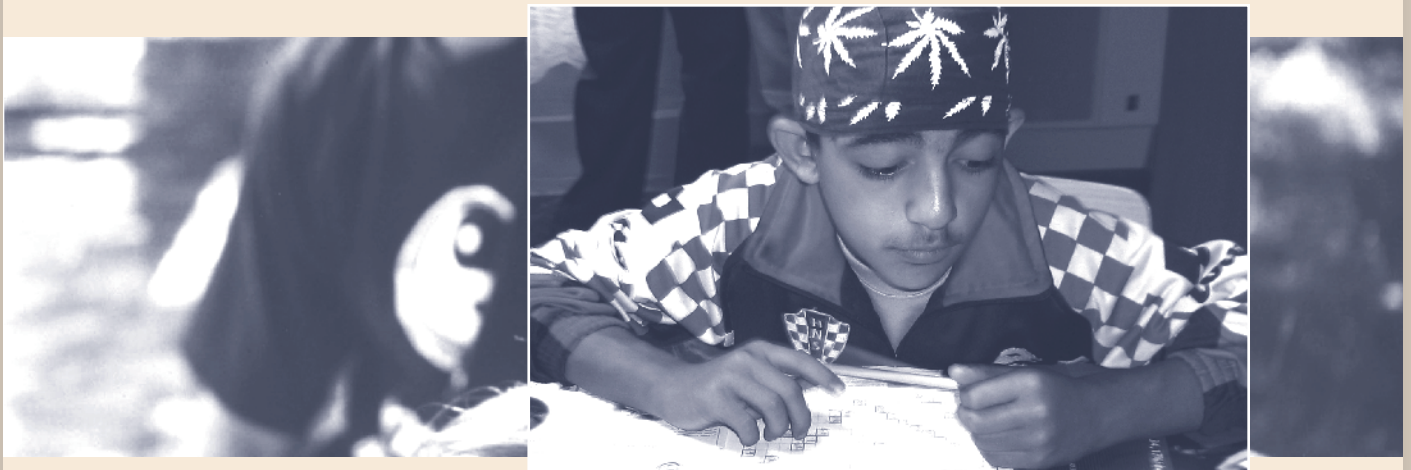


Country Assessment  
and the Roma Education Fund's  
Strategic Directions

## Advancing Education of Roma in Slovakia



# **Advancing Education of Roma in Slovakia**

Country Assessment  
and the Roma Education Fund's Strategic Directions

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# Preface

*T*his document is part of a series of REF Country Studies. It seeks to provide an analysis of the education systems and the ongoing education reforms – from the perspective of the inclusion of Roma children – in the countries taking part in the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The document also reviews the different programmes and activities the Roma Education Fund (REF) has carried out since its establishment in 2005, and highlights the thematic and programme areas REF is planning to concentrate on during the coming three years. The REF hopes that this document will offer a useful instrument for:

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- ⇒ Policy-makers seeking to improve education policies that address the education outcome gap between Roma and non-Roma.
- ⇒ Civil society representatives who wish to improve the effectiveness of their educational programmes by making them more relevant to the overall education reform of their country.
- ⇒ The overall development and donor community, who needs to better understand the situation that Roma children are facing, so they can identify niche areas where support and contributions would be most needed and valuable.
- ⇒ REF, which needs to define the areas of policy change upon which it will focus.

The information presented in the document has been discussed with representatives of governments and civil society, through various consultative meetings, in order to ensure that the document realistically reflects the actual situation and the recommendations made are viable. This document reflects a situation at the time when the document was produced. Many countries are experiencing relatively fast changes and REF plans to update these assessments on a regular basis.

# Acknowledgements

The editors of the series are Tünde Kovács-Cerović, Roger Grawe, and Alexandre Marc. They have developed the model for the studies, provided oversight during the process of preparation and ensured coherence throughout the documents in the series.

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The main author of this document is Andrej Salner of the Slovak Governance Institute and Beata Olahova, Roma Education Fund. They received contributions from Tünde Kovács-Cerović, Roger Grawe, Alexandre Marc, Vivien Gyuris, and Dragica Pavlič.

Tom Popper did the language editing.

# 1. Executive Summary

## Political, Economic and Social Context

Slovakia is an upper-middle-income country, with a population of 5.4 million and a gross national income per capita of \$8,130 in 2005 (by the Atlas method).<sup>1</sup> Slovakia has achieved both political and economic stability since it gained independence with the breakup of Czechoslovakia in 1993. Its economic transformation, initiated in 1998, positioned it well for European Union accession, which occurred on May 1, 2004.

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Slovakia is one of the fastest-growing economies in the region, and gross domestic product increased by 6 percent in 2005. Nevertheless, unemployment, at 16.2 percent, remains high, even by regional standards, though its level continues to recede – in line with improved performance in the real sector and administrative measures taken by the government. There are sharp regional differences in unemployment: The eastern region has a much higher incidence of poverty, as economic activity is heavily concentrated in the west, particularly around the capital, Bratislava.

Slovakia's population consists of 80 percent Ethnic Slovaks, 10 percent Hungarians and 10 percent Roma. The living conditions of the Roma are especially poor in isolated settlements. Poverty in these areas is multidimensional – related to high levels of unemployment, poor housing conditions, and lack of access to basic public services.<sup>2</sup> Almost one quarter of Slovakia's Roma live in these isolated and extremely poor settlements.

The Roma's political representation has weakened since 1992, with no representation at all in the Parliament and disproportionately low numbers in local and regional governments. Nevertheless, the establishment of the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Affairs in 1998 was a major achievement in government recognition of Roma needs. The office falls under the jurisdiction of the Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights, Minorities and Regional Development and has been headed by a Roma since 1999. It is expected that Slovakia's recently elected government<sup>3</sup> will continue existing programs to reduce social inequalities, including those affecting the marginalized Roma communities.

## Education

While the Slovak education system can boast various achievements, it also features some serious systemic weaknesses that affect Roma children. The legal framework for improving the educational outcome of Roma children is based on the "Concept of Roma Children and Youth Integrated Training," which covers secondary and university educational development and was adopted by the government in 2004. This policy draws on the key document of the Ministry of Education, the

1 Source: World Bank Slovakia Country Brief 2006.

2 [http://www.government.gov.sk/romovia/list\\_faktov.php](http://www.government.gov.sk/romovia/list_faktov.php)

3 In June 2006.



national “Program of Education and Training in the Slovak Republic in the forthcoming 15-20 Years.” The implementation of the Concept may bring about important improvements in the secondary and university education of the Roma children.

Some of the achievements of the Slovak education system are as follows:

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- ⇒ High enrolment rate: The enrolment rate of school children reaches close to 100 percent. Every child is registered for compulsory education, and this registration is monitored by the municipality and the social services department. Social and child benefits for parents are based on school attendance.
- ⇒ Scholarships and free meals: Social system measures were introduced as part of social reform in 2003/2004, and these included subsidized school meals and scholarships at primary and secondary schools (for children of social benefit recipients).
- ⇒ Teacher assistants: The amendment to Decree No. 408/2002 (1631/2002-sekr.) of the Ministry of Education introduced the profession of a teacher assistant. Working in partnership with the teacher, the teacher assistant becomes a liaison officer for Roma children, providing a distinctly positive example. In the academic year 2006/07, preschools and primary schools employed 900 Roma teacher assistants, whose salaries are financed by the Ministry of Education.
- ⇒ Per-capita financing: Decentralization of powers and a new per-capita financing system have increased efficiency. While no precise measurements exist, it is likely that per-capita financing has also increased the interest of regular schools in retaining Roma students.
- ⇒ Preparatory classes: The preparatory classes were adopted under Act. No.408/2002 (600/2002-43) and became effective since September 2002. The preparatory grade is aimed at helping children adjust to the transition from a domestic to a distinctively institutionalized environment. The preparation children receive in grade zero is intended to create a space for accelerated personal growth of each child, while assisting them in adapting to initial social differences. The success of this program is confirmed by the fact that as many as 91 percent of the students who went through the preparatory class during its piloting from 1992/93 completed the eighth year of primary school and were admitted to secondary and vocational schools.<sup>4</sup> There are more than 2,000 children per cohort every year in the preparatory classes and the majority of them are of Roma origin.
- ⇒ Funding to encourage Roma students to complete secondary schools: The Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Affairs provides funding to encourage Roma students to complete secondary school. The funds are used to enable gifted but socially disadvantaged Roma secondary school students to carry out their studies.
- ⇒ Civic involvement: Insufficient state involvement in efforts to meet the educational needs of Roma children has encouraged the emergence of an extensive network of nongovernmental initiatives at all levels. Civic associations working at the school level often carry out extensive work with Roma children.

Despite all of the above achievements, the Slovak education system has a severe and built-in systemic problem that brings about extensive, up-front discrimination against Roma students: A large percentage of Slovakia’s Roma children are de facto segregated in special schools, or in special classes in regular schools.

<sup>4</sup> Roma People, Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic, 2006.

The special education system was designed to create schools for children with different disabilities. However, most of the students enrolled are diagnosed with a mild mental disability, and the majority of them are of Roma origin. Children are placed in special schools based on a diagnosis of mental retardation. Violations in testing and diagnosing Roma children are found to be common, but these violations are often overlooked, and they are not considered as signs of discrimination.

The Special Schools for the mentally handicapped in Slovakia caters to more than 24,000 children, with about 230 special primary schools. Many of these schools are located close to Roma settlements, and thus they are the easiest schools for Roma students to access. Special education in Slovakia is a low-quality education. The system has a lack of qualified teachers, and it offers a reduced curriculum for students. Roma children enrolled in Special Schools for the mentally handicapped do not receive a formal certificate for completion of primary education, and, therefore, they may not apply for admission to regular secondary schools.

The high number of children in Special Schools for the mentally handicapped is encouraged by a high financial normative. State financing for children in special schools is twice the amount provided per-student in standard primary schools, so there is a strong incentive for special school managers to attract as many students as possible.

Another form of special education has been recently introduced under a program to allow “individually integrated pupils in regular primary school.” In these cases, children are placed in special classes within regular schools and are taught with special curricula under the supervision of a special pedagogue. These types of special classes, so called “integrated classes,” receive the highest normative per child in the education system. It is expected that, due to this new program, the number of children in special schools will decrease. This form of special education is considered less harmful to children than special schools for mentally handicapped, because transfer into standard classes is possible and a good level of primary school education is provided. Nonetheless, it remains a segregated form of education that prevents children from progressing in a standard environment.

There is a lack of clear state policy and political will to address the education system’s shortcomings with respect to Roma, including the problem of special schools for mentally handicapped.

## REF’s Activities in Slovakia in 2005-2006

By February 2007, the Roma Education Fund (REF) had received 16 project proposals from Slovakia. The REF approved four projects and two reimbursable grants to support Roma nongovernmental organizations’ access to European Union Structural Funds. The REF’s total commitment in Slovakia is EUR 667,660 for 2006.

The REF-funded project of the League of Human Rights Advocates, implemented in two schools in the Trnava region in collaboration with the municipal and school authorities, seeks to re-integrate Roma children from special classes to standard classes. The project also seeks to provide additional support and mentoring to Roma children, and to offer mediation between the school and parents.

Another REF project, implemented by the Slovak Ministry of Education, pilots an approach that combines teacher training and preschool enrolment of 300 Roma children in eight localities. It is hoped that the project will help the government to identify approaches and policy changes to reduce the number of children placed in special schools.

The REF-supported project of the Romany Union for Civil Development in central Slovakia will support advocacy and information activities for Roma parents, as a means for addressing the negative impact of sending children to special schools in central Slovakia.

The REF-funded project managed by the NGO New Roma Generation focuses on the design of a second-chance education program for 150 Roma from isolated localities in eastern Slovakia who have not completed primary education. The program will also help these children to enrol in secondary school. The program is implemented in close collaboration with local authorities and has interesting pilot components.

## Strategic Directions for Future REF Activities in Slovakia

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Within the overall strategic framework of the REF for improving Roma education outcomes in Slovakia, future REF activities over the next three years will be grouped around the following project themes:

### 1. Assistance and support to the Roma community could involve:

- ⇒ Activities focused on reduction of the number of Roma children in special schools for mentally handicapped and on decreasing segregation:
  - Supporting NGO programs and local government activities to reduce enrolment of children into special schools for mentally handicapped and to monitor and disseminate best practices.
- ⇒ Activities focused on providing direct support to the Roma community/civil society:
  - Building capacity of Roma communities to be involved in education changes, including supporting Roma parents' participation in school boards.
  - Developing a network of Roma NGOs and communities to work toward supporting education.
  - Supporting greater interaction/linkages between local authorities and Roma NGOs.
  - Assisting local and regional governments in using EU funds to support isolated Roma communities.

