



Roma Education Fund

# ROMA EDUCATION FUND

Country Assessment

**ROMANIA**



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# PREFACE

This document is part of a series of Country Assessments produced by the Roma Education Fund (REF). It seeks to provide an analysis of education and the ongoing education reforms from the perspective of the inclusion of Romani children in the countries taking part in the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The document also reviews the different programs and activities REF has carried out since its establishment in 2005 and highlights the thematic and program areas on which REF plans to focus during the coming three years. In addition to serving as a tool for the Roma Education Fund's own programming, REF hopes that this document will offer a useful instrument for:

- Policymakers 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 programs by making them more relevant to the overall education reform of their country.
- The overall development and donor community, which needs to better understand the situation faced by Romani children in order to identify niche areas where available resources would produce the greatest impact.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The original model for the Country Assessment series was developed by Tünde Kovács-Cerović, Roger Grawe, and Alexandre Marc, who also edited the series through the end of 2007. The current Country Assessment follows the new format developed by Toby Linden, Mihai Surdu, and Eben Friedman in early 2009. The current editor of the Country Assessment series is Mihai Surdu.

The main authors of this document are Laura Surdu and Marius Wamsiedel. They received contributions from Tom Bass, Eben Friedman, and Šemsi Šainov, as well as from the participants at the roundtable held in Bucharest on June 14, 2011.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## ROMA IN ROMANIA

Conducted in 2002, the last census for which complete data are available indicates a Romani population of 535,250 persons (2.5 percent of the total population of the country), making it the second largest ethnic minority in Romania. Unofficial estimates made by independent researchers place the Romani population in Romania somewhere between 1.4 and 2.8 million persons. Roma represent the majority ethnic majority in 67 localities, but most Roma live in localities where their proportion is lower than 10 percent.

## EDUCATION

Recent years have seen the Ministry of Education demonstrate a commitment to improving the education of Roma through the introduction of compulsory preschool education in the year before entry to primary school, support for desegregation, promotion of intercultural curricula, and affirmative action measures and financial incentives to increase Roma's participation in upper-secondary and tertiary education.

The most pressing problems for the education of Roma in Romania are limited access to education in early childhood and persistent school segregation on the basis of ethnicity. Also problematic is the absence of coherence among initiatives aimed at increasing Roma's participation in education, with the lack of official data on Roma's participation in education posing an additional barrier to reducing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

REF funding in Romania over the next two years will reflect the following priorities:

- Increasing the access of Romani children to quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) in general and preschool education in particular, drawing on lessons learned from projects supported to date and from the EU multi-country pilot project "A Good Start."
- Supporting existing desegregation efforts through activities that have a proven impact in preventing and/or diminishing segregation, including but not necessarily limited to coalition building, policy advocacy, knowledge sharing and technical assistance.
- Promoting grassroots efforts to improve the quality of education received by Romani children by providing pilot grants to small NGOs and parents' associations able to apply empirical knowledge generated by research conducted by REF and other relevant stakeholders.
- Supporting the channeling European Social Fund resources to Romani children education via the Roma Education Fund Romania.

Major themes of REF's research and policy activities in Romania will include:

- A study teacher Absenteeism in Romani and non-Romani Schools.
- A set of practically oriented publications on ECEC services for Roma.

Developmental priorities of the REF Scholarship Programs in Romania will include:

- Increasing the number of RMUSP scholars.
- Beneficiary networking.
- Promoting scholar participation in other REF activities.







# THE ROMANI POPULATION IN ROMANIA

## HISTORY AND POPULATION SIZE

Conducted in 2002, the last census for which complete data are available indicates a Romani population of 535,250 persons (2.5 percent of the total population of the country), making it the second largest ethnic minority in Romania.<sup>1</sup> The Romani language is the mother tongue of 237,570 persons (1.09 percent of the total population).<sup>2</sup> Nearly eighty-two percent of Roma in Romania declare themselves as Christian Orthodox; the second important religious affiliation is to evangelical Christian denominations. Roma represent the ethnic majority in 67 localities,<sup>3</sup> but most Roma live in localities where their proportion is lower than 10 percent.<sup>4</sup>

The census information of the ethnic composition of the population is highly questionable and is regarded with reluctance by academics, activists, and politicians. For several reasons, including remembrance of historical persecutions and fear of being stigmatized,<sup>5</sup> many persons of Romani origin are reluctant to disclose their ethnicity to the census takers.<sup>6</sup> As a result, Roma are severely underrepresented in the official data. Unofficial estimates made by independent researchers place the Romani population in Romania somewhere between 1.4 and 2.8 million persons. The most recent census took place in October 2011, but data disaggregated by ethnicity was not available at the moment of writing this report.

<sup>1</sup> Hungarians represent the largest ethnic minority (6.6 percent of the population).

<sup>2</sup> Romanian was identified as mother tongue by 275,466 self-identified Roma, whereas 23,950 Roma declared Hungarian as their mother tongue.

<sup>3</sup> Most of them (10) in Mures County. Mures is also the county with the highest proportion of Roma (7 percent), followed by Calarasi (5.7 percent), Salaj (5.1 percent), Bihor (5 percent), Dolj (4.3 percent), Ialomita (4.1 percent), and Sibiu (4.1 percent).

<sup>4</sup> Tamas Kiss and Ilka Veress, *Minorități din România: Dinamici demografice și identitare* [Minorities in Romania: Demographic and identity dynamics] (Cluj-Napoca: Institutul pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2010), p. 52.

<sup>5</sup> A new law proposal of changing the denomination of *Roma* to that of *Țigan* was rejected in February 2011 by the Senate Chamber of the Romanian Parliament.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Pierre Liégeois, *Romii în Europa* [Roma in Europe] (Bucharest: *Monitorul Oficial*, 2008), p. 25; Jeremy Druker, "Present but Unaccounted For," *Transitions* 4.4 (1997), p. 22; Gabor Fleck and Cosima Rughiniș *Vino mai aproape: incluziunea și excluziunea romilor în societatea românească de astăzi* [Come closer: Inclusion and exclusion of Roma in Present-Day Romanian Society] (Bucharest: Human Dynamics, 2008), p. 9.

## GENERAL SITUATION OF THE ROMANI POPULATION

### Poverty and unemployment

Of any ethnic group, Roma are most affected by unemployment and poverty. Census data indicate that 28.5 percent of the active working-age Romani population was unemployed (as compared to 11.5 percent for the majority population). Unofficial estimates consider Romani unemployment to be considerably higher.<sup>7</sup> The 2002 report of the Commission on Antipoverty and for Promoting Social Inclusion (CASPIIS) considers the poverty rate to be 75.1 percent for Roma and 24.4 percent for the majority, with a severe poverty rate of 52.2 percent for Roma and 9.2 percent for the majority.

Romani unemployment is a quite recent phenomenon. During the socialist regime, state policy was directed towards full employment and job security; after 1970, persons refusing to join the workforce faced the risk of prison or forced labor.<sup>8</sup> In that context, most Roma abandoned self-employment and lucrative informal activities and became employees in industry and agriculture. The restructuring of the economy in the first years of post-socialist transition led to a reconfiguration of the labor market, with many Roma losing their jobs.

According to the Decade Watch 2010 report,<sup>9</sup> in 2009 only 22.9 percent of Roma in Romania were economically active, 71.5 percent of them being involved in informal economic activities, which generally offer low wages and scant job security.<sup>10</sup> Authorities developed a set of measures to increase Roma's access to the labor market—including Romani job fairs and training projects for unemployed Roma—but their success is limited. Several factors continue to account for the difficult occupational integration of Roma in Romania: discrimination on the labor market; localization of Romani communities in isolated settings that are remote from areas of economic development; and the tendency of local authorities to employ Romani persons only in low-skilled jobs, such as street cleaners or park cleaners.<sup>11</sup>

It is worth adding here that most research has not considered those Roma who are fully included in Romanian society and have a mainstream socio-economic status. Taking into account this segment of the population could result in a somewhat different poverty profile.

<sup>7</sup> European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), *The Social Situation of the Roma and Their Improved Access to the Labour Market in the EU* (Brussels: European Parliament, 2008), p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> Dena Ringold, *Roma and the Transition in Central and Eastern Europe: Trends and Challenges*. (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2000), p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Roma Civic Alliance of Romania, *Decade Watch Romania Report: Mid-Term Evaluation of the Decade of Roma Inclusion* (Bucharest: Roma Civic Alliance of Romania, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> See: Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale, *The Social Situation of the Roma and Their Improved Access to the Labour Market in the EU* (Brussels: European Parliament, 2008), pp. 28–29.

<sup>11</sup> Gabor Fleck and Cosima Rughiniş, *Vino mai aproape: incluziunea și excluziunea romilor în societatea românească de astăzi* [Come closer: Inclusion and exclusion of Roma in present-day Romanian society] (Bucharest: Human Dynamics, 2008), pp. 127–129.

## Health

The Romani population in Romania is younger than the majority population, has higher fertility and mortality rates, and a lower life expectancy at birth.<sup>12</sup> There is no ethnic-specific pathology for the Romani population, but the incidence of respiratory diseases is higher than in the majority population. Inadequate nutrition and insufficient physical activities have been identified as major risk factors for Roma. Another major problem is the low rate of children immunization.<sup>13</sup> Recent studies have pointed out the various factors limiting Roma's access to health services: lack of identity papers; lack of medical insurance due to irregular employment; limited information on patient rights, possibilities of treatment, and importance of child vaccination; the practice of informal payments to medical service providers; the distance between the medical unit and the community; and overt or hidden ethnic discrimination.<sup>14</sup>

An important initiative designed to increase Roma's access to healthcare was the introduction of the health mediation system in 2002. The health mediators, persons from Romani communities who have received intensive training, are appointed to work as liaisons between the medical providers and the members of the community. 690 persons, most of them women, have been trained since the beginning of the program. Currently, approximately 400 mediators are employed. There is no comprehensive evaluation of the health mediation system after the transfer of mediators to the authority of local governments in 2010, but some changes in jobs have been reported.

