HEART
HEALTH & EDUCATION ADVICE & RESOURCE TEAM

Helpdesk Report: Approaches to promoting educational inclusion, participation and learning achievement among Roma children

Date: 15 August 2016

Query: Produce an up-to-date report based on available evidence that includes:
  a) What has worked/ hasn't worked in reducing segregation and promoting inclusion of children of disadvantaged groups, in particular Roma, in schools.
  b) What measures work best to i) increase participation, particularly of Roma children, in inclusive mainstream education, and ii) to strengthen learning achievement.
  c) An annotated bibliography of 10-20 key resources that may be useful in promoting better education for Roma children.

The geographical focus of particular interest is East European and Middle East countries. Examples of evidence from Western Europe and elsewhere are welcome.

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1. Introduction

This report summarises available evidence on approaches to promoting inclusion, participation and achievement in education for Roma children.

The purpose of this report was to inform programme development for Roma education in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, and to support policy dialogue with governments, sub-national authorities and others. However, examples and evidence from the Middle East were not found to be available, and therefore the report draws primarily on evidence and examples from Eastern and South European countries. The review does not present findings or practices differentiated according to country or region, unless otherwise specified. However, the review draws on documentary evidence and case studies from the following countries:
Albania; Bosnia & Herzegovina; Bulgaria; Croatia; Czech Republic; Greece; Hungary; Kosovo; Macedonia; Montenegro; Romania; Serbia; Slovakia.

The main body of this report consists of two sections, each responding to research questions:
   a) What has worked/ hasn't worked in reducing segregation and promoting inclusion of children of disadvantaged groups, in particular Roma, in schools, and
   b) What measures work best to i) increase participation, particularly of Roma children, in inclusive mainstream education, and ii) to strengthen learning achievement.

It is accompanied by an annotated bibliography of 10 key resources associated with the promotion of better education for Roma children. The review seeks to identify particular educational interventions that are seen to impact on the areas in question. In addition, the review may also summarise any additional contextual factors that may influence outcomes in the associated area.

In general terms, the range of interventions under each section can be categorised as either systemic inputs (e.g. educational resources, mechanisms, and infrastructure) or educational inputs (e.g. courses, content, teaching and learning approaches etc.). It is to be noted that the role of administration, infrastructure, and resources in countries may make up important differences in the effectiveness of types of education interventions for Roma children, particularly when focusing on school-level activities.

Methodology

This review undertook a review of published research on education in conflict and post-conflict settings from a broad range of sources, including UN agencies, humanitarian organisations and websites. Documents included meta-studies, literature reviews, and research papers.

Where possible, the review sought to draw on evidence drawn from geographical contexts in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, in the interests of currency, the review gave preference to evidence published since 2010. However, in some cases, the limited availability of evidence made it necessary to draw on evidence from studies in other settings. In all cases, the review sought to highlight evidence from only those interventions that indicate examples of transferable good practice.

Limitations

As noted in the introduction, it has been difficult to source reliable evidence of successful interventions in the Middle East. In fact, reliable data and robust evidence in general is an issue for the topic of Roma education. A lack of information and analysis continue to hamper efforts to identify best practice, and many projects lack the indicators, institutional audits and rigorous evaluations necessary to accurately assess progress. A wider data problem is that a number of governments fail to collect or monitor disaggregated data on Roma children (see, for example, the 2010 report *No Data No Progress* at https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/no-data-no-progress-20100628.pdf), which prevents evidence-based planning, monitoring and evaluation. For example, according to the *No Data No Progress* report, information on primary school completion rates for Roma children did not exist in 2010 in two thirds of the countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Until comprehensive data exists for Roma populations it will remain challenging to accurately assess the progress made by interventions.

2. What has /hasn't worked in reducing segregation and promoting inclusion of Roma children in schools?

Overview of educational segregation of Roma children

While there is some debate over how segregation of Roma communities might be identified and defined from a legal perspective (European Commission, 2014), in an educational context, segregation can be summarised as follows.

Firstly, *inter-school* segregation i.e. the existence of schools whose populations are made up entirely of Roma or non-Roma pupils. In Eastern Europe, while pan-European laws prevent the legal and formal segregation of educational provision by community, in reality such segregation may take place as a result of three separate factors:

1) pre-existing segregation between ethnic groups, based on regional geography, local neighbourhoods or availability of housing;
2) the existence of private, foundation or faith schools, where additional factors such as entrance exams or tuition fees exclude Roma children on the basis of social disadvantages;

3) inappropriate or culturally biased educational and psychological testing that leads to the placement and over-representation of Roma children in remedial or special schools rather than in mainstream education.

(European Commission, 2014; Institute for Human Rights & Roma Education Fund, 2013; UNICEF, 2007; Kertesi & Kezda, 2013)

Many Roma children in South East Europe learn in ethnically-segregated schools and classes. Research by the Open Society Foundation in 2001 in Bulgaria identified 419 segregated schools where Roma pupils make up 50-100% of the student body. Such schools were more poorly resourced with shortages of equipment, as well as less skilled and motivated teachers. Only 5% of pupils from these schools graduated to secondary school, illiteracy in the fourth grade was common, and just 0.3% of the Roma pupils took part in national examinations for high schools (UNICEF, 2007).

In Romania, **segregated schools** (defined as those where over half the pupils are Roma) covered around 12% of the Roma pupil population in 2007. Most of these schools were located in rural areas and were less than 3 kilometres from nearby schools of the same type, which are used predominantly by non-Roma children. Segregated schools had more overcrowding and poorer facilities. They were less likely to have a library, and showed a clear correlation between schools with a Roma intake of over 50% and those employing unqualified teachers. Pupil achievement was lower, with the ratio of pupils passing the national capacity examination 25% below the national average. The repetition rate was almost three times higher in Roma schools and the participation of pupils in school competitions was almost six times lower than the national average of the education system (UNICEF, 2007).

Secondly, *intra-school* **segregation** within individual schools, through the organisation of separate classes for Roma and non-Roma pupils. This frequently takes place on the basis of language of schooling and/or levels of curricular attainment. Similarly, *intra-class* segregation can also exist, where pupils are divided into separate study groups on a similar basis (European Commission, 2014).

Thirdly, there is also the widespread existence of *individual* or *involuntary segregation*, where individuals are absent from mainstream education as a result of various social and contextual factors. For example, throughout their education, a great proportion of Roma children in Eastern Europe face harassment from their peers, teachers, and from non-Romani parents (UNICEF, 2007), a fact that holds many Roma families back from enrolling their children in integrated schools (Institute for Human Rights & Roma Education Fund, 2013). In addition, based on community practices, Roma girls may drop out of school earlier than boys (European Commission, 2014; Institute for Human Rights & Roma Education Fund, 2013).

Further factors influencing the *individual* or *involuntary segregation* of Roma children from mainstream education include the inadequate provision of educational facilities to particular locations or geographic communities. For example, Roma children are often concentrated in sub-standard schools or classes that follow substandard curricula, contributing to withdrawal or non-attendance. Furthermore, education in the minority languages spoken by the Roma is seldom provided in mainstream education due to the lack of teaching materials and teachers proficient in these languages. Similarly, pre-school facilities designed to bridge language issues and provide initial levels of academic understanding are often unavailable to Roma communities (European Commission, 2014; UNDP, 2012).

Responses to reducing educational segregation and promoting educational inclusion

- *Legislative frameworks to uphold the right to education for Roma children*

Although legislative frameworks can be considered a fundamental step towards improving desegregation and inclusion for Roma children (UNICEF, 2010) the existence of such high-level policies does not guarantee progress.

For example, the Declaration of the Decade of Roma Inclusion was signed in 2005 by 11 countries across Central and South Eastern Europe (CEE/SEE). Under this declaration, the participating countries (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia) sought to enact a series of interventions across multiple sectors (including education), that would seek to overcome segregation and promote inclusion. This included establishing national frameworks legislating the right to education for Roma children (Institute

for Human Rights & Roma Education Fund, 2013), and enacting mechanisms that support this, including policies, commitment of resources, training and capacity building, and campaigns to raise awareness of the law and how to apply it (UNICEF, 2011).

However, whilst reports affirmed that action plans and coordination offices were in place across all countries, plans were not used effectively to inform policy decision-making, offices were not fully integrated into government ministries and lacked the staffing and influence to enact change, and the programmes themselves were not monitored closely. As the 2007 DecadeWatch report noted, '*most governments think about Roma inclusion in terms of projects and sporadic measures but not in terms of programmes or integrated policies*' (DecadeWatch, 2007 in UNICEF, 2010).

