to individual minority groups on education. This approach on a practical level means that members of ethnic groups living in Slovakia do not have equal rights and opportunities to be educated in their native language as members of other minorities or majority population. This differentiated approach toward minorities on education is also reflected in the structure of the system of education of ethnic groups in Slovakia.

Pre-school education of children in Slovakia takes place in kindergartens, which can be established by state, district, religious denominations, or other subjects. During the school year 2002/2003 there was a total of 3206 kindergartens. In 87.4% of these, the education took place in Slovak, in 11.6% of schools in both Hungarian and Slovak, and in 1.1% of kindergartens the Ukrainian language was used. Other languages were used not as languages of direct communication, but as support languages to improve communication (The ethnic composition of pupils is contained in Table 2 in Annex 2).

On the primary level of education, the situation is similar as in kindergartens. Members of Hungarian minority enjoy the possibility to use their mother tongue for the whole duration of the educational process, or at least its part, followed by Ukrainian and German minorities. In 12.4% of primary education facilities, the language used is both Hungarian and Slovak or just Hungarian; in eight schools out of the total (0.3%) Ukrainian or both Ukrainian and Slovak are used; and in one primary school (0.04%) education is in German. (The overview of schools and ethnic composition of pupils in the primary level of education can be found in Table 3 and 4 in Annex 2).

Secondary education in Slovakia includes grammar schools (in Central Europe called also gymnasiums), specialised secondary schools⁹ and vocational secondary schools.¹⁰ In the

⁸ To meet the obligation to the Roma ethnic group to be educated in the mother language, if the Roma show interest in such an education is complicated. There are several reasons for this: Despite the fact that pedagogical employees are being trained at University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra with focus on Roma culture, there is still a shortage of teachers who would be capable and willing to teach Roma children and who speak the Roma language. Presently, issues around the Roma language itself are being addressed. The language was codified in 1971; however, for educational purposes this form is inadequate. The Roma language in Slovakia has many regional dialects, which makes it especially hard to create scripts for the teaching of the language and issue textbooks that could be used in all of Slovakia. Presently, there is an experimental evaluation of the Roma language underway on its usage in the educational system at two primary schools and two secondary schools. The aim is to propose scripts and methodological materials for the teaching of the Roma language. It is expected that these will have to take into account regional differences between individual dialects of the Roma language.

⁹ Subject to the current School Act the mission of secondary specialised schools is to prepare industrial and technical employees at a secondary educational level for the needs of the labour market, practical life and at the same time, also for their subsequent university or further education. Secondary specialised schools educate specialists for individual industries, such as construction, transportation, agriculture, food industry, services, economics, financial sector, culture, state administration and other areas of social life (Slovakia, Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky [2002], Vzdelávací systém na Slovensku [Educational System in Slovakia], available at: http://www.uips.sk/download/ine_zdroje/edusyssk.doc [29.1.2004]).

¹⁰ The objective of secondary vocational schools is to prepare graduates for qualified performance in working professions in all industries of the national economy. Education and training comprises general and vocational part. The education mainly consists of its vocational part with vocational (practical) training, which forms the

school year 2002/2003, there were 220 grammar schools. In 25 of these, education took place either in Hungarian or both Hungarian and Slovak language. Only one grammar school had education in Ukrainian. Education in other minority language was not offered. Aside from the mentioned grammar schools, there are also bilingual institutions, where education takes place in foreign language along with Slovak. In the same year (2002/2003), there were a total of 278 specialised secondary schools. In 24 out of these education took place in Hungarian, or both Hungarian and Slovak language. At two schools, the students had the opportunity to be educated in German. Education in Roma language took place only at one specialised secondary school of art in Košice. Out of the total number of vocational secondary schools (300), education in a minority language – Hungarian – takes place at 31 facilities. There are no other minority languages used (for an ethnic representation of pupils see Table 6 in Annex 2).

Aside from the mentioned educational institutions, there is also a system of special needs schools for mentally handicapped children. These schools are also divided up into kindergartens, primary and secondary education facilities. During the school year 2002/2003 there was a total of 444 of these facilities. The educational process in these schools takes place in the official language – only in 35 facilities out of the total number of 444 Hungarian language or both Hungarian or Slovak language are used in the educational process. Education in any other minority language is not taking place despite the fact that 7.5% of all children are of Roma ethnicity (for comparison: in other schools, this share is only 0.55%). The Roma language is being used only as a support language to improve communication (the overview of specialised schools and ethnic composition of pupils can be found in Table 7 and Table 8 in Annex 2).

A separate system of University education with a minority language as language of instruction has so far not existed in Slovakia. However, this is changing. In March 2003, the government of the Slovak Republic has approved the establishment of a Hungarian University in Komárno (University of János Selye). It was officially founded in the beginning of 2004. This university was founded for reasons to raise the educational level of members of Hungarian ethnic minority in Slovakia. Within the state financed system of college education, preparation of teachers is underway in the instruction in minority language. The teachers, who will be instructing students at institutions of Hungarian primary and secondary education, are being trained at the University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra, the Comenius University in Bratislava and the University of Matej Bell in Banská Bystrica. In 1990, the department of Roma culture was established at the University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra, which trains first grade teachers with focus on Roma culture and social workers for work with Roma communities. Teachers for the Ukrainian ethnic group are being trained at Prešov University at the Department of Ukrainian Language and Literature. Pedagogical employees for the German minority get their training at the University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra.

basis of profiles of graduates. Training takes place in more than 600 training and educational courses and their specialisation, which reflect the system of working professions and specialisation (Slovakia, Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky [2002], Vzdelávací systém na Slovensku [Educational System in Slovakia], available at: http://www.uips.sk/download/ine_zdroje/edusysk.doc [29.1.2004]).

5. Minority schooling in “practice”

5.1. EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN SLOVAKIA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EDUCATION OF THE ROMA

As was already mentioned in the beginning of this report, the Roma represent the second most numerous ethnic minority in Slovakia. At the same time, they represent the poorest group of inhabitants, which is to a great extent excluded from participation in many socio-economic processes in the society and is confronted with a differential treatment by the majority population. This persistent exclusion, aside from other areas, applies specially to education. These are the reasons why the educational system should be designed in a way so that the Roma will have equal access to education as is the case with other ethnic minorities in Slovakia. At the same time, specific programmes aimed at increasing the educational level of the Roma are needed.¹¹

Ethnic minorities in Slovakia have a right based on the Constitution to be educated in their mother tongue, should they show interest in such an education. The Slovak Republic has also adopted the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages that upholds this right. However, at the present time the education in minority languages that takes place in Slovakia includes only Hungarian and Ukrainian. The situation of the Roma language is highly specific, due to the problems associated with its usage. There are several reasons for this. At present time, approximately 60% of the Roma use the Roma language in day-to-day communication¹² (see Graph 3 in Annex 4). The Roma who use it include mostly those living in eastern Slovakia. The form of the codified Roma language (codified in 1971) was based on a Roma dialect, which is used by a minority of Roma living in western Slovakia. This dialect is incomprehensible to the eastern Slovakian Roma and using this dialect for educational purposes thus would be highly ineffective. Another reason is also the fact that the Roma themselves do not show a huge interest in being educated in the Roma language (see Graph 5 in Annex 4). On the other hand, it is the right of the Roma as an ethnic group to use the language also in the educational process. In practice, this means that even if the Roma show interest in education in the Roma language, they will not have this opportunity. Presently, there are attempts at re-codification of the Roma language – in 2002 Roma grammar textbook was published, which is a precondition for the re-codification of the Roma language. Based on this grammar, it is possible to use the Roma language in the educational process (see also ACT/SK/0138).