## Housing

Romani persons face severe housing problems, including poor housing conditions, residential segregation, and lack of ownership. A study conducted in 2007 indicates that Romani dwellings in both rural and urban areas have lower access to gas, sewage, tap water, and electricity than non-Roma, and are more heavily populated.<sup>15</sup> Other research pointed out that more than one-fifth (more specifically 21 percent) of Roma do not own their home, as compared to only three percent of non-Roma.<sup>16</sup> The absence of legal ownership

<sup>12</sup> Tamas Kiss and Ilka Veress, *Minorități din România: Dinamici demografice și identitare* [Minorities in Romania: Demographic and identity dynamics] (Cluj-Napoca: Institutul pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2010), p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> Marius Wamsiedel et al., *Sănătate și comunitatea romă: Analiză asupra situației din România* [Health and the Romani community: Analysis of the situation in Romania] (Madrid: Fundación Secretariado Gitano, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Gabor Fleck and Cosima Rughiniș, *Vino mai aproape: incluziunea și excluziunea romilor în societatea românească de astăzi* [Come closer: Inclusion and exclusion of Roma in present-day Romanian society] (Bucharest: Human Dynamics, 2008); Marius Wamsiedel et al., *Sănătate și comunitatea romă: Analiză asupra situației din România* [Health and the Romani community: Analysis of the situation in Romania] (Madrid: Fundación Secretariado Gitano, 2009); Livia Popescu, Cristina Rat, and Adina Rebeleanu, *Nu se face discriminare!... doar accesul este inegal: Dificultăți în utilizarea serviciilor de sănătate de către populația romă din România* [There is no discrimination! Only the access is unequal: Difficulties of the Romani population in accessing health services in Romania] (Cluj-Napoca: Institutul pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Gabriel Bădescu et al., *Barometrul Incluziunii Romilor* [Roma inclusion barometer] (Bucharest: Open Society Foundation, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale, *The Social Situation of the Roma and Their Improved Access to the Labour Market in the EU* (Brussels: European Parliament, 2008), p. 30.

makes Roma vulnerable to forced evictions and residential segregation. Although no exact data is available on segregation, researchers consider it to be a rule rather than an exception.<sup>17</sup>

### Representation

The National Agency for Roma (NAR) is the official government institution in charge of Romani affairs. 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 Roma Population's Condition. NAR is funded from the state budget. The maximum staff of the institution is limited to 31 persons, out of whom 10 employees work in the Agency's seven regional offices. Each year, the Agency publishes an activity report as well as financial information, particularly the wage structure.

The only Romani political organization running in all post-socialist elections is the Roma Party.<sup>18</sup> Other organizations competed in only one or two elections, had a local or regional character, and obtained modest results.<sup>19</sup> As the Romani organization with the highest number of votes, the Roma Party had one representative elected in the Chamber of Deputies in all legislatures since 1990. So far, no candidate of Romani parties has been elected to the Senate.

The Roma Party also managed to secure 189 seats in local councils in 2004 and 202 seats (out of 40,299) in 2008. That year, it also obtained absolute majorities in two local councils (Brahatesti, Galati and Berbulesti, Ialomita). In 2008, the Alliance for Romani Unity also gained four local councilor seats. However, the aggregated scores of the two political organizations never passed 0.75 percent of the total votes.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Ina Zoon, *On the Margins, Roma and Public Services in Romania, Bulgaria and Macedonia* (New York: Open Society Institute 2001), p. 123, cited in European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers: Romania* (Vienna: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2009), p. 35.

<sup>18</sup> This party has been registered under various names for different elections: Democratic Union of Roma in Romania (1990); the Roma Party (1992, 1996, 2000); the Romanian Social Democratic Roma Party (2004); and Pro-Europe Roma Party (2008).

<sup>19</sup> István Gergő Székely, *The Political Representation of Minorities in Romania* (Cluj-Napoca: Institutul pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> István Gergő Székely, *The Representation of the National Minorities in the Local Councils: An Evaluation of Romanian Electoral Legislation in Light of the Results of the 2004 and 2008 Local Elections*. (Cluj-Napoca: Institutul pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2008).

# GOVERNMENT AND DONOR COMMITMENTS

## GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

### Overall legal framework

Romania has ratified practically all the 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<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> The 2002 Labor Code also prohibits discrimination on all these grounds, as well as banning discrimination on the basis of age. The 2003 National Collective Agreement<sup>23</sup> 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. An anti-discrimination law<sup>24</sup> was adopted in the Parliament in 2006 in an effort to comply to the requirements of the EU anti-discrimination directive. However, through a letter addressing Romanian Parliament, in February 2011 the members of the Anti-discrimination Coalition, a coalition of NGOs including Romani NGOs such as Romani CRISS and ACRR (*Roma Civic Alliance from Romania*) contested that Romanian anti-discrimination law adequately transposes the EU Race Directive.

<sup>21</sup> Official Monitor, Ordonanța nr. 137/2000 privind prevenirea și sancționarea tuturor formelor de discriminare [Decree No. 137/2000 for the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination], *Monitorul Oficial al României* 431/2000.

<sup>22</sup> Legea nr. 48/2002 pentru aprobarea Ordonanței Guvernului nr. 137/2000 privind prevenirea și sancționarea tuturor formelor de discriminare [Law 48/2002 for approving Decree No. 137/2000 for the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination], *Monitorul Oficial al României* 69/2002.

<sup>23</sup> Legea nr. 53, Codul Muncii [Law No.53, Labor Code], *Monitorul Oficial al României* 72 /2003.

<sup>24</sup> Legea nr. 324 /2006 pentru modificarea și completarea Ordonanței Guvernului nr. 137/2000 privind prevenirea și sancționarea tuturor formelor de discriminare [Law No. 324/2006 for modification and completion of Decree No. 137/2000 for the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination], *Monitorul Oficial al României* 626/2006.

The legislation regulating education lacks direct language forbidding discrimination against Roma in education. 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. By means of order 1540/19.07.2007<sup>25</sup>, the Ministry of Education, Research, and Youth prohibits, beginning with the academic year 2007–2008, the formation of school segregated classes during the beginning of first grade and again at the beginning of fifth grade (classes with majority of Romani pupils or only with Romani pupils).<sup>26</sup>

## MEASURES TARGETING ROMA

### The Decade of Roma Inclusion

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. The National Agency for Roma drafted in 2007 the national action plans for the Decade, plans including the field of education. These plans adapted the plans drafted in the 2001 Strategy for Improving the Situation of Roma, a strategy elaborated by the government before the launch of the Decade. However, the national action plans for the Decade in Romania were never adopted and financed.

The National Action Plan on Education has five major objectives: increasing Romani participation in preschool education; encouraging Romani participation to primary and secondary education (grades one to twelve); encouraging Romani participation to tertiary education; developing an inclusive educational environment; and preserving Romani cultural heritage. The concrete measures proposed for achieving the aforementioned objectives included: priority enrollment of Romani children, upon parental request, in early education units (crèches, kindergartens, and daycare centers); development of intensive preparatory courses (summer kindergartens) for Romani children about to enroll in primary school who did not pursue preschool education; adapting educational curricula to the specific of Romani communities; financial support for Romani children with a poor economic situation; development of "Second Chance" programs for Romani youth who dropped out of school; providing school supplies and sport equipment to Romani children whose parents have low incomes; maintaining affirmative action measures for admission of Romani children in universities; and organizing contests and festivals for promoting Romani traditions and values. Nonetheless, the plan has not been translated into a coherent set of measures aiming to improve the education situation of

<sup>25</sup> Ordinul 1540/2007 privind interzicerea segregării școlare a copiilor romi și aprobarea Metodologiei pentru prevenirea și eliminarea segregării școlare a copiilor romi [Order 1540/2007 for the prohibition of the school segregation of Roma children and methodology for the prevention and elimination of school segregation of Roma children]. *Monitorul Oficial al României* 692/2007.

<sup>26</sup> The idea was to prevent the segregation of Romani children in first and fifth grades because grades one and five are important moments when classes are formed, either at the primary or secondary school level. They will be mixed with children from other schools, whereby a few classes of fifth grade are taught in the same school, with a majority of Roma children confined to one classroom.



Roma, with a lack of coordination between different strategies and governmental plans and among the main stakeholders and relevant governmental agencies often hampering action.

### Desegregation and diversity into the school curriculum

The first measure to address desegregation of Roma in the educational system was taken in 2004 by the Ministry of Education through Notification No. 29323/2004 which prohibited the establishment of kindergarten groups and primary and secondary school classes composed exclusively or mainly of Romani children or pupils. In 2007 the Romanian Ministry of Education issued Decree 1540/19.07.2007 through which, starting with the academic year 2007–2008, the establishment of segregated classes in grades one and five was explicitly prohibited.

Desegregation initiatives have been initiated in the framework of the PHARE project “Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups, with a Special Focus on Roma.” There is controversy about the effects of the legislation and of the PHARE programs on reducing the educational segregation of Roma. However, despite the regulations of the ministry of education and of PHARE intervention, a monitoring report from 2008 of Romani CRISS on 90 schools finds that 67 percent of these schools presented cases of segregation.<sup>27</sup> Among the causes of the inefficiency of the anti-segregation legislation, the report highlights the weak dissemination of the decree in schools, the absence of monitoring mechanisms, and the lack of sanctions for the school managers failing to comply with legislation. Moreover, a study from 2010 found that most of the Romani parents (76.5 percent on a representative sample) did not know about the 2007 decree prohibiting the educational segregation of Roma.<sup>28</sup> The findings of another research report based on an availability sample of 100 schools identified 16 school cases of residential segregation and 15 cases of segregation attributable to administrative decisions or the lack thereof rather than to residence patterns.<sup>29</sup> A 2010 notification by the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport (MECTS) reports that school units are signaling segregation tendencies, and in accordance with previous legislation call upon the school inspectorates to reinforce previous anti-segregation legislation.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, this new notification acknowledges segregation in preschool and highlights that those Romani preschool and school pupils who enroll at a later date due to family, work, or migration issues should not be placed in segregated groups, classes, or school buildings. The Ministry of Education intends to introduce committees on preventing and combating discrimination in each school; one responsibility of the committee is monitoring the implementation of desegregation plans in the respective

<sup>27</sup> Laura Surdu, *Monitorizarea aplicării măsurilor împotriva segregării școlare în România* [Monitoring the application of measures against school segregation in Romania]. (Bucharest: Romani Criss and UNICEF, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Laura Surdu, Enikő Vincze, and Marius Wamsiedel, *Participare, absenteism școlar și experiența discriminării în cazul romilor din România* [Roma school participation, non-attendance and discrimination in Romania] (Bucharest: Romani CRISS and UNICEF, Vanemonde 2011).

<sup>29</sup> Gelu Duminiță and Ana Ivăsiuc, *O școală pentru toți? Accesul copiilor romi la o educație de calitate* [A school for all? The access of Romani children to quality education]. (Bucharest: Vanemonde, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> Notification 28463/2010, Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport (MECTS).

<sup>31</sup> Press Release of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport: “Oana Badea: ‘Fiecare unitate de învățământ va avea o comisie pentru combaterea și prevenirea discriminării’” [Each school unit will have a commission for prevent and combat discrimination]. Available online: <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/pressrel/15303>





school.<sup>31</sup> Currently, the desegregation process is led by NGOs and there are no evaluations yet about the implementation of desegregation programs financed by EU financial resources.