### 2. Institutional strengthening of education authorities could involve:

- ⇒ Activities to support policy dialogue and provide advisory services in:
  - Training of Roma teacher assistants, through official state institutions, to receive the pedagogical credentials that will be required by law in 2010.
  - Modifying the core curriculum to strengthen multicultural education.
  - Working on training a new generation of teachers, including improving quality and multicultural sensitivity.
- ⇒ Activities to support change in the structure and finance of the education system:
  - Undertaking a study on special schools for mentally handicapped, looking at the cost-benefit of this approach versus efforts to support integrated education. The study will be supported by an effort to map the process of assignment of children to special schools for mentally handicapped.
  - Building alliances with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Family, based on an economic benefit study for supporting mainstream education.
  - Building capacity of local authorities and NGOs to access EU funds.

3. Policy development could involve:

- ⇒ Establishing a solid dialogue on special schools for mentally handicapped with senior policy makers, the general public, the professional community, local leaders and Roma parents/leaders.
- ⇒ Providing support for changing legislation related to special schools for mentally handicapped.

Collaborating with the operational program in 2007-2013 for use of Structural Funds, by harmonizing the REF and Slovak government approaches to Roma education financing.

## 2. Country Profile

### Roma Population in Slovakia

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According to the 2001 National Census, Slovakia had 5,379,455 inhabitants. In terms of growth trends, the country recorded slight increases in population in 2004 and 2005, after declines in the early years of the decade. This very modest growth is expected to continue. In 2005, the population of young people in Slovakia under the age of 14 was 894,308, or 16.59 percent of the estimated total. This age group declined from 918,915 (17.06 percent of the population) in the previous year. In 2005, the size of the cohort at age 7 was 69,595 youngsters.

Gross domestic product per capita in 2005 reached about \$8,600 at current prices or about \$5,800 in purchasing power parity. Real GDP growth reached 6.1 percent in 2005, accelerating from 5.4 percent in the previous year and rates of more than 4 percent in the two years before.

The official 2001 National Census lists the number of Roma in Slovakia as 89,920, only 1.7 percent of the total population. This data is based on self-declaration of ethnicity, and it means that Roma are the country's second largest minority after Hungarians, who, with 520,528 people comprise 9.7 percent of the population. However, the number of self-declared Roma is suspect even according to census data, as the number of individuals declaring Romanes as a mother tongue is greater than the number of people declaring Roma ethnicity. A total of 99,448 persons claim to be native Romanes speakers, but only 59,174 of them declare Roma ethnicity, while 37,803 declare Slovak ethnicity and 2,018 Hungarian.

The Census also provides a picture of the geographic concentration of Roma. Other data and estimates discussed below correlate with the Census's geographic distribution data. According to the Census, some 85.5 percent of Slovak Roma live in three of Slovakia's eight regions – the Eastern Slovak regions of Košice and Prešov, as well as eastern portions of the central Slovak region of Banská Bystrica.

The key source for estimates of the Roma population outside of the Census is provided by a project to map Roma settlements, carried out in 2003 with government and donor support. This project concluded that there were about 320,000 Roma in Slovakia, of whom some 280,000 live in communities viewed by the majority as "Roma communities." The methodology used in the mapping exercise is less likely to capture certain segments of the Roma population, especially the fully integrated Roma. For 2002, Boris Vano estimated that as much as 40 percent of the Roma population lived in segregated settlements.<sup>5</sup> (see tables 1 and 2)

<sup>5</sup> Vano, Boris (2005): *The Demographics of Roma Children*, in "Roma Children in the Slovak Education System" (Andrej Salner, ed.), Slovak Governance Institute.

Table 1: Estimates on Age Structure of the Roma Population

Total	Age 0-14		Age 15-44		Age 45-64		Age 65+	
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share
390,000	132,000	33.8%	185,000	47.4%	50,000	12.8%	23,000	5.9%

Table 2: Roma Population and the Share in Mandatory School Attendance (6-15)  
(Based on estimates in Table 1)

Year	Age 0-14		Age 6-15	
	Number	Share of total Roma population	Number	Share of total age group
2005	131,746	32.7%	93,400	14.3%
2010	124,225	28.5%	81,700	15.0%
2015	129,704	27.7%	81,600	15.7%
2020	134,334	26.9%	88,400	16.5%
2025	131,041	25.1%	90,700	17.1%

Source for both tables: Infostat-VDC, from Vano, Boris, "The Demographics of Roma Children," in Roma Children in the Slovak Education System (Andrej Salner, ed.), 2005, Slovak Governance Institute.

Availability of any other ethnic-specific data is extremely limited, due to both legal issues and lack of research in this area. The National Action Plan within the Decade of Roma Inclusion anticipates improvements in data collection, with a focus on education data.

### *Poverty, Inequality and Discrimination*

According to Eurostat data, Slovakia is one of the European Union countries with the highest share of population at risk of poverty as measured by relative income.

High rates of unemployment are a pervasive problem. While no reliable data on the unemployment rate of Roma exist, government estimates place Roma unemployment at double the level of overall unemployment. And in some locations, the unemployment rate among Roma is estimated to be as high as 100 percent.

Living conditions are especially poor for Roma who live in isolated communities. Poverty in these areas is multidimensional with high unemployment, poor housing conditions, and lack of access to basic public services. This poverty is exacerbated by social exclusion and racial discrimination.

Compared to other countries in the region, more Roma in Slovakia are concentrated in separate settlements, on the outskirts of villages and towns. The characteristics of these settlements vary significantly, based upon geographic location and ethnic composition. An estimated one-fourth of Roma in Slovakia live in such settlements, many of which are in the poorer eastern regions of the country, though the actual number is difficult to gauge because of methodological difficulties in measuring the Roma population.

### 3. Political, Economic and Social Situation

#### Government Structure, Mandate and Finance

Elections held in June 2006 resulted in a coalition government led by SMER, a centre-left party. The coalition also included HZDS, a centre-right party, and SNS a Slovak nationalist party. The new government has pledged to reverse some reforms and reduce inequalities, while maintaining Slovakia's commitment to join the Euro zone in 2009. The government declared a strong commitment to improve the situation of the Roma. Traditionally Roma political activity on the local level has been linked with the HZDS, but this connection has not translated into national representation. In the first months of the new government, ethnic tensions with the Hungarian minority increased.

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#### *Sub-National Structures*

Government reform in 2000 resulted in the formation of eight sub-national units, known as self-governing regions (SGRs). Their main responsibilities are in the areas of roads and transport, regional planning, regional development, secondary education, health, social affairs, and culture. SGRs are almost exclusively responsible for secondary education in terms of establishing secondary schools. Curricular responsibilities rest with the central government.

At the municipal level, Slovakia is an extremely fragmented country with a prevalence of small village units. In 2000, some 68.5 percent of Slovakia's 2,883 municipalities had fewer than 1,000 inhabitants, while only about 2.5 percent had more than 10,000 inhabitants. Municipalities have two types of competencies: "original" competencies, belonging to them on the basis of decentralization legislation, and "transferred" competencies, which are funded by various state bodies.

Key municipal responsibilities include roads, public transport, public parks, sanitation, environmental protection, communal waste, sewage, utilities, territorial planning, construction permits, local development, birth and death records, housing, pre-schools, primary schools, art schools, social services, healthcare, and culture.

There is no exact measure of Roma representation at the sub-national level. In the 2005 election for representatives of self-governing regions, the Roma made an extremely poor showing, and no Roma candidates were chosen in that election, according to the National Democratic Institute, which was implementing a project on Roma political participation.

#### *Government Finance: Deficit and Medium-Term Fiscal Plan*

The state budget deficit in 2005 fell to 2.9 percent of GDP, from about 3.7 percent in the previous two years. The decline in the deficit was mainly the result of strong growth, as well as better-than-expected performance of tax collection following the introduction of a 19 percent flat tax. Slovakia now meets the budget deficit requirement of the EU's Maastricht Criteria for entry into the Euro zone, which Slovakia aims to accomplish by 2009. While the new government has declared that the euro adoption plan remains valid, observers worry about the government's



ability to keep the budgetary deficit under control, given the spending agendas of the three coalition parties.

EU pre-accession funds (PHARE) and Structural Funds are a key source of external finance with respect to Roma education issues. Additional funding for smaller projects comes from the Social Development Fund, which was established by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Family and draws on the resources of the European Social Fund.

Education expenditure reached about 3.8 percent of GDP in 2005, a slight decline from the previous years caused mainly by sharp GDP growth outpacing the growth in education expenditure.

## Roma Representation in Government/Parliament

The first Roma members of parliament were elected to the Czechoslovak Parliament in June of 1990. Six Roma became members of the newly constituted Czechoslovak Federal Parliament; four more were in the Czech National Parliament; and one was in the Slovak National Council.<sup>6</sup> All were elected on the lists of larger non-Roma parties: the Czech-based Civic Democratic Forum, VPN in Slovakia, and the Party of the Democratic Left. In the whirlwind of political change in subsequent years, Czechoslovakia split apart in the Velvet Divorce, establishing two independent states: the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. Since 1992, Roma have not been represented in the Slovak Parliament, and they have disproportionately low representation in local and regional governments. There are total of 22 Roma political parties in Slovakia, out of which only the Roma Initiative of Slovakia, in cooperation with the mainstream political party Hnutie za Demokraciu (HZD), ran candidates in the last parliamentary elections. The political party Slobodne Forum also had one Roma person in their candidate list. None of these parties managed to get into parliament.<sup>7</sup>

## Responsibility for Roma Affairs and the Decade

A key development occurred in 1998, when the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Affairs was created as part of the office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Minorities and Human Rights. During the ensuing years, the government has delegated significant responsibility in the area of “Roma affairs” to this office. Orgovanova was also designated as Slovakia’s representative on the Roma Decade Steering Committee. The current deputy prime minister for minorities intends to establish an office for national minorities within two years. According to the plan, that office would include other minorities with the Roma in one unit. Plans also call for establishing regional and district affiliates for national minorities, to make the unit for national minorities more effective at the local level.

<sup>6</sup> National Democratic Institute (2003): *Roma Political Participation in Slovakia*.

<sup>7</sup> Roma Press Agency, October 2005.

## Status with Key International and Regional Partners

Since May 2004, Slovakia has been a member of the EU. In the process of EU membership negotiations, Slovakia faced severe criticism with respect to the situation of the country's Roma. Slovakia acceded to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2000. The OECD has undertaken significant analyses of Slovakia's education sector, highlighting problems of access and quality. Slovakia has been an active borrower from the World Bank, particularly during the period of concentrated economic reforms between 1998 and 2004. The World Bank has undertaken numerous studies detailing the situation of Roma in Slovakia and has supported the Slovak Office of the Plenipotentiary and advised on the formulation of the Slovak Development Fund.

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## Political Opposition: Composition, Structure, and Relation to Roma Issues

The present political opposition consists of three parties who belonged to the 2002-2006 ruling coalition: the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU-DS), the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), and the ethnic Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK). During their two terms in power, these parties failed to develop effective social inclusion policies for any minority besides Hungarians, and they have little connection with the Roma population.

## Anti-Bias and Anti-Discrimination Legislation

Discrimination in education is formally forbidden in the Constitution and by the Anti-Discrimination Act. Education-specific legislation usually does not explicitly address discrimination.

Allegations of discrimination in education have been investigated in individual cases by the State School Inspection and the Ministry of Education, usually at the request of nongovernmental organizations. Most cases were not treated primarily as discrimination cases, but rather as failures to abide by other specific education legislation. Repeated violations have been found in the process of testing and re-testing Roma children before or after their placement in special schools for the mentally handicapped.<sup>8</sup> Again, these violations have been mainly addressed as violations of specific legislation and sub-legal norms.

The most recent findings on the problem of Roma segregation come from the Slovak National Center for Human Rights, the government agency responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Antidiscrimination Act No. 365/2004. In a brief report released at the end of February 2006, the centre found significant problems with the increased integration of individual pupils in regular schools following the adoption of the Anti-discrimination Act, due to inadequate preparation and conditions for this integration.

<sup>8</sup> This material makes repeated reference to special schools. While at present six different categories of special schools exist for various handicaps, the reference is the special schools for the mentally handicapped, which constitute the largest group by far among special schools.

## Civil Society

### *Traditional, Civil, and Political Structure of the Roma Community*<sup>9</sup>

The Roma population in Slovakia is a native and settled population, which has lived on this territory since as early as the 14th century. Written records of Roma presence in the materials of the Leles Convent from the Zemplín Administrative Region date from 1377 and 1381. Most Roma groups passed through southwestern Slovakia and the Czech lands when traveling to western and southwestern Europe.

Roma in Slovakia belong to four main ethnic subgroups. The largest group of Roma in Slovakia is the Slovak Roma, which make up about two-thirds of the total Roma population in the country. This group settled in Slovakia in the 16th century. The second largest group is the Ungrike Roma (Hungarian Roma), a group of settled Roma who are located in southern Slovakia, especially in the eastern part of the country.