The case of the Czech Republic further highlights how legislative frameworks alone do not guarantee success. In response to the 2007 judgement of the European Court, which deemed that the disproportionate placement of Romani children in special schools violated the rights of Romani children not to be discriminated against in their access to education, the Czech authorities began a process of reform which included five acts of legislation introduced between 2010-2015 (see Table 1). According to a 2015 Amnesty International report, these legislative frameworks will continue to be ineffective unless underlying factors and discriminatory attitudes are addressed, the issue of racial discrimination and segregation is explicitly challenged and it becomes mandatory for mainstream schools to accept Romani pupils (Amnesty International, 2015).

Table 1 Legislative measures passed to improve inclusion in the Czech Republic education system (Amnesty International, 2015)

2010: National Action Plan for Inclusive Education
Although the plan was to provide more appropriate support for children with a range of educational needs, the subject of ethnic discrimination was not explicitly addressed.

2011: Decree on Education of Pupils with Special Needs
An amendment which stated that only pupils with diagnosed health disabilities could be placed in special schools. However, despite the finding of the Czech School Inspectorate in 2010 that social disadvantage was often confused with disability, the amendment did not oblige local authorities to educate children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in mainstream schools.

2011: Strategy for Combating Social Inclusion 2011-2015
This strategy did address the exclusion of Roma children and proposed the phasing out of practical schools, but was ineffective because it was largely unfunded and unimplemented.

2012: Consolidated Action Plan for the Implementation of the D.H. Judgement
The Action Plan committed to abolish practices such as 'diagnostic stays' (where pupils could be trialled in a practical school for up to 6 months without a conclusive diagnosis). However, according to a 2012 Amnesty International response to the Action Plan, it did not address the necessary broader reforms to combat racial segregation nor detail exactly how Romani children should be included in mainstream education.

2015: Revised Action Plan for the Execution of the D.H. Judgement
Due to come into effect in September 2016, the reform aims to maximise mainstream education for pupils, strengthen the monitoring of psychological assessment centres and integrate pupils with mild mental disabilities into mainstream education with increased funding for additional educational needs support.

As well as legislating at the state level for the right of education for Roma children, the case of the Czech Republic would imply that there also needs to be national legislation for entry requirements which would prevent schools from discriminating against certain children. Despite higher level policies, entry requirements and school tests are left to the discretion of individual schools which enables them to set arbitrary criteria, claim that their schools are already full or judge that a pupil is not ready for the particular school (Amnesty International, 2015).

The annotated bibliography in Section 5 contains practical recommendations made by Amnesty International for the Czech Government which could be considered useful guidelines for other governments developing legislation.

- *Addressing anti-Roma prejudice at state and social level*

As outlined above, among the strongest obstacles to ensuring access to integrated and inclusive education for Roma children are high levels of anti-Roma prejudice at state and social levels (UNICEF, 2007), and an attendant lack of political will to embrace thoroughgoing reform. Initiatives to work with local state authorities such as mayors and municipalities can build partnerships, facilitate dialogue and cultivate a sense of shared ownership in local level project interventions.

Evidence suggests that such approaches can involve a difficult process and require a minimum of five-year cooperation to take root. However, evidence also suggests that such approaches can engage key local stakeholders in supporting and enacting inclusive education, through a practical engagement in the day-to-day work of implementation which helps to diffuse resistance and build a broader consensus for equity (Roma Education Fund, 2014iii).

As with the development of legislation frameworks, strategies to address anti-Roma prejudice need to be considered in the local context and address underling attitudes.

The Amnesty International 2015 report *I Must Try Harder* contains a range of narrative instances of where schools in the Czech Republic have been unable to successfully merge Roma and non-Roma children due to failing to address prevailing attitudes on both sides. One director (all case studies were anonymous) recalls when, due to pressure from a local NGO, opened a class in which were placed 14 Roma and 14 non-Roma children. According to the director, all of the non-Roma parents took their children and enrolled them in a neighbouring school. Another director of what is now a Roma school (80%) explained how in 2004, when the municipality decided to merge four schools into two in Brno, 200 non-Roma pupils left the newly merged school 'overnight'. Despite saying he believed that all children should be educated together, the director claimed that the situation was 'hopeless', that talks with parents failed and that Roma parents were equally keen for their children to be educated together, believing that their children would be treated more fairly and face less discrimination if in a group (Amnesty International, 2015). If underlying social attitudes have not yet been transformed, requiring all schools in a district to take part could prevent parents from transferring their children. In Bulgaria, all schools in the district took part in the Vidin desegregation project, thereby decreasing the possibility of secondary segregation.

- *Development of Roma-targeted educational policies and practices*

In an educational context, regional programmes for the development of Roma-targeted educational policies and practices were seen as necessary due to levels of prejudice towards Roma children at different levels of local and national government and educational authorities influencing decision-making over school registration, deployment, enrolment, investment in facilities, etc. (UNICEF, 2010; Institute for Human Rights & Roma Education Fund, 2013).

However, processes in implementing programmes, policies and legislation designed to advance Roma education in CEE/SEE following the Declaration of the Decade of Roma Inclusion were seen to be affected by the lack of political will, especially at the local level, by a failure to mainstream Roma issues into general policies, and by endemic discrimination throughout public institutions and the wider society. Challenges were also compounded by high rates of regional and national decentralization and government changeovers, weak systems of documentation and monitoring, and little oversight of how specific programmes and policies were implemented at district level (UNICEF, 2010).

For example, in Serbia, the 'Equal Chances – Integration of Roma Children and Youth in the Educational System' ran from 2002 to 2005, implemented by the Centre for Interactive Pedagogy in cooperation with local Roma NGOs. On the national level, the project supported the creation of a Draft Strategy for Improving Education of Roma in the Republic of Serbia, delivered in 2003 in cooperation with Ministry for Human and Minority Rights (MHMR) and Ministry for Education and Sport (MoES), as well as with input from the Roma community. Based on this, the same partners collaborated in developing the Common Action Plan for Advancement of Education of Roma in the Republic of Serbia,

approved in 2004. However, due to political volatility and with the change of local governments in 2005, activities were dropped and the action plans that were subsequently drafted were not adopted. A selection of activities from the strategies were finally realised in 2007 (UNICEF, 2011).

- *Teacher training for attitude change*

In addition to inputs designed to address prejudice at state and social level, similar inputs can operate within the context of national education systems. In Former Yugoslav Republic (FYR) of Macedonia, Romania and Serbia, reform of the way teachers are trained has been undertaken to explicitly include training on the rights of children and the meaning and importance of combating discrimination. In Bulgaria, the government has required schools to make a formal commitment to promoting tolerance and educational inclusion, and to include a similar commitment in teachers' job descriptions (UNICEF, 2007). The Roma Education Fund (REF) currently provides inputs that focus on awareness-raising among trainee teachers in Croatia, Hungary, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia. They also closely cooperate with teacher training colleges and pedagogical departments of universities.

REF-led interventions include teacher training on theory of change and equity in education, and voluntary teaching experience working directly with Roma communities, schools and students on supported projects (Roma Education Fund, 2014iii). For example, in Hungary, under the REF's 'A Good Start' initiative, pedagogy and andragogy students at the College of Nyíregyháza, a higher education institution, participated in community-based parental engagement sessions and pre-school home visits as part of their required practical training and to gain experience with socially disadvantaged Roma children (Karacsony, 2016).

As part of the Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups intervention in Romania, teacher training was conducted through a 3-week summer school in a seaside resort in Costinesti. The training provided intensive training in Romani language and culture and it was reported that this enabled teachers to modify their teaching appropriately and increase their awareness of Roma pupils' needs (UNICEF, 2010).

- *Targeted interventions for enrolment in pre-schooling for Roma children*

There is substantial evidence that enhancing access to and enrolment for pre-school and early years learning for Roma children can help address many of the educational factors associated with the segregation or exclusion of Roma children from mainstream schooling (Institute for Human Rights & Roma Education Fund, 2013). Roma adults who have attended pre-school as children are found to be *much less* likely to be enrolled in a special school (by more than half) and *much more* likely to complete secondary school (by more than half) (Karacsony, 2016).

In general terms, where Romani is prominently used as the primary language at home, pre-school participation provides an opportunity for Roma children to learn the language of primary school instruction. Pre-school education also provides an opportunity for Roma and non-Roma children to interact with each other at early educational stages, which it is suggested may mitigate prejudice and stereotypes later on (UNICEF, 2007; Karacsony, 2016; World Bank, 2012ii).

