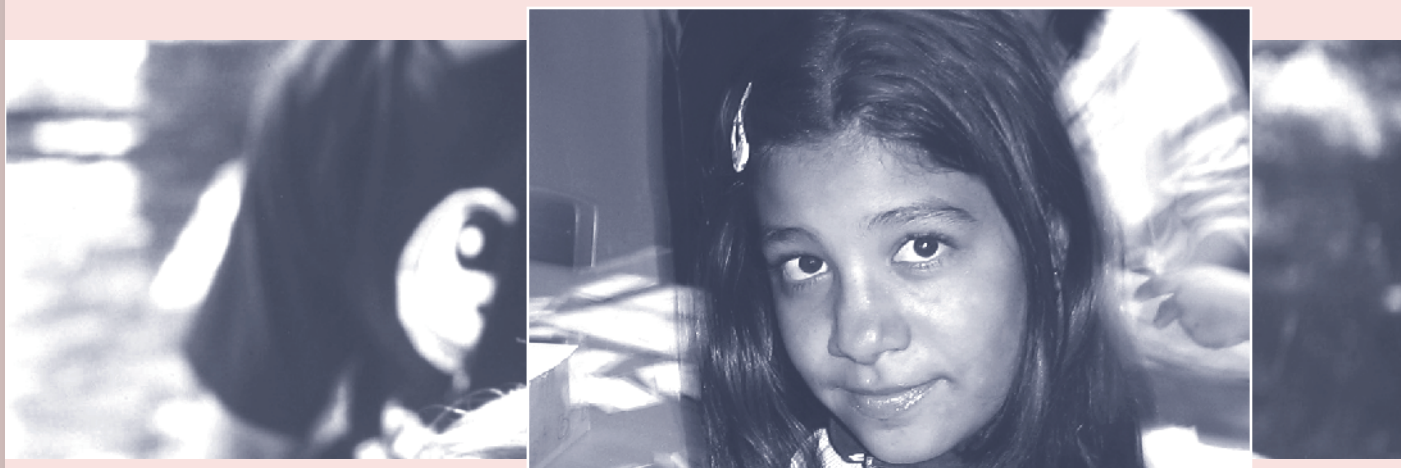


Country Assessment  
and the Roma Education Fund's  
Strategic Directions

# Advancing Education of Roma in Romania



# **Advancing Education of Roma in Romania**

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:

- ⇒ 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

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8 The main authors of this document are Mihaela Jigou of the Institute for Education, and Mihail Surdu, consultant. They received contributions from Florin Nasture, Roma Education Fund country facilitator in Romania, and Judit Szira, Senior advisor at the Roma Education Fund.

Tom Popper did the language editing.

# 1. Executive Summary

## Political, Economic, and Social Context

Romania is a middle-income country with a gross national income per capita of \$3,830 in 2005 (measured by the Atlas method).<sup>1</sup> With a population of 21.6 million, Romania is the second largest country in Central and Eastern Europe. Over the past few years, Romania has successfully completed the actions necessary for joining the European Union, and its membership officially started on January 1, 2007.

Despite robust economic growth over the past five years, Romania still faces important challenges. Additional structural reforms are needed to build a competitive market economy capable of withstanding the pressures of EU integration. Moreover, poverty persists in the country, and more than 15 percent of the population is below the poverty line. Two-thirds of Romania's poor live in rural areas, despite the country's substantial potential in agriculture, forestry, and fishery.<sup>2</sup>

Romania has the largest population of Roma in Europe, with an official count at 535,000, or 2.5 percent of the population, and an unofficial estimate ranging from 1,800,000 to 2,500,000 – or between 8.3 percent and 11.5 percent of the population. The poverty rate among Roma is three times higher than the average poverty rate in Romania. This high level of poverty is due to many factors, including poor health and education, limited opportunities in the labour market, and discrimination, all of which contribute to a vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion.

Romania has ratified most international human rights and minority rights protection documents adopted by the United Nations and the Council of Europe. Romania has also developed elements of legislation against discrimination within the framework of different larger national laws. However, Romania has received warnings from the EU regarding the protection of minorities, especially concerning the Roma. The warnings state that the country has done little in establishing policies ensuring “a zero level of tolerance against racist manifestations.” There is still much to do to establish a favorable legal framework and related enforcement mechanisms for the protection of minorities, including Roma.

Roma minorities are under-represented in the different state structures. Since 1989, the only Roma political party present in the parliament has been the Roma Social Democratic Party. Although a quite large number of Roma NGOs are registered, only few of them are active. While at the national level there is 20-30 active Roma NGOs representing Roma interest, at the local level the small Roma NGOs are not empowered. Since 1989 Romanian authorities have showed interest for Roma issues and created different structures and institution within the government and at the local level. These institutions do not always have the means and capacity to influence important policies and programmes.

<sup>1</sup> Source: *World Bank Romania Country Brief 2006*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



## Education

Romania's education system has been in transition for more than a decade. Currently, the system is characterised by major instability, principally due to the lack of a sound legal framework. New legislation is needed. In 2005, Romania started the decentralisation of its education system with pilot projects in three counties. The process is expected to be completed by 2010.

In addressing Roma education, the Ministry of Education and Research has been trying to create a support structure by building on the inspectors and school mediators at the local level. However, in most cases, these promising and well-intended measures brought about insufficient results, principally due to lack of sustainability. At present, Roma children still have low rates of attendance and enrolment in the Romanian education system.

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More specifically, the education system in Romania is characterised by the following problems for Roma:

- ⇒ Roma children have low enrolment rates in pre-school/kindergarten, and they face severe enrolment barriers in primary education.
- ⇒ There is a lack of adequate desegregation policies and enforcement measures.
- ⇒ There is an extensive number of Roma children placed in special education.
- ⇒ The unsupportive education, financing, and management system discriminates against children from poor families.
- ⇒ Extensive disparities exist in the quality of education, due to different curriculum standards. Also,
- ⇒ Roma culture is not well recognised in schools and school curricula, and multicultural education rarely forms part of teachers' education or in-service training.

In addition to these problems, some of the upcoming systemic changes related to the decentralisation process might even worsen the situation of Roma children when it comes to their access to education and the quality of that schooling. Some potential consequences of the changes are as follows:

- ⇒ Discrimination and segregation could become more severe because of the discretion left to local authority in many aspects of education.
- ⇒ The benefits of per capita financing of education could be undermined by negotiated contracts that limit incentives to enroll Roma children.
- ⇒ Parental choice could play against marginalised groups like the Roma.
- ⇒ New school accreditation mechanisms will likely affect schools with low performance without providing any safeguards.

These systemic barriers in Romania are reinforced by a negative attitude of the majority of society against those living in poverty, especially in socially segregated communities. Roma children generally face low expectations from their parents, due to the low levels of parental education. Roma children lack the necessary role models of successful Roma when leaving in segregated environment and are required to take part in different household and income generating activities, which leave limited time for studying. Early marriages in isolated communities and seasonal migration of Roma families, including children from rural areas, represent further barriers for school enrolment.

## REF's Activities in Romania in 2005-2006

By February 2007, the Roma Education Fund (REF) had received 35 project proposals from Romania. Out of these proposals, the REF approved 13 projects and committed about €2.5 million.

Three projects support implementation of activities based on a recent legislative acts on desegregation (Notification No. 29323/20.04.2004 regarding desegregation). They test various approaches for supporting Roma children education in integrated school, providing training to teachers, after school classes, additional pedagogical support in the classroom and outreach to Roma parents.

The other the REF's projects in Romania:

- ⇒ Increase Roma children's enrolment in kindergarten, primary and secondary schools.
- ⇒ Provide awareness raising and education about Roma culture and history and intercultural education.
- ⇒ Improve the quality of education in schools where Roma children are enrolled, through teacher training, Romanian language teacher training, and employment and training of school mediators.
- ⇒ Contribute to the amendment of the national curricula in general education by seeking to introduce topics related to Roma culture and history.
- ⇒ Improve Roma citizens' capacities to participate in the process of making decisions about investments and other matters related to their children's education.
- ⇒ Develop strong cooperation between Roma NGOs and governmental stakeholders.
- ⇒ Provide scholarship and mentoring to Roma students in secondary education.

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## Strategic Directions for Future REF Activities in Romania

Activities that the REF will seek to undertake include:

1. Assistance and support to the Roma community, through the following potential activities:
  - ⇒ Supporting Roma parents and community leaders to recognise and engage in key education issues by:
    - Involving Roma parents in school boards and parent associations.
    - Detecting and acting on school-level discrimination.
    - Raising awareness of Roma parents on the importance of enrolment and attendance at all levels.
    - Increasing the flow of information on education issues.
  - ⇒ Supporting Roma NGOs involved in educational activities, to cooperate and strengthen their organisational, networking, and capacity building structures, by:
    - Identifying policy impacts.
    - Strengthening implementation.
    - Accessing and using EU funds effectively.
    - Ensuring inclusion of smaller/isolated NGOs.
2. Implementation support to education authorities, through the following potential activities:
  - ⇒ Increasing the enrolment of Roma children in education by:
    - Increasing pre-school enrolment to cover all Roma children.
    - Expanding kindergarten attendance.

- Supporting affirmative action for kindergarten and pre-school to recognise the needs of disadvantaged families.
  - ⇒ Increasing transition rates at critical stages and reducing drop outs by:
    - Focusing attention of Roma inspectors and mediators.
    - Involving local authorities and school leaders.
  - ⇒ Increasing attention to quality and focusing on quality improvement in the education system by:
    - Focusing on desegregation.
    - Addressing over-representation of Roma in special schools.
    - Promoting inclusion in education, including multicultural curricula, taking into account particular features of minority/Roma culture.
    - Ensuring access to textbooks and other learning aids.
    - Promoting greater openness to Roma parents and the Roma community.
  - ⇒ Using the monitoring and evaluation framework to strengthen policy implementation and coherence and identify responsibilities of local/county authorities by:
    - Involving the Roma community.
    - Ensuring that school/local development planning and school/Maintainer self-evaluation supports inclusive education.
    - Ensuring effective use of governmental/EU funds and other funds.
    - Developing channels for feedback to the national level.
3. Policy development with the government, through the following potential activities:
- ⇒ Engaging in the decentralisation process to build local government capacities and commitment to Roma education by:
    - Focusing on municipal/county educational authorities.
    - Assisting in developing inclusive local/county public education policy development plans;
    - Linking local and school autonomy to enhanced responsibilities.
    - Monitoring financing inequities and ensuring that the per capita financing formula promotes quality Roma education.
  - ⇒ Reviewing and strengthening the legislative framework for Roma education, including the desegregation directive, and ensuring enforcement.

The REF's short-term strategic objectives in Romania are to:

- ⇒ Scale up support to pre-school enrolment and programme quality for Roma children.
- ⇒ Achieve improvement in elementary school enrolment and continued attendance through grade eight.
- ⇒ Strengthen the impact of existing affirmative action at the high school level by reinforcing linkages between the Roma community and elementary and high schools.
- ⇒ Provide scholarships and additional support to Roma secondary students coming from poor families.
- ⇒ Initiate media campaigns and other activities to empower Roma communities and strengthen Roma NGOs on education issues; this would include participation in parent-teacher-student associations.

The REF's policy analysis and research-related strategic objectives in Romania are to:

- ⇒ Engage government and other stakeholders in dialogue, to improve the status of Roma inspectors and mediators.
- ⇒ Support improved school monitoring, to more accurately reflect the situation of Roma students, with a particular emphasis on enrolment, preventing drop out, achievement, and employability.
- ⇒ Undertake a study to quantify fiscal benefits to Romania from improved education outcomes for Roma.
- ⇒ Assess the outcomes associated with Romania's system of affirmative action at the high school and tertiary levels.
- ⇒ Support capacity building related to accessing and managing EU funds.

## 2. Country Profile

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According to the most recent census (2002), the population of Romania was 21,680,974. Ethnic minorities represent around 10.5 percent of the total population. The area of Romania is 238,391 square kilometres. In 2002, the average density of the population was 90.9 inhabitants per square kilometre. Between 1992 and 2002, the population declined by about 1 million persons. In 2002, approximately 52.7 percent of Romania's population (11,435,080 people) lived in urban areas and 47.3 percent (10,245,894) lived in rural areas.<sup>3</sup>

Children of 14 years or less represent 18 percent of the entire population (2,111,320 males and 2,015,347 females). In 2005, there were 4,382,463 students registered in all types of schools.<sup>4</sup>

The class cohort size is approximately 250,000, and the cohort of Roma students is estimated to be between 25,000 and 35,000.

In 2004, the gross domestic product per capita was \$3,342, and it has grown since 2000, by 6 percent per year. Romania received foreign aid in the amount of \$28 per capita in 2003.<sup>5</sup>

Romanian public education expenditure is supposed to represent 4 percent of GDP, according to the Romanian legislation. However, education expenditure as a percentage of GDP has fallen to 3.5 percent in 2004, from 3.6 percent in 2001,<sup>6</sup> but it is expected to reach 5 percent of GDP in 2006.<sup>7</sup>

### Roma Population in Romania

Romania has the largest population of Roma in Europe, and the key word for defining the country's Roma community is diversity. The diversity shows in the Roma's geographic distribution, their groups and dialects, and their cultural heritage and traditions.

The poverty rate of Roma is three times higher than the average poverty rate in Romania. The poverty among the country's Roma is complex and multidimensional. It is related to a broad range of factors, including poor health and educational status, limited opportunities in the labour market and discrimination, all of which together feed a vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion.

According to the 2002 census, the country's biggest minority is Hungarians, with 1.4 million people, or 6.6 percent of the total population. The same census found that the Roma population is 535,250, or 2.5 percent of Romania's total population. The highest concentration of Roma is in rural areas, where they make up 3.2 percent of the population, as compared to urban areas, where they comprise 1.8 percent of the population.

However, it is widely recognised by policy makers, civil society representatives, and members of the academic community that censuses dramatically underestimate the number of Roma in Romania. According to the Institute for Research on the Quality of Life, which gives an estimate

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.eurydice.org/Eurybase/Application/frameset.asp?country=RO&language=EN>.

<sup>4</sup> From which 75,000 were Roma students (official estimate).

<sup>5</sup> <http://devdata.worldbank.org/data-query/>.

<sup>6</sup> Report on Status of Education, Ministry of Education and Research, November, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Strategy on Education 2006-2008; Presentation at <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/c481/>.

used both by the government and the majority of civil society groups, there are between 1,452,700 and 1,588,552 Roma in the country, which would make them about 7 percent of the population.