#### **Romani culture and language and Romani school inspectors**

Beginning with the 2001 strategy of the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport (MECTS), governmental priorities on the education of Roma are focused on developing a network of Romani school inspectors and introducing the study of Romani language and history into school curricula and practice. To this end, the Department of Romani-language Education within the Ministry coordinates the work of the Romani school inspectors in Romania's 42 counties. Among the activities of the department are the following:

- Presenting measures by which MECTS and educational institutions will promote Romani teachers to administrative positions (school directors and school inspectors);
- Presenting, together with the NGOs and the Romani communities, programs to train and improve school mediators perfecting and train teaching staff in intercultural education;
- Presentation of measures to introduce Romani language and history classes as an elective in educational institutions; and
- Presenting an annual plan of action for intercultural education in schools, facilitating communication among different ethnicities, and fostering tolerance.<sup>32</sup>

#### **Affirmative action for Roma in high schools, vocational schools, and universities**

In 1992, upon the initiative of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work of the University of Bucharest, the first reserved places were allocated to Romani candidates in the specialization for social workers. In 1998, the Ministry of Education adopted the first official regulations to reserve special places for Romani candidates in seven universities. Starting in 1998, the affirmative action for Roma expanded at the level of the entire secondary and higher education system.<sup>33</sup> According to a REF-Gallup study during 2000–2006, approximately 10,300 students enrolled in secondary and vocational education in special places for Romani people, and approximately 1,420 students benefited from these places in universities. The study finds that the affirmative action policy is rather weak in targeting those pupils/students who are Romani-language speakers. The study remarks on, among other recommendations, better targeting for rural areas and compact, homogenous Romani communities and for creating synergies with the existing scholarships programs. Research conducted by Gallup Romania and REF found that the highest rate (13 percent) of non-Roma benefiting from special places for Roma is in high school.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Public Information, "Master Plan of Measures for Applying the Strategy of Improving the Roma Condition." Available online: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UNTC/UNPAN016041.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Mihai Surdu and Judit Szira (coordinators), *Analysis of the Impact of Affirmative Action for Roma in High Schools, Vocational Schools and Universities* (Budapest: Roma Education Fund, 2009).

According to government officials in the National Agency for Roma attending the national roundtable discussions, the Agency also proposed to the Ministry of Education to grant affirmative action places for Roma at the post-university level.

### School mediators

The idea of school mediators for Romani communities started as an early initiative of the Ministry of Education together with the PHARE program in 2001 to train 70 Romani school mediators. Since then, the Ministry of Education has extended this initiative with financial support from PHARE and UNICEF. Beginning in 2003 more than 600 school mediators were trained, so that by 2009 the Ministry estimated that more than 400 school mediators were employed in the school system.<sup>35</sup> The role of the school mediator is to connect and assist in the process of communication between the school and parents and to facilitate school enrollment and attendance of children from vulnerable groups.

The employment of school mediators proved to be difficult in the absence of external funding. A notification of the Romanian Ministry of Education from 2010 is asking school inspectorates to maintain the jobs of the school mediators, committed as a financial contribution by local authorities as part as their contribution to the PHARE project.<sup>36</sup> The school mediators' policy lacks a clear mechanism of sustainability. This fact is due to current legislation which leaves the duty of employing school mediator both to the school unit and County Centers of Resources and Educational Assistance. This shared responsibility is contributing in practice, in some cases, to the unemployment of the school mediators in which the two institutions fail to assume the employment duty and consequently the payment of the salary of the school mediators. The jobs for school mediators created through PHARE programs were not maintained in some cases after the end of the programs. The magnitude of the problem is unknown.

## DONOR-FUNDED PROGRAMS

The education of Roma is a priority for the Romanian government and the European Union (EU) (pre-accession and structural funds), as well as for donors, including foreign governments, international organizations working in the fields of human rights and development (UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP, ILO, OSCE, WB), international and national foundations, and charitable or non-profit organizations, a prominent one being Open Society Foundations. Center Education 2000+ implemented various educational projects that included Roma and was an active organization in the field of research and policy dialogue for the education of Roma.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport, "Ministerul Educației a reluat cursurile de formare a mediatorilor școlari" [Ministry of Education resumed training courses for school mediators]. Available online: <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/pressrel/12299>

<sup>36</sup> Notification No. 28463/ 2010, Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport.

### Pre-accession funds

**EU PHARE programs** in Romania, financed by the EU, had the general objective to support the implementation of the Ministry of Education 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 the period of 2001–2009, the Romanian Ministry of Education developed, implemented, and evaluated multi-annual and multi-regional PHARE programs (in 2001, “Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups, with a Special Focus on Roma” and in 2003 and 2004, “Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups,” also extended in 2005). Overall, the spending budget was EUR 35 million.

The Ministry of Education, Research, and Innovation presented the results in the impact study of the PHARE 2006 program in Romania:<sup>37</sup>

- About 850 trainers of trainer and 3278 teachers from 42 counties participating in training courses on inclusive education, interactive methods of teaching and learning, curriculum development and implementation, remedial and second chance programs, early learning;
- Remedial education programs and summer kindergartens organized in 36 counties;
- Courses of culture and traditions of Roma included in the curriculum of second chance programs;
- Extended second chance programs in 216 schools from 27 counties;
- About 400 school mediators were trained, currently employing about 70 percent of them;
- 36 resources centers for the inclusive education were set up in the counties participating in the PHARE projects.

At that time about 450 schools carried out school activities for parents and finished rehabilitation. According to the evaluation, the weaknesses of PHARE's programs are the following:

- The difficulty of identifying human and financial resources for continued implementation of educational support programs;
- The tendency of schools to make separate groups/classes (in other words, to maintain segregation);
- The lack of school mediators in some schools;
- The insufficient number of psychologists and support teachers (for distance learning) compared with the actual needs;
- Lack of remuneration/rewards for teachers involved in remedial programs diminished their interest;
- The existence of stereotypes and prejudices of some teachers;
- The lack of school space, didactic materials, and supplies for pupils;
- Insufficient monitoring of individual student learning progress.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Ministry of Education and Research, *Raport asupra stării sistemului național de învățământ* [Report on the state of the national education system]. Available online: <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/10913>

### Structural funds

From 1999 to 2010 pre- and post-accession funds totaling EUR 157.3 million, out of which EUR 134.4 million non-reimbursable/grants (87.88 percent EU funds and 12.12 percent state budget funds), have been allocated for improving the socio-economic situation of Roma in Romania.<sup>39</sup> Most projects co-funded by the government and European Structural Fund (ESF) are focused primarily on education (including early childhood education and care), vocational and professional training, labor market insertion, and social inclusion. According to information provided by the Romanian Managing Authority, the national public agency responsible for managing and disbursing EU funds, a total of 11 projects targeting Roma are being or will be implemented multiregionally or statewide with an aggregate budget of EUR 37,819,853 from 2008 through 2012. Another six major projects (employment and early education) are directly managed by the National Agency for Roma.<sup>40</sup> The funding ranges from under EUR one million to EUR five million for each project that has to be implemented for periods of 24–36 months.

Ten educational projects mainly targeting Roma were awarded grants through the European Structural Funds and more specifically through the Operational Sectorial Program Human Resources Development 2007–2013 (POSDRU), framed under the major domain of intervention (DMI 2.2.) “Prevention and correction of early drop out.”<sup>41</sup> A brief description of some of these projects follows below:

- *All in kindergarten—all in the first grade* is a sequence of integrated programs for increasing access to education and educational level of 8,000 children from underprivileged communities, mainly Roma, during 2008–2009, managed by the central government with a budget of EUR five million to increase access to preschool and school education through participation in “summer kindergarten” and “school after school” programs;
- *Quality education—a step forward for equality* is targeting preschool education and is managed by the NGO Amare Rromentza in four counties (Iasi, Bacau, Calarasi, and Buzau). The project addresses preschool education, introducing bilingual and intercultural curricula for about 800 children from 40 kindergartens.
- *Strategic steps for improving access to education for Roma children* is a project managed by Romani CRISS in partnership with the Ministry of Education, “Equal Chances” Association (Salaj), Romani Alliance from Galati Association, and *Asociatia Rroma Heart Ilo Rrom* (Brasov). The general objective of the project is the reduction of early school leaving among Romani pupils by developing desegregation plans within 90 schools from four regions, including intercultural training for teaching staff and awareness-raising initiatives. The approved budget is EUR 4,872,060.

<sup>38</sup> Catalina Ulrich (coordinator), Bogdan Voicu et al. (authors), *Programele PHARE Acces la educatie pentru grupuri dezavantajate. Studiu de impact* [PHARE programs educational access for disadvantaged groups. Impact evaluation] (Bucharest: Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport, 2009).

<sup>39</sup> National Agency for Roma, *Presentation of the National Agency for Roma*. Available online: [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/esf/docs/c\\_idinca\\_speech\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/docs/c_idinca_speech_en.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> Fundacion Secretario Gitano, *EURoma Report: Roma and the Structural Funds*. Available online: [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/esf/docs/euroma\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/docs/euroma_report_en.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> The list of projects, the implementers, and eligible value of the projects are presented in Annex 6.



– *Education of Roma children—the way to guaranteed employment* is a project managed by the National Agency for Roma with a budget of EUR 4,943,831 in order to increase of the educational level of the Romani children from rural and urban areas nationwide and the development of human resources.

A representative of an organization implementing ESF-funded projects acknowledged that “programs are going through very big difficulties because of the non-fulfillment of contractual obligations by the management authority in the Ministry of Education, because of lack in technical assistance, and because of lack in the NGOs cash flow. In regard to this last aspect, the support offered by the Open Society Institute, in particular its program, Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma, have been very useful”<sup>42</sup> The EU also provides EUR 1.9 million for the multi-country project “A Good Start,” implemented by REF in Romania in partnership with local NGOs Romani CRISS and the Ruhama Foundation. The project began in June 2010 and will continue through June 2012.

Since 2000, a series of educational projects initiated by some Romani and non-Romani NGOs have been funded by UNICEF. UNICEF Romania allocated approximately USD two million for projects related to Romani children, under the following priorities:

- Early childhood development (ECD): development of inclusive policies and standards for ECD, crèches, and preschools; development and implementation of ECD curricula;
- Compulsory education: policies and strategies that will lead to increased enrollment and retention; development of curricula and curricular products generation; policies for mainstreaming the principles of gender equality, non-discrimination, inclusion, and student participation; an increased number of Romani children, particularly girls, will complete 10 years of compulsory quality education; developing the system of Romani school mediators;
- Advocacy: different campaigns for Romani children;
- Health: capacity building (Romani health mediators); models of intervention on HIV prevention.<sup>43</sup>

The later launch of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2004 led to the establishment of the Roma Education Fund (REF), which started to fund a series of pilot projects submitted by Romani and non-Romani NGOs.