However, ensuring such benefits involves, in the first instance, overcoming existing barriers to kindergarten attendance. Such barriers vary across countries. In a survey of Roma parents across CEE countries, cost was a major stated consideration, but more than half of parents reported they would reconsider if there were no fees or if they received food coupons (World Bank, 2012ii). Secondly, language barriers are assumed to be a common challenge for Roma children in pre-primary (and also primary) education; the share of Roma households that speak Romani at home, rather than the official national language and medium of instruction, is high in all CEE countries with the exception of Hungary. Thirdly, cultural factors appear to play a part: while the majority of Roma parents wish their children to complete secondary education, they state a desire to raise children at home in their early years rather than enrol them in pre-school. However, almost half of parents reported being willing to reconsider enrolment of children in pre-schooling if a Roma teaching assistant was present (Karacsony, 2016; World Bank, 2012ii), indicating that concerns about the treatment of children at school have a part to play in the parental decision-making process.

In the context of overcoming these general set of barriers, four main policy measures are seen to help to increase the enrolment of Roma children in pre-schools, support early learning at home and use pre-schooling to overcome the long-term impact of segregation. These are:

1) better informing parents of the benefits of a formal pre-school education;
2) using Roma teaching assistants to more directly involve parents in pre-schools;
3) eliminating existing cost barriers and considering conditional cash transfers based on attendance;
4) supporting parenting at home.
(Karacsony, 2016)

Two key examples of where such approaches have been successfully implemented are Hungary's Biztos Kezder programme, and the Roma Education Fund's 'A Good Start' initiative, delivered in 16 localities in countries across CEE. Case studies and links for both programmes are included in the selection of annotated resources included in Section 4 of this report.

However, outside of these specific cases, fulfilling the potential of pre-school education in CEE – whether for Roma or other children – largely involves addressing kindergarten capacity constraints throughout the region. This requires state investment in the expansion of quality pre-school education and the promotion of the benefits of kindergarten attendance, and additional investments targeting adequate staffing (including diversity training for pre-school teachers), resources, and curricula (UNICEF, 2007). Appropriate financial incentives may help increase early childhood education attendance rates among vulnerable families (World Bank, 2012ii; Karacsony, 2016).

Additionally, since 2014, pre-school education in Hungary has been compulsory from age 3, and since 2008, local governments have been required to offer free kindergarten placements to 3-year-olds from families with multiple disadvantages (Eurydice, 2012, in Karacsony, 2016). The revised Action Plan adopted by the Czech government in February 2015 and due to come into force in September 2016, has made it mandatory to attend the last grade of kindergarten (Amnesty International, 2015). It has been suggested that, in the context of CEE, Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia should follow these models by considering compulsory pre-school education for at least two years prior to enrolling in primary school or by providing an extra year of free pre-school education to help improve school readiness (Karacsony, 2016).

In the absence of pre-school, countries including the Czech Republic have run preparatory grades for children who have not attended kindergarten in preparation for them to attend primary school a year or two late. However, although it has been suggested that preparatory grades could prepare children for primary school (Karacsony, 2016), in the case of the Czech Republic it has increased segregation further.

The Czech Schools Act allows for primary schooling for the 'socially disadvantaged' to be delayed by up to two years if the child is not considered ready. If the child is not judged to have passed the school readiness test (these vary as they are set by the school), the school can send them for an assessment which, together with a statement from a paediatrician and authorisation from parents, can result in them attending preparatory classes for a year. Although this is meant to benefit Romani children who have not attended kindergarten, the actual result is increased segregation because i) the 'socially disadvantaged' clause means that it is mainly the Roma who attend such classes ii) some schools use the preparatory classes as a means of delaying or avoiding accepting the Roma child into mainstream classes iii) such placements are partly the reason why so many Romani children finish school in the 7th or 8th grade rather than 9th (Amnesty International, 2015).

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3. What measures work best to
   i) increase participation, particularly of Roma children, in inclusive mainstream education
   ii) strengthen learning achievement?

Overview of barriers to participation in mainstream education by Roma children

At a basic logistical level, one of the major barriers to the participation of Roma children in mainstream schooling is the frequent distances between Roma communities and schools. School segregation is

significantly associated with student mobility (Kertesi & Kezda, 2013). Across CEE, it is reported that in Romania almost all Roma children have primary schools within 'walking distance' that is, less than 3 kilometres. This is the also case for between 85 – 93% of Roma children in Bulgaria, Hungary, and the Slovak Republic, and 79% in the Czech Republic. However, a more detailed analysis of the Slovak case, for example, (2013 Atlas of Roma Communities, in Karacsony, 2016) points out there is no primary school in almost one third of the 1,035 Slovak villages and towns with Roma populations covered by the Atlas, and the nearest primary school is located on average 5 kilometres away. In addition, many Roma live at the outskirts of villages or towns or in segregated settlements, often without easy access to a school due to missing roads, a lack of safe pavement, and longer walking distances (UNDP, 2012; Roma Education Fund, 2015).

Secondly, the costs associated with schooling present a significant barrier for poor students, and to Roma children in particular. Although compulsory primary and secondary education is free in all five CEE countries, there are various costs associated with schooling e.g. textbooks, clothing, school dining, transportation, parents' association fees, etc. that poor Roma are unable to afford. As a result, children from disadvantaged families are unable to commit to school participation, and are unlikely to access extracurricular activities and school trips (UNICEF, 2007; Karacsony, 2016).

In the Czech Republic, there are no systemic measures in place to decrease the direct financial costs of education. In response, some schools try to solve these problems in an ad hoc manner; some cooperate with the local social affairs office, which pays an extra one-off social benefit to cover school aids for needy families recommended by the school, while others do not charge children from poor families fees for afternoon activities (Baslova and Homrova, 2012, in Karacsony, 2016). While such measures can assist at primary level, despite stated family intentions, most Roma students drop out of school before completing upper secondary education. In Bulgaria and Romania, these drop-out rates are driven by education-related costs (Karacsony, 2016).

However, there are various other factors contributing to the drop-out of Roma students. Recent survey evidence from Romania indicates that, in addition to poverty, Roma are especially vulnerable to early school leaving as a result of special-school segregation and cultural factors (World Bank, 2014, in Karacsony, 2016). In the Czech Republic and Hungary, 'being sufficiently educated' is the most frequently cited reason for leaving school, usually at primary or upper secondary level (Karacsony, 2016).

Similar social norms in Roma communities can strongly impact on rates of participation and educational attainment of Roma boys and girls. Qualitative research has found that in communities that adhere to traditional gender norms, boys skip classes or leave school altogether (UNICEF, 2007). This is particularly the case in poor communities. Under these circumstances, boys are expected to conform to the traditional gender norm of providing for the family; to be perceived as hardworking inside the family and community; and to supplement the family's income (World Bank, 2014b, in Karcsony, 2016). The same research found that Roma girls are often constrained in pursuing their education once they hit puberty, as parents often deem the commute to and from school (and any interaction with boys) as putting them at risk of sexual activity. In addition, traditional Roma communities often expect girls to have children early and take charge of the family, on which basis continued education is considered irrelevant (ibid.)

Finally, at a school and systemic level, teachers' expectations and stereotypes can negatively impact Roma students' school participation and performance, particularly in the case of girls. In a survey of Roma girls in Serbia (CARE, 2011, in Karacsony, 2016), the hostility of the school environment and teachers' prejudices were ranked as the most common reasons why girls leave school early (69% of respondents). Another study found that, despite the fact that Roma children expressed high aspirations for their future, teachers viewed them as unmotivated and disinterested in studying (Fleck and Rughinis, 2008, in Karacsony, 2016). Stereotypes or expectations that Roma girls will drop out of school to get married seem to influence teachers' attitudes toward them, and even influence curricula: in some cases, Roma girls have been taught that it is very common to marry early in Roma culture, even against evidence from their own communities (Duminica and Ivasiuc, 2013, in Karacsony, 2016).

Overview of issues associated with learning achievement among Roma children

Inequalities in academic performance between Roma and non-Roma children appear to be common across countries. For example, Roma children are much more likely than non-Roma to repeat grades. According to ROCEPO (2011, in Karacsony, 2016) in Slovakia, as many as 30% of children from marginalised backgrounds repeat the grade after their first year in primary school, compared to a national average of 9%. Similarly, at 5th grade, immediately after transitioning to lower to upper secondary education, 19% of children from marginalised backgrounds repeat the 5th grade, compared to the national average of 4%, and figures remain greater than 15% in subsequent grades. In the Czech Republic, 15% Roma children either repeat 1st grade or are transferred to special education (GAC, 2009, in Karacsony, 2016). Although the share of children who repeat a grade is negligible in Bulgaria (0.2%) and low in Romania (1.5%), both countries have a high proportion of primary education drop-outs (Karacsony, 2016).