The settled Roma clearly are the very large majority on Slovak territory. The Roma literature and other Roma, including the former Roma-travelers, refer to settled Roma as Rumungro (originally from Romungro, meaning a settled Hungarian Roma).

A very specific group is the Vlachika Roma, who came to Slovakia in the second half of the 19th century from Romania and Moldova. Until they were forced to settle, they traveled and traded. The Vlachika Roma remained a closed group for a long time and they were able to maintain their authentic way of life and values, as well as their culture and folklore. Only recently have the Vlachika Roma begun to participate in the social, political, and cultural activities of the entire Roma minority in Slovakia. A smaller subgroup is the Sinti, the last members of the German Sinti Roma who survived the Holocaust.

The different dialects of the Romanes language reflect the diversity of Roma subgroups. Despite the past assimilation in education, most Roma in the countryside, and especially in the settlements, understand and speak their native language, Romanes. The most widespread branch of the language is the eastern Slovak dialect of Romanes, which is used by almost 80 percent of the Roma, not only those in eastern Slovakia but also those who migrated to the Czech Republic after 1945. The Hungarian dialect, used by the Rumungros along the southern border with Hungary, has been quite strongly influenced by the Hungarian language. A gap separating Roma and the rest of population in these ethnically mixed regions is not as great as the gap in municipalities with a Slovak population. The dialect of the Vlachika Roma has been preserved in its authentic form through an intentional effort to protect the language from outside influences. This preservation of the language is similar to the Vlachika's maintenance of their traditional way of life. The last groups of German Sinti have been protecting their language in the same way.

The group referred to as Romanian trough makers has remained almost unknown due to insufficient research. This community is settled in some locations in eastern Slovakia but also in the southern parts of central Slovakia. In the 1960s, their language was identified as a dialect of the so-called Romanian Roma, or Rudars, which was strongly influenced by the archaic Romanian language that contains the terminology of the trough makers' craft.

According to a government survey (Mapping of Roma Settlements carried out in 2003), there are 1087 municipalities in Slovakia out of which there are 315 municipalities with large number of Roma.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Romanonevo lil, Culture: *The Roma in Slovakia*, 2005.

It is estimated that half of the Roma live in urban and municipal concentrations, communities on the outskirts of municipalities, or communities physically separated from villages or towns by natural or artificial barriers, such as railways or creeks.

In almost 1/3 of these localities, the Roma live in mobile houses, wooden huts, shelters etc. Concerning the infrastructure: only 39 percent of the Roma settlements enjoy running water; only 13 percent of these settlements have a sewage system; only 15 percent of these settlements are connected to gas lines; only 89 percent of these settlements are connected to electricity.

According to the research, the other half of the Roma in Slovakia live integrated among the majority population.<sup>10</sup>

### *Roma NGOs and Other Key Actors in Civil Society*

There are many Roma NGOs working on projects for social inclusion and integration, including, to name just a few: New Roma Generation, Phralipe – Bratstvo – Testveriseg, Spolu – community development foundation, Skola dokoran, Club of Romani women of Slovakia, KARI, League of Human Rights Advocates, Multicultural Generation, Association of Young Roma, etc. There is also a network of Roma community centres, which are established and financed by Municipal governments to work with Roma communities, and are usually headed by Roma.

There are also groups that are active in the minority policy process; such as CVEK – Center for Research of Ethnicity and Culture, INEKO – Institute for Economic and Social Reforms, and IVO – Institute for Public Affairs. Other important NGOs include the Open Society Foundation, People against Racism, Nadacia Milana Simecku, Children of Slovakia, etc.

Slovakia does not have the advantage of the presence of large and strong Roma organizations that can be found in Romania and Bulgaria and this limits the capacity to carry out large scale national projects and programs.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.government.gov.sk/romovia/list\\_faktov.php](http://www.government.gov.sk/romovia/list_faktov.php).

## 4. Education System

### Responsibility for Education

Primary responsibility in the area of education lies with the Ministry of Education. Since July 2006, the minister of education is Jan Mikolaj, a representative of the Slovak National Party.

22 In the formal structure of the ministry, the political nominees include the minister and one or two state secretaries (deputy ministers), whose specific assignments depend on the minister. Traditionally, these come from a different political party in the governing coalition than the minister. Furthermore, the minister can legally bring in up to five temporary (politically nominated) civil servants.

Below the level of state secretaries, all employees are civil servants, supposedly beyond politics. Traditionally, however, new governments have made extensive changes, especially at the top civil service level. There are usually changes in the head of office of the ministry and the level of general directors of sections, often through the reorganization of departments. Lower-level civil servants generally have quite stable positions, aside from cases where political appointees carry out specific personnel changes in key areas of their agenda.

The education ministry undertook a number of reforms in the area of decentralization of primary and secondary education, notably introducing a new system of per-student financing. The former minister has been criticized for excessive emphasis on a specific Christian Democratic political agenda, which included introducing mandatory teaching of religion and concluding a treaty with Vatican on education.

Problems of Roma children and children from disadvantaged backgrounds in general, have not been a priority of the Ministry of Education in the past. A small unit of Roma Education existed within the ministry until September 2006, under the Section of Regional Schooling. This unit, with a staff of two-to-three persons, had key responsibilities for most strategic documents in the area of Roma in the education system. However, in October 2006, the unit for Roma education was relocated, and it is now part of the Department for Minority Unit. This could be perceived as a positive step if the number of people in the unit had also increased, however, at the moment, there are actually fewer people covering minority and migrant education than before.

International projects dealing with Roma issues are also handled by the Section of International Cooperation.

### Specialised Institutions

Within the Ministry of Education, a number of institutions are delegated specific tasks.<sup>11</sup> These institutions include the State Pedagogical Institute, the Institute of Information and Forecasting in

<sup>11</sup> According to the Law on state administration and self-administration in education (Act. No. 596/2003).

Education, the State Institute for Vocational Education, and the State School Inspection. At the sub-regional level, the Ministry of Education establishes Regional School Offices, Methodical Pedagogical Centers, Regional Psychological Advisory Centers, District Psychological Advisory Centers, Regional Special Pedagogical Centers, and District Special Pedagogical Centers.

**The State Pedagogical Institute** is the key institute on curricular matters and is part of the Ministry of Education. The ministry delegates most tasks related to the content of education, as well as limited policy-making responsibilities, to the State Pedagogical Institute. It is involved in a number of projects, including preparation of learning materials for teaching the Romanes language. It is also responsible for the preparation and implementation of centralized pupil performance measurements, including the State Secondary School Leaving Examination and monitoring exams carried out in the fifth and ninth grade of primary school.

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**The Institute of Information and Forecasting in Education** (UIPS), which is also a budgetary organization within the ministry, has overarching responsibilities in the area of methodology, collection, and processing of education statistics. In addition, the UIPS administers the scheme of social scholarships for secondary school students.

**The State School Inspection** oversees primary and secondary schools. The State School Inspection is a budgetary organization established by law and managed by the ministry. The inspection is independent in its activities and responsible for state oversight of pedagogic management, quality of education, upbringing of children, and material conditions in schools, school facilities, centres of vocational teaching, and centres of applied vocational training. It also receives and processes complaints and petitions in these areas. In 2004, the State School Inspection created a special post of inspector in charge of children from weak socio-economic backgrounds, based in Košice, in eastern Slovakia. This inspector pays special attention to problems of Roma and other disadvantaged pupils. The State School Inspection manages a network of School Inspection Centres, one in each of Slovakia's eight regional capitals. The inspection carries out general and thematic inspections, as well as inspections based on complaints and petitions.

**The State Institute of Vocational Education** (SIOV) is a budgetary organization that is directly managed by the Ministry of Education and oversees the network of secondary specialized schools and secondary vocational schools. SIOV is responsible for managing coordination, pedagogy, advisory functions, education, research, and informational and methodological matters in these schools.

**The Department of Roma Culture and Language** is a part of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Health of the Constantine the Philosopher University, located in Nitra. The school also has regional units in Spišská Nová Ves, in the Košice Region, and Lučenec, in the Banská Bystrica Region – two places with a high concentration of Roma. Classes in this department prepare students for work with the Roma community in the field of “Social and Missionary Work with Roma Communities.” initially the main objective of the department was to prepare a new generation of Roma teachers with the knowledge of Romani language who would later work with Romani children in schools.

### *Sub National Institutions*

Sub national institutions dealing with education include:

**Regional School Offices** in each of the eight self-governing regions are founded and directly managed by the Ministry of Education.<sup>12</sup> They establish all levels of schools within the state-approved network – including special primary and secondary schools – in cases where municipalities or the self-governing region itself fails to establish a sufficient number of schools.

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**Special Pedagogical Centres and Pedagogical-Psychological Advisory Centres** are the centres responsible for testing and screening children with disabilities or who experience learning difficulties when referred by the schools management or regional school offices. They also provide advice to schools and pedagogical approaches for these children and psychological counseling.

**Methodological-Pedagogical Centres**, organizations directly managed by the Ministry of Education, are in charge of methodological guidance of teachers, including continuing education of teachers. The centres exist in Bratislava, Banska Bystrica, Trencin and Presov.

**The Roma Education, Information, Documentation, Counseling and Consultation Center** is within the Presov Methodological-Pedagogical Center. It has national-level responsibility for making sure the specific conditions and needs of the Roma are reflected in schools with a high Roma population.

**The Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology** is an organization established by the Ministry of Education to carry out research in the area of child psychology. The institute is funded in part based on a contract with the ministry and in part from scientific grants, mainly from government grant schemes. The institute has carried out several research tasks related to Roma children, including the development of new diagnostic tools used in assessing school abilities.

(More information on the law on state administration and self-administration in education can be found in Annex 2 of the report).

## **Financing**

In 2005, Slovakia's educational expenditure was about 3.8 percent of GDP, which represents a slight decline compared to previous years. The main reason why the proportion of spending on education dropped is that the GDP grew quickly, outpacing budgeting for education.

Primary schools, secondary schools, and some other facilities, such as free-time centres, are funded by formula-based transfers from the state to the founder of the institution, in most cases the Regional School Centers. Pre-schools and some other facilities, like primary art schools, are funded by municipal or regional local governments, from their own budgets.

The present system of financing primary and secondary schools is based on a formula that allocates a fixed amount per student to the school's founder that then pass it on the schools. Public

<sup>12</sup> The new cabinet has announced plans to abolish the eight Regional School Offices.



schools are eligible for funding of current and capital expenditures, while private and parochial schools receive current expenditure funding but no capital expenditure funding.

The funding formula reflects the type of school and its location, in so far as the location impacts on heating requirements or other special considerations. From 2004 to 2006, a school's founder was guaranteed at least 95 percent of the previous year's budget, so that the funding formula would not cause steep drops in budgets. This cushion, which has helped guarantee the survival of small schools, is due to be lifted.

A classification by level of disability exists for funding of special schools. The majority of pupils from disadvantaged Roma communities who are placed in special schools are judged to have the mildest degree of disability. Under the funding formula, special schools with these students receive approximately double the per-student rate of regular schools.

Special primary schools receive a separate per-student allocation that is more than twice that of regular primary schools. This funding is further adjusted for each student by a coefficient reflecting the degree of disability. (see table 3)

Table 3: Overview of Selected Education Formulas (Normative) for 2006 in Slovak Koruna, Per Pupil Per Year<sup>13</sup>

Type of school	Minimum	Maximum
Standard Primary school	23,055	23,983
Individually integrated special education student in regular primary school	2.5 x regular normative (57,637.5)	2.5 x regular normative (57,637.5)
Special primary school (for students with mild mental disabilities)	48,942.1	50,019.1

Source: [http://www.minedu.sk/FaR/FINRS/2006/WEB\\_2006\\_DATA\\_V3.xls](http://www.minedu.sk/FaR/FINRS/2006/WEB_2006_DATA_V3.xls).

## Facilities

The majority of the country's primary schools and pre-schools are operated by local governments. In addition to these schools, there are also a smaller number of parochial and private schools. Secondary schools are operated by either the self-governments of the eight Slovak regions or parochial and private operators.<sup>14</sup> Public schools function mostly in older communist-era facilities.