<sup>42</sup> Response received in January 2011 to the interview guide designed for this report.

<sup>43</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, *Revised Country Programme Document: Romania* (Geneva: United Nations Children's Fund, 2004). p. 6.

# EDUCATION SYSTEM

## GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport (MERYS) manages education and training at the national level. The Ministry elaborates, coordinates, and implements educational policy and has the initiative and execution rights in financing and human resources policies in education. Its main responsibilities include: coordination and control of the national system of education; approval and monitoring of the national curricula and the national system of evaluation; distribution of resources from state budget to school inspectorates; setting the structure of the state school education; ensuring the framework for the production of school textbooks; elaboration of diagnosis and prognosis studies regarding the modernization of the educational system; contribution to the improvement of the legislative framework; and provision of specialized schooling to children with physical, sensorial, mental, or associated deficiencies.<sup>44</sup> The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sports establishes, organizes, and provides financial support to national committees and councils, and proposes to the government the establishment of agencies.<sup>45</sup>

School inspectorates are subordinated to the Ministry of Education and represent an intermediary level of authority. Currently, there are 47 school inspectorates (one in each county, and six in Bucharest). Their main responsibilities are: ensuring the implementation of the legislation in the organization and functioning of schools; distribution of financial resources from the state budget to the schools; proposing to the Ministry of Education student enrollment plans; monitoring the performance of teachers and students; appointing school head teachers; and establishment, with the agreement of the Ministry of Education, of public education units. In counties that provide education in the language of national minorities, the structure of the school inspectorates includes an inspector in charge with this type of education.<sup>46</sup> The general school inspector and the deputy general school inspectors are appointed by the Ministry of Education.

School units represent the lowest level in the governance structure. Their responsibilities include the organization and implementation of educational programs; management of the budget; monitoring and evaluation of teachers and staff; and ensuring adequate conditions for carrying out educational activities (Eurydice 2010b: 9–10). The governing body is the school administration council, composed of seven, nine, or 13 members, including the school head (who acts as president), deputy head(s), teachers elected by the

<sup>44</sup> Law on National Education 1/2011, Article 94 (1–2)

<sup>45</sup> Law on National Education 1/2011, Article 94 (3).

<sup>46</sup> Law on National Education 1/2011, Article 95.

school teaching council, representatives of parents, and representatives of the local authorities (mayor's office and local council).<sup>47</sup>

## FINANCING

According to official data, public expenditure on education in Romania accounts for six percent of GDP. In 2011, public expenditure on education in Romania dropped to approximately 3.85 percent from its previous level of six percent.<sup>48</sup> Not only is the current figure well below the OECD average of 5.7 percent,<sup>49</sup> but the percentage is also potentially misleading, because it encompasses money allocated from the state budget, but also projected contributions of local authorities and revenue generated by schools through various activities they are allowed to perform (such as additional educational services, rent, and micro-production). These revenues are difficult to predict, and it is likely that the official estimates overstate their importance. In 2008, nearly 73 percent of the budget was allocated for staff-related expenses, a proportion similar to the EU–27 average.<sup>50</sup> Compulsory education is entirely state-funded.

The financing mechanism for primary and secondary education is consistent with the principle of decentralization, and provides incentives for local communities to supplement school funding. Since the 2010–2011 school year, each educational institution receives a budget based on the number of students, the quantum established nationally for each student, and other indicators, including quality of education.<sup>51</sup> Financing of primary and secondary education relies almost exclusively on local budgets.<sup>52</sup> In addition to the main sources of income, educational institutions are allowed to attract funds from lucrative activities, donations, sponsorships, and subventions. The sums thus collected can be used integrally by the institution, without any contribution to local or state budgets.

The financing of tertiary education is based on a combination of funds received from the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport (per capita financing, complementary financing, investments, scholarships), funds secured through lucrative activities realized by the education institution (such as educational services,

<sup>47</sup> Law on National Education 1/2011, Article 96.

<sup>48</sup> Eurydice, *Structures of Education and Training Systems in Europe. Romania: 2009–2010 edition* (European Commission); Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport, *Raport de activitate ianuarie – iulie 2009: Iulia Adriana Oana Badea-Secretar de Stat pentru învățământul în limbile minorităților naționale și relația cu Parlamentul* [Activity report January–July 2009: Iulia Adriana Oana Badea – Secretary of State for Education in the Languages of National Minorities and Liaison with the Parliament] (Bucharest: Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport, 2009).

<sup>49</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators* (Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010).

<sup>50</sup> Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport, *Raport de activitate ianuarie—iulie 2009: Iulia Adriana Oana Badea-Secretar de Stat pentru învățământul în limbile minorităților naționale și relația cu Parlamentul* [Activity report January–July 2009: Iulia Adriana Oana Badea—Secretary of State for Education in the Languages of National Minorities and Liaison with the Parliament] (Bucharest: Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport, 2009), p. 16.

<sup>51</sup> See: Government Decision 1618/2009 provides the legal framework and the mechanism of money allocation to schools.

<sup>52</sup> The most notable exceptions are the financing of railway and subway transportation, and the organization of exams and competitions; these expenses are covered directly from the state budget.

research, renting, micro-production), and funds obtained from other sources (such as donations, sponsorships, taxes, fees). The autonomy of the universities, granted through the Constitution and recognized by the National Law on Education 1/2011 (Article 123), allows higher education institutions to manage all their revenues, regardless of source, to accomplish the state policy on higher education and research. Over the past five years, the share of budgetary allocations to the higher education institutions out of the total budget of the Ministry of Education recorded a significant increase (from 22 percent in 2006 to approximately 33 percent in 2008);<sup>53</sup> thus, public spending on higher education reached 0.8 percent of the GDP in 2007 and 2008.<sup>54</sup>

The Romanian Constitution stipulates that state education shall be free, and the state shall grant social scholarships to children or young people coming from disadvantaged families and to those who are institutionalized (Article 32). Free-of-charge public education is reiterated by the Law on National Education 1/2011 (Article 9(2)). Educational services and textbooks are provided free of charge during compulsory education, as well as for school-preparatory groups in pre-primary education. Moreover, the Ministry supports the financial costs for translating the approved textbooks into the languages of national minorities. Public kindergartens also offer free-of-charge educational services. Nonetheless, parents of children enrolled in prolonged or weekly pre-primary education programs have to contribute to the cost of meals. The amount of the contribution is fixed based on family gross income and the number of children enrolled in these kind of programs.

## FACILITIES

The total number of educational institutions functioning in the school year 2009–2010 was 8,244. Due to the restructuring of the educational system, the number of educational units decreased by 240 (or 2.8 percent) in 2010 as compared to 2007, and by 6,152 (or 42.7 percent) as compared to 2005.<sup>55</sup> The distribution of educational units on educational cycles in 2009 is presented in table 1.

<sup>53</sup> Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport, *Raport de activitate ianuarie–iulie 2009: Iulia Adriana Oana Badea-Secretar de Stat pentru învățământul în limbile minorităților naționale și relația cu Parlamentul* [Activity report January–July 2009: Iulia Adriana Oana Badea – Secretary of State for Education in the Languages of National Minorities and Liason with the Parliament] (Bucharest: Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport, 2009), p. 12. Official data for the academic year 2008–2009 indicates that 50 percent of the budget allocated to higher education institutions was used for salaries, utilities, and maintenance of the educational properties, whereas approximately 40 percent was spent on infrastructure works (renovation or construction of educational buildings, libraries, canteens and cafeterias, and student housing).

<sup>54</sup> Eurydice, *Structures of Education and Training Systems in Europe. Romania: 2009–2010 edition* (European Commission: 2010b), p. 10.

<sup>55</sup> National Institute of Statistics, *România în cifre* [Romania in numbers] (Bucharest: National Institute of Statistics, 2010); National Institute of Statistics, *Anuarul statistic al României* [Statistical yearbook for Romania] (Bucharest: National Institute of Statistics, 2009).

TABLE 1. Distribution of educational units by level in 2009

Kindergartens	1,718
Primary and secondary schools	4,727 <sup>56</sup>
High schools	1,444
Vocational and apprenticeship schools	147
Post-high-school and foremen schools	79
Tertiary education schools	106
Total	8,221

Source: National Statistical Institute.<sup>57</sup>

All public school buildings are the property of local authorities, mandated with the responsibility for their maintenance. However, the state also is involved in school rehabilitation and modernization. The School Rehabilitation Project, initiated in 1998, led to the rehabilitation of more than 1,200 schools. Currently, the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport implements several projects aiming to improve the material basis of the educational system, with particular emphasis on rural areas and disadvantaged communities. The Project for the Reform of Early Education (PRET) intends to rehabilitate 750 kindergartens and develop their infrastructure, and to provide 13,000 kindergartens with educational materials; the Project for Inclusive Early Education (PETI) aims to build and equip 70 kindergartens in communities with significant Romani population;<sup>58</sup> the Project Regarding the Development of School Infrastructure looks for the rehabilitation, modernization, and equipping with didactical material of 1,400 pre-tertiary educational units; and the Project for Rural Education targets the improvement of material conditions in 1,500 pre-tertiary rural schools.<sup>59</sup>

## EDUCATION CYCLES AND PROGRESSION CRITERIA

The Law on National Education 1/2011 establishes the structure of the educational system, as shown in table 2.

<sup>56</sup> Including 113 special education schools.

<sup>57</sup> National Institute of Statistics, *Anuarul statistic al României [Statistical yearbook for Romania]* (Bucharest: National Institute of Statistics, 2009).

<sup>58</sup> Providing inclusive education is mentioned as an objective of the project. In order to prevent segregation, the selection of localities where new kindergartens are built is made by a joint team of Ministry of Education and National Agency for Roma's representatives, after consultation of Roma experts and local authorities.

<sup>59</sup> Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport, *Raport de activitate ianuarie-iulie 2009: Iulia Adriana Oana Badea-Secretar de Stat pentru învățământul în limbile minorităților naționale și relația cu Parlamentul [Activity report January-July 2009: Iulia Adriana Oana Badea – Secretary of State for Education in the Languages of National Minorities and Liaison with the Parliament]* (Bucharest: Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport, 2009), pp. 115, 119.