Other estimates place the Romanian Roma<sup>8</sup> population at somewhere between 1,800,000 and 2,500,000. Taking into account the total population from 2002 census, this would mean that Roma make up between 8.3 percent and 11.5 percent of the population. Romania's Roma are a young population:<sup>9</sup> The average age is 25.1, and 33.9 percent of the entire Roma population is 14 year old or younger. For the Romanian population as a whole, only 15.6 percent were 14 or younger in 2005. The country's Roma population is extremely diverse and can be divided into several subgroups. It is estimated that 60 percent of the Roma population speak the Romanes language.

The Roma population is spread throughout Romania. But, according to the censuses of 1992 and 2002, the geographical distribution of Roma has a higher density in specific areas of Romania. There are concentrations of Roma in the central counties of Braşov, Sibiu, and Mureş; in the western counties of Satu Mare, Sălaj, Bihor, and Arad; and also in the southern counties of Dolj and Mehedinţi.

The Roma minority is the only ethnic group in Romania whose poverty rate departs significantly from the average.<sup>10</sup> As mentioned above, the poverty rate of Roma is three times that of the majority population.<sup>11</sup>

Table 1: Poverty Rate Based on Ethnicity – 2003

Ethnicity	Rate of severe poverty	Poverty rate
Romanian	9.3%	24.4%
Hungarian	6.4%	19.9%
Roma	52.2%	75.1%

Source: Anti-poverty and Social Inclusion Commission, Romanian Government. Social Support for Roma Population. Analysis of Social Problems: Areas of Intervention No. 2.

Due to the level of poverty, dependence on social assistance is very high among Roma. The family allowance represents the most frequent regular source of income among Romania's Roma families: Research found that 66.2 percent of Roma households surveyed benefited from the family allowance. Less than a quarter of the households reported income from salaries, and retirement pensions are a source of income in 11.7% of the surveyed Roma families. Unemployment compensation was a source of income for 9.5 percent of the surveyed households. Pensions provided for disability were granted in 4.7 percent of the households and 5.8 percent received pensions for sickness. Out of all the Roma households surveyed in 1998, a total of 53.4 percent declared occasional (or non-permanent) revenues.<sup>12</sup>

Romanian's Roma have a very low employment rate, due to discrimination in hiring practices and their low educational background. The Roma's limited opportunities in the

<sup>8</sup> Gheorghe, N., Liegeois J.P. (1995): *Roma/Gypsies: A European Minority*, Minority Rights Group, UK.

<sup>9</sup> According to a study written in 1998 by the Institute for Quality of Life.

<sup>10</sup> Based on a study of the International Management Foundation in December 2000.

<sup>11</sup> As pointed out in the report written by the governmental commission CASPIS 10, in 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Dumutru, S. (2005): *Roma Social Mapping. Targeting by a Community Poverty Survey*. Worldbank, Bucharest.

labour market, and their difficulty in securing a regular income, directly influence their social status. Neither the National Institute for Statistics nor the National Agency for Employment report official unemployment rates for the Roma population. But estimates indicate that Roma have significantly higher unemployment rates than non-Roma, across all age cohorts and all educational categories.

### 3. Political, Economic and Social Situation

#### Government Structure, Mandate, and Finance

The political situation in Romania has always been unstable. There are permanent changes at the level of parties, as well as in the coalitions. The legislation is also continuously changing, an indication that Romania is in the process of transition. However, lately Romania has made strong efforts to develop a legislation that complies with European Union standards.

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The current ruling coalition, which has been in power since December 2004, consists of four political parties: the PNL-PD Alliance, which includes the National Liberal Party and the Democratic Party, the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania, and the Romanian Humanist Party now called the Conservator Party). The coalition has a majority, but only by a very small margin. In fact, the opposition Social Democratic Party won the parliamentary elections over the Alliance with a margin of around 5 percent, and only the defeat of their candidate in presidential elections prevented them from creating the government.

The Romanian Government initiated important reforms in the area of the judiciary, the health sector, property restitution, minority rights, and child protection. Economic reforms have assured macroeconomic stability and strong economic growth.

The main objectives of the Government relate to consolidating the rule of law and democracy in Romania; redefining the state's role, by restraining its intervention into the economy and strengthening its functions as guarantor of legality; strengthening individual liberties; and increasing the security of citizens and families. At the same time, the Government focused explicitly on improving the functioning of the market, respect of minorities' rights and reduction of poverty and social exclusion.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Sub-National Political Structures*

Sub-national administrative structures in Romania are organised at the county and municipal level. The territory of Romania is divided into 41 counties (judet). In these counties there are 83 cities (municipium), including the capital, Bucharest, 180 towns (oras), and 2,684 communities (comuna). These municipalities contain about 12,864 villages.

Local elections were organised most recently on June 6, 2004. Municipalities have their own leadership, consisting of a council and a mayor, and they control their own revenues.

Though not recognised as an administrative level, there are key structures which play a very important role in the regional planning and EU funds management and are also relevant for the Roma with Regional Boards, Regional Development Agencies, and regional offices for Roma.

There are 8 development regions with 8 regional offices for Roma. These regions are: Region 1 North-East, Region 2 South – East, Region 3 South – Muntenia, Region 4 South West – Oltenia, Region 5 West, Region 6 North – West, Region 7 Center, Region 8 Bucuresti-Ilfov. These offices are part of the National Agency for Roma structure.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.guv.ro/engleza/obiective/afis-docdiverse-pg-eng.php?iddoc=6>.



## Roma Representation in the Parliament/Government

Overall, Roma political participation in Romania is weak and that Roma are poorly represented in state structures. Since 1990, the only Roma party represented in the Parliament and Government was the Roma Social Democratic Party, which is now called the Roma Party pro-Europa. The other Roma parties have played an episodic but insignificant role in the country's government and legislature.

Two Roma political parties took part in the last parliamentary elections in 2004: The Roma Social Democratic Party, which gained 0.55 percent of the vote, and the Alliance for Roma Union,<sup>14</sup> which gained 0.14 percent of the vote. This meant that the one seat legally reserved for a Roma deputy<sup>15</sup> was filled by the Roma Social Democratic Party, which gained the largest number of minority votes.

On the governmental level, the following specialised institutions dealing with minorities have been set up in Romania:

- ⇒ Council for National Minorities, established in 1993.
- ⇒ Department for the Protection of National Minorities (DPNM), which includes the Roma Social Integration Office and the National Office for Roma, established in 1997.<sup>16</sup>
- ⇒ Department of Interethnic Relations, the new name of the DPNM, after its restructuring in 2003.
- ⇒ National Agency for Roma, established 2005.

For the time being, the National Agency for Roma is the structure representing the Roma minority on a governmental level. It is a public body of the central administration, coordinated by the concerned minister and the General Secretariat. The Agency is led by a president, who is appointed by the prime minister. The Agency applies, coordinates, monitors, and evaluates the measures included in the Government's Strategy on Improving the Roma Population's Condition, which was approved by the Governmental Decree No. 430/2001 (revised in April 2006).

## Responsibility for Roma Affairs and the Decade

Romania took the rotating presidency and secretariat of the Decade of Roma Inclusion from July 2005 to July 2006. The secretariat for the Decade was provided by the National Agency for Roma.<sup>17</sup>

According to recent legislation, the following institutions will implement the general Action Plan for the Decade:

- ⇒ Task Force on Roma Public Policies.
- ⇒ Ministry commissions on Roma issues.
- ⇒ County bureaus on Roma issues.
- ⇒ Local experts in Roma issues.

<sup>14</sup> The Alliance for Roma Union registered as many as 246 candidates (for both Chambers), of which 57 were women.

<sup>15</sup> According to Act 373/2004 for electing the Deputy Chamber and Senate, with its additions and subsequent changes, Art. 4.: legally established organisations belonging to national minorities, which do not have at least one mandate of deputy or senator in the elections, have the right, according to Art. 59, line 2 of the Constitution, to a deputy mandate if certain other conditions are met.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.anr.gov.ro>.

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.anr.gov.ro/documente/Romania\\_Priorities.pdf](http://www.anr.gov.ro/documente/Romania_Priorities.pdf).

## Status with Key International and Regional Partners

Romania is an active member of international bodies focusing on South Eastern Europe: the Process of Cooperation of the South-Eastern European States, the Central European Initiative, the Central European Free Trade Agreement, the Danubian Cooperation Process, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, and the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative. Romania also belongs to other international groupings in the region, such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation organisation, and the Georgia Ukraine Uzbekistan Azerbaijan Moldova association. Romania is not yet a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), but it took part in the Programme for International Student Assessment's (PISA) survey.

Another important partner in the development of Romania is the World Bank. To date, the World Bank has financed more than 40 operations in the country with a total original commitment of almost \$5 billion. The Bank's Development Policy Lending (DPL) and investment focus on three broad areas: promoting the private sector and the growth of efficient markets; building public sector institutions and improving governance; and, building human capital and improving social protection. In addition, the Bank's rural development and poverty alleviation programmes aim at improving rural infrastructure – including irrigation systems, social services, and the related financial system – by increasing participation. Bank operations also aim at improving productivity in agriculture and forestry.

There is broad consensus in Romania regarding EU accession, which is favoured by more than 80 percent of the population and is considered a national priority. Because Romania was under pressure to meet the political criteria for accession (set in Copenhagen in 1993), the Roma issue has been a priority for the government and the opposition.

Romania closed its accession negotiations to the European Union in December 2004, and the accession treaty was signed by the 25 Member States and Romania in April 2005. On September 26, 2006, Romania gained approval to join the EU on January 1, 2007. Romania, together with Bulgaria, added 30 million people to the EU's total population, taking it to almost half a billion.

The monitoring process of the European Commission continued until the moment of Romania's effective accession to the EU. The Commission used the same instruments as it did with the first 10 new members who joined the Union in 2004: early warning letters, peer/review missions, consultation on specific fields. Romania has received stern warnings that it risks losing out on some of the vast economic benefits of joining the EU. One of the warnings was regarding minority protection, an area where Romania registered limited progress. The warning mentioned that Romanian authorities have not done enough to help Roma by establishing specific policies to create "a zero level of tolerance against racist manifestations."

## Political Opposition and Relationship to Roma Issues

### *The Results of the 2004 National Election*

Traian Basescu, the candidate of the alliance between the National Liberal Party and the Democratic Party (Alianta PNL-PD), won the presidential election with a narrow margin, but the Social Democratic Party won more seats in the two houses of the Parliament (around 36 percent). As a result, there is a relative balance in Romanian politics between the ruling alliance (Alianta PNL-PD), which was entrusted by the President to form the new government, and the Social Democratic Party, the most important opposition party. On the other hand, there are many tensions and disputes

within the alliance of the National Liberal Party and the Democratic Party, and the alliance needs the support of other political parties, like the Greater Romania Party or the Conservative Party (formerly the Humanist Party) in order to achieve a majority in the Parliament.

### *Possible Political Alliances*

Although the Greater Romania Party is well known for its nationalistic and racist discourse, which is directed against the Roma minority, the Social Democratic Party initiated negotiations with this party, in an attempt to achieve a majority in the Parliament. The negotiations began in May 2006, but criticism from some European socialist parties convinced the Social Democratic Party to reconsider its initial position. According to statements made by some Social Democratic Party officials, these two opposition parties will not sign a political collaboration agreement after all, but instead will have a “gentlemen’s agreement,” which is based on trust and is not written down.

The Conservative Party (formerly the Humanist Party) is trying to forge new political alliances with other major political parties, but some Romanian political analysts predict a possible alliance between the Conservative Party and the populist Greater Romanian Party.

### *The Relationship Between the Social Democratic Party and the Roma Party*

The Social Democratic Party was one of the few mainstream parties that initiated formal negotiations with the Roma Party, in order to gain support from the large Roma constituency. The Social Democratic Party signed two political agreements with the Roma Party, the first in 1999, before the 2000 national elections, and the second in 2002. The agreements stipulated that the Social Democratic Party would support the improvement of the situation of Roma in exchange for the Roma Party’s political support during elections. After the Social Democratic Party won the presidential elections in 2000, two Roma officials became members of the new Government, which issued The Strategy of the Romanian Government to Improve the Situation of the Roma (2001).

The Social Democratic Party and the Roma Party, which changed its name into the Roma Social Democratic Party, signed a political agreement in November 2003, according to which the Roma Social Democratic Party would support the Social Democratic Party in the next elections, in exchange for support to improve the situation of Romania’s Roma communities. The candidate of Social Democratic Party lost the presidential elections in 2004 and the Roma Social Democratic Party became an opposition party. The party has recently changed its name to the “Pro Europe” Roma Party (Partida Romilor “Pro Europe”).

## **Anti-Bias and Anti-Discrimination Legislation**

Romania has ratified practically all international documents adopted under the aegis of the United Nations and the Council of Europe on human rights and minority rights protection. According to the Constitution, all international treaties, once ratified, become part of domestic legislation, over which they take precedence in the case of inconsistency.

In addition to international treaties, Romania has also developed elements of legislation against discrimination, but only within broader laws. For example, Decree 137/2000 forbids discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, and sexual orientation. In 2002, this

decree became Act No. 2002/48. The 2002 labour Code also prohibits discrimination on all these grounds, as well as banning discrimination on the basis of age. The 2003 National Collective Agreement forbids discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

The institution in charge of giving sanctions for discriminatory conduct and preventing future discrimination is the National Council for Combating Discrimination, set up by Decree 137/2000. When it was established the efficiency of this institution was highly questionable because it was a specialised body of the central public administration, subordinated to the Government and its organisational structure and other responsibilities were regulated by Governmental decision.<sup>18</sup> Since 2005 when the NCCD became an independent body under the Parliament, it has registered real progress. The legislation was revised and the new law adopted in the Parliament in 2006 meets all the requirements of the EU antidiscrimination directive. In its Monitoring Report of September 2006 the European Commission has appreciated these developments not only in terms of legislation but also administrative capacity. In relation with Roma, the CNCD has been particularly active. One of the members of the NCCD Board of Directors (since 2005) is the former Romani Criss human rights lawyer.

It is worth mentioning that, until now, just a single case charging segregation in school has been sanctioned with a warning. The complaint was made by Romani CRISS, with regard to the segregated primary and lower secondary school in Cehei, Salaj County, in March 2003. The National Council for Combating Discrimination ruled, in Decision 218 of June 23, 2003 that the acts detailed in the report constitute discrimination, and the Cehei School received an official warning.<sup>19</sup>

The legislation regulating education lacks direct language forbidding discrimination. The only provision in this respect is the Notification of the Ministry of Education and Research No. 29323/20.04.2004, which prohibits any form of segregation in the pre-university education system.

## Civil Society

Many Roma people have lost their traditional lifestyle, not because they chose to do so, but because of assimilation policies during the communist era. This means there was no tradition of Roma civil society from that time.

Although the number of nongovernmental organisations would seem to indicate that the Roma minority is well represented, just a few of these NGOs are active. At the national level, there are two or three active NGOs representing Roma interests, but on the local level, the smaller Roma NGOs are not empowered.