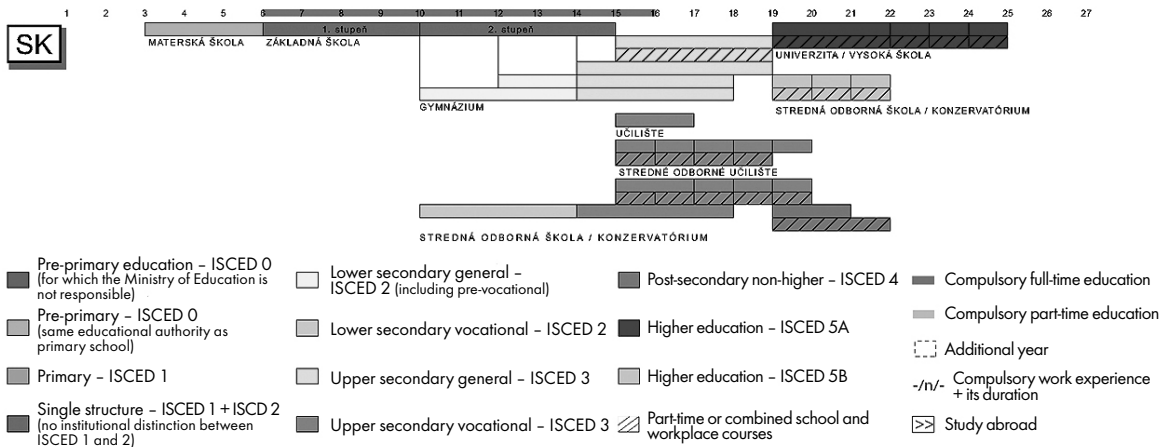
There is a clear demographic decline in the number of students: In primary schools, the total number of students dropped from 724,000 in 1989 to 534,000 in 2005. In many areas with significant

<sup>13</sup> 2006, 2007 data are Basic schools 26,727 to 27,840, Individually integrated, special schools with light mental disability 1.286\*44192 to 1.286\*45339, source <http://www.minedu.sk/FaR/FINRS/2007/Normativy07.xls>.

<sup>14</sup> Some selected schools remain as state schools operated by Regional School Offices.



Figure 1: Organisation of the Slovak Education System in Slovakia, 2003-2004



Source: <http://www.eurydice.org>

marginalised Roma populations, the number of children is increasing. Many of these locations have inadequate facilities and there is frequently a need to use two shifts in one school.

The network of primary schools has seen a limited amount of rationalisation over the past few years, but despite these efforts, the changes in the facilities have not matched demographic developments in many localities.

## Language of Instruction

The language of instruction is Slovak, but education in minority languages is formally guaranteed to all minorities, including Roma. In practice, Romanes is officially used at the Department of Roma Culture and Language within the Faculty of Social Sciences and Health of the Constantine the Philosopher University, in Secondary school of music and arts in Košice, in Gandhi's school in Lucenec and in Private gymnasium in Košice.

Teaching assistants in schools with Slovak-language instruction also sometimes speak Romanes and use the language informally or formally in the education process.

## Education Cycles, Progression Criteria, and Examination System

School attendance is mandatory for 10 years, during which students usually progress to at least the first year of secondary school, unless the student repeated a grade. Pre-schools enroll children from ages 3-6 and are run by municipalities. Primary schools cover grades one through nine. Grades one through four are lower primary school, and grades five through nine are upper primary school.

In addition to regular primary schools, there is a network of special schools. Students with special needs are also served by special classes in regular schools, and through individual integration into regular classes.

Primary schools are set up by municipalities and special schools are established by regional authorities. In some locations, the state has established schools because the local government failed to do so. Secondary schools are set up by regions. The three streams of regular secondary education are: comprehensive (university-track) “gymnasiums,” specialized (professional) secondary schools, and vocational schools. Gymnasiums and professional secondary schools always conclude with a state leaving exam (maturate), and some vocational school programs also end in a state exam.

Progression in every year of primary school is conditional on not failing any required subjects. Students who fail may repeat grades, or be tested for placement in a special school if disability is suspected.

If a student completes 10 years of mandatory education in primary school without graduation because they repeat at a grade least once, the student is not required to continue education. Progression to secondary schools is subject to entrance exams specific to each school. Many schools with lower demands, especially vocational schools and other non-university track schools, accept all students who completed all nine grades of primary education.

If a student completes primary school prior to completing the 10-year mandatory education requirement, and is unable to gain admission to secondary school, the Regional School Office is required to find the child a secondary school.

Students who complete their primary schooling in special education classes are not considered to have completed primary education, so they may not apply for admission to regular secondary schools.

To proceed to a publicly accredited public or private higher education institution, a student is required to complete the state secondary leaving exam and pass tertiary entrance examinations specific to each institution.

## Special Schools

Children are placed in special schools based on a diagnosis of mental retardation. This diagnosis may be made at the beginning of a child’s school attendance, after “grade 0” (similar to kindergarten), or later, during primary school.

Pre-school testing is carried out by the state Pedagogical Psychological Advisory Centers at the district level, on the request of a pediatrician or psychologist or during school enrolment.

The special education system consists of schools for various disabilities but most of the students in the system are children with a mild mental disability. The majority of the students in these schools are Roma.

In addition to special schools for mentally handicapped, special classes with special school curricula can operate as a part of regular primary schools. According to official data on ethnicity of pupils from the Institute of Information and Forecasting in Education, the share of Roma children reported in special schools exceeds that in regular schools by a factor of almost 14.<sup>15</sup>

Special school students are officially precluded from completing formal primary education and therefore may not apply for admission to regular secondary schools. This exclusion from regular progression through the education system affects more than 20,000 children, most of them of Roma

<sup>15</sup> Andrej Salner, Inštitút pre dobre spravovanú spoločnosť. Calculation made for this report.

origin. This exclusion is reinforced by Slovakia's absence of life-long learning opportunities, which might allow special education students to re-enter the formal system.

The practice of enrolling a high number of Roma children in special schools is encouraged by the higher per-student financing special schools can receive. There are currently about 230 special primary schools, and many of these are located close to Roma settlements, making them the easiest schools for Roma to access. It is a common practice for teachers from special schools to encourage Roma parents to send their children to a special school by describing it as the most suitable place for a Roma child.

A second form of special education has become increasingly common under a program called "individually integrated pupils in regular primary school." Children in this program are placed in special classes for mentally handicapped within a regular primary school and are taught using special curricula under a supervision of special "pedagogue." This form of special education decreases the chances that a child will be transferred to a special school and allows the child to stay in the regular school. These types of special classes, so called "integrated classes," receive the highest per-child normative in the education system at about 2.5 times the average. This form of segregation is arguably less harmful than placement in special schools, because there is a greater possibility for children to transfer back to standard classes, and students in the "integrated classes" do receive a recognized primary school education. However, these classes remain a segregated form of education, and they prevent children from progressing in a standard environment. The education authorities expect that the introduction of this program will reduce the number of children in special schools.

Extensive discrimination exists on a local level with respect to Roma children. Even in those cases where Roma children attend regular primary school, they are often segregated within the class and are rarely acknowledged in any positive way.

Allegations of discrimination have been investigated on an individual basis by the State School Inspection, but instead of being treated primarily as discrimination, these cases are treated as failures to abide by other specific education legislation.

Repeated violations have been found in the process of testing and re-testing of Roma children before or after placement in special schools for the mentally disabled. Again, these problems have been mainly addressed as violations of specific legislation and sub-legal norms.

Even now, Slovakia lacks a clear state policy to address the issue of special schools and Roma children. There is no evidence of political will or professional commitment to correct the systemic shortcomings affecting the education of Roma children. It is telling that the Department of Special Schools has no staff dealing with Roma educational needs, even though the majority of clients of the special school system are Roma.

## Teacher Assistants

Based on amendment to Decree No. 408/2002 (1631/2002-sekr.), the Ministry of Education introduced the profession of "teacher assistant" into the education system, effective January 1, 2004.

In 2005/2006, there were 973 teacher assistants in the educational system.<sup>16</sup> Funding of teacher assistants is based on a specific allocation, not on a formula basis, and is financed by the central government through the Regional School Offices.

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Education Slovak Republic, "Súčasný stav vo výchove a vzdelávaní romských detí a mládeže" page no. 5.

Through the Ministry of Education's introduction of teacher assistants, some people of Roma origin are employed to assist Roma children and parents in school work. This has been the only means of arousing the Roma community to take an active role in the education of their children. However, in Slovakia, the job of teacher assistant has become so competitive that Roma applicants hardly gain access to the opened positions.

Moreover, the Ministry of Education issued a decision that persons working as teacher assistants in the schools have to have completed secondary school and at least a minimal pedagogic education before 2010. Very few Roma teacher assistants have such accreditation, or the means to acquire it during the coming years.

This implies that, after 2010, many Roma will be excluded from the possibility to become, or continue as, teacher assistants.

## Social Support for Students

A system of social support has been created as a part of social system reforms under the 2002-2006 government.

The system provides three key types of subsidies to children in pre-school and primary school from families who receive social assistance or fall below a minimum income threshold. A separate system of scholarships exists for students in secondary schools.

The subsidies for pre-schools and primary schools are:

- ⇒ Merit-based stipends introduced in September 2004 for primary and secondary school students based on grades, as well as improvement in grade-point average.
- ⇒ School meals introduced in May 2004 for all students meeting the requirements, this assistance reduce the cost of meals to SKK 1-5 per day.
- ⇒ Subsidies for school supplies introduced in May 2004 for all students meeting the requirements.

All subsidies are directed to schools and require the school principal to apply on behalf of the students.

Since its launch, the system has been expanded to cover special schools, creating further perverse incentives for attendance in special schools, where high grades are easier to achieve. In 2005, meal subsidies and subsidies for school supplies covered about 11-12 percent of all children in schools, while merit-based scholarships covered some 3.6 percent of eligible children.

## Key Legislation and Other National Documents

Two key legislative acts govern primary and secondary education: the Act on Schools, No. 29/1984, and the Act on Self-Administration in Education, No. 596/2003.

The former has been amended extensively over the years and has been scheduled for replacement for a long time now. It is the key act defining the types of schools and school facilities. Drafting a new act is among the priorities in the area of education of the present government.

The latter piece of legislation, the Act on Self-Administration in Education, defines the governance structure in the school system, including the decentralization of responsibility to local governments.

Act No. 597/2003, the Act on Financing of Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and School Facilities, creates the existing normative-based financing system, charging the government with setting the per-student normative annually.

In addition to these acts, there is a complex set of sub-legal norms in the form of decrees of the Ministry of Education, orders, methodological guidance and other instruments which govern specific aspects of the education process.

A Phare project (1999-2002) on Roma education produced a Concept of Roma Children and Youth Integrated Training, including secondary and university education development.

The concept was approved by the government of Slovakia in May 2004. This document draws on the key document of the Ministry of Education the national Program of Education and Training in the Slovak Republic in the forthcoming 15-20 Years adopted by the Slovak government in 2001 and subsequently passed by the National Council.

Based on numerous analyses and statistics, the following tasks have been set out in the Concept of Roma Children and Youth Integrated Training, including secondary and university education development:

- ⇒ Improving academic results of Roma.
- ⇒ Improving the readiness of Roma children to attend school.
- ⇒ Increasing the percentage of Roma students attending secondary schools.
- ⇒ Reducing the number of Roma children attending special primary schools.
- ⇒ Increasing the percentage of Roma students attending universities.
- ⇒ Improving the material equipment of schools and schools facilities.
- ⇒ Implementing widespread multicultural education.
- ⇒ Improving the system of dropout prevention, education, and counseling.
- ⇒ Strengthening the sense of identity in Roma.
- ⇒ Introducing an academic program in universities covering the Romanes language and literature;
- ⇒ Encouraging continuing education for Roma with incomplete education and encouraging their subsequent placement in the labor market.
- ⇒ Introducing support and mentoring activities for Roma students.
- ⇒ Increasing participation of teacher assistants, missionaries, social workers, special pedagogues, educational psychologists, and teachers trained for specific work with Roma children, in the education and training of Roma children.<sup>17</sup>

## Status of the Education System: Key Indicators

Table 4: Schools and Attendance 2005/2006

Type of school	Number of schools (Total   Public   Private   Parochial)	Number of students (Total   Public   Private   Parochial)
Pre-school	2,945   2,887   24   34	141,814   139,516   777   1,521

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic (2006): *Roma People*.

Special pre-school	38   35   0   3	761   729   0   32
Primary	2,304   2,173   18   113	534,147   507,278   1,658   25,211
Special primary	230   222   2   6	24,349   23,861   23   465
University-track secondary "gymnasiums"	238   160   24   54	99,758   81,357   3,447   14,954
Special "gymnasiums"	2   2   0   0	65   65   0   0
Secondary specialised	215   171   38   6	73,577   67,567   4,726   1,284
Special secondary specialised	5   5   0   0	216   216   0   0
Joint secondary schools	126   119   5   2	71,534   68,231   2,496   807
Secondary vocational schools	210   181   24   5	65,020   56,443   7,422   1,155
Special secondary vocational	12   12   0   0	762   762   0   0
Special vocational	45   45   0   0	4,024   4,024   0   0
Special practical secondary	29   25   1   3	389   358   5   26

Source: Statistical yearbook of Education 2005/2006.