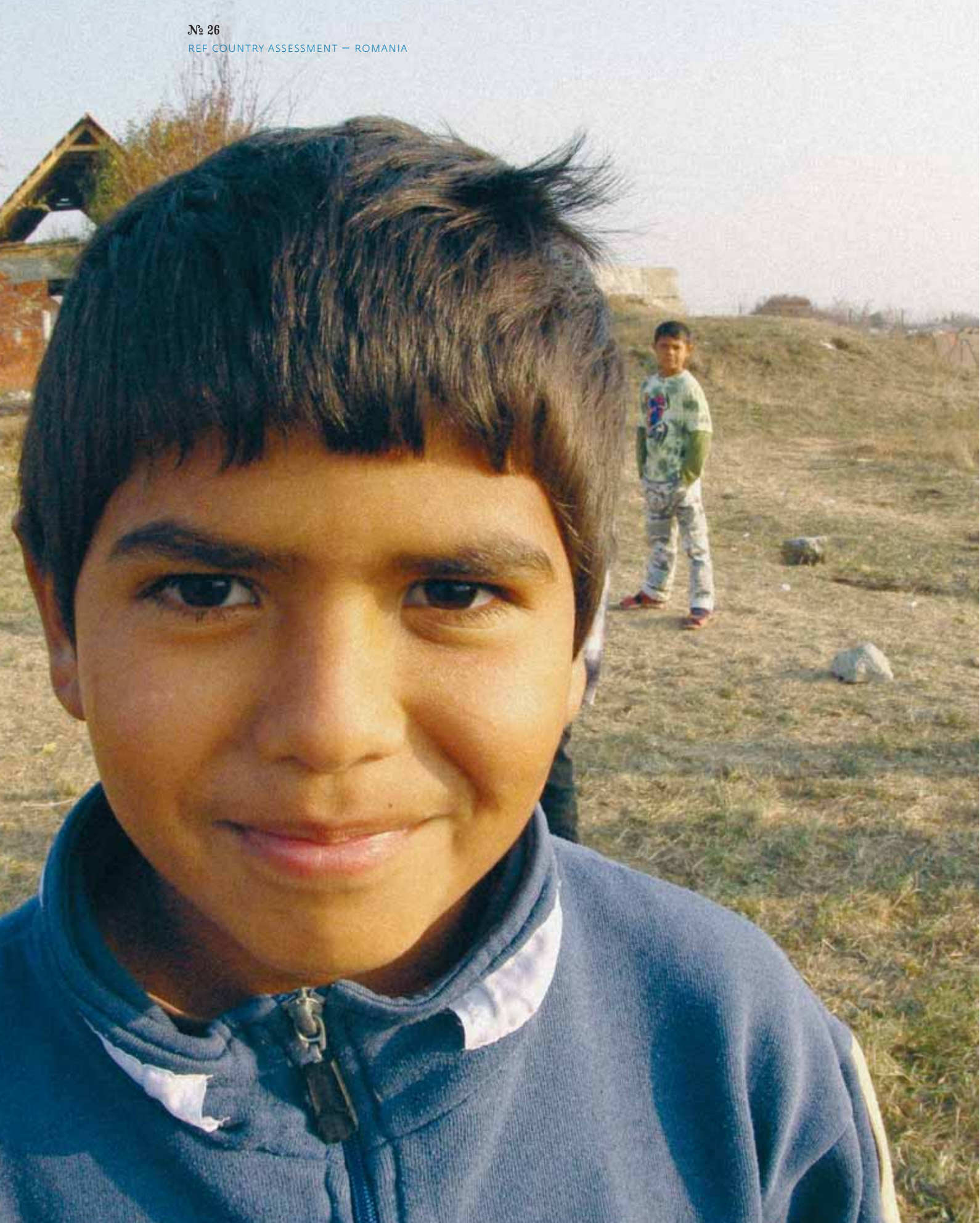




TABLE 2. Structure of the educational system

Education cycle	Division of the education cycle	Size of class/group
Early education	Before preschool (0–3 years)	5–9 (average 7)
	Preschool (3–6 years)	10–20 (average 15)
Primary education	Preparatory group	12–25 (average 20)
	Grades 1–4	12–25 (average 20)
Secondary education	Lower secondary (Grades 5–9)	12–30 (average 25)
	Upper secondary (Grades 10–12/13)	15–30 (average 25)
	Undergraduate (3–4 years)	n/a
Tertiary education	Master (1–2 years)	n/a
	Doctorate (3–5 years)	n/a

Source: Law on National Education, Articles 23, 24, 135.

The Law on National Education brings important changes in the architecture of the educational system. Before-preschool (in Romanian, *antepreșcolar*) education becomes part of an education cycle;<sup>60</sup> the preparatory group is moved from preschool to primary education; grade nine becomes part of lower secondary education; and compulsory education covers the primary and the lower secondary cycles (from preparatory group to grade nine).

Before-preschool education can take place in crèches, kindergartens, and daycare centers. The units can be public or private, but need accreditation from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and the Ministry of Health. The organization of before-preschool units, curricula, standards of quality, and associated methodology are to be established by the Ministry of Education before January 2012.

Preschool education takes place in kindergartens with regular hours (five hours a day), kindergartens with extended hours (10 hours a day), and weekly kindergartens (providing educational services continuously, from Monday to Friday). The preschool units can be either public or private, and are not allowed to function without the prior approval of School Inspectorate. In 2009, there were 1,718 kindergartens in Romania, out of which 1,506 were public and 212 were private.<sup>61</sup> Kindergartens are distributed unevenly by the milieu of residence, with disproportionately more kindergartens in rural than in urban areas.<sup>62</sup> Enrollment in preschool units is optional, with admission based on three criteria (age, distance from kindergarten, and

<sup>60</sup> The Law on National Education is the first legislative text to use the term “early education.”

<sup>61</sup> National Institute of Statistics, *România în cifre*. [Romania in Numbers] (Bucharest: National Institute of Statistics, 2010); Eurydice 2009. *Organisation of the educational system in Romania 2008/2009*. (European Commission, 2009), p. 77.

<sup>62</sup> Eurydice. *Structures of Education and Training Systems in Europe. Romania: 2009-2010 edition* (European Commission, 2010b).

existence of siblings in the kindergarten) and contingent upon the number of available places. Currently, the infrastructure does not allow the enrollment of all children who want to attend preschool education. Kindergartens are organized in three age-based groups: lower group (3–4); middle group (4–5); and upper group (5–6). The curriculum for early education developed in 2008 realizes a transition from knowledge-centered activities to activities focused on learning experiences. In 2009, only 78 children attended preschool education in the Romani language.<sup>63</sup>

The preparatory group includes children aged six at the start of the school year, and upon parental request, children who will be six before the end of the calendar year. The curriculum is adapted to the age particularities of children and aims to adequately prepare all participants to start their school lives. The measure of making preparatory groups compulsory is likely to be beneficial for Romani children, given that several studies identified children's difficulty in adapting to school's demands as a major cause for dropout.<sup>64</sup>

Primary school grades one to four takes place in public or private schools approved by the School Inspectorate. Public primary schools are organized either as independent units or as part of schools covering primary (grades one to four) and lower secondary education. During the school year 2008–2009, there were 4,614 educational units providing primary education grades one to four, out of which approximately one-quarter (1,351) were in urban areas and three-quarters (3,263) in rural areas.<sup>65</sup> Children completing a preparatory group are enrolled in the first grade of primary school by local school authorities. Upon demand, County School Inspectorates can organize primary school with partial/complete education in the language of national minorities or can provide only the study of the mother tongue. In 2008–2009, the total number of children attending primary and secondary schools in Romani language doubled as compared to the previous school year, but remained relatively modest—only 209.<sup>66</sup>

Lower secondary education (*gimnaziu*) comprises public or private units approved by the School Inspectorates. Because there is no exam or certification at the end of primary school, children completing primary school are automatically enrolled in grade five. In 2008–2009, there were 4,582 educational units providing lower secondary education (grades five to eight), out of which 1,337 in urban areas and 3,245 in rural areas.<sup>67</sup> Children graduating from lower-secondary education are evaluated through standardized national tests, and the scores are used for the computerized distribution of children in upper-secondary education.

<sup>63</sup> National Institute of Statistics, *România în cifre* [Romania in numbers] (Bucharest: National Institute of Statistics, 2010).

<sup>64</sup> Gelu Duminică and Ana Ivasiuc, *O școală pentru toți? Accesul copiilor romi la o educație de calitate* [A school for all? The Access of Romani children to quality education] (Bucharest: Vanemonde, 2010), p. 94; Laura Surdu, Enikő Vincze, and Marius Wamsiedel, *Educație timpurie, participare școlară și discriminare în cazul romilor din România* [Early childhood education, school participation, and discrimination in the case of Roma in Romania] (Bucharest: Romani CRIS and UNICEF, 2011).

<sup>65</sup> Eurydice, *Organisation of the Educational System in Romania 2008/2009*. (European Commission 2009), p. 104)

<sup>66</sup> National Institute of Statistics, *Anuarul statistic al României* [Statistical yearbook for Romania] (Bucharest, National Institute of Statistics, 2009).

<sup>67</sup> Eurydice. *Organisation of the Educational System in Romania 2008/2009* (European Commission, 2009), p. 168.

Upper-secondary education offers three paths: theoretical (with two profiles: humanities and sciences); technological (with three profiles: technical services, natural resources, and protection of the environment); and vocational (with five profiles: military, theological, sports, arts, and pedagogical). Only children having graduated from lower-secondary education are allowed to enroll in upper-secondary education. In the school year 2008–2009, there were 1,444 upper-secondary education units, out of which 570 were theoretical; 691—technological; and 183—vocational. No child enrolled in upper-secondary education received education in the Romani language. Graduates of upper-secondary education are subject to a national standardized examination (*bacalaureat*); students who pass the examination receive a diploma entitling them to compete for a place in tertiary education.

Tertiary education is organized on three levels: undergraduate (three to four years); Master (one to two years); and Doctorate (regularly three years, with possibility of extending by one to two years). Each university is allowed to establish its own admission criteria. In 2009, there were 106 universities in Romania, out of which 56 were public and 50 were private.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION

Children diagnosed with special educational needs are enrolled in special schools, with curricula, textbooks, and evaluation adapted to the disability or deficiency of the child. In 2008–2009, there were 172 special schools in Romania, with a student population of 27,654, out of which 10,702 were girls.<sup>68</sup> Approximately 80 percent of special schools function in urban areas (Eurydice 2009: 362). Special schools are encountered from preschool to the secondary cycle, with a higher representation at primary and lower-secondary education.

TABLE 3. Special education facilities and students

	Preschool	Primary and lower secondary	Upper secondary	Vocational and apprenticeship
Schools	14	113	14	31
Students	2,156	16,048	1,020	8,206

Source: National Statistical Institute.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup>The population of students enrolled in special schools decreased by about 50 percent in the last decade: In the academic year 1998–1999, there were 305 special schools, with a total student population of 55,237.

<sup>69</sup>National Institute of Statistics, *Anuarul statistic al României* [Statistical yearbook for Romania] (Bucharest, National Institute of Statistics, 2009).