Since 1989, Roma authorities have shown an interest in Roma issues. They created different structures and institutions within the government and at the local level to address Roma needs. Unfortunately, there were often barriers to the implementation of these strategies and policies, and there is a tendency to address Roma issues with formal, but ineffective means.

<sup>18</sup> An evaluation written by Monitoring Media Agency “Academia Catavencu” in 2004 is indicating a rather low efficiency of the National Council for Combating Discrimination. The visibility of the NCCD is very low as 58% from the interviewed person did not have a particular knowledge of the activities of the NCCD.

<sup>19</sup> According to G. Andreescu (2004): “Analytical Report Phare RAXEN\_CC Minority Education” *RAXEN\_CC National Focal Point Romania, Report on Minority Education in Romania*, Vienna, p. 14. Available online at: <http://eumc.eu.int/eumc/material/pub/RAXEN/4/edu/CC/EDU-Romania-final.pdf>.

### *Structure of the Roma Community*

A large proportion of Roma communities in Romania, such as Kaldarari, Spoitori, Corbeni, Gabori, Ursari, and others, continue to speak Romani as their first language.<sup>20</sup> Vatrashi are primarily Romanian speakers, and only a small number of them preserve Romani as an additional language. In Transylvania, there is a significant number of Hungarian-speaking Roma, who give preference to their Hungarian identity. For example Gabori, who mainly live in Transylvania (most of them in Targu-Mures county), are trilingual, speaking Romani, Romanian, and Hungarian.<sup>21</sup>

According to the National Commission of Statistics (NCA), 54.31 percent of the Roma speak Romanian as mother tongue, 40.86 percent speak Romani and 4.83 percent declare that they speak another language.<sup>22</sup> The preliminary census data, from 2002, found that there are 237,570 Romanes speakers among a total Roma population of 535,140.<sup>23</sup> However, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) research conducted in 2001 found that 63 percent of Romanian Roma speak Romani at home.<sup>24</sup>

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### *Roma NGOs*

Romania has about 150 NGOs promoting Roma interests. These various groups take different approaches – targeting the majority and the state, focusing on human rights, working for social inclusion, etc. Due to a lack of resources and self-sustainability, many of these groups are passive. Roma NGOs have sought to coordinate their work on issues of common interest. In the beginning of 1999, on their own initiative, representatives of 80 Roma NGOs nominated a 15-person Roma Working Group to represent all the NGOs in working with the National Office for Roma, to develop a Phare-sponsored national strategy for Roma. Roma NGOs have participated in campaigns promoting adoption of the Act on Public Advertising and Decree 137, and they have joined forces to protest against racist statements in the press, or to support the adoption of positive legal measures to ensure equal treatment for Roma. Since 2000, there have been more attempts to create an umbrella group of Roma organisations, such as For-Romenqe, and the Roma Alliance from Romania.

Along with other activities, the Federation of NGOs for Child Protection, including UNICEF and Roma NGOs, organised a campaign against discrimination in 2004. Roma NGOs also came up with the idea of training and employment of school mediators in 1999. It was Roma NGOs that brought attention to the issue of segregation. This was mostly done by Romani Criss.

The most representative political organisation is the “Pro Europe” Roma Party. This organisation is represented in the Romanian parliament by Paun Nicolae, and in the previous years, it was the main partner of the government for Roma issues.

<sup>20</sup> According to Save the Children (2001).

<sup>21</sup> Save the Children (2001): *Denied a Future?*, Vol. 1, South eastern Europe, London, p. 306.

<sup>22</sup> Radocea, A. (1995): *Structura etnica a populatiei Romaniei si evolutia ei in ultimele decenii in Recensamantul populatiei si locuintelor din 7 ianuarie 1992. Structura etnica si confesionala a populatiei.*, Comisia Nationala de Statistica, p. VII – LXXI, p. XLIV. Data is based on the results of the 1992 population census.

<sup>23</sup> National Institute of Statistics. Preliminary results of 2002 census.

<sup>24</sup> According to *The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency Trap.*, Andrey Ivanov (coord.), UNDP, Bratislava: 2002, p. 87.

### *Other Civil Society Actors*

Since 1989, many NGOs active in the human rights field have worked to prevent human rights abuses against Roma. Specialised institutions dealing with minorities have also been established. In 1993, the Council for National Minorities was established as a consultative body of the Romanian Government. The Department for the Protection of National Minorities was established in 1997 within the Prime Minister's Office, and it included an Office for Social Integration of Roma. During this time, the most active participants in the development of a national and international policy for the Roma were the Open Society Institute, UNDP, UNICEF, the European Council, OSCE and the EU. In the area of education policy, there are several relevant NGOs, including Education 2000+, Ovidiu Rom, and the Intercultural Institute Timisoara.

## 4. Education System

### Governance Structure

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The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for implementing educational legislation and for general administration and management of the education and training system. The Ministry of Education and Research cooperates at the central level with other ministries and institutional structures that are subordinate to the Government. Particularly important cooperation includes the Ministry of Education and Research's collaboration with the Ministry of Labour – in specific areas, such as human resources development, creation of a national qualification framework, increasing the chances of graduates on the labour market, etc. Also important is the Ministry of Education and Research's cooperation with the Ministry of European Integration and Ministry of Finance. Romania still has a centralised education system, but, in 2005, it started the process of decentralisation and school autonomy in three counties.

The position of the minister of education and research is currently allocated to the Democratic Party. During the term of the present Government, two ministers have been appointed. The minister who held the office from March 11, 2004-December 28, 2004 pointed out, for the first time, problems with the current system, based on specific indicators,<sup>25</sup> and started planning important reforms in key areas. These reforms were to cover structure, decentralisation, quality assurance, higher education reform, etc. To overcome the barriers and challenges that had been identified in the school system, the minister asked for a significant increase in the budget allocated for education: up to 5 percent of GDP. However, due to a lack of political support, the minister resigned and was replaced with another representative of the Democratic Party who has continued reforms including raising the overall level of public expenditures on education.

The Ministry of Education and Research has a Department for Minorities, which employs an advisor and an inspector for Roma issues. Furthermore, each County School Inspectorate appoints an inspector for the education of the Roma population. Since 1993, the Roma minority has had an office in the Department for Minorities. This office proved its efficiency by lobbying for the introduction of the Romanes language as a native language in schools, providing training for Roma teachers, appointing inspectors for Roma education, etc. In addressing Roma education, the Ministry of Education and Research has been trying to create a structure which, at the local level, is based on inspectors and school mediators. In many cases, this very promising and well intentioned effort has lacked sustainability. In spite of the measures taken for improving the access of Roma to education during this transition period, there is still low attendance and enrolment of Roma in education.

The deputy prime minister, who is also the state secretary for culture, education, and European integration, also plays an active role in supporting minority education and in lobbying to keep the education of minorities, including Roma, on the Government's agenda.

One key characteristic of the education system is its instability, which derives, first of all, from the frequent changes in legislation and regulations. The notifications and ordinances that help govern the school system are issued by the Ministry of Education and Research. Governance structures of

<sup>25</sup> In October 2005 the Ministry of Education published its yearly Report on the Status of Education.



education have several layers in Romania, corresponding to the administrative structures on the national, county, and municipal level.

Aside from implementing legislation and managing the education system, the Ministry of Education and Research also organises government inspection nationwide. Other central organs have educational responsibilities, which are defined by separate legal acts. For example, the ministries of health, the interior, and defence, manage selected departmental schools.

At the sub-national level, education is governed by counties, municipalities and schools.. Administration of the pre-university education is part of local, decentralised public services while the financial resources, manuals, and curriculum, are still centralised. On the county level, the County School Inspectorate handles education issues, and on the more local level, municipal authorities predominantly handle maintenance issues.

There are 42 County School Inspectorates, corresponding to the 41 counties and Bucharest city. These inspectorates have a somewhat dual status – they are detached units of the central administration, but they also act as decentralised specialised bodies.

On one hand, County School Inspectorates are subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Research. They are financed by the state through the Ministry of Education and Research, and the ministry establishes their structure by decree. The County School Inspectorates ensure observance of the legislation and evaluation of the educational system, and they also process implementation of educational policy established by the Ministry of Education and Research at the local level.<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, the County School Inspectorates also act as regional-level decentralised specialised bodies, with the following attributes: They have their own projects and execute their own budgets, and they finance certain educational units and activities, as specified by the legislation. In counties where schools provide for studying the languages of national minorities, the structure of the County School Inspectorates includes school inspectors for this type of education. To address the specific problems of the Roma population, each County School Inspectorate appoints an inspector for issues related to Roma education. There is also a school mediator, who facilitates the relationship between the school and Roma communities.

At the municipal/local level, education is governed by the local public administration. Larger municipalities, with larger internal organisations, have a small, separate unit responsible for education. In smaller municipalities, the responsibility for education is merged into units dealing with other social services. These units are established by the local council. Each municipality also has a local school council, which is established by the local council and serves a supportive role for schools in the municipality.<sup>27</sup>

At the school level, the governing body is the administration council of the school, a body that has a decisive role in the administrative area. It is comprised of five-to-11 members and is chaired by the head of the school. The administration council of a school is made up of: the head of school, the deputy head(s) of the school, the chief accountant, elected representatives of the teachers, and representatives of the parents, students and the local public administration authority.

The roles of the governing organs in education are described by the law on state administration and self-administration in education in the following way:

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.eurydice.org/Eurybase/Application/frameset.asp?country=RO&language=EN>.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*



Table 1: Roles of the Governing Organs in Education

State administration	Self-administration
<p>Director of school or school facility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ This is the first degree of state administration, handling admissions, postponement of school attendance, school attendance release, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Council of school or school facility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ The administration council of the school, with a decision-making role in the administrative area, comprises five-to-11 members and is chaired by the head of the school. Members are as follows: the head of school, the deputy head(s) of the school, the chief accountant, elected representatives of the teachers, and representatives of the parents, students, and the local public administration authority.</li> </ul>
<p>Municipality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Establishes and oversees primary schools within the state network, exercising transferred state authority.</li> <li>⇒ Establishes pre-schools, school clubs and other school facilities, exercising self-government authority;</li> <li>⇒ Acts as 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 of administration.</li> </ul>	<p>Municipal school council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Established by the local council of the municipality, this body ensures maintenance of the buildings and supports schools in establishing and executing the yearly budget, according to specific financing rules and the needs of the schools and the local community.</li> </ul>
<p>Self-governing region in terms of decentralisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ The County School Inspectorates ensure observance of the legislation and evaluation of the educational system and process at the local level, along with ensuring implementation of educational policy established by the Ministry of Education and Research.</li> <li>⇒ The County School Inspectorates act as regional-level, decentralised, specialised bodies that: project and execute their own budgets and are financed by the state through the Ministry of Education and Research; and finance certain educational units and activities, as established by law.</li> </ul>	<p>Territorial school council:</p> <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 elected representatives of school directors, two elected representatives of parents, three elected chairmen of school councils, one delegated regional representative, one delegated representative of the Regional School Office.</li> </ul>

<p>Regional school office:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Establishes all levels of schools within the state network, if necessary, including special primary and secondary schools, special pedagogical centers, and pedagogical-psychological advisory centers.</li> <li>⇒ Provides second degree of state administration in matters where directors of schools established by the regional school office carry out first-degree administration.</li> </ul>	<p>Pupil/student school council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Represents secondary school pupils vis-à-vis the school management.</li> <li>⇒ Has five-to-11 elected representatives.</li> </ul>
<p>State School Inspection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Provides state oversight of primary and secondary education.</li> </ul>	
<p>Ministry of Education and Research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ manages state administration in education;</li> <li>⇒ designs strategies, issues mandatory regulations, bylaws, and directives;</li> <li>⇒ approves state network of schools.</li> </ul>	

The structures described above were established as part of a process of decentralisation of pre-university education that began in the mid '90s. This decentralisation is currently guided by the Ministry of Education and Research's medium-term strategy,<sup>28</sup> which was approved by the Romanian Government in December 2005. According to this strategy, there will be further decentralisation in the areas of: curriculum, evaluation and certification, human resources, school network and student flows, management, administration, finance, monitoring, control, and evaluation systems. However, at the present, the strategy of decentralisation is only being implemented as a pilot project. This work is being done in the framework of a World Bank Project focusing on the development of a "School Based Management Model," in 50 schools within the counties of Dolj, Harghita, and Iasi. From academic year 2007-2008, the implementation of the strategy is to be extended to all the schools in these three counties. According to the strategy, the process of decentralisation should be extended to all Romanian counties from the school year 2009-2010.

Although the strategy explicitly promotes equity and equal opportunities principles, there is a concern that the process could entail various problems, including ethnic segregation at the school and local level. Past experience suggests a pervasive pattern of prejudice and discrimination against Roma among school directors, parents, NGOs, local businesses, professional organisations etc. Without concrete counter-measures, the potential for segregation is a clear risk in the current

<sup>28</sup> Strategia de descentralizare a invatamantului preuniversitar aprobata prin Memorandum in Sedinta de Guvern din 20 Decembrie 2005. (The Strategy of decentralisation of pre-university education approved by Memorandum in government meeting from December 20, 2005.) Accessed on June 5, 2005 at the following address: <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/c481/>.

decentralisation model, which seeks to reorganise responsibilities on a local level and to involve precisely those elements of the local community in educational decision-making.

## Financing

According to information from the Ministry of Education and Research and different studies, the budget devoted to education is 4.1 percent of the GDP. But this figure is more a goal of the ministry than a reality, because the contribution of local authorities and the revenue produced by schools, through rentals or other activities, is much lower than the ministry information assumes. Hence, the real expenditure on education in Romania is actually closer to 3.1 percent of GDP.

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Concerning educational expenditures, the highest share of the budget, 36.57 percent, goes to primary and lower-secondary education, because of the higher number of the students enrolled as the table below shows.

Table 2. Expenditures on Education

	<b>Pre- primary</b>	<b>Primary and lower secondary</b>	<b>Upper secondary</b>	<b>Tertiary</b>
Average cost per pupil <sup>1</sup>	EURO 486			
Public expenditure on education 2003/04 on the level of education <sup>2</sup>	8.79%	36.57%	22.16%	21.30%

<sup>1</sup> 2005, source Ministry of Education and Research

<sup>2</sup> 2004/2005 source: INS

Note: 11,18 from the budget for education is not allocated on levels of education

According to the provisions of the Education Act (Act 84/1995), public education is financed from the state and local budgets; economic agents, individuals, and institutions with legal standing can also directly finance education and training activities. The financing mechanism ensures decentralisation of the administration of national funds transferred to local levels, and involvement of local communities in allocation of supplementary financial resources for education. In theory the allowance for each county, municipality, educational unit, or institution is calculated at the national level on the basis of number of children served, their educational level, specific needs, and other educational indicators, especially the ones referring to the quality of education. Educational units and institutions can also benefit from other financial sources. As a result the actual funding is decided in a complex procedure with a significant role for an ad hoc lobbying process.