Among the key drivers for this is the impact of peer groups on children. Roma typically have class peers who come from similar socioeconomic backgrounds, and so peer effects play a role in levels of learning achievement. International evidence suggests that high-performance peer groups enhance, and low-performance peer groups inhibit individual learning performance. In addition, this 'peer effect' is most significant for low-achievement pupils, and increases lower expectations and feelings of inferiority among children (World Bank, 2012ii). Hungarian research finds that Roma students are 40% more likely than non-Roma ones to study in classrooms in which the majority of their peers have inadequate reading skills (Kertesi & Kezdi, 2014).

Responses to increasing participation in inclusive mainstream education and strengthening learning achievement

Evidence suggests that the most successful interventions are those which improve both access to and the quality of education (UNICEF, 2010). The majority of the identified successful initiatives in this section address both areas and therefore the two subsections have been merged. Where relevant, strategies which specifically address inclusivity or student achievement are highlighted. However, it can be difficult to isolate individual interventions as it is often the comprehensive and holistic nature of the initiatives which have combined to result in success.

- *Community-based programmes*

Successful community-based projects involve the Roma community in a variety of ways, for example, in the design and organisation of the project (Development and Education Centres in Serbia), or in direct project delivery (Roma Education Initiative in Slovakia, and initiatives which employ Roma teaching assistants). Developing 'community hubs' through which supplementary activities that benefit the wider Roma community can be delivered alongside educational support has also been deemed successful in engaging the community and achieving attitudinal change amongst parents (UNICEF, 2010).

Development and Education Centres (DECs) in Serbia have been effective in both supporting Roma children to transition to primary school and improving retention. Established in some of the poorest areas in Serbia and primarily targeting Roma children between the ages of 3-16, the DECs have been running since 2001. Results include better school preparedness, with no child who participated in the programme attending special schools, Roma children becoming more accepted in mainstream schools by their peers and increased school attendance rates for participating pupils. A 2004 external evaluation also claimed that no pupil attending the programme had dropped out of school or repeated a grade.

The approach taken by DECs is a holistic one which included cooperation with health, labour and social services, municipal authorities, school administrators and teachers and the Roma community. The local Roma community participated in the establishment of each DEC's organisational structure and was further empowered through volunteer work and paid positions, such as Roma teaching assistants. Although primarily supporting education, the DECs were also used as community hubs to reach out to the Roma community on issues including basic health care and help with employment. Snacks were given out to younger children at a number of centres to improve their nutrition, health workers made sure that children were immunised, and one of the advantages of the pre-school programme was that it freed up time to enable mothers to enter employment. Results demonstrate increased parental awareness about the importance of education and that local Roma communities view DECs positively (UNICEF, 2010).

Roma Education Centres (RECs), a key component of the Roma Education Programme in Macedonia, were successful in increasing i) transition to primary school ii) retention in primary school and iii) learning outcomes amongst participating students. Centres supported the academic and psychosocial skills of Roma children and provided opportunities for parental involvement. Parents were invited to meetings where discussions took place on the importance of education and general child development. Results were impressive, with enrolment rates in primary school having increased by 9.53% from 2004 to 2007, 98% of participating primary-aged children progressing to the next grade in 2006-2007, the grade point average (GPA) of pupils who attend RECs being 0.56 points higher than those who don't, and Roma children who attended RECs having a completion rate of 98.01% compared to 42.08% for Roma children not in RECs (UNICEF, 2010).

In order to establish contact between Roma communities and local education systems, Romania has institutionalised the role of the Roma school mediator, originally introduced by the NGO Romani CRISS. The school mediator is a respected and trusted Roma community member who works to connect community members with schools and public education officials. Between 2003 and 2013, a total of 1,001 school mediators were trained in Romania under various programmes. Of these, about 400 mediators are currently active. Since 2011, the school mediator function has been mainstreamed into the education infrastructure.

Recent research indicates that such school mediators have had a positive impact on a number of issues, including considerably decreasing the number of school drop-out and non-enrolment cases, and reducing absenteeism among students, as well as wider issues such as reducing Roma students' class segregation and the general desegregation of schools; improving communication between the school and the Roma community; and achieving better school attainment and academic performance of Roma students. It is also reported that these roles have improved teachers' attitudes toward the Roma (Karacsony, 2016).

Integro Association in Bulgaria works at the grassroots level and focuses on Roma community development and social innovation. The goal of Integro's community development is to empower local communities as a group, support them to improve their socioeconomic status, to challenge social discrimination and to improve communication between institutions and authorities responsible for Roma issues. Its programmes to encourage Roma participation in mainstream school are inclusive holistic, and significantly, programmes are developed in partnership with and led by members of the Roma community (Harvard FXB, 2015).

- *Multi-stakeholder cooperation*

As well as direct buy-in from the local Roma community, successful initiatives have engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, from local authorities and ministries of education and health to school administration and teachers, non-Roma parents and NGOs.

The Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups project, jointly developed by the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Youth (MoERY) and the EU Commission, had the goal of improving the social inclusion of Roma and tackling barriers inside as well as outside of school. Interventions included school renovation, teacher training, curriculum adaptation, the facilitation of Roma empowerment and provision of meals in school to the poorest. Contributing to the project's success was the multilayered institutional and civic involvement and cooperation, local NGOs, Roma school mediators, parents, students, teachers, local governments and administrations, the MoERY and the central government (UNICEF, 2010).

Local Roma NGOs played their part in the project by liaising directly with school administrators to ensure the participation of the Roma community. NGOs also supported pupils to prepare for secondary school enrolment and held workshops for Roma pupils on topics including economic independence, combating stereotyping and Roma culture and tradition. Although there were challenges encountered in transforming the project to policy, it was reported that this was due to a lack of political will rather than weak project design, and despite the challenges, strong partnerships were built across levels of governance and civil society. It was therefore suggested that using comparable strategies in partnership building in other countries where it is challenging to gain government support could be successful (UNICEF, 2010).

Meaningful engagement across institutional levels and with a variety of stakeholders has been a significant factor in the success of the Alliance for Inclusion of Roma in Education project in Macedonia. The project was able to cooperate with the central government, local government and school administrators, which led to increased sustainability (UNICEF, 2010).

- ***Targeted interventions for pre-schooling for Roma children***

As already discussed under Section 2, investment in targeted pre-school facilities for Roma have a significant impact on overall levels of engagement in education (World Bank, 2012ii). In terms of the impact on participation levels of Roma children throughout different stages of the education system, evidence from Macedonia presents data that states that, as a result of various pre-schooling interventions, the attendance of Roma children in first grade of primary school in Skopje has increased by 7%; primary school attendance in general has increased by 23%; and at secondary school by 57% (Institute for Human Rights & Roma Education Fund, 2013). Research in the year 2000 found that almost all (97%) of the Roma children who had attended NGO-run pre-school programmes in Serbia were proficient in Serbian and almost all subsequently completed the first year of primary school (UNICEF, 2007).

In Slovakia, the pre-school component of the Roma Education Initiative was highlighted as having been particularly successful in transitioning Roma children from pre-school to the local primary school through using a community-based approach (UNICEF, 2010). Providing quality pre-school education and transforming parental attitudes were the strategies used by the project, and although a variety of methods were employed (see UNICEF, 2010 for more details), the home-based pre-school programme was the most recognised aspect. This component directly involved the 30-39 mothers by requiring them to teach a lesson. Training for the week's topic was given at the community centre and the classes were then taught by the mothers at designated homes.

Similarly, part of the low levels of academic achievement among Roma children stem from the poor levels of access to and participation in pre-schooling. Evidence in and outside of the EU demonstrates that early intellectual stimulation at home and in pre-school develops the foundations of cognitive and socio-emotional skills. Few Roma children have access to quality pre-school education. In CEE, only 43% of Roma children between 3 and 6 years of age are enrolled in pre-school, compared to 56% of non-Roma. This undermines Roma children's school readiness and their chances of achieving higher educational levels and obtaining the necessary academic skills for later schooling later in life (Karacsony, 2016).