¹¹ In this regard, attention needs to be paid to the factor of social exclusion, which is not as prevalent in other ethnic groups living in Slovakia, but is especially afflicting the Roma population.

¹² Findings of international comparative research Roma Human Development Project in the Slovak Republic, available at: http://www.ivo.sk/mensiny_vyskum/UNDP/Index.htm (29.1.2004)

5.2. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES OF ROMA AT INDIVIDUAL LEVELS OF THE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

Pre-school education is not directly a part of the educational system of the Slovak Republic. Its aim -primarily in connection with the education of the Roma - is of such importance and it is necessary to devote attention to it. It is often the case that Roma children enter into compulsory school attendance badly prepared. This means that they do not speak Slovak; do not know how to write; they are having problems with paying attention. These handicaps are thus reflected in their performance in school. One of the ways how to overcome these handicaps is to prepare children prior to their mandatory school attendance. Prior to 1989, pre-school education in Slovakia was mandatory – during the nineties, since it is no longer mandatory, the attendance of kindergartens is rapidly decreasing. At present, out of all children attending kindergartens, the share of Roma children is only 3.41%. It is often the case that the parents or Roma children are not motivated to enrol their children in a pre-school facility. The reasons are often unemployment and the fact that it is more advantageous (primarily from a financial point of view) for the family when the children remain at home.¹³

This was the reason why several programmes were launched in Slovakia aimed at increasing the enrolment in kindergartens by Roma children, as well as projects aimed at improving the system of pre-school education with focus on the needs of the Roma minority.

In terms of pre-school education, the project “Mother and Child” is being implemented in Slovakia. The financial contribution to approximately 50 kindergartens attended predominantly by Roma children was provided by PHARE fund in cooperation with the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. The aim of the project is to engage Roma mothers in the educational process of their children and thus to better prepare children to begin compulsory school attendance. The project is based on the mother’s taking part in a daily educational process by assisting in the communication between the Roma community and the kindergarten.¹⁴

Presently, a negligible number of children are engaged in the pre-school education. The aim of the project is aside from providing schooling to children who presently attend kindergartens to also motivate other Roma parents to enrol their children in kindergartens. The allocated financial resources are also intended for material needs of kindergartens and are used for the purchase of necessary educational aids.¹⁵ This project was implemented thanks to activities of various non-governmental organisations and was carried out in several experimental pilot projects in various regions of Slovakia. They have served as “good practices” for measures to be implemented on a nation-wide level (see Chapter 5 in this Report).

¹³ Rigová, S. et al. (2003) The Roma in the Education System and Alternative Education Projects, in: Vašečka, M. (ed) Čačipen pal o Roma: A Global Report on Roma in Slovakia, Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, pp. 415-443

¹⁴ Jurásková, M., Kriglerová, E. (2004) Roma, in: Mesežnikov, G., Kollár, M. (eds) A Global report on the State of Society, Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, pp. 169

¹⁵ *ibid*, pp. 170

The PHARE project *Better Conditions for Roma Self-Realisation in Education System* carried out by the ministry of education of the Slovak Republic is another project that builds on experiences gained in the above-mentioned projects (see ACT/SK/0144). It includes the pre-school activity *Strengthening the Comprehensive Pre-school System for Roma Children by Employing Trained Roma Teacher's Assistants*. The focus here is on pre-school upbringing and education of Roma children.

Pre-school education is only one of the ways to prepare Roma children for the compulsory educational process and to improve their performance. It is also possible to narrow the gap in school performance by instituting a mandatory school attendance of the so-called “zero” or “preparatory” levels prior to entering first grade in primary schools.

ZERO-GRADES

Since 1992, a project of zero-grades has been implemented into practice with the aim of improving in school performance, fostering of positive relations toward school, education and further prospects of personal growth of children. The implementation of this system was met with a positive reaction from teachers, as well as parents of Roma children. The project was based on a promise that through an intensive, goal-oriented educational engagement by experienced teachers during a two-year cycle, it will be possible to improve the performance of pupils from a language and socially disadvantageous environment and to increase their chances of success in the first year in primary school.¹⁶ After the creation of a concept of a zero-grades and its approval by the ministry of education, an experimental investigation of its results took place. Its aim was to monitor select psychological indicators in pupils in selected schools with a high concentration of Roma pupils. Based on these results, we can conclude that the effectiveness of zero-grades (also known as preparatory levels) has led to improved writing skills, verbal expression and the fluency and richness of verbal expression and vocabulary of Roma pupils.

The ministry of education has prepared within the PHARE programme “Better Conditions for Roma – Self Realisation in Education System” materials on the implementation of the zero-grades programme in schools with a high concentration of Roma pupils from a socially disadvantaged background. The materials contain exact methodological procedures for teachers. The focus is being placed on the pupil and on getting to know better his/her social environment.¹⁷ The material takes adequate consideration of evaluation of the child’s abilities before enrolment in the compulsory educational system. In this regard, it is important to mention that the zero-grades are not intended solely for Roma children and are not intended for all Roma pupils. This principle prevents discrimination and practices of segregation, such as concentrating all Roma children in zero-grades.