Legal changes in the financing mechanism to accommodate decentralisation are described in Act No. 354/ July 2004. This act adjusts and modifies Act on Education No. 84/1995 and regulates the new education funding system, which is to be gradually applied between January 2005 and December 2007. Under the changes, financing of educational units will be based on the standard cost per student. Complementary funding would come from the local budget, according to a funding calendar established by each educational unit. Basic and complimentary funding will be provided on the basis of a contract between the concerned school and the local administration. However, this mechanism has not yet been developed and implemented – not even in pilot schools.

## Facilities

All public schools buildings are the property of the local public communities. At the start of the school year 2005-2006, the pre-university school system contained almost 12,000 education units, according to the National Institute of Statistics.

In the 2005/2006 school year, there were 162,900 classrooms and laboratories on the pre-tertiary level (including pre-school education) and more than 15,000 on the tertiary level.

The general state of school buildings and equipment reveals an obvious shortage of financial resources. The poor physical condition of many schools, which are in need of urgent rehabilitation, remains a problem. Facilities suffer from insufficient heating, lack of public transportation in rural areas, lack of educational equipment, obsolete books and documentation, lack of computers and software, etc. The fact that some schools, including some private schools, are much better equipped than others is an important factor in inequality of education. Increasing public and non-public funding could help with proper guidelines.

In recent years, different programmes were implemented with the goal of improving and rehabilitating school buildings and providing didactic materials. These efforts include:

- ⇒ Phare Programme 2001 – “Access to Education of the disadvantaged groups with focus on Roma” described above.
- ⇒ Phare Programme 2003 – “Access to Education of the disadvantaged groups”
- ⇒ Phare Programme TVET 2001-2003, under which 122 schools received equipment with a total value of EUR 20 million.
- ⇒ World Bank Project for School Rehabilitation (January 1998-January 2004), with a total budget of \$130 million, succeeded in rehabilitating 1,206 schools, with 270,000 students and teachers as direct beneficiaries.
- ⇒ World Bank Project for Rural Education aims at increasing the quality of educational services provided by schools located in rural areas and, in particular, improving the school performance of the students with a rural background. The main activities are related to: enhancing professional and managerial skills of teachers and school principals; improving teaching and learning conditions; and strengthening the school-community partnership and the decision-making capacity at the local and central level.

Schools are obliged to give priority to enrolling students who reside in the local school district, within the limit of the approved enrolment plan. The regulations allow a student to be registered at a school that is not in his/her area of residence, but this situation is possible only if the number of students already registered in a school does not exceed the number specified in the official school plan. Registration is handled through a written request by the parent/tutor, and it should be approved by the school council.

## Human Resources

Teachers: In 2005/2006, the total number of teachers was around 281,000. According to official data,<sup>29</sup> in 2002/2003, the total number of persons teaching the Romani language was 257.

<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Education and Research (2003): *Dimensions of Education for National Minorities in Romania*, Bucharest.

**Roma Inspectors:** Within each County Inspectorate there is a Roma inspector. There are 42 inspectors in total, not counting the inspector within the Ministry of Education. The actual responsibilities of the inspectors include: monitoring the relevance and adaptation of education to the specific needs of the Roma community; monitoring the adaptation of regulations to the needs of the Roma minority; coordinating and monitoring the census of Roma children of pre-school age and early school leavers.

**School Mediators:** Roma inspectors and Roma NGO representatives defined the role of school mediators in 2000. The main responsibilities of the mediators include: facilitating connections between schools and families of Roma pupils; identifying potential Roma teachers; identifying and mediating inter- and intra-community conflicts; and supporting the schooling of Roma children at all levels of education. The employment status of the mediators is still not clear. Some of the mediators have been employed by the local authority, others by schools, as teachers of the Roma language.

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## Language of Instruction

The Education Act and Anti-discrimination legislation stipulate students' right to be educated in their native language. To comply with these acts, complete instruction is organised in Romanian and Hungarian. In the case of Roma, the language of instruction is mainly in Romanian. In 2005/2006 only 48 Roma students from 1 to 8 grades were studying in Roma language (this figure is close to that of children who are studying in Czech, Croatian and Turkish, according to National Institute of Statistics"), with additional provisions for extra classes in the Romanes language and Roma history, organised as prescribed by the national curriculum. The curriculum comprises a common core curriculum, which is compulsory at the national level, and a school-based curriculum. School curricula are drawn up by workgroups, which are organised by school subject or curricular areas, include specialists and teaching staff, and are coordinated by experts from the National Council for the Curriculum.

Students from the majority ethnic Romanians do not learn about the culture, history, and problems of minorities. The national curriculum handles these issues as a special educational programme designed for the minority. The national curriculum includes school disciplines especially designed for minority children in the following ways:

- ⇒ In institutions or departments where classes are taught in a minority language, the study of the native language is included in the core school curriculum. This language instruction lasts seven-to-eight hours per week in the first and second grades and three-to-four hours per week in later grades.
- ⇒ In institutions or departments where classes are taught in Romanian, native language classes are included in the school curriculum after second grade, and they are taught three-to-four hours per week.
- ⇒ Instruction in the history and traditions of the minority is included in the curriculum, if school decides to offer this subject. This instruction is provided in the sixth and seventh grade, and it is taught in the native language.
- ⇒ Regulations also stipulate the opportunity for students to study religion in the languages of the national minorities.
- ⇒ Along with the minimum instruction in minority language and history included in their core curriculum, schools with minority students may allocate an additional number of hours for the study of these subjects.

In recent years, the number of schools that have included Romani language classes in their course offerings has increased significantly. According to official data,<sup>30</sup> in 2002/2003, there were 135 schools on pre-university level – primary, lower and upper secondary schools – in which Romani was taught. A progress report on the implementation of the strategy on Roma education by the National Agency for Roma<sup>31</sup> revealed that 24,010 Roma students opted for the additional Roma curriculum. The report said that, out of the almost 200,000 Roma students identifying themselves as Roma, 19,812 students chose to study Romani language and literature for three-to-four hours per week, while 4,198 students opted for Roma history and traditions.

Furthermore, a significant number of teaching staff was trained to teach Romani.<sup>32</sup>

## Education Cycle, Progression Criteria, and Examination System

The most recent amendments to the Act on Education, which increased the total duration of compulsory education from eight to ten years, brought in some novelties in the overall structure of the education system. The new structure of the Romanian education system can be described as follows:

- ⇒ Pre-school education is for children from age 3 to 5 or 6, and the last year of pre-school education is compulsory.
- ⇒ Compulsory basic education includes: the first four grades of primary school; four years of lower secondary school, or gymnasium, which covers grades five through eight; and grades 9 and 10, the first years of high school and School of Arts and Trades (SAT).
- ⇒ School of Arts and Trades (SAT) is two years long and provides training for the first level of qualification, which is the minimum level covered by compulsory schooling. SAT graduates may continue their studies in upper high school, on the condition that they take the additional (completion) year of schooling. Finishing this year ensures the second level of qualification.
- ⇒ The selection and distribution of eighth-grade graduates into the lower stage of high school or SAT is made through an evaluation of skills acquired in lower secondary education, on the basis of national evaluation standards. Passage from the lower to the upper stage of high school is based on an evaluation of skills acquired in the lower stage of high school.
- ⇒ High school consists of a compulsory lower cycle, consisting of grades nine and 10, and an upper cycle, consisting of grades 11,12, and 13. High school has a three-track structure: theoretical, vocational, or technical. Technical high schools provide training for the third level of qualification. Full completion of the high school level requires passing a standardised national exam that earns students a “baccalaureate” diploma.
- ⇒ Post secondary school education lasts two-to-three years and provides training for the third level of professional qualification. Post secondary school education is available for high school graduates with baccalaureate diplomas, who either do not go on to higher education or may simply wish to attend the courses, as well as high school graduates without baccalaureate diplomas.

<sup>30</sup> Ministry of Education and Research (2003): *Dimensions of Education for National Minorities in Romania*. Bucharest.

<sup>31</sup> *Progress Report on the Implementation of the Government Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma: April 2003-June 2005*, Bucharest, September 2005, p. 25.

<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Education and Research (2003): *Dimensions of Education for National Minorities in Romania*. Bucharest.



According to Act No. 288/2004 on Academic Study Structure, higher education is divided into three levels: undergraduate university studies, which lasts three years, and master studies, which last two years.

## Special Schools

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Apart from the mainstream schools, Romania has a complex parallel system of primary and secondary schools for children with physical and developmental disabilities. These children are educated at special primary schools, or in specific classes in regular primary schools. Special schools do not offer the same standard of education as regular schools. For example, they do not include foreign languages. Due to poor curricular standards and low expectations, children from special schools have practically no opportunity to continue with higher levels of education.

Many Roma begin their education in special schools without even having the chance to start in a regular school. The European Roma Rights Centre cites a psychologist as saying, “The majority of Roma children who attend special schools suffer from a social-cultural handicap; they belong to a sub-culture, living in an environment of poverty, promiscuity, and illiteracy, which prohibits a normal physical and intellectual development.” Human rights activists report<sup>33</sup> that, in the case of some special schools, the ratio of Roma can be as high as 70-90 percent. There has been no research to precisely evaluate the potential over-representation of Roma children in special schools, because Romania neglected to include this problem as part of a Phare project.

According to a report by the EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program (EUMAP), children are evaluated by a team that includes a pediatrician, a neuro-psychiatrist, a psychologist, a psycho-pedagogue, and a social assistant.<sup>34</sup> The report cited interviews indicating that the main and only objective of special schools is to teach pupils basic reading and counting skills.<sup>35</sup> A psychologist interviewed by the EUMAP argues that evaluation “is often superficial, as the examining psychologists lack standardised instruments and tools.”<sup>36</sup> The same report mentions that the disproportionate number of Roma children enrolled in special schools is due to misdiagnosis because of language and cultural barriers.<sup>37</sup> It is also to be noted that, in certain cases, poor Roma parents may enrol their children in special schools for the free meals and school supplies provided.

<sup>33</sup> For the estimate on the ratio of Roma in some special schools see: European Roma Rights Centre (2001): *State of Impunity: Human Rights Abuse of Roma in Romania*, p. 64. Quoted in the report “Rights of People with Intellectual Disabilities. Access to Education and Employment – Romania.” Open Society Institute, 2005 p. 38.

The estimate on the ratio of Roma in some special schools is mentioned in the report “Discriminarea rasiala in judetele Arad, Cluj, Harghita, Sibiu si Timis.” (“Racial discrimination in the counties Arad, Cluj, Harghita, Sibiu and Timis”) Pro Europe League, 2005, p. 18.

<sup>34</sup> Open Society Institute (2005): *Rights of People with Intellectual Disabilities. Access to Education and Employment – Romania*, p. 36.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 43.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p. 36.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p. 49.

## *Second Chance Education*

An experimental project attracting to school 14-25-year-olds who have not completed compulsory education for social reasons has been developed by the Open Society Foundation since April 1999, as a second chance project. The project aims at supporting young drop-outs to complete their basic education, so that they can take the compulsory education final exam and/or attend vocational education courses. The programme is the result of the collaboration between the educational institution and the public administration, on the one hand, and the social partners and non-governmental organisations representing the civil society, on the other hand. The programme became an education policy and the MER issued more orders:

- ⇒ Order no. 5735/29.12.2005 regarding the approval of school programmes for education from “Second Chance Programme” – secondary education.
- ⇒ Order no 5333 from 25.10.2005 regarding the application of the programme “Second Chance” in 2005-2006 school year.
- ⇒ Order no 5160/6.10.2005 regarding the application of the programme “Second Chance” in 2005-2006 school year.<sup>38</sup>

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## **Social Support for Students**

Access to education for all children and young people is facilitated by a social protection system that takes different forms, including: provision of institutional services and facilities; scholarships for excellence; merit scholarships; study grants; social security scholarships; and a reduction in public transportation expenses.

In Romania, there are four types of scholarships at the university level:

- ⇒ For excellent grade levels, EUR 50/month.
- ⇒ Social scholarships, given to very poor students, around EUR 45/month.
- ⇒ Merit scholarships, for very good students, EUR 58/month.
- ⇒ For performance as student researchers, EUR 70/month.

There are two types of scholarship for the high school level:

- ⇒ Social scholarships, through a programme called Money for High School, assists very poor students with EUR 50/month.
- ⇒ Merit scholarships, for students with excellent grade levels, EUR 11/month.

There is one type of scholarships for primary and secondary school (grades one through eight): social scholarships, for students whose family has less than EUR 45/month per family member. This scholarship provides EUR 11/month.

Starting in 1998, only about 150-200 Roma students per year received scholarships for university studies. It is estimated that the total number of Roma students currently attending universities in Romania is more than 800.

<sup>38</sup> <http://www2.edu.ro/index.php?module=articles&func=&catid=492>.



## Key Legislation and Other National Documents

In recent years, new educational regulations were established, including the following:

- ⇒ Act No. 268/June 2003, which adjusted and complemented Act on Education No. 84/1995, extended compulsory education from eight to 10 years and decreased the age of school entry from 7 to 6 years.
- ⇒ Act 354/2004, modifying specific provisions of the Act on Education concerning the introduction of the new funding system for public education, is aimed at ensuring decentralisation of financing at the educational unit level. It also provides for the reorganization of the school network.
- ⇒ Act 349 /2004 modifies Act No 128/1997 on teaching staff status. One of its provisions refers to the implementation of the new system of funding and management, as well as remuneration for teaching and governance staff.
- ⇒ Act 87/2006 for approval of the emergency Ordinance of the Government no. 75/2005 regarding the support for quality in education.
- ⇒ Ministry of Education and Research Notification No. 29323/20.04.2004 forbids any form of segregation in the pre-university education system. The notification forbids school segregation of Roma children.

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## Status of the Education System: Key Indicators

The size of the Romanian education system is described below:

Table 3: Schools by Type and Population (2005/2006)

School Type	Number of schools	Number of students	Number of teachers	Pupil/Teacher ratio (approx.)
All types	11 701	4,360,831	281,034	16
Pre-school	3,769	648,338	35,755	18
Primary (only grades 1 to 4) <sup>a</sup>	305	124,619	5,334	17
Lower secondary school (grades 1 to 8)	5,942	1,775,942	139,155	11
High school	1,410	767,439	61,914	12
Vocational	90 <sup>b</sup>	284,412	6,234	25 <sup>d</sup>
Post-high school	78 <sup>c</sup>	43,617	1,099	46
Tertiary (public and private)	107	716,464	31,543	23

Note: This data include also the special education.