The previous Law on Education (84/1995) established the categories of children for which the special education was designed: children with mental, physical, sensorial, language, social and behavior disabilities. However, studies conducted by the Ministry of Education and NGOs indicated that a large part of children attending special schools do not have deficiencies or disabilities; they are enrolled in special schools due to economic and social reasons.

Data regarding the ethnic structure of student population in special schools are unavailable. However, studies relying on quantitative methods pointed out a widespread perception of teachers from both mainstream schools and special schools that many Romani pupils are unprepared to cope with the demands of mainstream schools.<sup>70</sup> The difficulties mentioned by the teachers include: limited stock of knowledge as compared to same-age peers; limited abilities of organization, argumentation, and expression; and failure to comply with schools' code of conduct. Children who are regarded by teachers as unable to follow the mainstream education are more susceptible of being redirected towards special education, even when they do not fall into categories established by law. Acknowledging this situation, the recently adopted Law on National Education (1/2011) explicitly forbids the abusive inclusion of children in special education on criteria of race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or belonging to a disadvantaged group (Article 50 (3)).<sup>71</sup>

## MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Among steps towards multicultural education taken by the authorities are the constitutional provision that national minorities are allowed to pursue education in their respective mother tongue; the creation of pedagogical programs aiming to qualify students for teaching in minority languages; the establishment of a Department for Minorities within the Ministry of Education, and the inclusion of inspectors for minority issues within County School Inspectorates; the development of programs and projects aiming to improve the access to education for children belonging to ethnic minorities (such as "second chance"); the introduction of school mediators to facilitate the interaction between schools and Romani communities; the promotion of affirmative measures regarding Romani children's admission to high school and universities; and material support for providing national minorities' children with textbooks in their mother tongue.

<sup>70</sup> Gelu Duminica and Ana Ivasiuc, *O școală pentru toți? Accesul copiilor romi la o educație de calitate* [A school for all? The access of Romani children to quality education] (Bucharest: Vanemonde, 2010), p. 93; Irina Horga and Mihaela Jigău, *Situația copiilor cu cerințe educaționale speciale incluși în învățământul de masă* [The situation of children with special educational needs included in mainstream education] (Bucharest: Vanemonde, 2009), p. 197.

<sup>71</sup> The article, which did not exist in the draft form of the Law, was introduced at the recommendation of Roma organizations (Civic Alliance of Roma in Romania) and UNICEF. See: Alianța Civică a Romilor din România and UNICEF, *Propunere de revizuire a proiectului legii educației naționale* (Bucharest: Alianța Civică a Romilor din România and UNICEF, 2010). Available online: <http://www.romanicriss.org/Amendamente%2olege%2oedu.pdf>

Toward generating a cadre of Romani-speaking teachers, the Department of Romani-language Education in the Ministry of Education was tasked with establishing classes/groups at elementary schools and pedagogical colleges to train teachers (Romani and non-Romani) who will be working with Romani students, conducting Romani-language courses for teachers, and founding in 1998 a Romani-language department within the Foreign Languages Faculty of Bucharest University. At the same time, to encourage the study of Romanes, the Department has provided the possibility to study Romani as a mother-tongue language at any moment during the school year and in any study year, also encouraging schools to employ teachers qualified to teach Romanes, or in the absence of fully qualified teachers, encouraging Romani high school graduates, or at least graduates of compulsory education, to teach Romanes. The Department has also produced and distributed documentary materials on Roma from Romania.

Complementing the desegregation ordinance of 2007 (treated above, in Section 3), in the same year the Ministry of Education also issued Decree 1529/18.07.2007 (the “diversity” decree) that aimed to introduce into the curriculum and school practice the principles and recognition of ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity. This decree ordered that the general history curriculum cover all the minorities living in Romania and that optional subjects such as history and traditions of minorities in Romania and intercultural education be introduced.

## SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR PUPILS AND STUDENTS

The state provides a monthly cash benefit of approximately EUR 10 for each dependent child in a family, with the amount adjusted according to various characteristics of the child and family. While this benefit was conditioned on school attendance beginning in 1993, a 2006 decision of the Constitutional Court ruled that granting the child allowance only to children attending school constitutes discrimination.<sup>72</sup>

Since 2002, a national nutrition program has provided a daily incentive to attend school in the form of dairy products and baked goods. Initially covering pupils in grades one to four of public schools, the “Milk and Bread” program was expanded in 2004 to include children attending four-hour programs in state kindergartens, in 2008 to include pupils in grades five through eight of public schools, and most recently in 2009 to cover also private schools and kindergartens.<sup>73</sup> Inspections by the National Authority for Consumer

<sup>72</sup> See: Eben Friedman et al., *Assessing Conditional Cash Transfers as a Tool for Reducing the Gap in Educational Outcomes Between Roma and Non-Roma* (Budapest: Roma Education Fund, 2009).

<sup>73</sup> Government of Romania, *Ordonanță de Urgență nr. 96 din 16 august 2002 privind acordarea de produse lactate și de panificație pentru elevii din clasele I-IV din învățământul de stat* (Bucharest: Guvernul României, 2002). Available online: [http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis\\_pck.htp\\_act?ida=39069](http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htp_act?ida=39069)

Protection have revealed deficiencies in implementation in some schools ranging from failure to conform with quality standards to delays in delivery.<sup>74</sup>

For students in upper-secondary education (whether general or vocational) from low-income families who also meet attendance and achievement criteria, the “Money for High School” program provides a monthly stipend equivalent to approximately EUR 42 throughout the academic year.<sup>75</sup>

In addition to the forms of support described above, children attending compulsory education are entitled to subsidized transportation to and from school, healthcare (through school-based or other public medical units), and school supplies (for children from disadvantaged families), as well as social scholarships. As part of the decentralization process, local authorities are responsible for providing these scholarships and for establishing their amount. Scholarships are financed from local budgets, with the Ministry of Education providing general criteria for awarding scholarships and school authorities allowed to impose their own specific criteria. Social scholarships are also available for university students. The amount of such scholarships is set by the National Council for Financing Higher Education (CNFIS), with universities allowed to raise scholarship levels and to provide additional scholarships.

Despite the programs described above, research carried out in recent years points out that hidden costs of schooling hinder institutional efforts of providing free of charge education. Parents participating in a nationwide survey declared they were required to pay for school supplies; educational software, workbooks, and additional teaching materials; school uniforms and sport equipment; and to make contributions to the so-called “school fund” and “class fund,” informal budgets used to support costs uncovered through official sources of income.<sup>76</sup> The indirect and informal costs of schooling affect particularly children coming from poor communities, and were identified by Romani parents of children who have dropped out as a major reason for abandoning school.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Autoritatea Națională pentru Protecția Consumatorilor, “Unități fast-food din București, controlate de ANPC,” Available online: [http://www.anpc.gov.ro/anpc/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=351:programele-guvernamentale-cornul-si-laptele-si-mere-in-scoli-&catid=23:comunicate-de-presa&Itemid=51](http://www.anpc.gov.ro/anpc/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=351:programele-guvernamentale-cornul-si-laptele-si-mere-in-scoli-&catid=23:comunicate-de-presa&Itemid=51)

<sup>75</sup> See: Eben Friedman et al., *Assessing Conditional Cash Transfers as a Tool for Reducing the Gap in Educational Outcomes Between Roma and Non-Roma* (Budapest: Roma Education Fund, 2009).

<sup>76</sup> Ciprian Grădinaru, Mihaela Manole, and Roxana Paraschiv, *Învățământul gratuit costă: Cercetare cu privire la costurile ascunse din educație* [Free-of-charge education is expensive: Research on the hidden costs in education] (Bucharest: Save the Children, 2010); Laura Surdu, Enikő Vincze, and Marius Wamsiedel, *Educație timpurie, participare școlară și discriminare în cazul romilor din România* [Early childhood education, school participation and discrimination in the case of Roma in Romania] (Bucharest: Romani CRISS and UNICEF, 2011).

<sup>77</sup> Laura Surdu, Enikő Vincze, and Marius Wamsiedel, *Educație timpurie, participare școlară și discriminare în cazul romilor din România* [Early childhood education, school participation and discrimination in the case of Roma in Romania] (Bucharest: Romani CRISS and UNICEF, 2011).



## PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

There is a scarcity of data regarding Roma's participation in education. The Ministry of Education does not publish disaggregated data on the ethnic origin of children in the school system. According to estimates of the Ministry of Education, over 200,000 Romani students were enrolled in the educational system in the academic year 2008–2009.<sup>78</sup> The same source indicates that 7,483 special places have been allocated for Roma in upper-secondary education as part of the affirmative action program. Out of 2,460 candidates, 2,246 have passed the minimum requirements for being admitted. For the academic year 2011–2012, the Ministry of Education allocated 611 special places for Romani students in the public universities, which represents less than one percent of the total places available (62,850).<sup>79</sup> No special places were awarded for institutions in the fields of public order or military.

The Report of the Presidential Commission for analysis and policy drafting on education and research mentioned that the proportion of Romani children enrolled in primary education is 64 percent, significantly lower than the national average of 98,9 percent.<sup>80</sup> Studies conducted by the Ministry of Education and NGOs are consistent in presenting the educational gap between Romani and non-Romani children, and the factors affecting the educational trajectory of Romani children, such as poverty, widespread discrimination, monocultural curricula, segregation, lack of support, and absence of formal early education.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport, *Raport de activitate ianuarie–iulie 2009: Iulia Adriana Oana Badea-Secretar de Stat pentru învățământul în limbile minorităților naționale și relația cu Parlamentul* [Activity report January–July 2009: Iulia Adriana Oana Badea – Secretary of State for Education in the Languages of National Minorities and Liason with the Parliament] (Bucharest: Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport, 2009), p. 6). This information is based on reports from inspectors for Roma issues within the County School Inspectorates. The absence of a methodology for collecting data reduces the accuracy of the estimation.

<sup>79</sup> *Official Monitor, Ordinul 4285/2011 privind repartizarea cifrei de școlarizare pentru învățământul universitar de licență în vederea admiterii la studii în anul universitar 2011–2012* (Order No. 4285/2011 regarding the allocation of student places for the tertiary education concerning admission to studies for the academic year 2011–2012). *Monitorul Oficial al României*, No. 382, 2011, Annex 1.