¹⁶ Maczejková, M. et al. (2000) *Prípravný – nultý ročník v ZŠ pre šesťročné deti nepripravené pre úspešný vstup do školy* (The Preparatory/Zero Grade of the Primary School for 6-Year-Old Children Unprepared for Successful Enrolment at School), Prešov: Metodicko-pedagogické centrum, pp. 78

¹⁷ Slovakia, Ministerstvo školstva SR (2003), *Pracovný materiál pre nultý ročník základnej školy* (Working Paper for Zero-grade of Primary Education), available at: <http://www.education.gov.sk/sekcie/sei/phare/main/sk/projektsr/vystdoc/A2/uvod.pdf>, (29.1.2004)

PRIMARY EDUCATION – ROMA ASSISTANTS

At present, in the system of primary education the most important and most effective programme to improve the educational attainment of Roma pupils is the Roma teacher's assistants programme. Originally the project was carried out by non-governmental organisations and included locally-specific educational models that were implemented in different regions of Slovakia. These initiatives after some time of running have proven to be effective, which has led to the inception since 2002 of the project of teacher's assistants on a nation-wide level. By the end of 2002 the **Teacher's Assistant** project has been launched by the Young Roma Association in cooperation with the National Labour Bureau, which has provided financial support. Within the project scheme, approximately 200 Roma who were registered as unemployed and have shown interest in employment have participated in a re-training course. Roma teacher's assistants should serve as a sort of intermediaries between the Roma community and the school. Since many children prior to their enrolment in the first grade could not speak the Slovak language, it was the Roma assistants who became instrumental in overcoming the language barrier between the teacher and the pupils.¹⁸ Roma assistants cooperate with teachers directly in the classroom and are spending time with children during extra-curricular activities. An important component of their task includes also work with the family through visits.¹⁹ The institution of Roma teacher's assistants has been a success in many schools throughout Slovakia. It has been demonstrated that the assistants make it a lot easier for the Roma pupils to become involved in the educational process, since they are assisted by someone from their own community. The project has, even before its implementation, gone through an experimental review process within the project Acceleration of the Success of Roma Pupils carried out by Wide Open School Foundation.²⁰

The education of Roma pupils is also one of the priorities of the government of the Slovak Republic in the area of integration of Roma communities into the majority population. This is why it was possible in 2003 to include the teacher's assistants into the category of pedagogical employees, which in practice means that in the future these assistants will have the status of a teacher in the state administration.

SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS FOR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

The educational system in Slovakia includes special needs schools that are intended for children with a certain mental handicap. These children are not capable of completing the mandatory school enrolment and need care in specially equipped facilities. Transfer to these facilities is based on the results of psychological tests tailored to children with mental disabilities. The graduates of special primary schools usually attend specialised secondary schools or vocational training schools according to their abilities. Thus they have very limited prospects on the labour market due to the fact that they can perform only certain kinds of employment.

¹⁸ Jurásková, M., Kriglerová, E. (2004) Roma, in: Mesežnikov, G., Kollár, M. (eds) A Global report on the State of Society, Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, pp. 163-175

¹⁹ In this regard, it is important that if necessary, they are able to communicate with the parents in the Roma language

²⁰ Rigová, S. et al. (2003) The Roma in the Education System and Alternative Education Projects, in: Vašečka, M. (ed) Čačipen pal o Roma: A Global Report on Roma in Slovakia, Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, pp. 415-443

In Slovakia, it is often the case that Roma children are placed in these specialised educational facilities due to the fact that they have unsatisfactory results of psychological tests, or their teachers or parents feel that better care will be provided to them in special needs schools. As was mentioned above, Roma children (mostly from segregated Roma settlements) are not adequately prepared to begin compulsory school and often lag behind their peers in school performance. They often do not speak the Slovak language; cannot pay attention as long as other children, suffer from underdeveloped writing skills and have difficulties in focusing on one specific issue. These features, however, are not caused by a mental handicap, but by a sort of social handicap and cultural differences. Psychological tests, based on which the children are transferred to special needs schools, do not take these aspects into account (they are not culturally and socially sensitive). This is the reason why Roma children are usually diagnosed with mental handicaps.

Based on this diagnosis, they are placed in special needs schools. Here, we can speak of discrimination of Roma children because in some instances, they are being placed to special needs schools automatically and there are cases where there are special “Roma” schools created – often in the vicinity of Roma settlements. Such practices have very negative consequences for the children because placement in such schools de-facto pre-determines their status as a long term unemployed persons. Not much is being done to remedy the existing state of affairs. However, the ministry of education has asked the Research Centre of Psychology and Patho-psychology to create a new set of tests for the purposes of diagnosing children with special needs. Moreover, a project *Reintegration of Roma Students from the Socially and Educational Handicapped Environment of Special needs schools into the Majority Population* (see Chapter 5 in this report) is in a phase of experimental trials.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

The Roma, in general attain a lower educational level than the majority population. Almost 48% of the Roma (see Graph 2 in Annex 4) have completed grammar school as their highest educational level attained. Presently, the level of education attained is of higher importance for successful placement on the labour market than it was during socialism. Thus it is more important than ever to support Roma children in continuing their education after they reached the age of 16 (age for compulsory education). There is a low share of Roma in secondary schools and specialised training schools (about 3% of the total enrolment). Most Roma students are enrolled in vocational schools and specialised vocational schools – however, this makes only 8% of the total of the Roma population. Presently, there are several options available to the Roma students to supplement their education. However, these activities are not coordinated and supported in a systematic manner by the state. In the future, there are plans to found grammar schools focusing on the teaching of Roma language, history and culture. There are even less university students of Roma ethnicity, and there is a lack of courses offering Roma studies. In Slovakia, there is one department of Roma culture at the University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra (for details see NFP/SK/0063).

The role of European Union in education of Roma in Slovakia

Many activities and programmes aimed at improving the conditions for education of Roma children in Slovakia were possible primarily thanks to the financial support from the PHARE fund. It has been used for providing pre-accession assistance to non-governmental organisations, but most of all to the ministry of education through financial support of the project *Better Conditions for Roma – Self Realisation in Educational System* (see ACT/SK/144-147).

The Franco-Slovak twinning programme was approved in the framework of the financial memorandum of the year 2000, concluded between the Slovak Republic and the European Commission. The overall aim of this programme was to help the Slovak authorities to: “develop an interdepartmental (between ministries and between State/regions) policy in order to resolve the difficulties encountered by the Roma minority and to improve their situation”.

The objectives of the twinning programme between France and Slovakia were to support and reinforce the existing Slovak Government strategy for improving the situation of Roma communities and allow the co-ordination of the sector-based strategies implemented by the principal ministries involved in the problems faced by Roma people: Education, Employment, Housing and Health, within a single comprehensive policy.²¹

6. Good practices in SLOVAK national context

In the past several years, there have been significant advances made in the Slovak Republic in the fight against discrimination in the educational system and removing disadvantages in the minorities’ – mainly Roma – access to education. Despite this progress, some negative phenomena prevail. These require effective and well considered solutions.

Activities such as proposals for equal access of Roma to education, the dismantling of discriminatory practices, increasing the motivation of Roma and the involvement of parents in the educational process of their children still remain in the domain of the non-governmental sector. Despite the fact that the most successful pilot projects have been incorporated also to state’s policies on education, the NGO sector still plays a key role in this area and in a sense substitutes in many areas the role of the state.

In the following section, we will provide two examples of Good Practices that have contributed to a great extent to improving the chance of the Roma to succeed in the educational system in Slovakia.