- a. These 6247 schools – grades I-IV and I-VIII (305 + 5942) are independent education units (Note: In comparison with the previous year it is registered an important decrease of the number of school education units I-IV and even of I-VIII).
- b. In addition to the 90 independent education units, there are 1,473 schools of arts and trades within Cluster Schools (Grupuri școlare).
- c. In addition to the 78 independent education units, there are 358 specializations within Cluster Schools. Source: National Institute for Statistics, 2005.
- d. This data is relevant for 2005/2006; Source: Ministry of Education and Research, 2005.

Romania registers positive trends in educational attainment at all levels of education. However, one indicator highlighting a barrier from the perspective of the efficiency of education is the drop-out rate in the primary and lower secondary educational level. In the period 2000-2005, the drop-out rate calculated by the in/out method increased from 0.6 percent to 1.3 percent in primary education and from 0.6 percent to 2.0 percent in secondary education.

Table 4: Indicators on Education Attainment and Education Efficiency – School Year 2005/2006<sup>39</sup>

	Pre-pri- mary	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper Secondary and Voca- tional	Tertiary
Gross <sup>40</sup> enrolment ratio	74,7	106.1 <sup>a</sup>	97.4	75.0	44.8
Enrolment ratio in pre-school education of children of 5 years old	86.0				
Enrolment ratio in pre-school education of 6-year-old children	76.5				
Net enrolment ratio		93.5	85.2	67.1	25.9
Share of students at first grade who attended pre-school education	91.5				
Transition rate	–	–	–	90.8	68.8
Drop-out rate	–	1.3	2.0	2.3 <sup>b</sup> /5.5 <sup>c</sup>	–
Drop-out rate by cohort in primary education <sup>d</sup>	9.4				
Drop-out rate by cohort in lower secondary education <sup>d</sup>	11.9				
Graduation rate <sup>e</sup>	–	102.6	103.7 <sup>f</sup>	90.0 <sup>g</sup>	33.4 <sup>h</sup>

Note: The data concerning drop out (including the drop-out on a cohort) and the graduation rate is for 2005/2006, the last year for which data are available for the calculation of the indicators.

- For 2003-2004 school year it was decided by the Ministry of Education to lower the age of enrolment in the primary school from 7 year to 6 year. Hence, starting with this year (until 2010) it has registered in the first primary class pupils at 6 but also at 7. The enrolment of a higher number of children in grade 1 (children of 6 and 7 years old) add to an increase of the gross enrolment rate in primary education.
- High school.
- Professional education.
- Including deceased and migrated persons.
- For primary and lower secondary the indicator is calculated by taking into account the number of enrolled students in the last grade of each cycle (fourth, eighth, tenth, and the last year at University) and the population having respective age 10, 14, 18 and 23. Graduation rates for secondary and tertiary level are corresponding to the school year 2003/2004.

<sup>39</sup> The calculation is made by dividing the total number of students in a certain level of education to the official total population of children belonging to a cohort corresponding to the level of education.

<sup>40</sup> Gross – it is divided the number of students between 6-12 to the official number of the total population of children between 7-10. Net – it is divided the number of students between 7-10 to the total population between 7-10.

- f. The percentage is bigger than 100 % because the students who are graduating primary and secondary education have theoretically the age of graduation (10 years and 14 years) but also over and below these ages.
- g. Graduated students without diploma of graduation.
- h. Graduated students with and without license (B.A.).

Source: Calculations based on National Institute for Statistics information.

## Student Performance Based on International Assessments

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Romania has participated in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS),<sup>41</sup> one of two most comprehensive international programmes to assess performance of students approaching the end of compulsory schooling.<sup>42</sup> The TIMSS assessment was conducted in 1995, 1999, and 2003.

The Romanian students' performance is summarized in the two tables below (tables 2 and 3):

Table 5: TIMSS 2003 Results

Area	Romania		International		Diff. Romania – Int'l
	Mean <sup>43</sup>	Mean stand. error	Mean	Mean stand. error	
Mathematics	475	4.8	467	0,5	+ 8
Science	470	4.9	474	0,6	- 4

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

Area	1995		1999		2003		Diff. 2003- 1999
	Mean	Mean stand. error	Mean	Mean stand. error	Mean	Mean stand. error	
Mathematics	474	4.6	472	5.8	475	4.8	+ 3
Science	471	5.1	472	5.8	470	4.9	- 2

<sup>41</sup> 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 (<http://timss.bc.edu>).

Martin, M.O., Mullis, I.V.S., Gonzales, E.J. and Chrostowski, S.J. (2004): *TIMSS 2003 International Science Report*, Boston: Lynch School of Education, Boston College (<http://timss.bc.edu>).

<sup>42</sup> Romania has joined the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) for the cycle 2006. At the end of 2007, data about student performance on PISA will be available.

<sup>43</sup> The way results are reported in the TIMSS is as follows: In each assessment area, each student is awarded a score based on the difficulty of the tasks that she or he could perform reliably. The scales are constructed so that the average student score is 500 points and about two-thirds of the students score between 400 and 600 points – so there is a standard deviation of 100 points).

The average performance of Romanian students is at the level of the international average. Also, Romanian students perform at the same level over eight years on both assessment areas.

In addition to the results depicted, TIMSS data provide evidence that some of the factors<sup>44</sup> describing the students' socio-economic background have a significant impact on student performance in Romania. As expected, higher levels of parental education are associated with higher student achievement, as in almost all countries. (E.g., the average mathematics achievement of students with university-educated parents, 533 score points, was 68 points higher than the average for students whose parents had lower secondary schooling) But, additionally, there is also a significant correlation between achievement and possession of cultural and educational resources at home. So, math performance of students with more than 200 books in the home is 99 points higher than the performance of students without books in the home. Possession of computer adds about 42 points on the math scale, which is one the highest differences among all participating countries.

## Education Indicators of Roma

According to official sources of information – which may actually underreport the Roma population because not all Roma identify themselves as such – the Roma school population, exceeded 74,000 students in the school year 2005/2006. The distribution by education levels is presented below:

Table 7: Roma School Population, by Levels of Education, in the School Year 2005/2006

Pre-primary	Primary	Lower secondary	High school	Professional education	Total
12,427	38,670	21,586	1,011	2,728	76,422

Note: From the total of 60256 students in the primary and secondary education, 1662 were enrolled in special schools.

Source: National Institute for Statistics, 2005. Official estimate.

The rate of school attendance of the Roma population is significantly worse than that of non-Roma. According to a study conducted by the Institute for Research on the Quality of Life<sup>45</sup> in 1998, the share of Roma children aged 7-16 who were attending school was around 62 percent, and the share of those who dropped out or never went to school reached almost 30 percent.

Table 8: The Schooling of Roma Children in 1998

School-age children (7-16 years old)	Enrolled	Dropped out of school	Have never been enrolled	Don't know/ don't answer
	61.4%	11.6%	18.3%	8.7%

Source: Data from the Institute for Research on the Quality of Life, 1998.

<sup>44</sup> In TIMSS, home backgrounds' factors on achievement are not combined in one index of socio-economic status. Their impact on performance is estimated separately.

<sup>45</sup> Expert Publishing House (2002): *Indicators on Roma Communities in Romania*, Bucharest.

A recent UNDP study confirms the continuing gap in enrolment between Roma and the majority population.

Table 9: Enrolment into Primary Education by Age in Romania

	Age 7	Age 8	Age 9	Age 10	Age 11	Age 12	Age 13	Age 14	Age 15
<b>Majority population in close proximity to Roma (%)</b>	95	92	100	96	100	88	96	91	88
<b>Roma (%)</b>	83	93	85	95	81	72	66	59	55

Source: UNDP, Faces of Poverty 2005, available at <http://vulnerability.undp.sk/>.

The same UNDP study shows that, while the national average ratio among children aged 12 and above who spent more than four years in school is 94.4 percent, the similar share for Roma is 46 percent. This is less than half of the national average.

The gap in enrolment into pre-school education is even higher. The enrolment of Roma children aged 3-6 years into kindergarten is four times lower than the national enrolment average in the same age group.<sup>46</sup>

Non-educated Roma children represent about 80 percent of the total of non-educated children in Romania.<sup>47</sup> Hence, a high rate of illiteracy continues to exist among the Roma. Data from the 2002 census<sup>48</sup> show the following situation of illiteracy among those aged 10 or more: 2.6 percent for the total population; 2.1 percent for Romanians; 1.4 percent for Hungarians and 25.6 percent for Roma.

## Extent and Nature of Roma Segregation, Attendance and Enrolment Barriers

Three facts obviously influence the low participation of Roma in the education process:

- ⇒ Roma have low pre-school enrolment and a high drop out rate, especially after fourth grade (before lower secondary school) and eighth grade (before high school).
- ⇒ Although Romania has not had an explicit policy of segregation, there is pervasive de facto segregation, starting with the earliest stages of school – largely because of special classes within schools.

<sup>46</sup> Data from 1998 Institute for Research on the Quality of Life survey show that participation of Roma children (3-6 years) in pre-school education is 17.2 percent, while the national average for all pre-school children was 67 percent for the same year. Surdu, M. (2002): "School Education of Roma population" in *Roma in Romania*, Zamfir C., Preda M. (ed), Bucharest, Expert, p. 106.

<sup>47</sup> Ministry of Education and Research, Institute for Educational Sciences, Institute for Research on the Quality of Life (2002): *Roma Children School Participation. Problems, Solutions, Actors*, Bucharest, MarLink Publishing House, p. 47.

<sup>48</sup> Census 2002. Table 59. National Institute for Statistics.

⇒ Due to the difficult environment of schools, and lack of opportunities for their children, there is low involvement of parents in their children's education.

The following sections provide further detail on these educational barriers:

1. Barriers to enrolment into pre-school and primary school exist for the Roma population in Romania:

⇒ About 80 percent of Romania's Roma children do not have a chance to enrol in pre-school education, because pre-school is only partly locally subsidized and partly paid by parents, and because pre-school classes, which often have limited space, give priority to children whose parents are employed. Even though the pre-school education is compulsory by law there are no actions taken when pre-schools or parents do not enrol children for pre-school education. As a result, about 80 percent of Roma children are not prepared for school.

⇒ Enrolment into primary education is not close to 100 percent in Romania. Among the 7 percent left out, about 80 percent are Roma. This is because a significant percentage of these Roma children do not have access to school, due to lack of identity or registration papers. The lack of necessary papers, and poor enforcement of compulsory education keep children from being able to enroll in school in the first place.<sup>49</sup>

⇒ School attendance is hampered by poor or non-existent roads to Roma communities, and the absence of public transportation, especially if the weather is bad. Where there is public transportation, the distance between residential areas and the school makes it harder for disadvantaged parents to enroll their children and send them to school, due to transportation fees.

⇒ Disproportionately high poverty rates limit the ability of many Roma to afford the direct costs of schooling, such as clothes, food, and school materials, as well as the indirect costs, including the opportunity costs of sending children to school. Families may require children to work, either at home or outside, in the informal sector. The extent of this phenomenon among Roma households is not known, but there are many reports of children dropping out of school in order to work.

⇒ The language barrier for a part of the Roma population is not acknowledged or addressed. A lack of bilingual education in the Romanian education system prevents Roma children from accessing education and negatively influences their school achievements. With the exception of a small-scale project of a Roma NGO (Amare Romentza), which set up a bilingual kindergarten for 20 Roma children, there are no other initiatives in this respect.

2. Segregated education of Roma children is a common practice in Romania.

School segregation is a result of decisions by school principals or residential segregation. Currently, the Ministry of Education and Research notification forbidding segregation has no clear enforcement measures, and it is not accompanied by legally binding and properly resourced desegregation measures. It is not easy to assess the extent of the problem, because there are no official statistics on Roma school segregation in Romania. But several data sets show that 12-20 percent of Roma children attend schools where more than 50 percent, or even more than 70 percent, of the students are Roma:

<sup>49</sup> An estimated 47,000 people in Romania lack identification documents necessary to access public services. See: <http://www.romaeducationfund.org/REFNeedsAssessment.pdf>.

- ⇒ A 1998 study,<sup>50</sup> based on a census of rural schools, estimates that 12.2 percent of the schools with Roma students are segregated, with more than 50 percent of the students being Roma. A total of 38,334 Roma students study in these schools. A more recent UNDP report<sup>51</sup> provides similar data, and considers both rural and urban residence. Although it uses different methodology – a questionnaire given to Roma – the study presents a relatively similar picture of the extent of segregation: It found that 13.5 percent of Roma students attend classes in schools with a Roma majority. However, both figures could underestimate the extent of segregation. For example, a recent World Bank study aiming to map Roma poverty utilized a sample of 848 homogenous and isolated Roma communities, of 20 households or more, in 549 localities (in one locality could be more than one community).<sup>52</sup> It is very likely that Roma children living in these residentially segregated communities attend segregated schools, which suggests a pervasive pattern of residence based segregation.
- ⇒ Even the Ministry of Education and Research is aware of the problem: In response to the ministry's notification forbidding segregation, 30 of the 42 county school inspectorates sent reports about segregation in their counties. This was the result of a Phare project, called "Access to education for disadvantaged groups, with a special focus on Roma," which has a component aimed at identifying all cases of segregation in education in pilot counties through close collaboration with school inspectorates, NGOs, and other relevant actors.<sup>53</sup>
- ⇒ The extent of segregated schooling is only partly attributable to residential segregation. There are at least six basic types of Roma communities:<sup>54</sup> urban downtown communities, urban communities in blocks of flats, peripheral urban communities, communities contained by rural communities, peripheral rural communities, and "autonomous" (isolated) communities. Desegregation measures could be applied for all these types of communities.
- ⇒ Aside from the fact that segregated education is a discriminatory practice that does not support social integration, the financial mechanisms applied in Romania have apparently created a situation where segregated schooling is of a significantly lower quality. Indicators of this are the following:<sup>55</sup>
- The likelihood of overcrowded classes in primary schools in which Roma pupils prevail was more than three times higher than for all rural schools. For secondary schools in which Roma students prevail, this likelihood was more than nine times higher than for the whole system.
  - In schools in which Roma pupils prevail, a library facility was missing in almost three-quarters of the cases.

<sup>50</sup> Ministry of Education and Research, Institute for Educational Sciences, Institute for Quality of Life (2002): *Roma Children School Participation. Problems, Solutions, Actors*, Bucharest, MarLink Publishing House.

<sup>51</sup> UNDP (2002): *The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency Trap*, Bratislava.

<sup>52</sup> World Bank (2005): *Roma Social Mapping*, Bucharest.