However, in most CEE countries, students who have attended at least one year of pre-primary education tend to perform better than those who have not, regardless of socioeconomic background. Regional PISA research also shows that the relationship between pre-primary attendance and performance tends to be greater in school systems with a longer duration of pre-primary education, smaller pre-primary pupil-to-teacher ratios, and higher public expenditure per child at the pre-primary level (OECD, 2013, in Karacsony, 2016). An analysis of PISA results in Bulgaria (Gortazar et al., 2014 in Karacsony, 2016) demonstrates that among children of low socioeconomic status, attending at least a two-year pre-primary education program is correlated with a 10-point increase in PISA math scores, relative to having attended one year or none at all. Research evidence from Hungary indicates that longer pre-school attendance effectively reduces cognitive and school achievement gaps later in life, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Kertesi & Kezdi, 2014).

More specifically, further evidence from across CEE shows there is a strong correlation between Roma children's pre-school enrolment and positive educational outcomes. The World Bank (2012ii) reports a positive correlation between pre-school attendance and: children's self-perceived cognitive skills and self-confidence; a lower chance of special school attendance in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic; a lower chance of receiving social benefits in the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, and Romania; and a higher probability of achieving education at a secondary school in all five countries. The study also finds that Roma children enrolled in pre-school are much more likely to recognise numbers, the alphabet, and understand simple sentences.

- ***Teacher training, pedagogy and material development***

Hungary's National Education Integration Network (Hungarian acronym: OOIH) programme supports the education of Roma and disadvantaged students in an integrated mainstream environment. The programme has been seen to have a large impact on Roma student achievement, partially through encouraging cooperation and peer sharing between pupils. The most important elements of the programme were seen to be teachers' training in modern, student-centred teaching methods and classroom management that deal with students' heterogeneity and reinforce cooperation. Emphasis was placed on the importance of teachers establishing personal relationship with the students; using techniques that helped foster high or moderate levels of student cooperation and collaboration through group-work; and presenting and evaluating expectations towards children's social behaviour in the classroom (Kezdi & Suranyi, 2009). Each participating school implemented an integration programme based on the government-created Integrated Pedagogical System (IPS), a *'detailed description containing a two-year Step by Step plan for introducing the system, describing necessary teaching methodologies for inclusive education, the way of cooperating with parents, [and] local government'* (Czák, 2007 in UNICEF, 2010).

The Step by Step programming approach was also used in the Roma Education Programme in Macedonia, along with anti-bias training of teachers and Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Methodologies, and employed by the Roma Education Initiative in Serbia (UNICEF, 2010). Equal Chances projects in Serbia also utilised this approach, with the 2005 Annual Research and Evaluation Report stating that the Step by Step pre-school groups developed *'curiosity and motivation for educational material and activities'* among the children and that learning outcomes for first grade pupils in the Step by Step programme First grade academic achievement for Roma children in the Step by Step programme was better than the national average for Roma children not in the programme. Further information on the Step by Step approach is included in the annotated bibliography in Section 4.

In other cases, the curriculum and materials are adapted according to specialist pedagogic approaches. Hungary's Complex Instruction Program (CIP) evolved from more than 20 years of research at the Stanford School of Education, and is designed to ensure academic access and success for *all* students in heterogeneous and inclusive classrooms, based on multi-level curricula, group work, specialist instructional strategies, inter-personal skills development, and teacher training. Case studies and links for this programme are included in the selection of annotated resources in Section 4 of this report. Research has shown significant achievement gains in the United States and Europe in classrooms that have adopted such methods (Karacsony, 2016).

In order to proactively address the cultural and social factors that contribute to Roma children's low school completion rates, a number of initiatives across CEE have seen the school curricula adapted to take into account cultural and context-relevant factors, for example, incorporating components on Roma language, identity, and culture, and to offset problems related to stereotyping and representation (Institute for Human Rights & Roma Education Fund, 2013; Karacsony, 2016; UNICEF, 2011).

Bilingual programmes, particularly in the early years, have also supported inclusion. One project in Romania enables teachers to use a bilingual curriculum and there has been a strong focus on teacher training to make sure that teachers are responsive to the needs of young Roma children. The kindergartens employ a curriculum which respects Roma history, tradition and literature as well as language, and materials have been developed to support its implementation. According to the Ministry of Education, the number of children attending the language classes has risen steadily (Bennett, 2012).

- ***Approaches for dealing with cost barriers and financial factors***

There are multiple examples of state measures for helping overcome the range of cost-associated barriers to participation of Roma children in mainstream education, whether through direct cost-covering or through other interventions.

For example, in Macedonia, measures aimed at promoting the inclusion of Roma in mainstream education through reduction of costs have included: an exemption from payment of administrative tax for immunisation certificates required for school enrolment; the provision of free textbooks and school transportation to Roma children attending primary and secondary schools; and scholarships for Roma secondary school students. These are reported to have borne results, such as a reduction of the drop-out rate between 5th and 6th grade among girls and the doubling of Roma enrolment in public universities from 150 in 2005 to 300 in 2012 (Institute for Human Rights & Roma Education Fund, 2013). In Bulgaria,

one-off support is provided to students in order to surmount the issues that negatively affect school access and regular attendance. Children from poor families receive free textbooks in grades 1 through 8 and are entitled to subsidised school meals.

In addition, state-awarded grants for Roma students are a common measure. All CEE countries have support programmes for students at upper secondary levels, including means-tested programmes that target only the poorest students or explicitly Roma students, with differences in eligibility criteria such as attendance, academic merit, or talent. For example, Hungary's MACIKA programme supported 14,481 students with a total of €7.2 million in the 2013–14 school year. The programme targets disadvantaged or multiple-disadvantaged students and is required to award at least 50% of the grants to Roma students. In Bulgaria, state scholarships are provided to students to award their performance, ensure access to education, prevent drop-out, and support children with disabilities or without parents. In Romania, the programme Money for High School has been in place since 2004. It makes students from low-income families eligible for a monthly scholarship of about €42 if their attendance rate is acceptable (that is, if they have no more than 20 unexcused absences per year). Priority is given to students from rural areas who study in other localities (Karacsony, 2016).

In 2008, the Czech Republic's Ministry of Education launched a grant programme to support Roma students from low-income families who study at general or vocational secondary schools. Schools are given funding to pay for dining, dormitory fees, travel costs, and school aids, or are reimbursed for these costs if students have covered them. In 2014, 487 students at 130 secondary schools were supported with a total of €78,000. Full-time students from low income families who declare Roma ethnicity and have not received a formal reprimand by their school concerning discipline or attendance are eligible. Grant sum per student increases with the grade, from €140 in grade 1 to €250 in grade 4 per semester of secondary school (Karacsony, 2016).

Finally, it is also argued that providing Roma communities and parents with information about the costs and expected returns of education is a crucial component of increasing participation and curbing drop-outs. Depending on contexts, the range of 'hidden costs' may not pose actual impediments to school attendance for disadvantaged families: for example, in Bulgaria, textbooks, transportation, snacks, and lunches are all free in the educational cycle where most drop-outs occur (grades 5–8); nevertheless, these costs are the most frequently cited reason among Roma for not going to school or dropping out. This suggests that households may not have correct information costs of attending school, and highlights the need to provide information to families about free services, any fees associated with education, opportunities to request support through assistance programs, as well as the expected returns on education and skill acquisition, such as higher earnings and better job quality (Karacsony, 2016).

- ***Recruitment of Roma teaching assistants***

There are extensive examples of the involvement of Roma teaching assistants in mainstream schools as a driver for improved participation. All CEE states have programmes for the training and employment of Roma teaching assistants to provide additional support to both teachers and Roma children in primary schools (UNICEF, 2007). As seen above, the presence of Roma teaching assistants in the classroom is regarded by parents as a major incentive to enrolling children in school. Their roles are to help overcome cultural and language barriers, as well as mistrust between schools and marginalised Roma communities (Karacsony, 2016).

Evidence shows that the recruitment of Roma teaching assistants can also have a large impact on learning achievement. In most settings, their roles are to primarily facilitate communication between schools and families or, in academic terms, to facilitate communication between the teacher and Roma students, and support Roma children outside of the classroom by helping them with homework, organising leisure time activities, and so on. Roma teaching assistants fulfil such roles in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria. Roma teaching assistants are most commonly used in primary schools, but also operate in pre-primary, lower secondary and, in some cases, in upper secondary (Karacsony, 2016).