²¹ Office of the Pre-Accession Adviser PHARE Twinning Programme (2003), Improvement of the situation of the Roma in The Slovak Republic- Final Report, available at: http://www.vlada.gov.sk/romovia/twinning/dokumenty/TwinnSK_Final_report_Eng.pdf, (29.1.2004)

6.1. THE HEJ RUP PROJECT OF HOME PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION OF ROMA CHILDREN WITH THE DIRECT INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS

The Hej Rup project, run by the Pro Familia NGO (NFP/SK/0058) tries to tackle two elementary social problems that affect the Roma population in particular. One problem is the increased rate of failure of Roma children in primary school, caused by their insufficient preparation for school (especially in terms of language), and the insufficient care and support they get from their parents. The second major problem is the high rate of unemployment among the Roma in some regions in Slovakia, and the absolute impossibility of acquiring qualifications or training to get a job.

- In this view, problems are perceived not as burdens but as positive challenges. The project strives to connect three negative and isolated phenomena:
- the low number of Roma children attending pre-school facilities;
- the growing number of Roma families with pre-school age children, in which one or both parents have been unemployed in the long term;
- kindergarten teachers losing their jobs.

In working with the family, this project rejects compensation in favour of support and development. Instead of uniformity, it strives for the tolerance of diversity, and supports independent decision-making and responsibility. The basic goals of the project follow from the aforementioned premises:

- to encourage Roma parents to positively influence the development of their children;
- to improve the preparedness of Roma children for enrolment in school, and thus increase their chances of success at school;
- to test a model of pre-school preparation for Roma children who do not attend a kindergarten, in which the schooling is carried out by Roma parents in the family environment under the guidance of a pre-school teacher.²²

In this way the project creates job opportunities for unemployed kindergarten teachers, offers an alternative activity to unemployed Roma parents who have the possibility to develop and improve their parenting abilities, and at the same time provides pre-school preparation to Roma children who do not attend a kindergarten. The project also includes group meetings with mothers and their children both outside the family and at home. The experience gathered during the project shows that the personality of the teacher is a substantial factor influencing the course and results of the project. The teacher's primary role is not to teach the child but to stimulate the mother to support her child. This requires special training of the kindergarten teachers to develop their ability to work with the parents.

After completing the programme, all children showed an improvement in the monitored aspects, yet the rate of improvement varied. Some 71.2% of the school-age children were

²² *ibid*, p. 4

able to be enrolled in school grades appropriate to their age. While only 41.2% of children could be schooled whose “home part” of the programme had been weak due to insufficient cooperation, in the group whose parents had cooperated well, 80% of the children were ready to start school (see ACT/SK/0128).²³

6.2. PROJECT THE REINTEGRATION OF ROMA STUDENTS FROM THE SOCIALLY AND EDUCATIONALLY HANDICAPPED ENVIRONMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS INTO THE MAJORITY POPULATION

Nadácia Škola dokorán (Wide Open School Foundation) is a nongovernmental organisation, which belongs to the key institutions in Slovakia in terms of creating, implementing and testing alternative educational projects for disadvantaged groups of the population (see NFP/SK/0019).

An important contribution of the foundation was to implement and apply the well-known methodology of alternative education called *Step-by-step*. They also verified the effectiveness of this methodology in practise. This methodology has contributed significantly to humanisation and democratisation of the educational system and provided a real opportunity for a multicultural approach to pedagogical approaches, to accepting socio-cultural differences of Roma children and support of development of each individual pupil’s potential.

The philosophical and theoretical basis for the methodology is an approach of understanding upbringing and education as a process in which it is necessary to develop cognitive, emotional, social and physical development of the pupil. Individual approach and focus on the personality of the pupil has translated into the project in the form of a change in organisation of education and the role of the teacher. The teacher directs and organises the activities of pupils in such a way that he provides the necessary conditions. The projects helps pupils to reach cultural and educational aims through clearly formulated expectations, through having faith in their abilities and allowing them to reach their goals by an approach of their choice.²⁴

In line with the approved methodology *Step-by-Step*, the foundation has carried out other important alternative educational projects for Roma, such as *The Acceleration of the School Success of Roma Students* and *The Reintegration of Roma Students from the Socially and Educationally Handicapped Environment of Special needs schools into the Majority Population*.

The firstly mentioned project was also implemented into the legislation and resulted in the creation of a position of Roma teacher’s assistant (see Chapter 4 in this Report). This project is discussed in detail in the previous chapter, thus we will not discuss it here. In this part, we will focus on the

²³ *ibid*, p. 5

²⁴ Nadácia Škola dokorán (2000), Krok za krokom: Alternatívna metodická príručka pre I. stupeň základnej školy (*Step-by-Step: An Alternative Methodology Handbook for the First Grade of Primary School*), pp. 7-9

second important project of the foundation – the fight against a harmful and undesirable phenomenon of unfounded transfers of Roma pupils to special needs schools.

The project Reintegration of Roma Students from the Socially and Educationally Handicapped Environment of Special needs schools into the Majority Population (ACT/SK/0133) focuses on the need for the humanisation and equality of educational opportunities and chances for all children. It tries to identify Roma students who were put into special needs schools without justification. The aim is to improve their school results and re-integrate them into the primary school system within three years, as well as to develop a functional model of school success for Roma students. The project is based on the assumption that if favourable conditions were created among Roma students for teaching and learning, then most pupils would be able to study at primary schools and achieve appropriate results according to the curriculum. The project attempts to implement the following:

- changing special primary school curricula using the curricula of regular primary schools;
- using the Step-by-Step method as a way to pass on educational content;
- training teachers and administrative workers participating in the project in anti-prejudice methods;
- using appropriate methods to support knowledge of the official language
- involving a Roma teaching assistant in each class.²⁵

In keeping with the above goals, the teachers taught the children inner freedom, to search for their own identities, to accept responsibility, to make decisions, as well as social skills such as tolerance, patience for people, respect for their own lives and Roma culture, etc. The essence of the teacher's work lay in taking an individual approach to the students. The pupil is the centre of attention, while the parents are partners in educating their children. The teachers and the Roma assistants created an environment that enabled the Roma community to feel closer to the educational process by showing the parents that they were welcome at the school. Besides the work of the teacher, the Roma assistant's role was also very important. The assistant helped in the class by translating for Roma students who did not speak the official language, serving as a role model, mediating between the school and the family, and integrating the Roma language, culture and history into the school setting. The teacher and the Roma assistant used various methods to educate the bilingual students.

The project was put through a trial run to determine the extent to which the Step-by-Step method worked with Roma students from special needs schools and the extent to which the work of the Roma assistant helped accelerate the school success of Roma students, as well as whether the methods improved the social climate at the school or improved cooperation between the school and the family. The aim of the test was to acquire sufficient information so changes could be made in the practice of putting Roma students into special needs schools. The research sample included 74 Roma students from five experimental and five reference classes.²⁶ The results of test are included in Annex 5.