<sup>53</sup> The Phare project was also intended to support local actors in the identification and implementation of effective measures for desegregation. Its expected results were: assessment of segregation cases in each participating county, based on the Ministry of Education and Research's definition; recommendations for desegregation plans for each case; and setting up a monitoring and evaluation system for a desegregation plan. Aspects of the Roma education expert's forward plan that relate to school segregation and desegregation were developed with the assistance of two Roma NGOS: Romani Criss and project partner Agentia Impreuna.

<sup>54</sup> Realized in a 2006 study.

<sup>55</sup> Mihai Surdu (2002): *Quality of Education in Schools with a High Percentage of Roma Pupils in Romania*, Roma Rights Review, No. 3-4, Budapest.



- Schools in which Roma pupils prevail indicated a shortage of qualified teachers almost two times more frequently than the average. There is an evident correlation between the percentage of Roma in schools and the percentage of unqualified teachers in these schools. The percentage of schools in which Roma prevail and the ratio of unqualified teachers is between 50 percent and 75 percent is approximately five times higher than the average. The percentage of schools in which Roma prevail and more than 75 percent of the teachers are unqualified is 10 times higher than the average. While, for the entire educational system, the ratio of the pupils who passed the capacity exam was 68 percent, for the schools in which Roma pupils are in a majority the same ratio was only 44.6 percent.
- ⇒ It is to be noted that most of the “beneficiaries” of this segregated education, Roma parents and children alike, have a clear awareness that they do not receive an equal education in schools with a high percentage of Roma children. A UNDP study<sup>56</sup> shows that the majority of Roma parents consider that more ethnically mixed schools can offer a better education for their children than schools in which Roma students form a majority or dominate.

3. Discrimination is present in all processes where personal judgments can influence decision making in the education system, and it is the main factor contributing to a difficult environment in schools.

This discrimination discourages Roma parents from taking an active role in their children’s education. The social distance between Roma and the majority, and the negative prejudices held by the majority, seriously affect the educational possibilities of Roma students. Manifestations of this problem include:

- ⇒ A 2005 study<sup>57</sup> reveals a huge social distance between the majority in Romania and the Roma minority. The ISD index (Index of Social Distance), which measures the potential of contacts between different social groups, shows a very high level of rejection of the Roma ethnic group. Roma are placed in the third position for social discrimination, after the groups of homosexuals/lesbians and people with mental disabilities. As a consequence, discrimination holds Roma back in all areas, including education.
- ⇒ Discrimination against Roma by non-Roma parents, children, and teachers contributes to low attendance. Discrimination can discourage children from attending school and affect the quality of education in the classroom. According to one study,<sup>58</sup> more than half of Roma women interviewed felt that the educational system discriminates against Roma children.
- ⇒ Qualitative studies document examples of discrimination and abuse of Roma students by teachers. Incidents catalogued range from teachers ignoring Roma in classrooms, to bullying and outright physical abuse. Discrimination can be both explicit – as in the case of schools creating separate classes – or more subtle, as when parents discourage their children from interacting with Roma classmates.
- ⇒ Segregated housing naturally has a direct impact on the educational environment, because high-Roma enrolment reflects the concentration of a Roma community. But poor housing

<sup>56</sup> UNDP (2002): *Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency Trap*, Bratislava.

<sup>57</sup> Study realised by CURS (Center for Urban and Rural Sociology) for NCCD (National Council for Combating Discrimination) (2005): *Perceptii si atitudini fata de fenomenul de discriminare (Perceptions and attitudes in regard with discrimination)*, CURS, p. 8-12. Available in Romanian at <http://www.curs.ro> as of May 28, 2006.

<sup>58</sup> Published by the Open Society Institute in 2006.



conditions also influence educational success in other ways. Many Roma children do not have the basic conditions for learning outside of school or doing their homework. The stigma attached to the inhabitants of “ghettos” can prevent Roma children from having relationships with their non-Roma peers, and it reinforces low self esteem. Low self esteem, in turn, has a negative influence on aspiration and on academic performance. Also, in isolated and disadvantaged communities where educational attainment is rare or irrelevant, it is harder to appreciate the value of schooling.

- ⇒ For Roma minorities, the lack of successful role models, combined with the marginal status of Roma within the educational system, means that there are few examples to encourage parents to enrol their children in primary school.
- ⇒ Negative expectations also work against Roma children: On one hand, the poor quality of education persuades many Roma children that education is not a worthwhile investment. Learning in segregated classes with poor facilities, achieving low scores and having to repeat years can be humiliating and can undermine a child’s confidence. Children can also experience discrimination when in school, a situation that reduces their willingness to continue. Meanwhile, many teachers in schools with a high percentage of Roma pupils have low expectations with regard to Roma. These teachers tend to set lower standards of educational achievement for Roma than for other students.

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## Qualitative Assessment of the Education System<sup>59</sup>

Due to the frequent changes in legislation and the continuous process of reform, the monitoring of the educational system is not very clear. There is a need to establish a coherence throughout the overall educational system that is supported by clear and comprehensive legislation. Aspects of the system are analyzed in the sections that follow.

### *School Management*

A school’s board consists of nine-to-15 members. The board also includes representatives of the parents’ council and the students’ council – for students in grades nine and up. In some schools, parents’ and students’ councils are quite active, but in many others, they take no part in decision-making. Quite often, the teaching staffs do not see parents and students as actual partners in the decision-making process. The school calls on parents to solve administrative issues, yet it rarely consults them on education issues. A climate of suspicion and tension exists. When a problem occurs, parents and educators often blame each other. Roma students and parents are rarely represented in typical school boards. The culture of differences is not presented in all school units.

### *Teachers*

Teachers and county school inspectorates continue to draw up employment contracts and recruit and dismiss teaching staff.

<sup>59</sup> For a detailed qualitative assessment see table in Annex.

There is a system of professional standards for teachers, based on teaching skills. The National Council for Continuing Teacher Training accredits teacher training programmes, based on an accreditation methodology that focuses on training curricula. However, additional training for teachers is relatively rare, and the accreditation procedure is standardised and rather bureaucratic. Not many of the available training programmes address competencies that are important for teaching in multicultural classrooms. There are plans to introduce new systems of incentives for teachers to take training, such as a special salary bonus for educational projects and related activities. Currently, teachers have difficulties in dealing with the many changes in the system.

There is a high rate of commuting and turnover among teachers in rural schools, especially in schools with a high proportion of Roma students. A systemic teacher training programme is obligatory for teachers who will teach Romanes language or the history and traditions of the Roma population. The need to employ Romanes language teachers has not been addressed, as most potential Romanes teachers are employed as non-teaching staff.

School Inspectors, school managers and teachers training has been a major focus of the Phare programme. As a result extensive managers or teacher training programmes promoting inclusive education, individualised teaching, multicultural dimension) have been developed and accredited and are already part of the Teacher Training Houses offer in 22 counties. They will be available in all counties by the end of 2007.

### *Curriculum*

At national level, the National Council for the Curriculum is responsible for drawing up, developing, applying and revising the national curriculum. The adopted structure of curricular design comprises a common core (compulsory curriculum) and a school-based curriculum. School curricula are drawn up by workgroups that involve specialists and teaching staff and are organised by school subject or curricular area. The workgroups are coordinated by experts from the National Council for the Curriculum.

The curriculum design allows for flexibility. But, at least in two respects, this flexibility has negative effects on the education of Roma. On one hand, students from the majority do not learn about the culture, history, and the problems of the minorities. The national curriculum treats these subjects as special educational content designed only for the relevant minority. On the other hand, school-based curriculum in segregated schools can easily be sub-standard, not providing knowledge and skills needed for sustained education.

### *Textbooks*

Textbooks cover all subjects, apart from the subjects developed in the school-based curriculum. There is a liberalized textbook market, and freedom of school choice from among textbooks offer. Textbooks are written from the perspective of the majority, often containing cultural and gender stereotypes, etc. Standards for textbook quality include a general requirement against stereotypes, but the criteria are not clearly explained. Roma only appear by accident in the textbooks. Textbooks are ordered by the school and offered free of charge to students in compulsory education. In rural areas, the variety of textbooks is low, and sometimes textbooks are not available for all students.

*Assessment and Evaluation*

Students' school performance is evaluated through a variety of methods, including:

- ⇒ Current evaluations of pupils – based on tests developed by the teaching staff.
- ⇒ National evaluation at the completion of the primary cycle of education – based on sets of tests developed by National Service for Evaluation and Examination.
- ⇒ National examinations at the end of eighth grade. These exams consist of sets of tests developed by the National Service for Evaluation and Examination, and they play a role in determining a student's orientation toward high-school or vocational schools.
- ⇒ National examination at the end of high-school – the baccalaureate exam, also consisting of sets of tests developed by the National Service for Evaluation and Examination. A baccalaureate diploma is compulsory for enrolment into higher education. The results of the baccalaureate examination represent the basis for access to university, but universities may add some specific access criteria, according to the principle of autonomy.

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While students are tested, there are no national evaluation standards set for school-based curriculum. Act No. 87/2006 is the most important recent policy development in relation to the evaluation process. According to this act, all providers of educational services should be accredited. External quality assessments will be made by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education and the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in University Education.

*Financing*

Because there are several, complex sources of financing, described in previous sections of this chapter, decision making is usually not transparent. Furthermore, the current practice perpetuates systematic financial marginalization of schools catering to Roma children. The forthcoming new financing mechanism has not yet been elaborated in detail, and it has yet to be tested through pilot programmes. Still, there is a concern that the new system will not substantially change the situation.

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

Strengths include the following:

- ⇒ Since the late '90s, policies and actions have started to focus on Roma education, and there is open discussion and debate.
- ⇒ A network of Roma staff in the 42 county school inspectorates has been established, and they have been given responsibilities related to education for Roma, primarily in the areas of enrolment and attendance.
- ⇒ The process of teaching Romanes language in schools, and consolidating the network of Romanes language teachers, has begun with an elaboration of programmes and manuals.
- ⇒ There is affirmative action in enrolment to universities.
- ⇒ Enrolment is encouraged through the provision of meals for all children, Roma and non-Roma, in kindergartens and schools, at least up to grade four, through the "Food in Kindergartens and Schools" programme.

- ⇒ The issue of Roma segregation in schools has been recognised, and there are at least nominal efforts to address the problem.

Despite these achievements, there are serious systemic weaknesses affecting the education of Roma in Romania. These are the following:

- ⇒ There are too many education initiatives and notifications, such as the notification against segregation, that are neither systematically monitored nor effectively implemented. The result is an overly complex and sometimes contradictory regulatory environment.
- ⇒ There is no established model for desegregation and, as yet, little recognition of the impact of special schools on Roma children. A climate of discrimination against Roma pervades the system.
- ⇒ The system of education financing and management reinforces inequities and does not allow poor municipalities to fund schools appropriately. As a result there are teacher shortages, overcrowded classes, and a lack of equipment.
- ⇒ Curriculum standards are not effective. The flexibility of school-based curricula is misused, contributing to significant disparities in the quality of education, a situation that encourages “white flight” from schools with high Roma populations.
- ⇒ Roma culture is not recognised in schools or the curriculum, and multicultural education is rarely a part of initial or in-service training for teachers.

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In addition to these problems, there are serious concerns that several forthcoming systemic changes might worsen the situation for Roma education. Examples include the following:

- ⇒ The decentralisation process could lead to even greater discrimination and segregation.
- ⇒ The introduction of per-student financing of education could be undermined by negotiated contracts that limit positive incentives to enrol Roma children.
- ⇒ Interest in Roma inclusion and external funds to support Roma initiatives will decrease following EU accession.
- ⇒ Parental choice will be given primacy in education policy, leaving marginalised groups segregated.
- ⇒ New school accreditation mechanisms will most probably affect schools with low performance, and there are no compensatory mechanisms in place to overcome this problem.

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

Data and capacity issues are generic across all countries where the Roma Education Fund (REF) is active. The original REF needs assessments highlighted these issues in each participating country, and, in most cases, little improvement has been registered.

While the lack of reliable data on Roma education is a pervasive problem, the particular dearth of monitoring data on non-enrolment, attendance and drop outs is a key weakness in Romania.

In terms of human capacity, most of the Roma professionals in Romania are working in the NGO sector. But there is now a trend of governmental institutions recruiting Roma experts from NGOs. One example of this is the establishment of the National Agency for Roma, in which all the positions were filled by Roma experts from the NGO sector. This process was also unique because it represented a departure from appointments based largely on political connections.

The network of Roma inspectors and mediators are supervised by the Department for Minorities in the Ministry of Education and Research. While there existence is a good sign, many of these inspectors have part-time position and sometimes they are requested to do other tasks that are not related to Roma education and are not written in their job description.

## 5. Overview of Government and Partner Activities

Since 1989, stakeholders involved in the Roma issue have realized that education should be a priority. Although progress has been slow, Romania has probably done more to address the education needs of Roma than it has for most other areas where Roma face problems.

The importance of this issue was underlined at the recent conference “Roma Decade for Inclusion 2005-2015,” where the general consensus of the participants was that education is the entry point for breaking the vicious circle of poverty.

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In 2001, the Ministry of Education and Research sought to address the Roma education issue by developing a strategy on Roma education. The priorities in the strategy are the following:

- ⇒ Encouraging more Roma to study at faculties and university colleges by increasing the number of publicly funded slots for Roma candidates. The measure was initiated in the 1992/1993 academic year and has been extended subsequently.
- ⇒ Stimulating the training of Romani-speaking teachers by:
  - establishing classes/groups at elementary schools and pedagogical colleges to train Roma or non-Roma teachers, who will be working with Roma students (the system began in the 1990/1991 school year and it still continues);
  - Conducting Romanes language courses for Roma and or non-Roma ethnic teachers, who may or may not receive qualifications;
  - founding a Romanes language department within the Foreign Languages Faculty of Bucharest University, in 1998.
- ⇒ Stimulating the study of Romanes language through special measures, including:
  - providing the possibility to study Romanes as a native language, at any moment during the school year and in any study year;
  - encouraging schools to employ teachers qualified to teach the Romanes language, or, in the absence of fully qualified teachers, encouraging high school graduates, or at least graduates who completed 10 grades and who are ethnic Roma, to teach Romani.
- ⇒ Drafting programmes, manuals and auxiliary materials for teaching the Romani language and for teaching the history and traditions of the Roma.
- ⇒ Establishing territorial structures that should monitor the school participation of Roma children and youths, in conformity with O.MER. No. 3363/1999 on the appointment of Roma inspectors in each county school inspectorate.

### Commitments to the Roma Decade, Actions/Progress to Date

Romania’s Government has indicated its clear political commitment to the Decade of Roma Inclusion by creating and supporting a structure that ensures a mechanism for implementing and monitoring Decade activities. Furthermore, a fund was created to support specific activities conducted as part of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The National Agency for Roma was planning to include redesigned Decade action plans in the state budget before the Romanian Decade

presidency ended in July 2006.