## Student Performance Based on International Assessments

The Slovak Republic participated on both PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies),<sup>18</sup> the two most comprehensive

<sup>18</sup> OECD (2004): *Learning for Tomorrow's World: First Results from PISA 2003*, Paris: OECD Publications [www.pisa.oecd.org](http://www.pisa.oecd.org).

Mullis, I.V.S., Martin, M.O., Gonzales, E.J. and Chrostowski, S.J. (2004): *TIMSS 2003 International Mathematics Report*, Boston: Lynch School of Education, Boston College.

Martin, M.O., Mullis, I.V.S., Gonzales, E.J. and Chrostowski, S.J. (2004): *TIMSS 2003 International*

international programs to assess performance of students approaching the end of compulsory schooling. This was for PISA in 2003 for the first time, for TIMSS in 1995, 1999 and 2003.

The Slovakian students' performances are summarized in the following tables:

Table 5: PISA 2003 Results

Area	Slovak Republic		OECD		Diff. Slovak R. - OECD
	Mean <sup>19</sup>	Mean stand. error	Mean	Mean stand. error	
Mathematics	498	3.3	500	0.6	- 2
Reading	469	3.1	494	0.6	- 25
Science	495	3.7	500	0.6	- 5

The Slovakian students performed on PISA mathematics and science scales at the OECD average level. However, on the reading scale, the average performance is statistically significantly below the OECD average, indicating serious discrepancies.

Also, on all three assessed areas there is a statistically significant and one of the biggest gap between males' (e.g. average math score 507 points) and females' (average math score 489 points) performance.

Table 6: Trends in Performance Over Eight Years: TIMSS 1995, 1999 and 2003

Area	1995		1999		2003		Difference 2003-1999
	Mean	Mean stand. error	Mean	Mean stand. error	Mean	Mean stand. error	
Mathematics	534	3.1	534	4.0	508	3.3	- 26
Science	532	3.3	535	3.3	517	3.2	- 18

*Science Report*, Boston: Lynch School of Education, Boston College <http://timss.bc.edu>.

<sup>19</sup> The way how results are reported in both PISA and TIMSS is the following:

In each assessment area, each student is awarded a score based on the difficulty of the tasks that she or he could reliably perform. The scales are constructed so that the average student score is 500 points and about two-thirds of students score between 400 and 600 points (i.e. standard deviation equals 100 points).



As with many countries, Slovakian students perform better on TIMSS than on PISA.<sup>20</sup> The average performance in all 3 cycles on both TIMSS scales are above the international average. However, the trend is a decreasing one: on the math and science scales the average performance decreased significantly between 1999 and 2003. (see table 6)

The impact of students' socio-economic status<sup>21</sup> on student performance in Slovakia is significantly higher than is the average for the countries participating in PISA – the Index of SES explains 17.3% of variance in performance in mathematics. The difference in performance between the bottom and the top quarter of students grouped by index of SES is one of the biggest among all participating countries (116 points). Also the educational level of the mother predicts the child's performance more than usually expected: the performance gap between students whose mothers' highest qualification is upper secondary and those with lower qualification is over 60 points.

The decline on TIMSS, the inconsistency between Math and Reading on PISA, the high gender difference, and the very high impact of SES and mothers' education on student performance all indicate considerable problems existing in the education in Slovakia, and also describe the Slovakian education system as a highly selective one, lacking effective strategies to support lower-achieving students.

## Education Indicators of Roma

Based on the official data available on the number of Roma children in primary education in academic year 2000/2001 the table below describes the huge decrease in the number of Roma children between the first grade to the second grade; these data indicate that more than 2,000 Roma children actually leave standard primary education and are transferred to special schools for mentally handicapped. The data for the final two grades indicate the large number of grade repetition and or drop outs.

Table 7: Government Research on Enrolment of Roma Children in Primary Schools in 49 Districts in Academic Year 2000/2001<sup>22</sup>

Grade	Total No. of children	No. of Roma children
0	1,047	985
1	40,069	7,429

<sup>20</sup> Lower International Mean on TIMSS than on PISA is mostly due to a wider range of less developed countries participating in TIMSS than in PISA, and the fact that the sampling for the two studies is different: TIMSS targets students at the end of primary schooling, usually while preparing for their final exams, while PISA targets 15 years olds, who are often already in the first grade of secondary schools, somewhat detached from the curriculum areas assessed.

<sup>21</sup> The Index of socio-economic status (SES) is composed of variables which indicate economic, social and cultural status of the student's family. It is expressed on a scale constructed in a way that OECD average is 0.0 and the standard deviation is 1 (two-thirds of students are distributed between -1 and 1).

<sup>22</sup> The Concept of Roma Children and Youth Integrated Training, including secondary and university education development.



2	40,038	5,870
3	40,250	5,565
4	42,303	5,348
5	39,320	5,399
6	39,431	4,884
7	39,469	4,050
8	39,082	3,153
9	39,013	2,002

## Extent and Nature of Roma Segregation and Enrolment Barriers

The Slovak education system has a huge, built-in, systemic problem that results in extensive up-front discrimination against Roma students. A large percentage of Slovakia's Roma children are de facto segregated in special schools for the mentally handicapped or in special classes for the mentally handicapped in regular schools.

Additionally it seems that a whole set of national and regional institutions are engaged in supporting and maintaining the special education system in Slovakia. These are certainly the Special Pedagogical Centres and Pedagogical-Psychological Advisory Centres; the testing related activities of the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Patopsychology (VUDPAP), and also the Regional School Offices, in charge of opening and closing special schools. Alongside is the list of institutions within Universities preparing special pedagogues for the needs of the education system.

All these institutions most probably have vested interests in maintaining the status quo in respect of special education.

## Qualitative Assessment of the Education System<sup>23</sup>

### *School Management*

The number of Roma parents and students on school governing boards is unknown, and there is no mechanism to ensure equity in this area.

According to the European Roma Rights Centre report, *Stigmata: Segregated Schooling of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe*, the most prevalent form of segregation of Roma students in Slovakia is segregation in schools for children with developmental disabilities. The report also said: "Various sources indicate that the number of Roma children in some of these schools is between 80-100 percent. Intense anti-Roma racism in Slovakia favors the ghettoisation of schools. In many schools the percentage of the Roma students has grown and is disproportionate to the

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed qualitative assessment see table in Annex.

percentage of Roma in the locality as a result of the flight of non-Roma students from these schools. The segregation of school facilities goes unchecked and is also amplified by socio-demographic processes that translates into the decrease of the non-Roma population in the rural areas of eastern Slovakia.”

Few projects piloted by the Ministry of Education have directly tackled segregation of Roma children in schools for children with developmental disabilities.

### *Teaching Profession*

Inspection results repeatedly show a lack of qualified teachers, especially in special schools. The share of graduates from teaching programs who go into teaching is low. A recently introduced teacher loan scheme aims to attract young teaching graduates into teaching. There are programs in place that provide optional in-service teacher training in diversity issues. These programs are mostly offered by the Methodological and Pedagogic Centers or NGOs. Several projects are underway to increase teacher education on diversity issues, both pre-service and in-service, including training by state Methodological Pedagogic Centers and a number of NGOs.

There is a significant lack of teachers qualified to teach the Romanes language and Roma culture, but a recent expansion in teaching faculties is seeking to address this problem. No special measures are in place to attract additional teachers into this area of training.

### *Curriculum*

Some indication of inequity in curriculum is provided by the failure rate of Roma students, which is far above failure rate of other students. This may not, however, be related only to the curriculum, but to teachers’ attitudes and their low expectation. There is no regular measurement of the situation.

The curricula for Romanes language teaching are presently under development by the State Pedagogical Institute. The institute is piloting the curricula at select secondary schools. Full deployment is foreseen toward the end of the decade at the earliest. For 2007, there are plans to train 60 mainstream teachers in the Romanes language.

### *Textbooks*

The existing textbooks are generally written from a majority perspective, although recent textbooks make more explicit efforts to cover minority perspectives. Some older books that are in use may still contain negative stereotypes of Roma, Jews, or other groups. But, more frequently, these textbooks simply avoid the topic of minorities entirely. Special Roma-language textbooks are presently under development and a few selected textbooks (Roma History, Roma Reading Book) already exist and are used selectively.

### *Financing*

Indirectly, the financial mechanism encourages education of children in special schools, because these schools receive financial incentives.

## Summary of Systemic Strengths and Weaknesses with Regards to Roma Education

### *Strengths in the Area of Roma Education in Slovakia Include*

**Enrolment rate:** In the Slovak education system, the enrolment rate of children is near 100 percent. Each child is registered for compulsory education and the registration is monitored by the municipality and the social services department. Based on children's school attendance, parents are entitled to social and child benefits.

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**Scholarships and free meals:** Social system reform, introduced in 2003/2004, provides subsidized school meals and scholarships for children of social benefit recipients in primary and secondary schools. The scholarship scheme has a built-in incentive for higher achievement.

**Teacher assistant:** The amendment to Decree No. 408/2002 (1631/2002-sekr.) of the Ministry of Education introduced the profession of teacher assistant. Working in partnership with the teacher, the teacher assistant becomes a liaison officer for Roma children, providing a distinctly positive example. In the academic year 2005/06, pre-schools and primary schools employed 973 teacher assistants, who were financed by the Ministry of Education. However, it is important to mention the Ministry of Education issued a new regulation for the teacher assistants, which obliges them to obtain a minimum pedagogical education before 2010 in order to be qualified for the teacher assistant position. This pedagogical education can be obtained either from trainings organized by the Pedagogic Institute of Presov or at the pedagogical faculties.

**Per-capita funding:** Devolution of powers and new per-capita financing has increased school competition for students. While no precise measurements exist, it is likely that this has increased the interest of regular schools in retaining Roma students.

**Preparatory classes:** Starting with a pilot project launched in academic year 1992/93, "grade 0" has the function of preparing children for school. The preparatory class is aimed at helping children adjust to the transition from a domestic to a distinctively institutionalized environment. The preparation is intended to create a space for accelerated personal growth of each child, while assisting in adapting to a multicultural environment. The preparatory classes were adopted under Act. No.408/2002 (600/2002-43) and are effective since September 2002. The success of this program is confirmed by the fact that as many as 91 percent of the students who went through the preparatory class completed the eighth year of primary school and were admitted to secondary and vocational schools in academic year 1998/99.<sup>24</sup>

**Scholarship to encourage enrolment of Roma students at secondary schools:** The Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma communities provides funding to encourage the enrolment of Roma students in secondary schools. The funds are used to make it easier for gifted but socially disadvantaged Roma secondary schools students to study.

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic (2006): *Roma People*.

## *Weaknesses in the Area of Roma Education in Slovakia*

*Segregation and Assignment of Large Number of Roma Children to Special Schools for Mentally Handicapped*  
Special schools are ingrained in education establishment – there is large number of special schools, and several institutions supporting the special education system.

Extensive discrimination exists on local level with respect to Roma children. In many schools Roma children are placed in separate classes (or separate facilities are set-up close to Roma settlements), in some localities they are almost automatically placed in special schools for mentally handicapped, which results in an increase of segregated “Roma” schools.

### *Structure and Financing of Education System*

There is a massive lack of statistical data on the situation of Roma children in the education system, as data come only from self-declared ethnicity. Parallel data exist based on other sources (e.g. research among school directors who semi-legally gather alternative figures) but these are not of verifiable.

Pre-school is not funded and it is not mandatory, and access to preschool is hampered for Roma. Despite recognised need for pre-school education for children from socio-economically marginalised backgrounds the availability of pre-primary education is limited in many municipalities as pre-schools are financed from municipalities’ own budgets.

### *Education Quality Concerns*

The Roma only schools, the Roma only classes and other forms of segregated education are creating serious obstacles for quality education and for progression to higher education cycles. The qualitative assessment of the education system shows that equity is not assured at several dimensions of the system (curriculum, teachers, inspection, assessment etc.).

### *Implementation Gap with Regards to Roma Integration*

The Decade Action Plan and especially earlier government strategies and action plans on Roma are not well integrated with mainstream policies, insufficiently elaborated.

The political elite and the leadership of the Ministry of Education often fails to recognise problems of Roma children in the education system as significant and does not treat them as an urgent priority. These are delegated mainly to a small department understaffed within the ministry while other departments do not pay attention to the problem (e.g. the Department of Special Schools has no connection with the people working on minority education, although the majority of clients of the special school system are Roma).

## **Knowledge, Data and Capacity Concerns Affecting Roma Education**

The lack of regular and consistent data collection and processing is still an important obstacle to proper targeting and monitoring of educational activities. Official statistical evidence is mainly based on the languages of instruction, and it disregards the ethnic background of the students. An increasing number of children receive scholarships and free meals because they come from socially disadvantaged families, but there are no estimates as to how many of these children are of Roma origin.