²⁵ Rigová, S. et al. (2003) The Roma in the Education System and Alternative Education Projects, in: Vašečka, M. (ed) Čačipen pal o Roma: A Global Report on Roma in Slovakia, Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, p. 433

²⁶ *ibid*, p. 434

7. Conclusions AND critical remarks

The level of education attained by the Roma in Slovakia is generally low (see Graph 2 in Annex 4). This fact has a negative effect on the possibilities of full integration of the members of the Roma ethnic group into society. According to numerous experts, it is predominantly the policies on education that are key to solving a broad range of problems afflicting the Roma population.

Equal access of the Roma to education, however, is prevented by a great number of barriers. School as it functions today is perceived by Roma children as a complicated, unknown, and formal environment that does not take into consideration the multicultural composition of the Slovak society. Moreover, this environment is often marked by negative sentiment toward the Roma. Inequality of opportunities of Roma children in access to education is caused primarily by the following factors:

- The curriculum texts and teaching methods reflect primarily values and expectations of the majority population, which does not provide sufficient room for development of talents and skills of Roma children;
- The teachers are not sufficiently prepared to handle education in a multicultural classroom;
- The children are not sufficiently prepared to comprehend the teacher's instructions in the official language, they have a poor motivation, and do not have role models that would lead them toward education;
- The teachers are not bound by any methodological guidelines that would require them to use Roma language during the educational process; if they find out that Roma children have trouble understanding Slovak, or other alternative teaching methods fail, it is only up to their good will to get closer to a Roma pupil and to select an innovative approach to teaching;
- It is often the case that Roma children have to travel several kilometres to attend school, which in light of the lower socio-economic status of their families represents a significant barrier and often is the cause of their transfer to special needs schools that are located closer to where they reside.²⁷

Within the last several years, it was possible to identify several positive steps that were taken in terms of democratisation and liberalisation of the school system. These were brought about primarily through activities of the Ministry of education of the Slovak Republic (see NFP/SK/0062), the National Institute for Education and above all, non-governmental organisations.

As most significant changes we can cite the following steps:

- To support the idea of multiculturalism in the system of education, with focus on history, culture and the way of life of ethnic minorities living in Slovakia. At the same time, it is important to lead pupils in the educational process to tolerance

²⁷ Slovakia, Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky (2003), Základné tézy koncepcie politiky vlády SR v integrácii rómskych komunit, uznesenie vlády č. 278/2003 (Basic Principles of the Policies of the Government of the Slovak Republic on Integration of Roma Communities, Resolution of the Government, No. 278/2003), available at: http://www.government.gov.sk/orgovanova/dokumenty/4zakladne_tezy.rtf

toward ethnic diversity, especially in connection with the increasing number of migrants on Slovakia's territory.²⁸

- To provide equal opportunities to be educated in mother tongue to all members of ethnic minorities to whom this law applies.
- To monitor the educational level attained by members of ethnic minorities and in case this level does not reach the educational level of majority population to adopt measures leading to its improvement. These measures should be thoroughly explained to the majority population and presented as necessary measures to increase the level of education attained by minorities, as opposed to measures favouring minority population over majority²⁹.
- The implementation of several projects aimed at improving the access of Roma children to education by adopting new educational methods. This includes mostly projects carried out in cooperation with non-governmental organisations such as School Wide Open Foundation, Young Roma Association, Project Schola, and others.;
- Experimental evaluation of the usage of Roma language in the educational process carried out by State Pedagogical Institute, but also by many non-governmental organisations. The result of this endeavour should lead to fulfilment of rights of members of Roma minority to be educated in their mother tongue and thus assist them in overcoming language barriers in the school environment.
- Creation of a good concept for improving the system of education of Roma minority through integrated community models of education and combining formal (school-based) and informal (community-based) activities at the Secretariat of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities (see NFP/SK/0020);
- The role of Department of Roma Culture and creation of several satellite offices;
- Publication of several textbooks, which can be used by teachers in the educational process. These include grammar textbook of Roma language and key to its usage; textbook of Roma history (see PUB/SK/0067), Roma reading book "Romano Hangoro" (see PUB/SK/103), Roma reading book "Geni Barica" (see PUB/SK/102), textbook "People in a Roma Family" (see PUB/SK/0091).³⁰

Even though these positive steps have been taken, their results have so far not been reflected in increasing the level of education of Roma youth. This is a difficult process that will take a long time to complete, and there are persisting problems in this area which need to be overcome. At the same time, it needs to be mentioned that the whole situation in the educational system as such is unfavourable and marked by shortage of financial resources available, which causes drain of young capable teachers into more lucrative employments, and decreases the willingness for their

²⁸ There was a lively discussion taking place in Slovakia on establishment of a Hungarian University. One of the reasons for its founding that was cited is a long-term lower level of education of Hungarian minority attained in comparison to the majority population. However, overall the public has understood its establishment in terms of favoring Hungarian minority over the majority population.

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³⁰ Ibid.

Radičová, I. (2001) *Hic Sunt Romales*, Bratislava. Fulbright Commission, pp. 133-150

greater engagement in the educational process. There is also a persistent problem of a lack of textbooks and teaching aids for special education in classes with Roma children.

Widespread and persistent negative phenomena include an inadequate approach of pedagogical employees to Roma pupils, labelling of Roma children as incapable, hard to manage, intellectually below average. This approach has detrimental consequence, such as lower expectations from teachers when it comes to the performance of Roma pupils, which in turn leads to frequent transfers of these pupils to special needs schools.

The majority of the Roma population is confronted with problems of access to education, however, the situation of children from segregated settlements is even more grave. They are often confronted with a situation marked by a very low standard of schools, which are also ethnically homogeneous, since they are attended by mostly children from Roma settlements.

Education is the one key area where support by parents and their involvement in the process of education of their children is missing. The parents often do not realise the correlation between education and placement on a labour market; they usually do not motivate their children to gain a higher level of education. In times when the focus is placed on survival and material aspects of existence, education is perceived more as a responsibility towards the state in which they live, as opposed to a responsibility to their children.

Moreover, due to absence of effective and active policies of labour market, high unemployment persists in marginalised regions also among educated members of majority in the population. This serves as a de-motivating factor for the Roma, and serves to reinforce their belief that education is not directly linked with social mobility.

Changes and reforms in the area of education which Slovakia has embarked upon are perceived by many experts as positive and they need to continue.

8. ANNEX 1

Constitution of Slovak Republic

Part II – Fundamental Rights and Freedoms

Chapter Four - The Rights of National Minorities and Ethnic Groups

ARTICLE 33

Membership in any national minority or ethnic group may not be used to the detriment of any individual.