However, for the effective utilisation of Roma teaching assistants a number of factors need to be addressed. First of all, buy-in may need to be sought with schools on the benefits of Roma teaching assistants. In the Czech Republic, interviews with school directors and staff pointed to a belief that it

was not worthwhile to provide Roma children with Romani teaching assistants because they were probably not going to learn anyway (Amnesty International, 2015). Secondly, there may need to be training on the effective utilisation of Roma teaching assistants and monitoring of their utilisation. Amnesty International (2015) noted how teaching assistants were sometimes used to take groups of Romani children out of certain lessons, effectively segregating them from the rest of their class.

The Roma Teaching Assistant (RTA) programme aims to increase Roma inclusion in education through providing one Roma teaching assistant per school to support Roma pupils in class to access the curriculum. It started as a pilot run by NGOs in 2002 and since 2009 has been under the Ministry of Education. Both schools and potential teaching assistants had to apply to the programme and pre-requisites included having between 5-40% Roma children in the school and, for the teaching assistants, having knowledge of Romani, a secondary school diploma and experience of working with children. Schools received guidelines on the duties of the teaching assistants but were free to allocate their time to fit the needs of the school. In-school activities involved working with pupils in regular lessons and providing extra support after school. Teaching assistants also worked with the local community to visit families and gather documents for enrolment. Their overall objectives were to ensure that the Roma children arrived at school, were retained in school and succeeded, and the Ministry of Education ran seminars in 2009 to train the assistants.

The rigorous evaluation of the first year of the programme (specified as 2009/2010 from when the Ministry of Education assumed responsibility) found that there was improved attendance for pupils and that children in the first grade benefited more than their older peers from higher retention rates and better marks. Evidence shows that absences fell by 3-4 days, marks improved for first graders by 0.296 SD in Serbian and 0.284 SD in mathematics. Higher impacts were obtained in schools with fewer Roma pupils (likely due linked to RTA to pupil ratio), and the researchers found that girls appeared to benefit more from the programme in terms of achievement and boys in terms of fewer absences (Battaglia& Lebedinski, 2015).

- *Systems for monitoring participation and mentoring*

A number of national education systems have put in place services for monitoring and supporting the participation of Roma children through data gathering blended with counselling and mentorship schemes tailored to address community-associated challenges (Karacsony, 2016). In Romania, an 'early-warning' system for monitoring drop-outs includes: school-based data-gathering and analysis; staff training for data-gathering and analysis; local cooperation with school and health mediators, informal community leaders, child protection structures, and NGO representatives that run relevant local projects (Jigau & Fartusnic, 2012, in Karacsony, 2016).

In Bulgaria, the Early School Leaving Programme was a year-long programme which aimed to increase enrolment and retention of Roma children at primary school. Having appointed a team of community workers to identify drop-outs, the identified children were visited at home to gain an overall understanding of their situation and an individual plan was subsequently developed for each child. Teachers received training in multiculturalism and integration of minority students and were compensated to provide support classes. At the same time, community workers supported parents to understand their children's needs, provided 6 months of training and connected families with social and employment services. The programme returned 40 children to school from the Ruse and Razgrad regions and was deemed to be innovative because of the way it gained the support of parents and engaged with teachers, social workers and civil servants. However, the project lasted for just one year and so, although it can be considered limited evidence of promising practice, was not implemented for long enough to foster long-term change (Harvard FXB, 2015).

The Alliance for Inclusion of Roma in Education in Macedonia provides mentorship and financial support to Roma secondary school students, with the mentorship component having been highlighted as a particular success (UNICEF, 2010). 149 high school teachers were selected and trained to be mentors for pupils awarded scholarships and supported students with closing gaps in knowledge, homework and general schoolwork, organisation, personal problems and motivation. Results include an increase of 3.6% in pupils completing grades without dropping out or repeating compared to the baseline and an increase in average attainment of participating students from 3.19 to 3.30 over one year (UNICEF, 2010).

- *Academic support initiatives*

There are examples of a range of academic support initiatives for Roma children, designed to improve participation and academic achievement. These include the promotion of individual learning strategies through teacher training. They may involve establishing achievable learning objectives for each child, in line with their skills and competences; communicating learning objectives to students to increase awareness of their own progress; providing meaningful learning experiences that relate to students' real family and community lives; promoting positive approaches in learning and 'earning-to-learn' strategies for children; and improving socio-emotional learning, including self-regulation and social skills (Karacsony, 2016).

Other initiatives, include afterschool programmes to compensate for insufficient resources and lack of support in the family environment, including tutoring and mentoring to address individual needs as they arise (Karacsony, 2016). In 2012, Slovakia introduced a similar measure aimed at improving the outcomes of Roma pupils in primary schools — the Full-Day Education System. The system is based on pedagogic experiments carried out in the Slovak Republic in the late 1970s, which showed the benefits of keeping Roma children from marginalised backgrounds engaged in class for the full day rather than just part of it. The project introduced varied combinations of afternoon activities (tutoring, extracurricular activities, sports) at some 200 Slovak schools with higher shares of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

As a summary of successful and documented approaches, UNICEF in the Review of Roma Education Initiatives in CEE/SEE identified the following strategies as recommended practice:

- child-centred pedagogy as practiced by Step by Step
- multi-ethnic, multi-lingual approaches to curriculum development and teaching in order to encourage diversity and Roma inclusion
- ongoing service-provider training to improve attitudes toward, expectations and understanding of Roma students and initiatives that consider the needs of students inside and outside school that may meet basic needs, such as nutrition
- instruction that is adjusted to build on each individual child's strengths
- instruction in heterogeneous environments with a mix of students with differing talents and levels of academic ability
- initiatives that consider the specific needs of Roma students, such as disparities in basic learning skills or lack of suitable after-school study environments
- initiatives that encourage community and parental involvement
- initiatives that consider the elimination of discrimination to be integral to reaching stated goals
- an approach that coordinates and partners across as many levels as possible – individual, school, community, municipal, national, regional – in order to address issues connected with improving the quality of and access to education, including housing, employment, economic development, human rights, and health (UNICEF, 2010).

4. Annotated bibliography of key resources for promoting better education for Roma children

1. General: Roma Education Fund website
http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/

The Roma Education Fund (REF) was created in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2005, with the overall goal to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. The organisation supports multiple policies and programmes across CEE which ensure quality education for Roma, including the desegregation of education systems and the inclusion of Roma in all aspects of participating national education systems.

Specifically, REF provides interventions into and advocates for:
- ensuring access to compulsory education for Roma
- improving the quality of education through curriculum reform, introduction of Roma language teaching, anti-bias and tolerance teaching, and training of school mediators
- implementing integration and desegregation of Roma students

- expanding access to pre-school education
- increasing access to secondary, post-secondary and adult education.

REF runs five major programmes:
1. Project Support Programme, to finance projects and programmes
2. REF Scholarship Programme for tertiary Roma students
3. Policy Development and Capacity Building Programme on education reform and Roma inclusion
4. Communication and Cross Country Learning Programme, to promote the exchange of knowledge on education reforms and Roma inclusion.
5. Reimbursable Grant Programme to help Roma NGOs and local governments access EU funds for the purpose of Roma education.

The website contains multiple resources, including publications, reports and project outputs, and studies across all participating countries.

2. Government Policy – government recommendations

With 4 legislative frameworks in 5 years having failed to improve education for Roma children in the Czech Republic, Amnesty International made a range of recommendations for the Czech government in the 2015 report *I Must Try Harder: Ethnic Discrimination of Romani Children in Czech Schools,* in order to tackle systemic discrimination. The recommendations are aimed at the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Education and the wider government and include publicly acknowledging that there is a problem, committing the necessary resources to implement reform, developing detailed and realistic plans of action, and obliging schools to prioritise integration.

Table 2: Recommendations for the Czech Government from Amnesty International (2015)

In order to **guarantee the necessary political commitment for reform,** the Prime Minister should:
- Publicly acknowledge that the Czech Republic faces a systemic problem of ethnic discrimination targeted against Romani children in primary schools and make an unequivocal commitment to address it.
- Allocate the necessary resources, including funding, human and technical, in order to effectively implement the necessary reforms that would end discrimination and segregation in Czech schools.

In order to **address discrimination of Roma in practical schools,** the Ministry of Education must:
- Prepare a plan with a realistic time line and budget with concrete targets and deadlines for the phasing out of educational programmes for pupils with mild mental disabilities and start its implementation as soon as possible.
- Provide appropriate methodological support and ensure adequate funding of support measures to schools to ensure successful inclusion and integration into mainstream education of children of different levels of ability ethnicities and nationalities, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Adopt regulations obliging schools and school advisory centres to prioritise individual integration into mainstream schools over placement into practical schools.