*Institutional and Other Capacity Issues*

Roma NGOs have only recently begun to show interest in the education of Roma children. In the past, only a few Roma NGOs were working in the field of education. There are more than 4,000 Roma NGOs in Slovakia, and the majority of them are focused on aspects of social issues and human rights other than education. This lack of interest in education is reflected in the number of projects dealing with education supported by the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Affairs since its inception.

Meanwhile, the low quality of projects dealing with education submitted to the Roma Education Fund by Roma NGOs indicates a lack of experience and lack of interest in education. The inadequate project proposals also reflect a lack of Roma professionals who are capable of occupying influential positions in the educational establishment.

## 5. Overview of Government and Partner Activities

### Commitment to Roma Decade, Action/Progress to Date

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The government of Slovakia has shown few signs of political commitment to the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The former deputy prime minister for human rights and regional development entrusted much of the implementation of the Slovak National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion to the office of the government Plenipotentiary for Roma Affairs, as well as some other relevant government bodies – including the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development; the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family; the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Education; and the National Office of Statistics. The representatives of these ministries and the office of the government Plenipotentiary formed a working group, which drafted the Slovak National Action Plan for implementation of the goals of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

This Action Plan is being implemented largely in accordance with the ongoing government plan for overcoming all forms of racial discrimination, which is currently in place from 2000-2006. The National Action Plan of Slovakia conforms to the expectations of the Decade vis-à-vis education, taking into account such factors as the existing level of schooling for Roma communities and the possibilities of integration on the national and local educational level.

Regarding the employment rate among the Roma community, the government has explained that, prior to the advent of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family was already running a program of social inclusion, which is compatible with the EU's social inclusion directives. However, even with all these government efforts in place, the problems of unemployment, poor housing, and unequal education for Roma remain very chronic.

The Action Plan of the Decade for Roma Inclusion is financed through regular state budget allocations. The budget was set using figures from a 2004 government document, the Concept of Roma Children and Youth Integrated Training, including secondary and university education development. The budget for Action Plan measures was estimated at SKK 230 million. No official reports on the progress of the Action Plan have been made to the cabinet yet.

### Donor Funding: In-Country Programmes

During the years when Slovakia was in transition, the government and NGOs received massive donor funding, especially for efforts to combat the problems affecting members of the Roma community in Slovakia.

Key donor institutions include:

- ⇒ EU's PHARE.
- ⇒ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).
- ⇒ Open Society Institute.
- ⇒ Open Society Foundation.
- ⇒ World Bank.

- ⇒ Matra KAP foundation of the government of Holland.
- ⇒ United Nations Development Program (UNDP).
- ⇒ United States Embassy.

After Slovakia joined the EU on May 1, 2004, some of the donor institutions gradually withdrew their support. But, shortly after entry to the EU, Slovakia started to receive substantial EU Structural Funds. The budget for the 2004-2006 programming period for Structural Funds includes increased co-funding by the funds. The contributions of the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, and the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund reached a total of EUR 25 million.<sup>25</sup>

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The Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family disbursed the EU's Structural Funds. Funds disbursed to NGOs, for implementation of projects, did not reach the intended recipients in most cases, due to bureaucratic bottlenecks adopted by the Ministry. However, even after EU entry, some of the other donor institutions remained to support Roma NGOs.

EU pre-accession funds (PHARE) and Structural Funds are a key source of external finance with respect to Roma education issues. Additional funding for smaller projects comes from the World Bank-supported Social Development Fund, established by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

A EUR 1 million, 2002 Phare project, called "Further Integration of the Roma Children in the Educational Field and Improved Living Conditions," was concluded recently, while a EUR 1 million, 2003 effort, called "Project Support to Further Integration of Roma in the Educational Field", is still running.

Within the 2004-2006 Structural Funds programming period, significant funding has been allotted for improving the general school infrastructure, and several other priority areas support projects specifically aimed at marginalized groups within the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development. A number of projects have been supported, mainly in the area of life-long learning. The EQUAL initiative also contains some priorities relevant to the Roma.

The programming documents for the 2007-2013 periods are presently under development and discussions. The National Strategic Reference Framework, a key document governing the use of EU funds, presently proposes significant allocations to Roma education priorities. If these plans are approved, the education system as a whole could receive more than SKK 10 billion per year, or an additional 20 percent on top of the state budget allocation. Significant funding is also planned for school infrastructure.

The Social Development Fund aims to support improvements in social services for marginalized groups in Central and Eastern Slovakia, and it has funded a number of smaller local initiatives related to Roma education. The fund is currently scheduled to conclude at the end of 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic (2006): *Roma People*, p. 32.

## 6. REF Programme in Slovakia

The REF staff visited Slovakia many times and had a number of discussions with the government, in particular the office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Affairs and experts of the Ministry of Education working on Roma issues. Until February 2007, REF had received 16 project proposals and REF had approved five projects and two reimbursable grants to support Roma NGOs' access Structural Funds. REF has committed EUR 716,000 in Grants for projects in Slovakia.

The first project, managed by the League of Human Rights Advocates, is implemented in two schools in the Trnava region in collaboration with the municipal and school authorities. The project seeks to move Roma children out of special classes for mentally handicapped to mainstream classes and to provide additional mentoring support as well as to encourage mediation between the school and parents. REF is financing a project implemented by the Slovak Ministry of Education. The project pilots an approach that combines teacher trainings, support for children in the classroom, and outreach to parents, with a target group of 300 Roma children in eight pre-schools. The project also involves preparing a curriculum for training teachers in eight kindergartens and eight schools in the pilot area.

Romani Union for Civil Development in central Slovakia supports advocacy and information activities addressing the negative impact of sending children to special schools for mentally handicapped in central Slovakia. The project, managed by the New Roma Generation in Eastern Slovakia, The program is design as a second chance education program for 150 Roma from isolated localities in eastern Slovakia, who have not completed primary education and at the same time the program will help them to enrol to secondary school. The project is implemented in close collaboration with local authorities and has interesting pilot components.

### Strategic Directions for REF's Future Activities

Within the overall strategic framework of REF for improving Roma education outcomes in Slovakia, REF's future activities, over the next three years, will be grouped around the following project themes:

1. Assistance and support to the Roma community which include the following potential activities:
  - ⇒ Activities focusing on reduction of Romani children in Special Schools for the mentally handicapped and decreasing segregation:
    - support NGO programs and local Government activities to reduce the entry of children to special schools for the mentally handicapped based on the socially disadvantaged background, (monitor and disseminate best practices).
  - ⇒ Activities focused on providing direct support to Roma community/civil society:
    - build up capacity of Roma communities to be involved in education changes (Encourage Roma parents associations and Roma members of school committees to contribute to school management and administrative decision making);
    - support greater interaction/linkages between local authorities and Roma NGOs for raising awareness on pre-school attendance and primary school enrolment of Romani children.



Table 8: Levels of Engagements for Improving Roma Education Outcomes in Slovakia

Assistance and Support to the Roma Community	Implementation Support to Education Authorities	Policy Development with the Government
<p><b>1. Support to isolated Roma community/civil society:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Support through technical assistance the local and regional governments in accessing EU funds for infrastructure support to isolated Roma communities with cooperation with the Operation Programme of EC 2007-2013.</li> <li>⇒ Increase community involvement in isolated communities for encouraging attendance of Romani children in secondary schools (dorms, social support, transport, etc) and primary schools.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Policy dialogue and advisory services aiming to raise quality of education provided for the Roma children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Recommend to modify core curriculum to strengthen multicultural education and inclusion of human rights in text books.</li> <li>⇒ Contribute to training Roma teacher assistants through official State institutions to receive pedagogical credentials that will be required in 2010.</li> <li>⇒ Develop programs that will focus on strengthening progression rate of Roma students develop programs that will focus on.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Clear enunciation of policy – close down gradually special schools for mentally handicapped in current form (which involves several Romani children from socially disadvantaged communities).</li> <li>⇒ Assist in redesigning the system of education related institutions which mainly serves for special education system.</li> <li>⇒ Integrate special education teachers to regular system (Revue Czech example).</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Support to Roma community/civil society in education matters:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Call for proposals for capacity building of Roma community for addressing education issues.</li> <li>⇒ Develop small Roma net-works to promote the need for quality education.</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. Support change in the structure and finance of education system:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Undertake a study on special schools for mentally handicapped looking at the cost benefit of this approach versus efforts to support integrated education.</li> </ul>	

Assistance and Support to the Roma Community	Implementation Support to Education Authorities	Policy Development with the Government
<p>⇒ Support greater interaction/linkages between local authorities and Roma NGOs for raising awareness on pre school attendance and primary school enrolment of Romani children.</p> <p>⇒ Encourage Roma parents associations and Roma members of school committees to contribute to school management and administrative decision making.</p>	<p>⇒ Build alliances with Ministry of Finance and MLSWF, based on economic benefit study for supporting mainstream education.</p> <p>⇒ Involve experts for evaluating proposals and overall plan for Roma inclusion in operational program of the SK 2007-20013.</p> <p>⇒ Pursue 2-track approach with EU and government on disposition of structural funds for Roma education and other programmes.</p>	
<p><b>3. Special schools and segregation</b></p> <p>⇒ Increase the work with Romani parents in order to identify possible solutions on enrolment to standard primary school.</p> <p>⇒ Advocacy and public awareness on Special Schools for mentally handicapped and its implications.</p>	<p><b>3. Quality issues</b></p> <p>⇒ Increase monitoring of equity in education for Roma children by establishing links with the State school inspectorate.</p> <p>⇒ Increase accountability of teachers for educational outcomes – and help to provide extra support for afternoon classes.</p> <p>⇒ Identify RMUS students and other sources to increase Roma participation in higher education tracks with good employment prospects.</p>	

2. Institutional strengthening of education authorities which include the following potential activities:

- ⇒ Policy dialogue and advisory services on:
  - modify core curriculum to strengthen multicultural education;
  - training new generation of teachers: improve quality and multi-cultural sensitivity;
  - training of Roma teacher assistants through official State institutions to receive pedagogical credentials that will be required in 2010;
  - activities aiming to increase enrolment to secondary education of Roma.

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- ⇒ Support change in the structure and finance of education system:
  - undertake a study on Special Schools for the mentally handicapped looking at the cost benefit of this approach versus efforts to support integrated education. The study will be supported by a mapping of the process of assignment of children to Special Schools for the mentally handicapped;
  - build alliances with Ministry of Finance and MLSWF, based on economic benefit study for supporting mainstream education;
  - support through technical assistance the local and regional governments in accessing EU;
  - funds for infrastructure support to isolated Roma communities with cooperation with the Operation Program of EC 2007-2013.

3. Policy development which include the following potential activities:

- ⇒ Establish a dialogue on special schools for the mentally handicapped with senior policy makers, general public, professional community, local leaders and Roma parents/leaders.
- ⇒ Provide support for changing legislation related to Special Schools for the mentally handicapped.
- ⇒ Collaboration with the operational program 2007-2013 for the use of structural fund harmonizing REF and Slovak government approach to Roma education financing.

## Overall Strategic Framework and Levels of Engagement

Having in mind both the systemic constraints and the specific barriers embedded in the education system which Roma face, REF's role in Slovakia should be viewed as a multi-layered assistance consisting of policy related activities, support to the Roma community and support to the government. Table 8 indicates the broad framework of REF priorities that from which specific REF activities in Slovakia should evolve during the coming years.

### *Strategic Directions for Future REF Activities*

#### *REF Project Priorities*

Based on this broad framework and considering the current REF programme, resource availability and capacity, short term priorities for REF funding will be given to the following:

1. Assistance in preparing municipalities to take over education decision making – e.g. through competitions for local governments that have a significant percentage of Roma population.
2. Activities that focus on increasing the quality of education for the Roma:
  - ⇒ Mentoring at transition grades (four and eight) to increase progression rates.
  - ⇒ Providing support in obtaining textbooks to disadvantaged students in communities with significant Roma populations – by borrowing from school libraries, providing special cheap editions, etc.
  - ⇒ Providing teacher and mentor training.
  - ⇒ Using Roma education centres to connect parents with schools and reach parents through training, sharing best practices for early schooling, information campaigns, and awareness raising.
  - ⇒ Applying the experience from the “Tanoda” example in Hungary to find the best ways to organise additional classes and after-school activities.
3. Scaling up of scholarship and mentoring programmes at the secondary level.

#### *REF Research and Policy Analysis Priorities*

Based on the overall framework for REF instruments and priorities, there are three current priorities for policy analysis in Slovakia:

1. Analysis of education expenditures including government, donor, and NGO sources.
2. Case study comparing Šuto Orizari schools to selected “mainstream” schools.
3. Analysis of teaching inputs and incentives to identify viable options for mentoring and additional classes, including work schedules, double financing, etc.