ARTICLE 34

- (1) Citizens of national minorities or ethnic groups in the Slovak Republic shall be guaranteed their full development, particularly the rights to promote their cultural heritage with other citizens of the same national minority or ethnic group, receive and disseminate information in their mother tongues, form associations, and create and maintain educational and cultural institutions. Details thereof shall be fixed by law.
- (2) In addition to the right to learn the official language, the citizens of national minorities or ethnic groups shall, under provisions fixed by law, also be guaranteed:
 - a) the right to be educated in a minority language,
 - b) the right to use a minority language in official communications,
 - c) the right to participate in decision-making in matters affecting the national minorities and ethnic groups.
- (3) The exercise of rights by citizens of a national minority guaranteed by this Constitution may not threaten the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Slovak Republic or discriminate against other citizens.

9. ANNEX 2

The overview of minority schools and ethnic composition of pupils in Slovak republic in the school year 2002/2003.

Table 1 Overview of the number of kindergartens and pupils according to the language of instruction

Language	Number of Kindergartens	Number of pupils
Slovak	2,826	140,938
Hungarian	275	9,484
Slovak-Hungarian	98	
Ukrainian	33	700
Slovak-Ukrainian	3	
Together	3,235	151,122

Source of the data: Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, available at: <http://www.education.gov.sk>.

Table 2 Children in Kindergartens according to nationality

Nationality	Total number of children	Share of children in percentage
Slovak	137,478	90.97
Hungarian	11,894	7.87
Roma	1,121	0.74
Foreign	191	0.13
Ukrainian	179	0.12
Other	136	0.09
Czech, Moravian Selezian	61	0.04
Ruthenian	45	0.03
German	14	0.01
Polish	3	0.00
Total	151,122	100,00

Source of the data: Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, available at: <http://www.education.gov.sk>.

Table 3 Overview of the number of primary schools and pupils according to the language of instruction

Language	Number of schools	Number of pupils
Slovak	2,090	562,423
Hungarian	259	39,347
Slovak-Hungarian	37	
Ukrainian	6	450
Slovak-Ukrainian	2	
German	1	53
Other	1	87
Total	2396	602360

Source of the data: Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, available at: <http://www.education.gov.sk>.

Table 4 Pupils in primary schools according to nationality

Nationality	Number of pupils	Share of pupils in percentage
Slovak	547,585	90.91
Hungarian	47,342	7.86
Roma	4,255	0.71
Foreign	916	0.15
Czech, Moravian Selezian	901	0.15
Ukrainian	505	0.08
Other	453	0.08
Ruthinian	258	0.04
German	106	0.02
Polish	39	0.01
Total	602,360	100.00

Source of the data: Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, available at: <http://www.education.gov.sk>.

Table 5 The overview of secondary schools and pupils according to the language of instruction

Language	Grammar schools		Specialised secondary schools		Vocational secondary schools	
	Number of schools	Number of pupils	Number of schools	Number of pupils	Number of schools	Number of pupils
Slovak	169	81,645	252	79,360	269	81,095
Slovak - bilingual	24	4,403	0	0	0	0
Hungarian	17	5,449	8	3,691	10	1,798
Slovak-Hungarian	8		16		21	6,244
Ukrainian	1	122	0	0	0	0
Slovak-German	0	0	2	302	0	0
Other	1	42	0	0	0	0
Total	220	91,661	278	83,353	300	89,137

Source of the data: Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, available at: <http://www.education.gov.sk>.

Table 6 Pupils in secondary schools according to nationality

Nationality	Grammar schools		Specialised secondary schools		Vocational secondary schools	
	Absolute numbers	Share in percentage	Absolute numbers	Share in percentage	Absolute numbers	Share in percentage
Czech, Moravian, Selezian	250	0.27	178	0.21	158	0.18
Slovak	84283	91.95	76765	92.10	80664	90.49
Ukrainian	113	0.12	62	0.07	68	0.08
Ruthenian	87	0.09	33	0.04	36	0.04
Hungarian	6573	7.17	6064	7.28	8033	9.01
Polish	15	0.02	8	0.01	6	0.01
German	33	0.04	17	0.02	8	0.01
Roma	6	0.01	100	0.12	85	0.10
Other	88	0.10	30	0.04	19	0.02
Foreign	213	0.23	96	0.12	60	0.07
Total	91661	100,00	83353	100,00	89137	100,00

Source of the data: Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, available at: <http://www.education.gov.sk>.

Table 7 Overview of special needs schools (kindergartens, primary and secondary education) according to the language of instruction

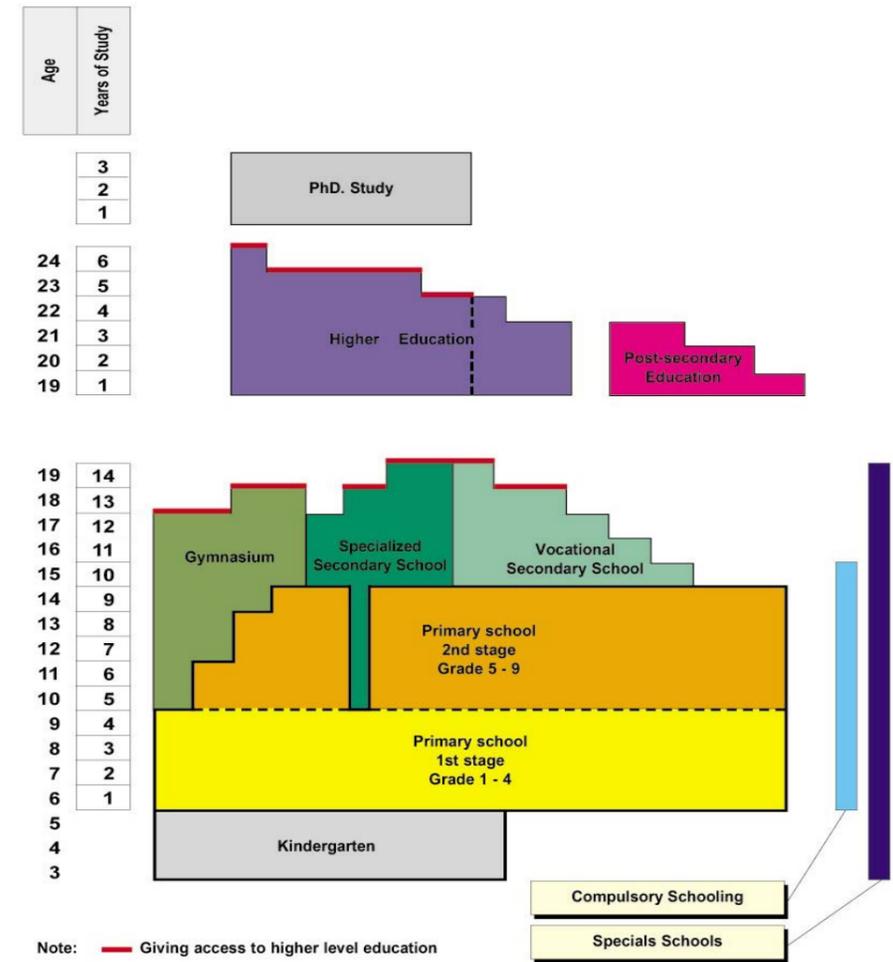
Language	Number of schools	Number of pupils
Slovak	409	30,918
Hungarian	13	1,570
Slovak-Hungarian	22	
Total	444	32,488

Source of the data: Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, available at: <http://www.education.gov.sk>.