<sup>80</sup> Mircea Miclea (ed.), *România educației, România cercetării: Raportul Comisiei Prezidențiale pentru analiza și elaborarea politicilor din domeniile educației și cercetării* [Romania of education, Romania of research: Report of the Presidential Commission for the analysis and drafting of public policies in the fields of education and research] (Bucharest: Presidential Commission, 2007), p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, Mihaela Jigău and Mihai Surdu (eds.), *Participarea școlară a copiilor romi: probleme, soluții, actori* [School participation of Romani children: Problems, solutions, actors] (Bucharest: Ministry of Education and Research, Institute for Educational Sciences, Institute for Research on the Quality of Life, and UNICEF, 2002); Gabor Fleck and Cosima Rughiniș, *Vino mai aproape: incluziunea și excludiunea romilor în societatea românească de astăzi* [Come closer: Inclusion and exclusion of Roma in present-day Romanian society] (Bucharest: Human Dynamics, 2008); Gelu Duminica and Ana Ivasiuc, *O școală pentru toți? Accesul copiilor romi la o educație de calitate* [A school for all? The access of Romani children to quality education] (Bucharest: Vanemonda, 2010); Laura Surdu, Enikő Vincze, and Marius Wamsiedel, *Educație timpurie, participare școlară și discriminare în cazul romilor din România* [Early childhood education, school participation and discrimination in the case of Roma in Romania] (Bucharest: Romani CRISS and UNICEF, 2011).

An overview of participation in education within the general population of Romania is given in table 4.

TABLE 4. Participation in education by level

		2005–2006	2006–2007	2007–2008	2008–2009
<b>Total school units</b>		11,865	8,484	8,230	8,221
<b>Pre-primary</b>		648,000	649,000	650,000	653,000
<b>Primary and lower secondary</b>		1,901,000	1,842,000	1,790,000	1,752,000
<b>Children</b>	<b>High schools</b>	767,000	781,000	792,000	785,000
<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>Professional and apprenticeship</b>	284,000	250,000	220,000	189,000
	<b>Post high school and foremen</b>	44,000	38,000	46,000	55,000
	<b>Tertiary</b>	716,000	786,000	907,000	891,000

Source: National Statistical Institute.<sup>82</sup>

## PROGRESS AND WEAKNESS IN EDUCATION FOR ROMA IN ROMANIA

### Areas of progress

- Involvement of the Ministry of Education in the desegregation of the school system and the promotion of intercultural curricula
- Affirmative action measures intended to increase Roma's participation in upper-secondary and tertiary education
- Introduction of compulsory preparatory group for children about to enroll in primary school
- Contribution of the Ministry of Education to providing free-of-charge textbooks in the languages of national minorities
- Facilities for children of national minorities willing to attend education in the mother language (free of charge transportation to the closest available unit or accommodation in the student dorms of the educational unit)
- Financial incentives for universities organizing programs in the language of national minorities
- Intended establishment of committees for preventing and combating discrimination in each school and establishment of a National Ethics Council

<sup>82</sup> National Institute of Statistics, *România în cifre* [Romania in numbers] (Bucharest: National Institute of Statistics, 2010), p. 37.

### Remaining weaknesses

- Limited access of Romani children to early education, especially in urban areas, due to lack of facilities
- Persistence of ethnicity-based school segregation
- School mediation services unavailable in many Romani communities
- Insufficient consultation between the Ministry of Education and the Romani civil society organizations
- Lack of correlation and coherence between the various initiatives aiming to increase the educational participation of Romani children
- Potential overrepresentation of Romani children in some special education settings
- Weak implementation of the existing legal framework
- Lack of official data on Roma's participation in education
- Low number of Roma employed in educational institutions







# REF IN ROMANIA

## REF IN ROMANIA

From 2005 to 2009, 26 projects were approved for Romania, out of which four projects are ongoing and one (with Ministry of Education) was canceled. The projects' objectives are to increase the participation of Romani children in schools and to increase the quality of their education, to reintegrate Romani students in the school system, to ensure equal opportunity in the mixed educational settings, to initiate and maintain the desegregation process in the school system. The projects addressed Romani children and students from the preschool level to tertiary education and in some cases involved parents, didactic personnel, and Romani school mediators. The total of REF commitments approved in Romania is EUR 3,933,937.

TABLE 5. Project grant commitments in Romania from 2005 to 2009

Funds committed by year (EUR)				TOTAL (EUR)
2005–2006	2007	2008	2009	
1,791,337	980,600	648,580	513,420	3,933,937

The ratio of received by approved projects in Romania is about 33 percent (23 approved projects from 70 received until the end of 2009). This ratio put Romania in the category of a low ratio of approved projects and in the same cluster with Croatia (22 percent), Macedonia (24 percent), Montenegro (25 percent), and Czech Republic (33 percent). The countries with a high ratio of approved from the received projects are Hungary (55 percent), Serbia (50 percent), and Bulgaria (48 percent).

## EU ROMA PILOT

REF is the lead implementing organization of the project "A Good Start" (AGS), funded by the EU at a level of EUR 1.9 million in the framework of the Open Call for Proposals 2009 "Pilot project Pan-European Coordination of Roma Integration Methods – Roma inclusion." The project runs from June 2010 through June 2012 in Hungary, Macedonia, and Slovakia as well as in Romania. Implementing partners for the activities in Romania include Romani CRISS and the Ruhama Foundation.



## REVOLVING FUND

As of end 2010, REF had provided five reimbursable grants totaling EUR 170 000 through the Revolving Fund, leveraging a total of approximately EUR 14.1 million. Because all the loans were still under implementation, none had been repaid.

## SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT

The Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP) and Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP) are two main scholarship programs offered by REF for tertiary level Romani students in Romania.

RMUSP was developed initially by OSI and is now implemented by REF in partnership with the Resource Centre for Roma Communities. RMUSP scholars receive a monthly stipend of EUR 80 during the ten-month academic year to cover basic living costs and other study-related costs. Students who pay tuition fees are eligible to receive a supplement proportionate to the fee.

TABLE 6. RMUSP awards in Romania from 2005 to 2009

Grants awarded by year					TOTAL
2005–2006	2006–2007	2007–2008	2008–2009	2009–2010	
228	243	160	125	220	976

In Romania, seven percent of Romani beneficiaries of affirmative action pointed out that they also were awarded a REF academic scholarship for an average duration of 4.2 semesters, a fact that indicates the rather loose connection between the two types of interventions.<sup>83</sup>

The Roma Health Scholarship Program, in addition to OSF and the Roma Education Fund, has active partnerships and is implemented with a consortium of NGOs including the Romanian groups Active Watch Media Monitoring Agency, Association of Resident Physicians, and Roma Center for Health Policies–Sastipen. In 2008, the first year of the health and pharmacy scholarship program in Romania, 35 Romani resident doctors and medical students were awarded scholarships, while 63 Romani resident doctors and medical students received grants, in 2009. This consortium of organizations applied for European Union funding for the scholarship program in 2009. In February 2010, the European Social Fund notified the organizations that it

<sup>83</sup> Mihai Surdu and Judit Szira (coordinators), *Analysis of the Impact of Affirmative Action for Roma in High Schools, Vocational Schools and Universities* (Budapest: Roma Education Fund, 2009).

would fund three years of the scholarship program in the amount of RON 19,595,319 (approximately EUR 4,756,145).

## REF ROMANIA

REF Romania is a branch office established in 2009 in Bucharest in order to actively participate in the implementation and the development of educational policies and programs. The Romanian branch of REF was set up with the aim of replicating the best practices of past REF-supported projects in Romania and scaling up these projects by leveraging financial resources in order to access the European Structural Funds. The staff are comprised of over 15 persons and they have two main directions of action: at the community level and at the public policy level. REF Romania successfully applied for two ESF-financed projects (with a 10-percent REF own contribution) and also was awarded partnerships in another two ESF projects.

The first project developed by REF Romania for ESF funds is named *School after School – the first step towards scholar and professional success*. Its objective is to prevent children from leaving primary school through programs like “School after School,” remedial education, and assisted learning for a total of 2,000 children in 50 schools in three areas of development over three years.

The second ESF-funded project, *Equal Opportunities in Education for an Inclusive Society*, has as a main objective to ensure equal access to education for 1,250 Romani pupils in grades five to eight at risk of leaving the education system early in urban and rural areas, by providing them financial support and to increase the opportunities of accessing secondary education for a number of 750 pupils in seventh and eighth grades by developing and implementing mentoring services. The projects started in 2010 and will be continued until 2012.

The approximate value of the two projects briefly described above is EUR 10 million, approximately equally shared between the two projects.

REF Romania is a partner in the ESF-funded project *Together on the Labor Market*. The main applicant is the Resource Center for Roma Communities, having as second partner the Center for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises. The main aim of the project is to enable young Romas’ access to the labor market, in view of reducing their social exclusion, discrimination, and poverty risk.

REF Romania also has projects in partnership with the Ministry of Education and NGOs like the Resource Center for the Roma Communities Foundation, “Amare Rromentza” Roma Center, Roma Cultural Center o Del Amenca, Center for Education and Social Development, Roma’s Center for Health Policies–Sastipen,

the Association of Resident Doctors (*Asociatia Medicilor Rezidenti*—AMR), the “Press Monitoring Agency” Association, the Open Society Institute, the Roma Health Program, and other stakeholders.

## RESEARCH AND POLICY ANALYSIS

Since publication of the 2007 Country Assessment, REF has played a central role in producing the following three pieces of research important for the education of Roma in Romania:

- *Analysis of the Impact of Affirmative Action for Roma in High Schools, Vocational Schools and Universities*.<sup>84</sup> Realized through a partnership between REF and Gallup Romania, this study tries to elicit the effects of the affirmative measures both on the main beneficiaries and on the Romani community as a whole.
- *Conditional Cash Transfers as a Tool for Reducing the Gap in Educational Outcomes between Roma and Non-Roma*.<sup>85</sup> This working paper provides a partial review of scholarship and relevant social assistance schemes in Romania in a working paper placing in global context the Hungarian, Romanian, and Slovak experiences with policies linking social benefits to participation of children in education.
- *Roma Early Childhood Inclusion*. Romania was included in the second phase of the ongoing multi-country research project “Roma Early Childhood Inclusion,” developed as a cooperative initiative among the Open Society Foundation—London, REF, and UNICEF. The national report for Romania takes stock of early childhood education and care (ECEC) policies and services in Romania, noting challenges for the inclusion of Roma and providing recommendations for key stakeholders.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Taking into account developments in Romania since the publication of the 2007 Country Assessment as well as persistent problems faced by Roma in the area of education, REF funding in Romania over the next two years will reflect the following priorities:

- Increasing the access of Romani children to quality ECEC in general and preschool education in particular, drawing on lessons learned from projects supported to date and from the EU multi-country pilot project “A Good Start.”
- Supporting existing desegregation efforts through activities that have a proven impact in preventing and/or diminishing segregation, including but not necessarily limited to coalition building, policy advocacy, knowledge sharing, and technical assistance to prepare the Romanian educational system and society at large – including Romani communities – for a sustainable desegregation process focusing on quality education in inclusive public schools attended by children from diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Eben Friedman et al., *Assessing Conditional Cash Transfers as a Tool for Reducing the Gap in Educational Outcomes Between Roma and Non-Roma* (Budapest: Roma Education Fund, 2009).