So far, with the exception of the administrative costs of the National Agency for Roma there had been no separate budget for the Decade of Roma Inclusion in Romania. At the launch event of the REF, the president of the National Agency for Roma pointed out that the National Action Plan is under revision. In April 2006, the Government of Romania decided to finance a set of activities included in the National Action Plan.

On the programme level, regarding Roma education, the following areas have been addressed by Romania's Government up to now:

- ⇒ A legal notification has been issued that forbids the segregation of Roma children in schools. However, it is still difficult to eliminate segregation at the local level. Unless there is a strong policy, and the notification is transformed into an order or governmental decision, there will be still cases of segregation. Desegregation initiatives have been initiated in the framework of the Phare project "Access to education for disadvantaged groups, with a special focus on Roma." Desegregation initiatives are expected to continue, and be extended to other locations.
- ⇒ New schemes that follow the "second-chance" model have been created within national programmes, such as Phare's "Access to education for disadvantaged groups," and new models have been piloted, such as the UNICEF project on Education Priority Areas implemented by the Institute of Educational Sciences.
- ⇒ Special places at universities and secondary schools have been granted to young Roma candidates according to the positive discrimination principle. Between 1998 and 2002, approximately 800 Roma students were enrolled as a result of affirmative action in higher education.<sup>60</sup> For the school year 2005/2006, 398 places in tertiary education have been granted for Roma candidates.<sup>61</sup> Affirmative action grants places for Roma students in high schools and vocational education, based on the Ministry of Education and Research's Decree 5083 of November 26, 1998, as well as other decrees. For example, in 2002, there were 1,350 places in high schools and vocational schools allocated for Roma children, and in 2003 there were 3,000 such places. In 2004-2005, approximately 2,500 Roma students had been admitted.
- ⇒ The necessary infrastructure was created on the level of 42 county school inspectorates by appointing an inspector with responsibilities related to education for Roma.
- ⇒ A Roma teaching staff was formed by involving young Roma high school graduates in the education system.
- ⇒ School working instruments (programmes and manuals) were elaborated with the involvement of Roma teaching staff.
- ⇒ The process of teaching the Romanes language in school was strengthened and the network of Roma language teachers was consolidated.
- ⇒ A programme called "Food in Kindergartens and Schools," was initiated. It aims to provide a symbolic meal for all children, Roma and non-Roma, in kindergartens and schools, at least through grade four.

<sup>60</sup> Open Society Institute (2002): *Minority Protection in Romania, EU Accession Monitoring Program*, p. 502. Retrieved on March 6, 2006 at the address: [http://www.eumap.org/topics/minority/reports/minority02/international/sections/romania/2002\\_m\\_romania.pdf](http://www.eumap.org/topics/minority/reports/minority02/international/sections/romania/2002_m_romania.pdf).

<sup>61</sup> Information from the Ministry of Education and Research website. Retrieved on March 6, 2006 at the address: <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/c220/>.

The Ministry of Education and Research also developed several programmes that benefit Roma in partnership with certain NGOs and governmental and intergovernmental organisations, such as UNICEF, CEDU 2000+, Save the Children, the Intercultural Institute Timișoara, CRCR Cluj Napoca, Romani CRISS, Press Monitoring Agency, Caritas Satu Mare, etc.

## Donor Funding: In-Country Programmes

With the adoption of the Government’s Strategy for the Improvement of the Situation of Roma, a new period began. For the first time, government funds were allocated for programmes directly targeted to assist the Roma population. The best examples of such spending are the programmes developed jointly with the EU Commission, the most important donor in this field.

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Table 9: EU and the Romanian Government contribution to programmes relevant for Roma population (2001-2004)<sup>62</sup>

Year of Budget allocation	Programme	EU contribution	Romanian Government contribution
2001	Phare – Access to education for disadvantaged groups, with a special focus on Roma	€7,000,000	€1,330,000
2002	Phare – Support for the National Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Situation	€6,000,000	€1,600,000
2003	Phare – Access to education for disadvantaged groups	€9,000,000	€2,300,000
2004	Phare – Acceleration of the implementation of the national strategy for the improvement of the Roma situation	€8,500,000	€1,000,000

Source UNDP.

EU Phare programmes had the general objective to support the implementation of the MER strategy to improve access to education for disadvantaged groups and to promote inclusive education for all, with a special focus on Roma and students with special educational needs, in order to fight the social exclusion and marginalization and to promote human rights and equal opportunities.

In the period of 2002-2004, the Romanian Ministry of Education developed a Phare programme “Access to education for disadvantaged groups, with a special focus on Roma” which is a multi-annual programme started with Phare 2001 and will continue until 2009 when Phare 2006 funding will come to an end). Overall the budget planned is 35 million Euro.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*



In PHARE 2001 ten counties were included in this project, which served 74 school units (including kindergartens). In 2001, the programme was financed by the European Union with EUR 7 million and by the Romanian government with EUR 1.33 million. The objectives of the programme were: raising the enrolment rate in kindergartens and raising the quality of pre-school education; stimulating children to finish compulsory basic education and to avoid early drop outs; and introducing second-chance education for persons who interrupted their compulsory education

For the year 2003-2004, the Ministry of Education and Research mentioned the following positive results:

- ⇒ Enrolment of Roma children in kindergarten programmes increased by 28 percent.
- ⇒ Attendance in kindergarten improved substantially: From more than 1,600 children enrolled in the reporting year, only five dropped out.
- ⇒ School enrolment of Roma children improved by 11 percent.
- ⇒ Drop out from primary education was halved.
- ⇒ In lower secondary education (grades five to eight), the drop-out rate was reduced from 9.9 percent to 8.5 percent.
- ⇒ A total of 335 young Roma re-entered school, due to “second chance” programmes, and only 50 of them left during the programme.
- ⇒ 74 Roma were trained as school mediators.

Taking into consideration the results of both programmes, the European Commission approved the implementation of the PHARE programme 2003/005-551.01.02 „Access to education for disadvantaged groups” with a budget of 11.33 millions Euros (9 millions from EU and 2.33 millions from Romanian Government). Thus, beginning with 2005, this programme was extended to another 12 new counties and continued in three of the “old counties,” with a new component promoting inclusive education and desegregation. For the first time, one of the priorities of this programme is school desegregation, while the other one is involvement of parents in school life.

Through this programme MER envisaged the extension of the mechanisms already created by PHARE 2001, redefining the target group by defining the education areas and priority interventions based on the socio-economic, cultural and educational criteria's. Also, it extended the area of activities by including components dealing with desegregation, integration of the children with special educational needs in the mainstream school, resource centers for inclusive education and the programme “Second Chance” for primary education as well. Beginning in 2006 the programme was extended to the whole country through a multi-annual framework.<sup>63</sup>

In May 2006, a new agreement was signed between the Romanian Government and the World Bank, to finance a programme for social inclusion with a special focus on the Roma population. In line with the Joint Inclusion Memorandum and the Action Plan, developed within the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the loan aims to support the following priorities:

- ⇒ Improving living conditions in poor settlements with a Roma population.
- ⇒ Increasing the participation of children from vulnerable groups in early childhood education programmes.
- ⇒ Offering programmes for people with disabilities.
- ⇒ Creating a programme addressing the fight against domestic violence.
- ⇒ Developing the National Agency for Roma to identify, implement, and monitor projects.

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/c115/>.

These will be implemented in 2006-2011 in a joint programme of the Ministry of labour, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Romanian Social Development Fund and the National Agency for Roma, in partnership with representatives of county councils from the areas where these projects are a priority.

UNICEF supports the preparation of local government strategies and networks to improve access of Roma children to education. It is similarly involved in implementing a number of projects for Roma girls and boys that can be replicated elsewhere.

Furthermore, UNICEF is involved in training Roma and non-Roma teachers working in Roma communities. These teachers are educated in the Romani language about the history and traditions of the Roma communities. In partnership with several NGOs, UNICEF has helped to set up a number of education centers, introducing inter-cultural approaches and gender-friendly educational programmes. UNICEF has also contributed to the editing and printing of many materials used in schools, like the first literacy manual in the Romani language, a trilingual ABC book, a Romanian-Romani dictionary, and audio cassettes containing Roma fairy tales and information about Roma history and traditions.

Save the Children Fund has conducted research in five communities on the situation of Roma children, publishing various materials on multi-cultural education and lobbying for establishment of the institution of the Ombudsman of Children. Many of the projects are focused on pre-school education.

The Open Society Foundation–Romania and the Soros Open Network currently run a programme aimed at improving the very difficult situation of Roma children in Romania by implementing a school development module, facilitating institutional exchange, and stimulating both Roma pupils and parents to get involved in school life. The programme also seeks: to strengthen the educational pillars of organisations that increase Roma girls' access, retention, and achievement in primary school and/or improve the quality of girls' primary school education; and to reduce a number of the barriers that prevent girls from gaining an education.

## 6. REF Programme in Romania

By February 2007 REF had received 35 project proposals from Romania, and thirteen were approved. The total of REF commitments approved in Romania is EUR 2,556,271 and of this amount EUR 645,400 has been disbursed.

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Three of the thirteen projects – run by Equal Chances, Romani Criss, and Amare Romentza – will support the implementation of the new legislative acts on desegregation. The general goal of these projects is to reduce the gap in education outcomes between Roma and non-Roma children through implementation of the activities described in the “Memorandum of Co-operation on ensuring the Roma children and youth’s access to quality education in Romania.” This memorandum specified that the Ministry of Education and Research’s Notification No. 29323/20.04.2004 regarding desegregation should be implemented by the government. These projects also aim at the creation of desegregation models at the local level in Romania. They are more aimed at policy implementation and policy improvement than at new policy development. These projects should contribute to the development of a set of good practices.

REF has recently approved a proposal of the Ministry of Education and Research, which aims to improve the policy framework regarding Roma education – targeting in particular legislative and regulatory changes as well as helping to ensure that legislation is adequately implemented. In spite of the overall excessive degree of policy change in Romanian education, there are still gaps in legislation and policies affecting Roma education. The project will work closely with all already accepted REF financed projects.

The latest project approved in 2007 supports the provision of scholarship for Roma students in secondary education. It will test an approach of combining scholarship with mentoring on the model of successful experiences in Hungary and Macedonia.

Six projects – involving Agency for Community Development, Impreuna, Ruhama Foundation, Equal Chances, Romani Criss, Amare Romentza, and the Siloam Association – are working to increase Roma children’s enrolment in kindergarten and participation in primary school and secondary school.

Four projects, involving Romani Criss, Amare Romantza, Centre for Roma Studies, and Equal Chances, deal also with Roma culture and intercultural education.

Four projects, involving Equal Chances, Resources Center for Roma Communities, Amare Romantza, and Ruhama Foundation, aim to improve the quality of education in schools where Roma children are enrolled, through teacher training, Romani language teacher training, and employment and training of school mediators.

One project, run by the Centre for Roma Studies, aims to modify the national curricula in general education, to introduce topics related to Roma culture and history.

Two projects, involving Agency for Community Development Impreuna and Ruhama Foundation, are working on the improvement of Roma citizens’ abilities and capacities to participate in the decision-making process in all investments and other decisions related to their children’s education that will be made in their communities. One of these projects also will build up strong linkages to leverage EU and World Bank funds for the benefit of Roma NGOs or communities.

In 9 projects, there is strong cooperation between the Roma NGOs involved with government structure.

## *Dialogue with the Authorities*

REF initiated its activities in Romania with a high profile launch event in February, 2006. In order to make our objectives and procedures known to key stakeholders, we organised an event with broad participation representing:

- ⇒ Government institutions dealing with education, social exclusion, and Roma issues.
- ⇒ Civil society organisations, and in particular Roma NGOs, but also the private sector with a philanthropic interest.
- ⇒ Donor community and large multilateral organisations represented in the country.
- ⇒ Press.

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REF relies on a continuous good professional relationship with the Vice Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Romanian Social Development Fund, the National Agency for Roma, and the EU Delegation.

## **Overall Strategic Framework and Levels of Engagement**

Based on the analysis presented in this document, it is clear that improving the outcomes of Roma in the Romanian educational system requires a strategy designed to keep Roma in school by addressing the two interrelated problems of school enrolment and quality of education. There is a strong correlation between the low quality of education for Roma and the high rate of drop out and low rate of enrolment among Roma children. The experience of past and present discrimination of Roma in the educational system also reduces the trust of Roma parents in schools. An overall framework for improving Roma education needs to engage stakeholders at three levels:

- ⇒ Government and national policy makers.
- ⇒ Education authorities, both national and local.
- ⇒ Roma civil society, including NGOs and parents. Table 10 lays out the key instruments and priorities.