Table 8 Pupils in special needs schools according to nationality

Nationality	Absolute numbers	Share in percentage
Slovak	27,770	85.48
Roma	2,475	7.62
Hungarian	2,165	6.66
Czech, Moravian, Selezian	51	0.16
Other	27	0.08
Total	32,488	100.00

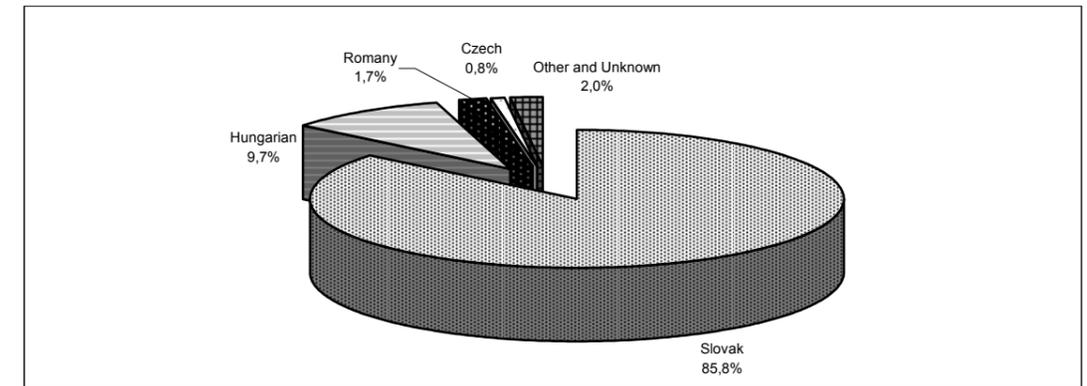
Annex 3 Educational system of the Slovak Republic



Source: Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, available at: <http://www.education.gov.sk>

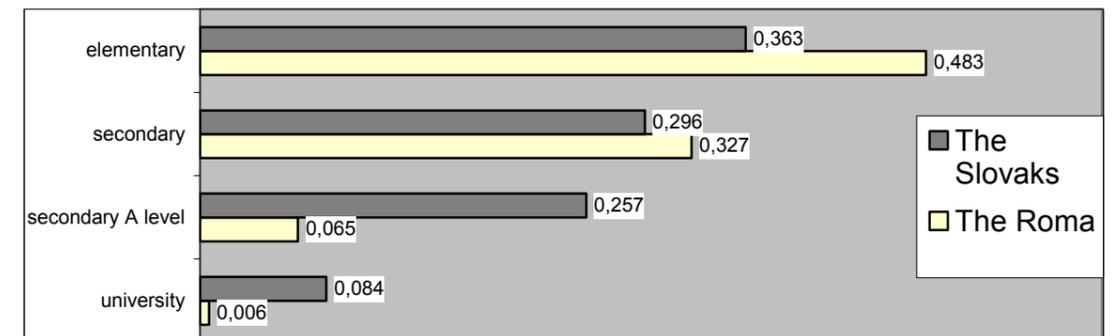
Annex 4

Graph 1 Population Structure by nationality in the Slovak Republic



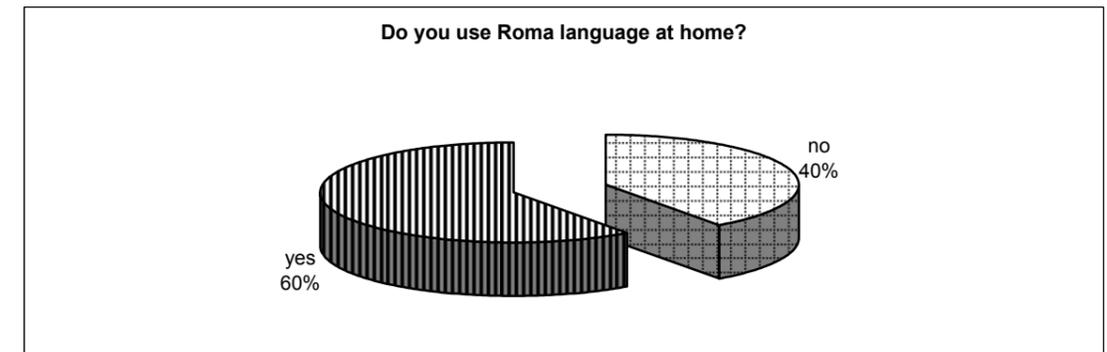
Source: Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky, May 2001, available at: <http://www.statistics.sk/webdata/english/census2001/tab/int2.doc>

Graph 2 Comparison of educational level of Slovak citizens and the Roma



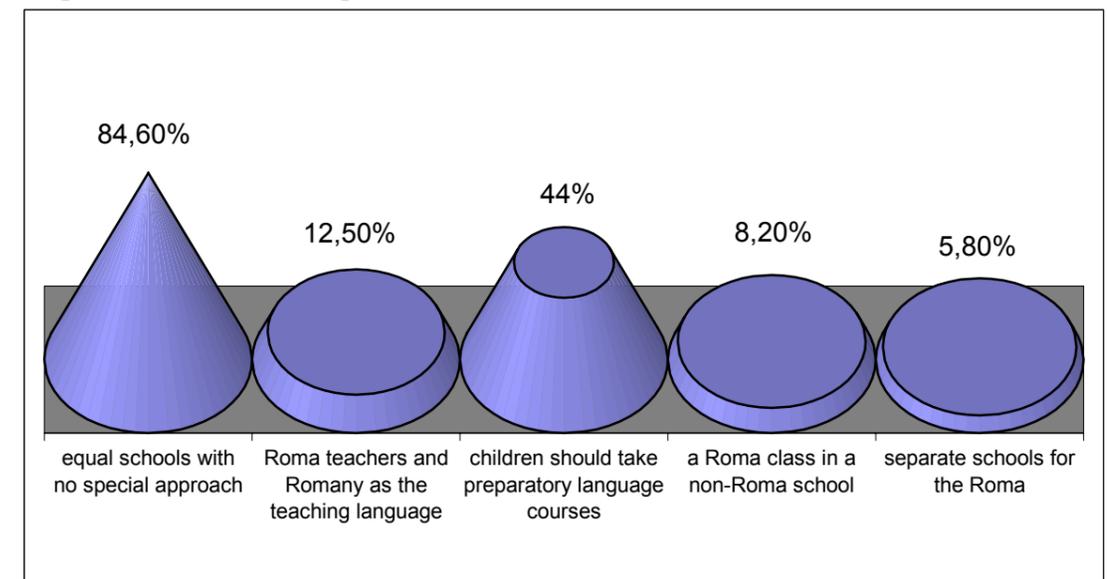
*Source:
The Slovaks: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, September 2001
The Roma: Findings of international comparative research Roma Human Development Project in the Slovak Republic, available at: http://www.ivo.sk/mensiny_vyskum/UNDP/Index.htm (29.1.2004)*