In addition to these subjects, there are four major areas that require targeted policy research in the future:

- ⇒ A review of existing scholarship schemes in the country, as well as the existing social assistance schemes, in order to develop more effective and better targeted models that could ensure higher attendance and lower dropout rates – and assist policy makers to adopt and implement these models.
- ⇒ An economic benefit study would be a very useful instrument to raise the issue of governmental financial commitment to Roma education both on the national and municipal level.
- ⇒ Teacher education universities must develop curricula that are pertinent for Roma students. In the framework of the Bologna process, universities will change curricula, structures and procedures in the forthcoming one or two years. It is important that this process is informed by the needs that a more effective education of Roma – both teacher trainees and the children they will teach – should encompass. For this purpose, there should be a study addressing the overview of existing teachers’ education curricula, possible options and recommendations, including an overview of options for preparing students to teach Romanes language and culture. Since the higher education reform process is an international one, it would be best to conduct such a study for all Decade of Roma countries in a coordinated way.
- ⇒ There is a need for a strategy to transfer students from special schools to mainstream education. Because special education is de facto segregated Roma education in Slovakia, there

should be a targeted analysis of the scope of the problem and the mechanisms underlying poor practices (including financial and other interest-based mechanisms). There should also be an elaboration of possible local strategies resulting in transferring children from special to regular education, and in keeping them out of special education in the first place.

- ⇒ Roma parents need better possibilities to become involved in their children's education. Although there is a growing experience of NGOs assisting in parent involvement as an indispensable support mechanism for successful education, there is still a need for a clear overview of possible practices, coupled with assessment of their long-term effectiveness. Based on these findings, a more sustainable approach could be built.

## Results Framework Anticipated by REF Activities

Based on the identification of REF strategic priorities, and on the REF's current projects and project pipeline, the results of REF activities should be visible in the next three to four years on the following levels:

1. Legal, financial, and administrative changes:
  - ⇒ A more coherent legislative framework addressing the problem Roma children and the special schools for mentally handicapped.
  - ⇒ An increased flow of EU funds to Roma communities, as measured by resources available to Roma organizations and local authorities in communities with high Roma populations.
2. Education indicators-results are expected in the mid-term, through improved education outcomes for the Roma. Key indicators for Slovakia would include:
  - ⇒ Increased pres-school enrolment of Roma children.
  - ⇒ Decreased number of Romani children in special classes and special schools for mentally handicapped.
  - ⇒ Increased number of Roma staff in the education system.
  - ⇒ Decreased impact of social economic status on students performance.
3. Improved social cohesion:
  - ⇒ Improved cooperation among schools, the Roma community, and Roma NGOs in the educational activities of schools.
  - ⇒ Improved cooperation between regional and local government in education activities.
  - ⇒ Development of active networking between Roma social workers and pedagogical assistants.

## Country Monitoring Framework

Monitoring of the outcomes of the strategic directions will need to be conducted through a matrix of organisations providing a variety of data sources. These entail:

- ⇒ Roma NGO Networks engaged in education.
- ⇒ UIPS – Institute of Information and Forecasting in Education.
- ⇒ Databases of Ministry of Education, other Government agencies, and other donor's data collection routines.
- ⇒ The evaluation and monitoring designed and funded by each REF project.

There is the need for REF to develop a system of gathering information on government and non-governmental activities affecting Roma education in Slovakia. Attention should focus on financial allocation to Roma education, policies of the government affecting Roma education and their implementation. In general, REF should develop a monitoring framework on the fulfillment of the Decade Action Plan for Roma inclusion.



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# Annex A

AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN SLOVAKIA				
	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
<b>SCHOOL MANAGEMENT</b>  Appointment of primary school principals is made by mayors and appointment of secondary school principals is made by regional presidents.  Schools are overseen by boards with parent representation and, at the secondary level, also student representation. Boards perform an advisory role and represent the interests of students, parents, and teachers at school, municipal and regional level.  On a primary school level, students enroll in their neighbourhoods. Free choice of schools is allowed but not often exercised.	Parents can participate in decision making through membership in school boards organized at school, municipal and regional level.  As a general rule, school boards have to be mostly made up of members who are not employed by the school. But parents only form a faction of the board. <sup>1</sup>  A lack of awareness and initiative, as well as the novelty of the above-described mechanisms, poses the major barriers to participation.	The Ministry of Education collects annual school reports on conditions and results of education. (Per administrative regulation 9/2006 of the Ministry of Education.)  School principals are required to draft a school development concept paper bi-annually and to submit evaluations to the school board and the school governor every year. (Per ministry regulation 596/2003.)  Inspection produces spot checks or more thorough evaluations, based on work plans and special requests.	The number of Roma parent/student school board members is unknown, and there is no mechanism to ensure equity.  There is segregation of Roma students in schools for children with developmental disabilities. Various sources indicate that the number of Roma children in some of these schools is between 80–100 percent.  Few projects piloted by the Ministry of Education have directly tackled segregation of Roma children in schools for children with developmental disabilities. They have not yet been adopted as an official policy and implemented country-wide.	Major efficiency problems exist, especially in small rural schools, and in special schools where the per-student costs far exceed the national average.  There is an increasing risk of ghettoization of schools in many localities, as an increasing share of Roma students in a school often leads non-Roma parents to move their children to alternative schools.	Governance of schools is regulated by law (596/2203). The country has a decentralized system of municipally governed and regionally governed schools, in which state administration bodies retain some responsibilities

AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN SLOVAKIA				
	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
On the secondary level, school choice is less affected by the place of residence.					

1

The organisation of school boards is as follows:

School boards at individual schools: In municipally governed schools, there is a maximum of four parents out of 11 board members; in regionally governed schools, there is a maximum of three parents out of 11 board members, and in secondary schools, there is also one student representative.

Municipal school boards in municipalities with more than one school: There is a maximum of two parents out of 11 board members.

Regional school boards (on regional level): There is a maximum of two parents out of 11 board members – and no student representation.

Student boards: In individual schools on the secondary level, there are student boards with five-to-11 student members.

AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts		BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN SLOVAKIA				
		Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
TEACHERS						
Teachers require a master's degree in specific teaching fields from one of the country's four pedagogical faculties. Alternatively, graduates with master's degrees in other fields can take additional courses at the pedagogical faculties to meet teaching requirements.	Teaching is one of the fields where an exception was adopted vis-à-vis Bologna requirements, to allow for a joint masters degree, which is otherwise only used for selected professions, such as doctors.	Teacher education programs at pedagogical faculties are accredited by the official Accreditation Commission, which has a sub-committee for teaching subjects.	There is a significant lack of teachers qualified in Romanes language and culture, though a recent expansion in teaching faculties is addressing this problem. No special measures are in place to attract additional teachers into this area.	At present, the average salary in the education sector (including non-teaching staff) is some 5-10 percent below the national average.	The teaching profession is regulated by law and ministerial decrees. The level of regulation is high, with a prominent role for formal Pedagogical Faculties.	
For further qualifications, teachers with five or 10 years of experience undergo state qualifying exams carried out by Methodological-Pedagogical Centers.	Pedagogical faculties cover theoretical aspects of child-centered and participatory approaches. Pre-service and further in-service training is provided in mandatory and voluntary trainings by Methodological-Pedagogical Centers, financed directly by the Ministry of Education. Optional trainings are also available from a number of NGO providers. In many cases, these are grant-financed, sometimes	Further non-degree in-service education programs are accredited by a separate Accreditation Commission at the Ministry of Education.	The special position of teaching assistants is used to employ Roma, who help students in class. The requirements for this position are temporarily reduced to completion of secondary education and will gradually increase to regular requirements by 2010.	Inspection results repeatedly show a lack of qualified teachers.	Salary levels are set nationally as a minimum and may be augmented at school level, though this is rarely financially feasible.	
Due to general shortages of teachers, they are mostly selected simply on the basis of meeting the qualification criteria.		Teachers are licensed on the basis of passing teacher exams at pedagogical faculties.	There are significant gaps in teacher knowledge identified by the State School Inspection. The problem is related mainly to the shortage of young teachers.	The share of graduates going into teaching is low. A recently introduced teacher loan scheme aims to attract young teaching graduates into teaching.		

AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN SLOVAKIA			
	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency Regulation
<p>The teaching profession suffers from low salaries overall.</p> <p>Teacher training is provided primarily by State Methodological-Pedagogical Centers.</p>	<p>with co-financing from schools, municipalities or individual teachers.</p> <p>There is no set of universally mandatory training.</p>		<p>projects are underway to increase teacher education on diversity issues.</p> <p>No major cases of teacher discrimination have been identified and addressed at the national level. However, there are individual discrimination cases identified by NGOs and addressed by the State School Inspection. In such cases, a teacher would be judged unsuitable to teach, due to failure to meet formal qualification criteria.</p>	

AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN SLOVAKIA				
	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
<b>CURRICULUM</b> At present curriculum development is carried out centrally by the State Pedagogical Institute. The national curriculum accounts for 70 percent of teaching curricula.	Teacher-based flexibility of curricula is formally at the 30 percent level. But, in practice, the required portion often fully dominates the curriculum. The national plan of education and teaching for human rights, started in 2005 for all levels of education, it has an emphasis on multicultural education and is overseen by the State Pedagogical Institute.	Adherence to curricula is regularly verified through testing of students by the State School Inspection, as well as by subject commissions at the school level. The testing covers a subset of schools each year, determined by the State School Inspection.  The formation of a two level curriculum with state-level learning programmes and school-level learning programmes is expected.	Some indication is provided through Roma students' failure rates, which are far above the failure rates of other students.  The curricula for Romanes language teaching are presently under development by the State Pedagogical Institute. The institute is piloting them at select secondary schools. Full deployment is foreseen towards the end of the decade at the earliest.	PISA 2003 results found that socio-economic status of parents has an above-average effect on students' results.  In the PIRLS study carried out in 2001, Slovakia was above the overall average at 518. The two regions with the highest shares of Roma students, Kosice and Presov were the lowest ranking regions, with 500 and 509 points respectively. In Kosice, 20 percent of the students failed to reach level 1, and in Presov, 14 percent failed to reach level 1.	Curriculum is determined at the sub-legal level although the mechanisms are given by law.  A new Act on Schools, likely to be prepared by the next cabinet, is expected to introduce major decentralisation in this area.

AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts		BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN SLOVAKIA				
		Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
<b>TEXTBOOKS</b> The quality of textbooks is highly varied, and in some subject areas the books are old or outdated. Some communist-era textbooks are still in use.		Textbooks are selected and approved and purchased centrally, by the Ministry of Education. Alternative texts may be used, but they are not financed by the state. Some schools that use alternative texts may have informal arrangements in place that require parents to contribute.	There are no formal quality standards for textbooks. Instead, a competitive system is used.	Existing textbooks are generally written from a majority perspective, though recent textbooks make more explicit efforts to cover minority perspectives.  Some older books in use may still contain negative stereotypes, e.g. of Roma or Jews, though, more frequently, the books simply avoid discussing minorities entirely.  Special Roma-language textbooks are presently under development and a few selected textbooks – Roma history, a Romanes reading book, etc. – are already used selectively.	The present system, while relatively efficient in terms of costs, limits textbook competition by only funding one textbook.	The textbook policy is mainly regulated by sublegal acts of the Ministry of Education, as is textbook approval.

AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN SLOVAKIA				
	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
<p><b>ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION</b></p> <p>Recent reforms have introduced a number of ways of measuring achievement across schools. Uniform monitoring exams are carried out in grades five and nine, as well as for some subjects in state-leaving exams in secondary schools.</p> <p>Schools now have an obligation to prepare and present annual reports, but there is little experience with implementation at this stage.</p> <p>Regular assessments of school management and quality are carried out by the State School Inspection.</p> <p>Pupils are evaluated by individual teachers and the “home room” teacher gives grades on behavior and attendance.</p>	<p>The new systems of testing in grades five, nine, and upon leaving secondary school, are still fraught with early implementation problems. There are suspicions of procedural violations.</p> <p>Results are published only selectively by central organs. For example, the Maturita is only published for the top half of schools. State School Inspection reports are not published but can be requested from schools.</p> <p>Schools are not particularly accountable to parents or the community for quality of education.</p>	<p>The main sources of data on school quality are threefold: State School Inspection reports, results of monitoring grades five and nine, and the centralized secondary school leaving exam.</p> <p>State School Inspection administers its own tests. Monitors use centrally developed tests by the State Pedagogical Institute.</p> <p>No appraisal of data quality has been performed yet.</p>	<p>The multitude of achievement measures indirectly emphasises the failure rate of Roma children. The failure of Roma children in schools is widely attributed to the Roma community.</p> <p>Roma children who have attendance problems frequently receive reduced behaviour grades.</p>	<p>General awareness on the efficiency of education is quite low. Until recently, the dominant view was that the schools were of high quality and merely underfunded. There is now growing recognition of the ill-preparedness of schools for teaching skills other than encyclopedic knowledge.</p>	<p>The State School Inspection's role is defined by law. Other examinations discussed are based on sub-legal norms.</p>



AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN SLOVAKIA				
	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
<b>FINANCES</b> The current financing scheme for primary and secondary schools is a normative one, based on a fixed amount per student in a given type of school. Limited additional funding is provided for special needs. In addition, a separate scheme exists of free-time vouchers for all primary school children, which can be used to cover the cost of a selected range of free time activities.	The dominant incentives encourage student recruitment and retention, as student results currently do not factor in any way in financing. Special schools receive about 2.5 times the financing of regular schools. Higher funding level is also given for special needs students individually integrated into regular schools.	Financing is based on reporting by municipalities and regions. The tables used for calculations are publicly available. Further information on education financing is available from the Ministry of Finance on the basis of surveys of municipal finances, which offer a functional division of municipal spending.	Indirectly, the per-student funding formula discriminates in favor of small rural schools, because the coefficients take into account if the school is the sole school in the municipality.	There is significant pressure for teacher rationalization, especially in localities with declining numbers of school children. In some cases, school rationalisation reduces the accessibility of schools to Roma children who reside outside of the main municipality.	Financing is regulated centrally, and formulas are determined annually at the level of the Ministry of Education. At the local or municipal level, the local government decides on school financing, but this is subject to providing each school at least 80 percent of its centrally calculated allocation.