To **end segregation in mainstream schools**, the government should:
- Adopt a national plan and timeline with concrete deadlines commencing at the earliest opportunity, with clear annual targets for eliminating school segregation and securing inclusive education.
- Amend the Schools Act to include an obligation on local authorities to prevent the emergence of ethnically segregated schools. This obligation should entail a requirement for local authorities to adopt desegregation plans.
- Pursuant to this obligation, local authorities should review the current school catchment areas to assess whether or not they facilitate ethnic segregation of schools and, if so, implement appropriate changes.
- In line with the Schools Act (Art. 178.1) issue and disseminate guidelines instructing schools that they cannot reject pupils who belong to their catchment area.

To **end discrimination of Romani pupils in primary schools**, the Ministry of Education should:

- Adopt a working definition of unlawful discrimination (based on the various grounds identified in national and international law including ethnicity) and segregation at schools.
- Ensure that the obligation to treat pupils and their parents equally and without racial prejudice is included in the professional standards of teachers and professional training courses for teachers.
- Introduce nation-wide training programmes to ensure dissemination and understanding of the equal treatment and non-discrimination principle among teachers.
- Adopt methodological guidelines "Responding to discriminatory behaviour" that would clarify what behaviour and statements can amount to unacceptable discrimination and racial and other forms of harassment and intimidation and how they should be addressed.
- Ensure that any discriminatory treatment by teachers, other school staff and staff at the diagnostic centres is properly investigated and addressed within the performance review system (including the possibility of disciplinary action).
- Amend the Framework Educational Programme for Primary Education (RVP ZV) so that it explicitly includes the equal treatment principle in the section "Principles of RVP ZV".
- Introduce an obligation on schools to promote human rights, diversity, mutual respect, tolerance, understanding and good relations between persons of different racial and ethnic groups and to transpose this principle (on education promoting understanding among ethnic groups) into the citizenship education of the school educational programmes.
- Ensure adequate methodological and financial support to schools in the development and implementation of programmes promoting respect and understanding among ethnic (and social) groups. Ensure that the schools are aware of the funding opportunities available from the EU funds for programmes promoting respect and multicultural education.
- Design, promote and ensure implementation by schools of a range of appropriate extracurricular activities for both Roma and non-Roma children and parents to help break down barriers and provide additional educational opportunities for all children.

Take measures to end discriminatory bullying:
- Amend and disseminate to schools the methodological guidelines of the Ministry of Education on bullying to ensure they explicitly include and define discriminatory bullying.
- Promote the requirement for all schools to take seriously and thoroughly investigate all complaints of bullying and to respond accordingly, including disciplinary action against both pupils and staff where allegations are substantiated.
- Amend the decree on the Czech School Inspectorate to ensure that inspectors actively investigate and report on discriminatory bullying, including by gathering testimonies of children and parents affected by it and making concrete recommendations for addressing it
- Implement a pilot on monitoring by the Czech School Inspectorate of discriminatory bullying in selected primary schools in all 14 regions and publish the results.

To **strengthen monitoring and accountability**, the government should
- Empower the Czech School Inspectorate to fulfil its function to prevent, prohibit and eradicate discrimination and segregation in education through the provision of adequate financial and human resources, detailed guidelines and procedures on how to identify, monitor and combat segregation in practice on the basis of appropriate indicators.
- Strengthen the Czech School Inspectorate's capacity to receive complaints and impose sanctions against the schools and local authorities for violations of the ban on discrimination and segregation, and provision of training for its staff on the issue of discrimination and the principle of equal treatment in education.
- Ensure that the Czech School Inspectorate monitors that the school readiness assessment does not introduce discriminatory barriers to school registration.
- Develop a data-collection system with a view to providing long-term and accurate statistics on pupils enrolled in primary, secondary and tertiary education, disaggregated by ethnicity and other appropriate characteristics including age, citizenship, gender, disability, national origin and, socioeconomic status and that this is used to identify and address discrimination and segregation;
- Ensure that in the development of the data-collection system, the Ministry of Education (Department of analysis and statistics) works with the office of the Public Defender of Rights (Ombudsperson) and that its methodology for gathering and analysing data meets best practice standards.

3. Policy: Toolkit on Programming the Structural Funds for Roma Inclusion in 2014-20

https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/programming-structural-funds-roma-inclusion-20140422.pdf

The Toolkit provides guidance on equality mainstreaming for Roma integration in the European Union, covering a range of thematic areas including employment, housing, health and education. Chapter 3 on education covers general policy recommendations, country-specific recommendations, suggested output and result indicators and a table of key actions to be supported, disaggregated by age. Chapter 7 focuses on cross-cutting initiatives on areas such as supporting capacity building for NGOs and reducing the administrative burden on beneficiaries.

4. Desegregation: Roma Education Fund (2015) Making Desegregation Work! Desegregation Toolkit

www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/desegregation_toolkit__2015_web.pdf

The Roma Education Fund's Desegregation Toolkit is a brief 11-page document that provides governments and NGOs with a basic overview of the types of educational segregation for Roma children, the impact it has on national development, and the range of interventions at policy and strategy level that contribute to a) the reduction of educational segregation between Roma and non-Roma children, and b) increasing educational enrolment and participation among Roma children.

5. Desegregation Case Study: Approaches to desegregation in Vidin, Bulgaria

Further information on the Vidin desegregation programme is included in this document: http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/ROMA_PAPER_FINAL_LAST.pdf
The DROM website is here: http://drom-vidin.org/

Desegregation projects in Bulgaria are widely viewed as some of the most successful in improving access to quality education for Roma children. The projects operate by stimulating positive attitudes towards desegregation among all stakeholders, and by providing logistical support to integrate all schools in Bulgaria. Most specifically, this has involved providing school transport for Roma children from remote Roma ghettos to mixed city schools. This is accompanied by various support services, such as community and parental engagement and provision of extra educational support.

The desegregation project in Vidin dates back to 2000 when, with the support of the Roma Participation Programme, the grassroots Roma organisation DROM implemented an initial desegregation intervention. The project has gone various cycles of funding, increasing the number of schools and beneficiaries. Though the primary component of the desegregation project in Vidin has been providing transportation, there are other elements put in place to support Roma children, including: parental motivation campaigns; school enrolment planning to avoid re-segregation in classrooms; academic support and catch-up provisions; integrated extra-curricular activities; and meals (now discontinued).

The most recent initiative implemented by DROM is 'Desegregation and support: entry to and exit with quality education'. It fosters willingness and action on the part of parents to have their children in mainstream schools in order to acquire a quality education. Currently, the project covers all 12 schools in Vidin. Due to various factors, the peak year, with over 600 students completing the school year, was in 2002/03. The number of Roma students in city schools remains high, with over 500 beneficiaries completing the 2006/07school year (UNICEF, 2011).

The Helsinki evaluation in 2005 reported that *"the project is not only enrolling students in the city schools but is also managing to keep them there after they complete their primary education..."* and that Roma students in integrated schools achieved 1.75 and 1.10 points higher than Roma students in Roma-only schools in state exams in Bulgarian language and mathematics (UNICEF, 2010).

Overall strengths & weaknesses
Following are the major strengths of the project:
- The project was successful in garnering the support and participation of parents, with well-conceived stages of cooperation, resulting in some parents becoming members of city school management.

- The local Roma NGOs played a central role in the initiation and effective implementation of the project. The project team is also comprised of both Roma and non-Roma, ensuring that the needs of the Roma community are reflected in the development and implementation of the project.
- Children are enrolled in mainstream schools regardless of their grade level, allowing more Roma children to be integrated and reducing the risks of re-segregation.
- All schools in Vidin are part of the desegregation project, again reducing the chances of secondary segregation.
- There is an effort to ensure that Roma children and parents are not singled out: Roma are expected to be brought to the school by their parents, like the non-Roma children. This helps to foster one community among Roma and non-Roma, and supports the perception of Roma children being the same as their non-Roma peers.
- Catch-up class and tutoring are provided to help meet the extra educational needs of Roma children in desegregated environments.
- The Edinstvo Club, a peer group established for teachers, has been effective in facilitating the sharing of knowledge and helping teachers to strategise around supporting struggling students.