Graph 3 Usage of Roma language



Source: Findings of international comparative research Roma Human Development Project in the Slovak Republic, available at: http://www.ivo.sk/mensiny_vyskum/UNDP/Index.htm (29.1.2004)

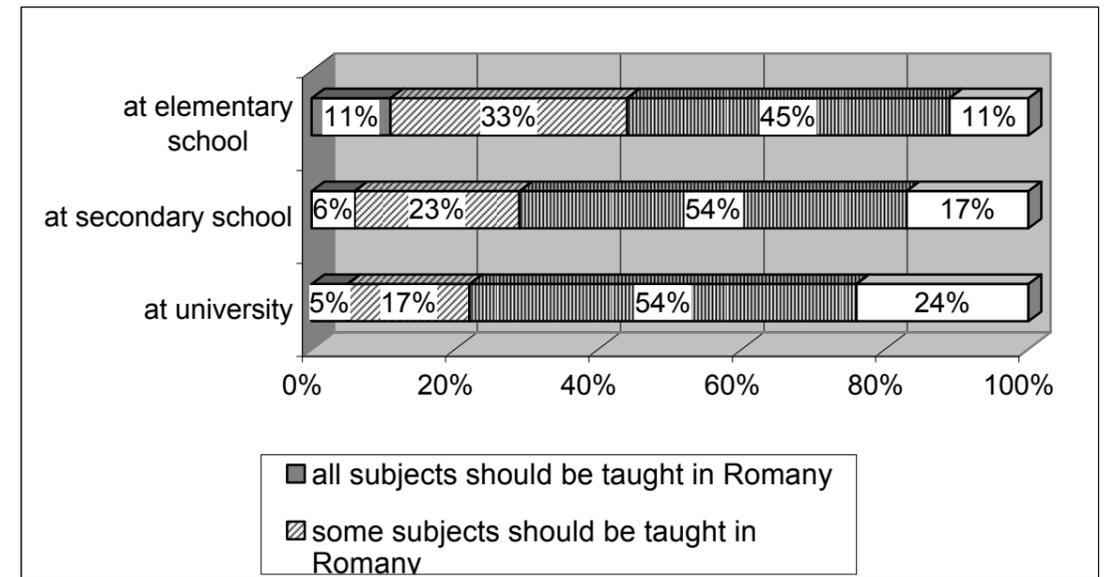
Graph 4 Attitudes of Roma parents to education of their children



Note: The sum of the percentage values exceeds 100, as the respondents were allowed to choose several options.

Source: Findings of international comparative research Roma Human Development Project in the Slovak Republic, available at [+http://www.ivo.sk/mensiny_vyskum/UNDP/Index.htm](http://www.ivo.sk/mensiny_vyskum/UNDP/Index.htm) (29.1.2004)

Graph 5 Opinions of the Roma on education in Romany



Note: The sample consisted of 682 respondents who claimed Roma ethnicity.

Source: Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky, May 1994.

Annex 5

The results of the experimental verification of the project Reintegration of Roma Students from the Socially and Educationally Handicapped Environment of Special needs schools into the Majority Population

	Reference classes	Experimental classes	Criteria of Evaluation
Cognitive development	20% - 45%	21.7% - 51.7%	measured using standard methods for gauging inborn intelligence
Intellectual level	21.6%	35.1%	measure of ability to cope with the requirements of the regular primary school
Evolution of speech		The repeating of sentences and the process of formulation of plural and singular forms of nouns showed a significant difference in favour of the experimental class.	Heidelberg speech evolution test (methodology that uncovers delayed or disrupted development of language skills)
Attitudes to selected objects	Positive attitudes (values over 20%) were expressed only to two objects – teacher and father.	Positive attitudes were expressed towards eight objects - love, father, mother, friend, schoolmates, the teacher, the "gadžo" (whites) and the school.	Test hidden "I" (the test tried to show the subconscious relationship to reality as defined through selected notions)
Visual and auditory development, development of perception and motor skills, right-left orientation	Pupils in control classes have attained better results in hearing perception	Statistically significant differences in favour of the experimental classes were seen in individual activities, emotional development, in communication skills, spatial orientation.	Test of physical health, self-serving habits, emotional and social development and communication.
Slovak language and literature	69.1%	77.9%	Test of knowledge and skills in Slovak language and literature
Mathematics	72.2%	80%	Test of knowledge and skills in Mathematics
Attitudes towards the school	30.5 days	17.5 days	the participation of students in lessons and their evaluation of school activities were tested by the average number of missed lessons
Evaluations by teachers	Among the methods that more than half of the experimental class teachers used in their work, and which they found helped students in the lessons, were: cooperative learning, group work and pair work. The experimental class teachers also preferred role play (40%), the use of Roma culture and songs (30%), morning meetings, and the use of teaching aids (20%). They also mentioned the involvement of the parents, using books with real topics, the creation of books, and group work.		
Evaluations by the parents	The parents of the experimental class students more often cooperated with the school (by joining in school and class activities, participating in personal meetings, visiting courses for mothers, etc.) than the parents of reference class students. Almost 60% of the parents whose children attended the experimental classes said that the attitude of their child towards the school was positive; among the parents of the reference class students the figure was 35.1%. 68.3% of the parents of the experimental class students were aware of the importance of the teacher's work and wanted the teacher to be appropriately remunerated for this work. More parents of experimental class students (41.6%) than of reference class students (23.4%) wanted their children to acquire qualifications and find a job. Only the parents of experimental class students had considered higher education for their children, and had thought about which field of study their children might be interested in.		

Source: Rigová, S. et al. (2003) *The Roma in the Education System and Alternative Education Projects*, in: Vašečka, M. (ed) *Čačipen pal o Roma: A Global Report on Roma in Slovakia*, Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, p. 435

Annex 6

TRANSLATION OF THE NAMES OF THE ORGANISATIONS

Slovenská tlačová agentúra SITA = Slovak Press Agency SITA

Štátny pedagogický ústav = National Institute for Education

Inštitút pre verejné otázky = Institute for Public Affairs

Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej Republiky = Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic

Nádácia Škola dokorán = Open Wide School Foundation

Metodicko-pedagogické centrum = Methodological and Pedagogical Centre

Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky = The Slovak Republic Government Office

Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky = Statistics Office of the Slovak Republic

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