# ANNEX B

## Administration of Schools

The law on state administration and self-administration in education (Act. No. 593/2003) recognizes the following network of organs:

State administration	Self-administration
<b>Director of school or school facility:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ First degree of state administration (e.g. admissions, postponement of school attendance, school attendance release).</li> </ul>	<b>Council of school or school facility:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Advisory body guarding the public interest.</li> <li>⇒ Carries out selection procedures for school directors.</li> <li>⇒ Has 5-11 members, and the majority must not be employees of the school.</li> <li>⇒ Includes two teacher representatives, one non-teaching staff representative, four elected parent representatives, and three delegated representatives of the school's founding entity.</li> </ul>
<b>Municipality:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Establishes and oversees primary schools within state network, exercising transferred state authority.</li> <li>⇒ Establishes preschools, school clubs and other school facilities, exercising self-government authority.</li> <li>⇒ Acts as the first degree of state administration in matters of mandatory school attendance.</li> <li>⇒ Acts as second degree of state administration in matters where directors of schools established by the municipality carry out the first degree.</li> </ul>	<b>Municipal school council:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ For municipalities with at least three school districts or ten schools.</li> <li>⇒ Advisory body guarding the public interest.</li> <li>⇒ Has 11 members, four of whom are elected representatives of school directors, two who are elected representatives of parents, three who are elected chairs of school councils, and two delegated municipal representatives.</li> </ul>

<b>Self-governing region:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Establishes secondary schools, vocational schools and centers of practical education, exercising transferred state authority.</li> <li>⇒ Establishes primary art schools, secondary school dormitories and other facilities, exercising self-government authority.</li> <li>⇒ Acts as a second degree of state administration on matters where directors of schools established by the region carry out the first degree.</li> </ul>	<b>Territorial school council:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Exists in each self-governing region.</li> <li>⇒ Acts as an advisory body, guarding the public interest.</li> <li>⇒ Has 11 members, four of whom are elected representatives of school directors, two who are elected representatives of parents, three who are elected chairmen of school councils, one who is the delegated regional representative, and one who is the delegated representative of the Regional School Office.</li> </ul>
<b>Regional school office:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Establishes all levels of schools within the state network if necessary, including preschools, special primary and secondary schools, special pedagogical centers and pedagogical-psychological advisory centers.</li> <li>⇒ Acts as second degree of state administration on matters where directors of schools established by the Regional school office carry out the first degree.</li> </ul>	<b>Pupil/Student school council:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Represents secondary school pupils vis-à-vis the school management.</li> <li>⇒ Has 5-11 elected representatives.</li> </ul>
<b>State School Inspection:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ State oversight of primary and secondary education.</li> </ul>	
<b>Ministry of Education:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Manages state administration in education, designs strategies, and issues mandatory regulations, bylaws, and directives.</li> <li>⇒ Approves state network of schools.</li> </ul>	
<b>Other central organs</b> (as defined by separate legal acts, including ministries of health, interior, defense, etc.): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Establishes and manages selected departmental schools.</li> </ul>	

Source: Act No. 596/2003 on State Administration in Education and School Self-Administration.

## Financing of Schools

In accordance with the division of education authority into state authority, local governments exercising transferred state authority, and original local government authority, education is financed as follows:<sup>1</sup>

Institutions	Source of Funding	Funding Formula
<p>Institutions under the original authority of local governments:</p> <p><b>Municipal:</b> Preschools, basic art schools, school clubs, school free-time activity centers, free-time centers, dining facilities for preschools and primary schools, language schools at primary schools, and school service centers.</p> <p><b>Regional:</b> Primary art schools, special interest education centers, dormitory facilities, school dining facilities, practical education centers, school service centers, school retreat centers, regional free-time centers, and school centers of free-time activities.</p>	<p>The local government's own funds, derived from a share of income taxes allocated to local governments and from local taxes (mainly property taxes).</p>	<p>The formula for this funding is determined by local governments. In practice, local governments decide how many preschool facilities to operate, with the de facto option of not operating any at all or only supplying a limited capacity.</p> <p>The Ministry of Education can initiate creation of preschool facilities by Regional School Offices in special circumstances, but this is very rarely done. Decree 353/1994 stipulates that a preschool is established where 10 or more parents wish to enroll their children, or in any situation "if local circumstances warrant".</p> <p>The regulated parental contribution (prior to any reductions) is about SKK 800 per month. An additional SKK 700-1,000 per month, to cover fees, a contribution for toys, hygienic supplies, cleaning, admissions for optional school trips, etc., is usually paid by parents.</p> <p>Municipalities may request a subsidy for food and teaching supplies on behalf of each child of a family that receives a social benefit or lives below a minimum income. This subsidy can be given to all children in a school if more than 50 percent of the children attending the school qualify. With this subsidy, the cost of food falls to SKK 1-5 per day, as set by the preschool.<sup>1</sup></p>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.employment.gov.sk/DIS/dotacie/1\\_Dot-vseobecne\\_info.htm](http://www.employment.gov.sk/DIS/dotacie/1_Dot-vseobecne_info.htm).

<p>Institutions under state authority transferred to local governments:</p> <p><b>Municipal:</b> Primary schools.</p> <p><b>Regional:</b> Secondary schools, vocational schools, centers of practical education.</p>	<p>State budget transfers and municipal or regional supplementary funding.</p>	<p>Normative (per student) financing from the state budget is determined for individual school types. The formula consists of a wage normative and an operations normative — including heating, educational material, further education of teachers, and additional operations. There are two levels of guaranteed minima: one for local governments, based on share of previous year's funding, and one for individual schools, based on 80 percent of the normative amount.</p> <p>Municipalities or regions may request a subsidy for food and for teaching supplies on behalf of each child of a family that receives a social benefit or lives below a minimum income. This subsidy can be given to all children in a school if more than 50 percent of the children attending the school qualify. With this subsidy, the cost of food falls to SKK 1-5 per day, as set by the preschool.</p> <p>Students from eligible families may receive merit-based monthly stipends, if the stipends are requested by the school on their behalf.</p>
<p>Institutions under state authority exercised by Regional School Offices:</p> <p>Special primary schools, special secondary schools, vocational schools and practical schools, student dormitories (at special schools), special preschools, basic art schools, preschools, and student dormitories.</p>	<p>State budget.</p>	<p>Normative (per student) financing from the state budget is determined for individual school types. The formula consists of a wage normative and an operations normative— including heating, educational material, further education of teachers, and additional operations. There are two levels of guaranteed minima: one for local governments, based on share of previous year's funding, and one for individual schools, based on 80 percent of the normative amount.</p>

Other school facilities established by Regional School Offices: School dining facilities, school clubs, district pedagogical-psychological counseling centers, regional pedagogical-psychological counseling centers, special pedagogical centers, child integration centers, etc.	State budget.	Simplified flat rate normative.
Public higher education institutions.	State budget.	Funded through the teaching normative, research funding on a grant and non-grant basis, and semi-legal fees charged to part-time students.
Private and parochial schools.	State budget, founders, and fees.	Private primary and secondary schools receive formula-based funding for current expenditure (but not for capital expenditure) in the same amount as public schools. In addition, they collect fees from parents or are subsidized by founders (e.g. churches).

## Common Forms of Segregation and Enrolment Barriers

Problem	Source	Causes
Roma children not enrolled in schools.	<p>A survey of teachers of primary and special primary schools found that most teachers believed a significant portion of Roma children were not in school at all.</p> <p>An assessment of living conditions of vulnerable communities in the Slovak Republic found that 12 percent of 6-15 year olds in the Roma sample never attended school.</p>	The key source of this barrier lies with the legislation on permanent residence. If a family has permanent residence in another municipality, the municipality where the family lives will not be aware that there are children not registered for school. Schools are not required to enroll children without a permanent or temporary residence registration, but each child is entitled to attend school where registered.

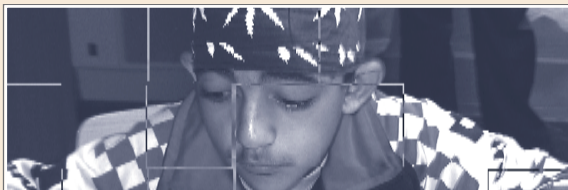
<p>Inappropriate placement of Roma children in special schools.</p>	<p>According to official data, the share of Roma children reported to be attending special schools exceeds that in regular schools by a factor of almost 14.</p> <p>The State School Inspection has found violations in procedures for placement of Roma children in special schools.</p> <p>European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) research in Slovakia found strong evidence of inappropriate placement.</p>	<p>Problems in the placement process relate to a number of issues, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Quality of judgment by psychologists who diagnose preschool age children.</li> <li>⇒ Procedures mandated by law are not always followed, especially in terms of periodic re-evaluations of children already placed in special schools (if a child is returned to primary school without individual integration arrangements, the school receives only the regular normative).</li> <li>⇒ Special schools compete for students with regular schools (as the two school types are run by different authorities: the state for special schools, municipalities for regular primary schools, regions for regular secondary schools).</li> </ul>
<p>Segregation of Roma children in separate classes or separate school buildings.</p>	<p>ERRC research in Slovakia found evidence of separate Roma classes.</p>	<p>Decisions are made at the level of school director, with insufficient testing: Formal requirements of the law are mostly met, but testing may be carried out by psychologists or special pedagogues affiliated with the school where the child is to be placed.</p> <p>A tradition of attendance of special schools in some localities leads to parental preference for these schools, and special schools sometimes actively recruit Roma pupils.</p>

Flight of non-Roma children from schools with large shares of Roma.	ERRC research in Slovakia found evidence of flight to private and parochial schools.	In many regions, when the share of Roma children in schools increases, non-Roma parents opt to move their children to an alternative school – such as a second school in the municipality, non-state schools, or schools in nearby cities.
Segregation in non-teaching activities.	Individual cases have been reported and investigated by state school inspection of segregated meals or after-school activities.	Decisions at the level of school director are informally sanctioned by the mayor/self-governing region and other authorities.  This may be done for alleged health reasons, or simply at the insistence of some parents.
Inadequate provision of special measures – such as teaching assistants for the “zero” preschool year and support for students with individual integration. <sup>2</sup>	Individual cases have been noted in official monitoring by the Slovak National Center for Human Rights.	There is a lack of financial incentives as financing for assistants is not made on a normative basis (by application).  Preschool grade “zero” is an optional device, with the decision depending on individual school principals.
Unavailability of preschool facilities.	Preschools are lacking, or are not attended by Roma, in many localities with large marginalized Roma communities	Municipalities lack direct incentives to establish preschools, which are part of their so-called original competence, and are thus financed from their own budgets.
Lack of adequate support, or counseling, caused by insufficient capacity in counseling centers or insufficient counseling in schools.	This problem has been noted in government documents.	There are high drop-out and failure rates for Roma children. This is exacerbated by a lack of adequate support and counseling, due to insufficient capacity in counseling centers and counseling in schools.

<sup>2</sup> Individually integrated students are placed in regular school classes but may receive special support according to disability. Depending on disability a higher normative is paid to the school.



Problems with the accessibility of secondary education.	Existing statistical office data show much lower shares of self-declared Roma in secondary education than in primary schools.	The problem is caused by failure in primary school, the fact that there are only 10 years of mandatory school attendance, and a lack of interest of Roma families. There are also problems due to costs and other barriers associated with travel from rural areas to secondary schools mostly in cities.
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## ROMA EDUCATION FUND (REF)

*T*he goal of the Roma Education Fund is to contribute to closing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma, through policies and programs to support quality education for Roma including desegregation of educational systems. The Roma Education Fund was created in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Therefore, it also shares the goals of the Decade.

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