This framework is presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Levels of Engagement for Improving Roma Education Outcomes in Romania

Assistance and Support to the Roma Community	Implementation Support to Education Authorities	Policy Development with the Government
<p>1. Supporting Roma parents and community leaders to recognise and engage in key education issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Involve Roma parents in school boards and parent associations.</li> <li>⇒ Detect and act on school-level discrimination.</li> <li>⇒ Raise awareness of importance of enrolment and attendance at all levels.</li> <li>⇒ Increase flow of information on education issues.</li> </ul>	<p>1. Increasing the enrolment of Roma children in education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Increase pre-school enrolment to cover all Roma children.</li> <li>⇒ Expand kindergarten attendance.</li> <li>⇒ Provide affirmative action for kindergarten and pre-school to recognise the needs of disadvantaged families.</li> <li>⇒ Promote second chance education being aware about the danger of creating segregation.</li> </ul>	<p>1. Engaging in the decentralisation process to build local government capacities and commitment to Roma education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Focus on municipal/county educational authorities.</li> <li>⇒ Assist in developing inclusive local/county public education policy development plans.</li> <li>⇒ Link local and school autonomy to enhanced responsibilities.</li> <li>⇒ Monitor financing inequities and ensure per capita financing formula promotes quality Roma education.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Supporting Roma NGOs involved in educational activities to cooperate and strengthen their organizational, networking, and capacity building structures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Identify policy impacts.</li> <li>⇒ strengthen implementation.</li> <li>⇒ Access and use EU funds effectively.</li> <li>⇒ Ensure inclusion of smaller/isolated NGOs.</li> <li>⇒ Ensuring participation of Roma NGOs in the process of decision making.</li> <li>⇒ Ensuring the participation of Roma NGOs in the process of designing, implementation and evaluation of the policies that address Roma people.</li> </ul>	<p>2. Increasing transition rates at critical stages and reducing drop outs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Focus attention of Roma inspectors and mediators.</li> <li>⇒ involve local authorities and school leaders.</li> <li>⇒ Support system for Roma students including preparatory classes, after school activities, etc.</li> <li>⇒ Scholarship support for secondary and tertiary student.</li> <li>⇒ Increase school accountability for achievement.</li> </ul>	<p>2. Reviewing and strengthening legislative framework for Roma education, including de-segregation directive, and ensuring enforcement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ ensure legal framework for desegregation applicable to decentralised environment</li> <li>⇒ appropriate financial mechanisms, linked to the decentralisation process, to ensure incentives for schools to support enrolment and participation of Roma students – through a weighted per-student formula or other measures.</li> <li>⇒ clarifying the legal status and improving employment terms and a better working situation for Roma inspectors and school mediators.</li> </ul>

<p>3 Increasing representation of Roma professionals in education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Clarifying the status and the framework of the Roma school mediator.</li> <li>⇒ Avoiding the parallelism and overlapping responsibilities regarding the involvement of the school mediators, educational facilitators in education policies at the local level.</li> </ul>	<p>3. Increasing attention and focusing on quality improvement in the education system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Focus on desegregation.</li> <li>⇒ Address overrepresentation of Roma in special schools.</li> <li>⇒ Promote inclusion in education, including multicultural curricula, taking into account particular features of minority/Roma culture.</li> <li>⇒ Ensure access to textbooks and other learning aids.</li> <li>⇒ Promote greater openness to the Roma parents and community.</li> </ul> <p>4. Using monitoring and evaluation framework to strengthen policy implementation and coherence and identify responsibilities of local/county authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Involve Roma community.</li> <li>⇒ Ensure that school/local development planning and school/maintainer self-evaluation supports inclusive education.</li> <li>⇒ Ensure effective use of governmental/EU and other funds.</li> <li>⇒ Develop channels for feedback to the national level.</li> </ul>	<p>3. Social policies that will be created as a result of the Structural Funds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ An increased flow of EU funds to Roma communities – measured by resources available to Roma organizations and local authorities in communities with high Roma populations.</li> <li>⇒ Targeting and mainstreaming Roma issues in general and Roma education in particular in the Structural Funds budget plan and in the goals of the strategies related with the SF.</li> <li>⇒ Avoiding the gaps in terms of social exclusion that may be created if the SF will be used wrongly.</li> </ul>
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## Strategic Directions for Future REF Activities

The REF uses a range of instruments to promote its program objectives, including project finance and support, technical assistance, analytical work, and policy dialogue. On the basis of the overall strategic framework for Roma education in Romania, and the background analysis of this document, the REF would allocate its resources for Romania in line with the following priorities:

- ⇒ Scaling up support to pre-school enrolment for Roma children.
- ⇒ Achieving close to universal elementary school enrolment by addressing pre-school enrolment and continued attendance through grade eight by increasing transition rates at critical stages and reducing drop outs.
- ⇒ Strengthening the impact of existing affirmative action at the high school level by strengthening the linkages between the Roma community and elementary and high schools.
- ⇒ Providing scholarships and additional support to Roma secondary students coming from poor families.
- ⇒ Initiating media campaigns and other activities to empower Roma communities and strengthen Roma NGOs on education issues; this would include participation in parent-teacher-student associations.
- ⇒ Supporting awareness campaigns regarding the effects that education segregation and discrimination have on society.

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### *Analytical and Advisory Activities*

- ⇒ Engaging government and other stakeholders in dialogue, to improve the status of Roma inspectors and mediators.
- ⇒ Supporting improved school monitoring, to more accurately reflect the situation of Roma students, with a particular emphasis on enrolment, preventing drop out, achievement, and employability.
- ⇒ Undertake a study for mapping the segregation in Romania
- ⇒ Undertaking a study to quantify fiscal benefits to Romania from improved education outcomes for Roma.
- ⇒ Undertaking or supporting assessment of the outcomes associated with Romania's system of affirmative action at the high school and tertiary levels.
- ⇒ Supporting capacity building related to accessing and managing EU funds.

## Results Framework Anticipated by REF Activities

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

### 1. Legal, financial and administrative changes:

- ⇒ A more coherent legislative framework, as measured by implementation and enforcement of anti-segregation and anti-discrimination measures.



- ⇒ Appropriate financial mechanisms, linked to the decentralisation process, to ensure incentives for schools to support enrolment and participation of Roma students – through a weighted per-student formula or other measures.
  - ⇒ Improved employment terms and a better working situation for Roma inspectors and mediators.
  - ⇒ An increased flow of EU funds to Roma communities – measured by resources available to Roma organizations and local authorities in communities with high Roma populations.
2. Education indicators: Results in this area are expected in the mid-term through improved education outcomes for the Roma. Key indicators for Romania would include:
- ⇒ Increased pre-school enrolment from poor Roma communities.
  - ⇒ Increased Roma enrolment in high school and tertiary schools, with a commensurate increase in volume and amount of scholarship support.
  - ⇒ Increased Roma numbers among the staff in the education system.
3. Improved social cohesion:
- ⇒ Lower rural-urban disparity on TIMSS and lower percentage of variance of the results on PISA explained by the social-economic factors.
  - ⇒ Improved cooperation between schools and the Roma community and NGOs in the educational activities of schools – to be monitored through project reporting.

## Country Monitoring Framework

Monitoring of these expected results will need to be conducted through a matrix of organizations providing a variety of data sources. These include:

- ⇒ The network of Roma NGOs engaged in education matters.
- ⇒ The State Statistical Office.
- ⇒ The databases of the Ministry of Education and Research and other government agencies, as well as data collected by other donors.
- ⇒ The information provided by the evaluation and monitoring processes that are designed and funded by each REF project.

Specific arrangements will be articulated in cooperation with all partners. Given knowledge and data gaps, and the need to develop a well functioning and efficient monitoring system, REF may also consider contracting a professional agency for data collection in missing areas. It could also be beneficial to convene all the actors listed above, to develop a joint comprehensive monitoring system.



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## Annex

AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts		BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN ROMANIA			
	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
<p><b>SCHOOL MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p>The school board of each school consists of nine-to-15 members. It is composed of the principal, deputy directors, one-to-five teachers from the teachers council, one accountant, and municipal officials.</p> <p>The board also includes representatives of the parents' council and the students' council (for students in grades nine through 13).</p> <p>The neighborhood schooling principle dominates. Free choice of a school outside the residential area is possible only if the number of students already registered in the chosen school does not exceed the number specified in the official school plan.</p>	<p>Management is accountable to the school board and municipal and national political leadership.</p> <p>In some schools, parents' and students' councils are quite active, but in many others, they take no part in decision making.</p> <p>The school calls on parents to solve administrative issues, yet it rarely consults with them on education issues.</p> <p>Parent associations exist, but only a few are active.</p>	<p>At the school level, there is a methodological commission, composed of a minimum of four teachers, and a commission for evaluating and ensuring quality, composed of three-to-nine members, including representatives of teachers, parents, and the local council.</p> <p>Mechanisms to ensure quality of school improvement and development, including assessment of the school ethos, are under development.</p> <p>Traditional inspection still dominates. Data on discrimination is not collected regularly.</p>	<p>Equity is generally not seen as an important part of the school ethos, but the Phare program "Access to education for disadvantaged children with a focus on Roma" started a process of promoting an inclusive ethos that includes minority language schools and schools in the school development program.</p> <p>Schools are indirectly motivated to avoid students who would potentially require additional staff time.</p> <p>Roma and low socio-economic-status parents are not selected in school boards and parent councils.</p> <p>The neighborhood schooling principle can encourage segregation.</p> <p>Roma NGOs are active in alerting the National Council against Discrimination</p>	<p>Management is not efficiency-oriented. Instead, a combination of political and personal benefit-oriented managerial skills dominate.</p>	<p>There is a process of decentralization. The legislation is continuously changing.</p> <p>There is a multitude of regulations, several of which are not enforced.</p> <p>Interpretation of regulations call for a legal advisor.</p>

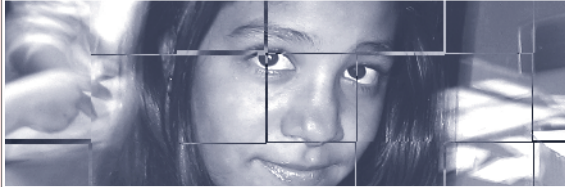
BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN ROMANIA					
AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
<p><b>TEACHERS</b></p> <p>Teachers are required to have a pedagogical degree or university degree, an induction period, and a state exam after one year of practice.</p> <p>Teachers are public servants, and county school inspectorates continue to draw up employment contracts and recruit and dismiss teaching staff.</p> <p>The National Council for Continuing Teacher Training accredits teacher training programs, based on an accreditation methodology focusing on the training curricula.</p>	<p>Teachers are poorly paid, and negative selection takes place.</p> <p>The implementation of the Bologna process has begun in higher education. As a result, many regulations are expected to change.</p> <p>Teacher education – especially the education for subject teachers – does not provide enough of the skills needed for child-centered and participatory approaches.</p> <p>Additional training of teachers is rather rare, and the accreditation procedure is standardized and bureaucratic. There are not many training programs addressing the competencies needed for teaching in multicultural classrooms.</p> <p>A participatory approach towards students and parents is not required from teachers, and they seldom practice it.</p>	<p>Teacher training provision is diversified. Accreditation procedures are standardized and conducted by the National Council for Continuing Teacher Training.</p> <p>There are no official, organized inspections of the efficiency or effectiveness of the training courses and no follow-up school visits.</p>	<p>There is a lack of qualified teachers for minority education and for rural schools.</p> <p>There is no provision in pre-service teacher education for diversity issues.</p> <p>A systemic teacher training program is obligatory for teachers who are supposed to teach the Romanes language or the history and tradition of the Roma population.</p> <p>A significant number of staff who can teach in the Romanes language has been trained. According to official data, in 2002/2003, the total number of persons teaching in the Romanes language was 257. Still, there is insufficient employment of Romanes language teachers, and most of them are employed as a non-teaching staff.</p> <p>Teachers who discriminate against children are neither identified nor punished.</p>	<p>Subject teachers lack basic teaching skills and assessment skills. Teaching is not efficient and not motivating.</p> <p>Additional training is only given to individual teachers, instead of several teachers or a school's whole staff. One teacher is not able to change the attitude of a school.</p>	<p>Education and selection are regulated through several rulebooks. The system is confusing and inconsistent, and it is also open to manipulation and misuse.</p> <p>Qualification (licensing) and in-service training are subject to new regulations, but these are not yet implemented.</p>

<b>BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN ROMANIA</b>	
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<b>Equity</b>	<b>Efficiency</b>
<b>Regulation</b>	
<p><b>CURRICULUM</b></p> <p>At the national level, the National Council for the Curriculum (NCC) is responsible for drawing up, developing, applying, and revising the national curriculum.</p> <p>The curriculum design allows for flexibility.</p> <p>Extracurricular activities are rare.</p> <p>The Romanes language and Roma culture is taught in 135 schools, including primary schools, and lower and upper secondary schools.</p> <p>Skills like active citizenship, democratic participation, and discussion of human rights and tolerance are not included in the curriculum.</p>	<p>The curricula are content-based instead of being outcome-based. No standards have been developed yet, but development is under way.</p>
<p>Mastering the curriculum requires parent engagement, a situation that discriminates against less-educated parents.</p> <p>The participation of minorities in Romania's history and culture is not part of the school curriculum.</p> <p>Equity as such is not a fundamental issue of the curricula. The flexibility of the curricula has negative effects on the education of Roma at least in two respects: There is no tracking of the effectiveness of various curricula, and the development of a school-based and outcome-oriented curriculum approach was recently stopped.</p>	<p>The curricula are overburdened with facts, and they lack relevance for real-life situations.</p> <p>There is a low rate of retention of knowledge gained.</p>
<p>The curricula are over-regulated by a very specific national curriculum, which spells out a detailed syllabus by grade and by subject.</p> <p>No national evaluation standards are set for the school-based curriculum.</p>	

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<p><b>TEXTBOOKS</b></p> <p>Textbooks cover all subjects, apart from subjects developed in the school-based curriculum.</p>	<p>There is a liberalized textbook market and freedom of choice at the school level.</p> <p>Textbooks are written from the majority perspective, and they often contain stereotypes.</p>	<p>Standards for textbook quality include a general requirement regarding stereotypes, but the criteria are not clearly explained.</p> <p>Roma are only mentioned in textbooks by accident.</p>	<p>Textbooks are requested by the school, and they are offered free of charge to students in compulsory education.</p> <p>In rural areas, the variety of textbooks is low, and sometimes textbooks are not available for all students.</p>	<p>The efficiency of textbooks varies.</p>	<p>Textbook provision is de-regulated and market-based.</p> <p>There are no regulations ensuring systemic textbook provision to all students, or to those in need.</p>
<p><b>ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION</b></p> <p>Current evaluation of pupils and national evaluation.</p> <p>New assessment and evaluation types are being developed</p>	<p>There is no transparency of evaluations—except for entrance exams. There is no official accountability to parents or the community.</p> <p>Formative assessment was started but abolished.</p>	<p>An external examination system has been planned, but not yet set up. Only research studies and the results of the international TIMSS exams are available.</p> <p>No national evaluation standards are set for the school-based curriculum.</p>	<p>Private tutoring is an important part of education, and this situation discriminates against students from a low socio-economic background.</p>	<p>Current evaluation is not objective.</p> <p>Students with good grades from rural schools are often not on the same level as students from urban schools.</p>	<p>Evaluation is regulated only on the level of systemic legislation.</p> <p>There are still no rulebooks for implementation of new assessments.</p>

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<p><b>FINANCES</b></p> <p>Public education is financed from the state and local budgets.</p> <p>Salaries are based on the number of eligible teachers in each school. They are calculated based on the number of eligible classes and program requirements.</p> <p>Finances are in the process of decentralization. In the planned system, per-student and complementary funding would come from the local budget, based on a funding calendar established by each educational unit.</p>	<p>There is non-transparent decision making and a systematic financial marginalization of schools catering to Roma children.</p> <p>Uniform finances are used: there is no formula favoring diversity, openness, developmental programs, minority education, etc.</p> <p>School development grants are available through a World Bank program supporting mainstream schools for inclusive education projects.</p>	<p>There is no transparency of finances yet. A new Education Management Information System ensuring transparency is under development.</p> <p>In theory, the allowance for each county, municipality, educational unit or institution is calculated at the national level—on the basis of the number of children served, their educational level and specificity, and other educational indicators, especially the ones referring to the quality of education.</p>	<p>Schools in low-income municipalities are struggling with basic maintenance financing.</p> <p>The distribution of funds for Roma education is poorly oriented, and a big part of the budgets is for project administrative costs.</p> <p>Financing for special schools is unduly favorable.</p>	<p>Teacher rationalization is being considered as a means to ensure higher efficiency, but no concept has been developed yet.</p>	<p>There is a lack of clear regulations.</p> <p>Eligible School finances are calculated and approved yearly by regional authorities.</p>





## 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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