The following are the major weaknesses of the project:
- There is a lack of training about teaching in a more culturally sensitive manner
- There is gender disparity. For every year the project has run, there have been more boys who were enrolled and finished the academic year than girls.
- There are some problems with transportation, especially for children who want to attend extra-curricular activities.
- There are indications of a need for more catch-up provisions and academic support.
- Though desegregating has been shown to improve the performance of Roma students in integrated schools compared to those in segregated schools, the project has not yet addressed the fact that Roma students in integrated schools still lag substantially behind non-Roma students in school performance.

6. Early Years and Pre-school Case Study: Biztos Kezdet (Hungary)

For a comprehensive peer review of the UK's Sure Start model and other country pilots (including Hungary in 2006), see the peer review synthesis report "Sure Start" by Fred Deven at: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/docs/2006/pr_uk_en.pdf

For a recent evaluation of the Sure Start project, see "The impact of Sure Start Local Programmes on Five-Year-Olds and Their Families" at: http://www.ness.bbk.ac.uk/impact/documents/RR067.pdf

Detailed information about the Biztos Kezdet programme is available in Hungarian at: http://www.biztoskezdet.eu

In reducing cost-associated barriers, Hungary has seen significant benefit from investment in a wide network of kindergartens based on the UK's Sure Start programme.

Biztos Kezdet involves a pre-school enrolment model with low associated costs to families: there are no tuition fees; children pay only for meals and extracurricular activities; meals are free for disadvantaged children). In addition, the programme involves conditional cash transfers for families with multiple disadvantages who enrol their child in pre-school before age 4 and maintain stable attendance during the school year.

In addition to such education-specific systematic interventions, the programme currently operates Children's Centres in more than 110 localities in the most disadvantaged regions of Hungary with large Roma populations. Biztos Kezdet Children's Centres were originally set up with funding from Norway Grants and the European Union, and since 2012 they have been funded from the national budget.

Through the centres, the programme provides integrated social services to children ages 0–6 (early childhood education and care) and their parents (parental training, employability support). Rather than create a new parallel child care provision system, the programme complements the existing system

with a clear focus on the most vulnerable communities. The programme currently provides services to 4,000 children (Karacsony 2016).

7. Early Years and Pre-school Case Study: 'A Good Start' (CEE regional initiative)

Further details and links to associated resources can be found here: http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/good-start-eu-roma-pilot

A Roma Education Fund-produced introduction to the 'A Good Start' programme is available here: http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/documents/a_good_start_booklet.2001.pdf

A full case study on the A Good Start programme is as follows:
Asenov, Rosen; Jasarevic, Marijana; Laat, Joost de; Kits, Barbara (2013). 'A Good Start (AGS): scaling-up access to quality services for young Roma children: case study of the Roma Education Fund Pilot Project'. Washington, DC; World Bank.
http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2013/06/18600107/good-start-ags-scaling-up-access-quality-services-young-roma-children-case-study-roma-education-fund-pilot-project

In increasing parental awareness of and participation in early years learning, the Roma Education Fund's 'A Good Start' model involves a 'complex set of centre-, community-, and home-based interventions customised to the local community'. Launched in 16 localities across CEE and working with local partner organisations, activities included the employment of community mediators, predominantly of Roma ethnic origin, whose role was to conduct intensive outreach work and liaise between the local communities and relevant education institutions. These mediators also conducted regular home visits and helped families enrol their children in pre-school.

This standard approach was complemented with country-specific activities. For example, as part of Hungary's 'Your Story' programme, mothers attended regular sessions where they received children's books and learned to read and tell stories to their children. The sessions were led by facilitators who often were Roma women from the local community. The participants were taught a variety of skills ranging from reading, writing, role playing, and parenting, and were individually counselled on a wide range of issues and concerns. Other initiatives include the Home Pre-school Community Liaison Programme that encouraged Roma parents and grandparents to participate in the school experience by leading a kindergarten session alone or in pairs. The participants were trained along with the teachers and were given skills to conduct a session on a subject of their choice. Finally, in linking with teacher training, pedagogy and andragogy students the College of Nyíregyháza, participated in Your Story sessions and home visits as part of their required practical training and to gain experience with socially disadvantaged Roma children.

Similar reading activities were designed in the project's framework for delivery in Romania, whereas in the Slovak Republic, activities included afterschool instruction and tutoring that was provided in the first year of primary education. To facilitate pre-school attendance, material support was distributed that addressed differing family needs (such as clothes, shoes, school supplies, and hygiene packages). In some cases, children were also transported and accompanied to and from school.

Finally, each participating locality received assistance to conduct additional locality-specific activities designed to facilitate or support inclusion, including: child vaccination programmes; support in obtaining necessary official identification documents; construction to increase kindergarten capacity; parental education; diversity training for teaching staff, training on child-centred pedagogy; and community motivation events (Karacsony, 2016).

8. Materials development and pedagogy: Hungary's Complex Instruction Program (CIP) H2O

English language resources are available on the Hungarian H2O website:
- http://h2oktatas.hu/en/for-teachers
- http://h2oktatas.hu/en/for-parents

Stanford University, the originator of the CIP model, have a dedicated website outlining the CIP approach: http://cgi.stanford.edu/group/pci/cgi-bin/site.cgi

Hungary's Complex Instruction Program (CIP) evolved from more than 20 years of research at the Stanford School of Education, and is designed to ensure academic access and success for *all* students

in heterogeneous and inclusive classrooms. Case studies and links for this programme are included in the selection of annotated resources in Section 4 of this report.

The methodology has three major components:
   a. multiple ability curricula and independent/group work that involves open-ended tasks on a topic that requires a wide array of intellectual abilities;
   b. special instructional strategies, as the teacher trains the students to use cooperative norms and specific roles to manage their own groups;
   c. teachers who learn to recognise and treat status problems, so that all students from diverse backgrounds can make meaningful contributions.

The programme uses diverse educational methods aimed at: strengthening student motivation; encouraging learner autonomy; strengthening communication, socialisation, ICT, language, and other skills and abilities; developing problem-solving and cooperation skills; encouraging teamwork, tolerance, and practice-oriented education. Students who lag behind others are prioritised and prompted to work cooperatively, creatively, and multi-culturally. Individual cognitive, meta-cognitive, and socio-emotional skills are given special importance, and parents' roles in their children's overall development and learning process are also emphasized. It is accompanied by a 90-hour accredited teacher training course for the entire staff of primary schools that have disadvantaged indicators (Karacsony, 2016).

9. Pedagogy: the Step by Step Approach
The International Step by Step Association (ISSA) website provides information about the ISSA, its programmes and services and publications: http://www.issa.nl/

Resources include:
Building Opportunities in Early Childhood from the Start: A Teacher's Guide to Good Practices in Inclusive Early Childhood Services
http://www.issa.nl/sites/default/files/AGS%20Good%20Practice%20Guide.pdf

The guide was written for professionals and para-professionals (such as Roma teaching assistants) who work with young Roma children. Contents includes: ISSA's definition of quality pedagogy; Competent Educators of the 21st Century: Principles of Quality Pedagogy; the accompanying Professional Development Tool; and experiences and knowledge gathered through the implementation of A Good Start. The guide also includes theoretical sections, reflection sections, tips and ideas and examples of good practice.

Diversity and Social Inclusion - Exploring Competences for Professional Practice in Early Childhood Education and Care
http://www.issa.nl/sites/default/files/Diversity-and-Social-Inclusion_0.pdf

This guide is aimed at teachers aiming to work for diversity and social inclusion in Early Childhood Education, and is centred on the core competencies needed to work in a setting of diversity and equality.

Effective teaching and learning for minority-language children in preschool
http://www.issa.nl/content/effective-teaching-and-learning-minority-language-children-preschool-0

Materials designed for pre-school teachers which support minority language children and include background, theory and activities to promote language inclusion in the classroom. The set consists of a Teachers' Guide "Speaking for Diversity: Promoting Multilingualism in Early Childhood Education", Training Modules for adult educators, and Compendium of learning materials.

There are also a number of resources linked to the Romani Early Years Network, some of which have been translated into two Romani dialects Vlaxicko and Rumungricko and can be found here: http://www.issa.nl/content/useful-resources

10. Early Childhood Development: Roma Early Childhood Inclusion. The RECI Overview Report
http://www.unicef.org/romania/RECI-Overview.pdf

The Roma Early Childhood Inclusion (RECI) report gives a comprehensive overview of early childhood provision and services available to Roma families and the barriers they face in accessing it in four countries: Czech Republic, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia. Of particular use might be the country-specific section, which includes an overview of Roma early childhood education, issues and challenges, and recommendations at both the governance and field level.

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