- Promoting grassroots efforts to improve the quality of education received by Romani children by providing pilot grants to small NGOs and parents' associations able to apply empirical knowledge generated by research conducted by REF and other relevant stakeholders.

In pursuing the substantive priorities listed above, REF will also attend to maintaining existing partnerships with government institutions and civil society, addressing demands for transparency and accountability through implementation of a rigorous monitoring and evaluation protocol, and reaching a larger number of rural, traditional communities in which the Romani language is spoken.

#### **REF research and policy analysis priorities**

Major themes of REF's research and policy activities in Romania will include:

- *A study with the working title "Dimensions of Teacher Absenteeism in Roma and non-Roma Schools."* This research has been commissioned and conducted in partnership with the Center for Urban and Rural Sociology and Romani CRISS.
- *A set of practically oriented publications on ECEC services for Roma.* The following publications relevant to Romania will be produced in framework of the EU-funded multi-country pilot project "A Good Start":
  - A policy paper on increasing the access of disadvantaged Romani children to quality ECEC services;
  - A practical guide on data collection in relation to ECEC programs focusing on Roma;
  - A practical guide on establishing partnerships to provide quality ECEC services to Roma;
  - A practical guide to principles of good pedagogy in ECEC programs focusing on Roma; and
  - A policy paper on implications of the EU Roma pilot for the 2013–2020 programming cycle of the EU Structural Funds.

#### **REF Scholarship Programs**

Beyond the administration of existing scholarships, developmental priorities of the REF Scholarship Programs in Romania will include:

- *Increasing the number of RMUSP scholars.* Sustained attention should be given to linking to RMUSP beneficiaries of government affirmative action policies, as well as beneficiaries of REF-funded and other scholarship programs in secondary education.
- *Beneficiary networking.* The establishment of centralized networking infrastructure should be complemented by consultation with beneficiaries of the Scholarship Programs in Romania as potential network members about the roles and functions such a network should fill, with in-country and/or international launching activities to be designed accordingly.
- *Promoting scholar participation in other REF activities.* Scholarship Program grantees with strong academic standing should be encouraged for their personal-professional development (but not as a condition for receiving scholarship support) to participate in non-academic activities organized by REF, including but not limited to joining project monitoring missions in their countries of residence.

## EXPECTED RESULTS OF REF ACTIVITIES

Based on the identification of REF's strategic priorities, results of REF activities should be visible in the next two years on the following levels:

### **Legal, financial, and administrative changes**

- Desegregation Unit established in Ministry of Education, Research, and Innovation with a mandate to analyze, combat, and prevent segregation, with concrete activities including the promotion of intercultural dialogue in schools.

### **Key education indicators**

Although data on education disaggregated by ethnicity are not publicly available, the following educational indicators should mark a change in the next two years (measures of these indicators should be documented at project level where REF support is concerned):

- Average age of Roma at enrollment in preschool education
- Average number of years spent by Roma in preschool education
- Proportion of Romani pupils enrolled in segregated pre-university educational settings
- Teachers and pupils absenteeism in segregated Romani schools
- Number of Roma completing secondary education
- Number of Roma completing tertiary education

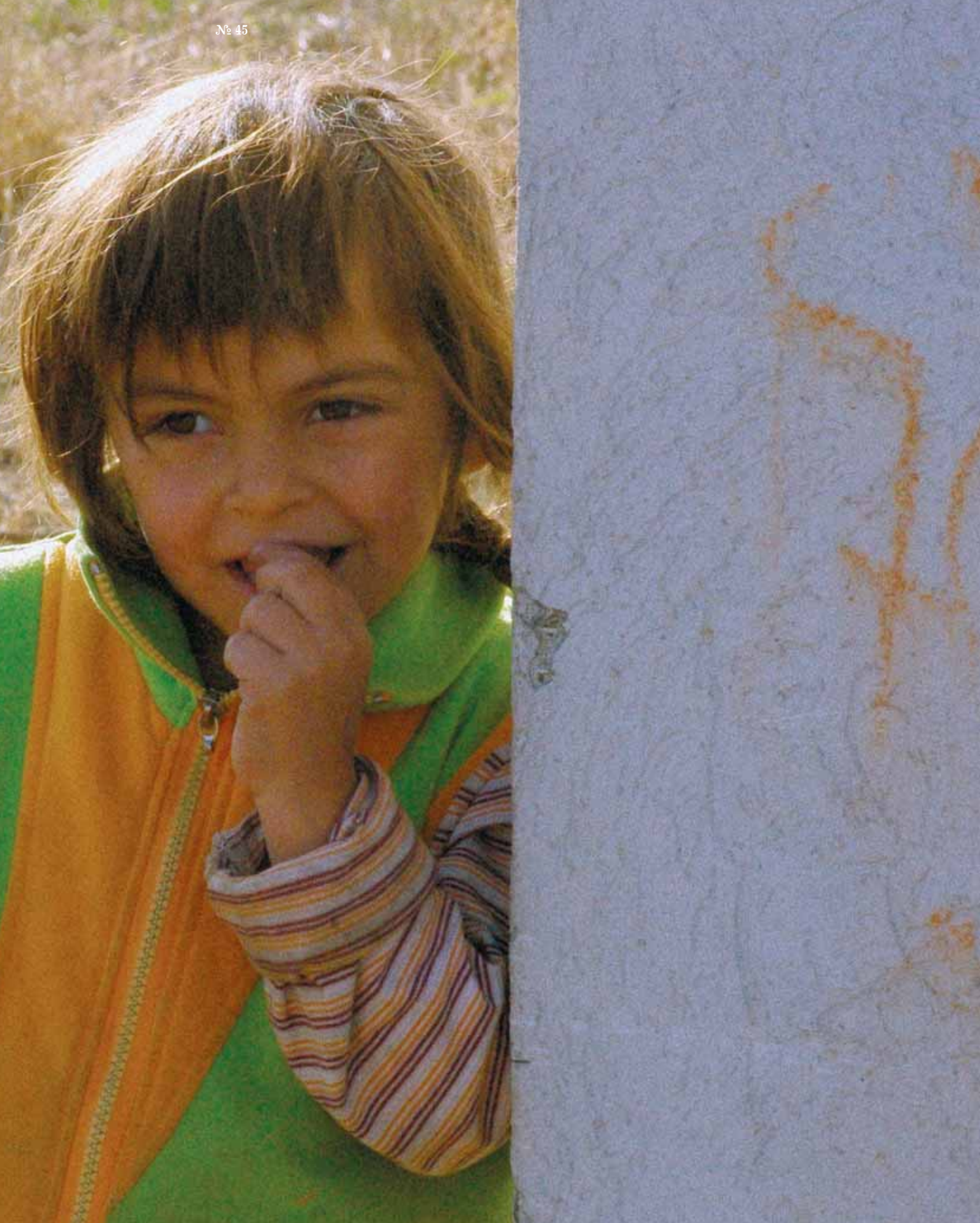
### **Social cohesion**

- Increased support for desegregation among local Romani and non-Romani communities.









# ANNEX 1: KEY EDUCATION INDICATORS

TABLE A1. National education indicators

INDICATOR (%)	ROMA		GENERAL POPULATION	
	Official data	Unofficial estimate	Official data	Unofficial estimate
1 Use of early care and education services (ages 0–3)	–	–	–	–
2 Enrollment in pre-primary education (ISCED 0)	–	–	–	–
3 Enrollment in first year of primary education (ISCED 1)	–	–	–	–
4 School-aged children in school (ISCED 1 and 2)	–	64% <sup>86</sup>	1,752,000 <sup>87</sup>	98.9% <sup>88</sup>
5 Children enrolling in primary education (ISCED 1) who do not complete the first cycle of compulsory education <sup>89</sup>	–	–	–	–
6 Children enrolling in primary education (ISCED 1) who do not complete the second cycle of compulsory education <sup>90</sup>	–	33.4% over 40; 23.1% under 40 <sup>91</sup>	–	17.7% over 40; 2% under 40 <sup>92</sup>
7 Children enrolling in primary education (ISCED 1) who do not complete the third cycle of compulsory education (if applicable)	–	Not applicable	Not applicable	–

<sup>86</sup> Figure covers enrollment in primary education only. See: Mircea Miclea (ed.), *România educației, România cercetării: Raportul Comisiei Prezidențiale pentru analiza și elaborarea politicilor din domeniile educației și cercetării* [Romania of education, Romania of research: Report of the Presidential Commission for the analysis and drafting of public policies in the fields of education and research] (Bucharest: Presidential Commission, 2007), p. 8.

<sup>87</sup> National Institute of Statistics, *România în cifre* [Romania in numbers] (Bucharest: National Institute of Statistics, 2010), p. 37.

<sup>88</sup> Figure covers enrollment in primary education only. See: Mircea Miclea (ed.), *România educației, România cercetării: Raportul Comisiei Prezidențiale pentru analiza și elaborarea politicilor din domeniile educației și cercetării* [Romania of education, Romania of research: Report of the Presidential Commission for the analysis and drafting of public policies in the fields of education and research] (Bucharest: Presidential Commission, 2007), p. 8.

<sup>89</sup> Expressed as a percentage of the total number of children who enroll in primary education.

<sup>90</sup> Expressed as a percentage of the total number of children who enroll in primary education.

<sup>91</sup> Gabriel Bădescu et al., *Barometrul Incluziunii Romilor* [Roma inclusion barometer] (Bucharest: Open Society Foundation, 2007), p. 82.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

INDICATOR (%)	ROMA		GENERAL POPULATION	
	Official data	Unofficial estimate	Official data	Unofficial estimate
8 Pupils in compulsory education (ISCED 1 and 2) attending special schools and classes	–	–	16.048% <sup>93</sup>	–
9 Pupils completing compulsory education in terminal lower secondary programs (ISCED 2C)	–	–	–	–
10 Graduates of compulsory education enrolling in upper secondary education (ISCED 3)	–	–	–	–
11 Enrollment in upper secondary technical or vocational education (ISCED 3C) not providing access to tertiary education	–	–	–	–
12 Completion of upper secondary education (ISCED 3)	–	2.2% over 40; 4.3% under 40 <sup>94</sup>	–	22.2% over 40; 25.3% under 40 <sup>95</sup>
13 Enrollment in post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4)	–	–	–	–
14 Completion of post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4)	–	–	–	–
15 Enrollment in tertiary education (ISCED 5 and 6)	–	–	891,000 <sup>96</sup>	–
16 Completion of tertiary education (ISCED 5 and 6) –	–	0.6% over 40; 0.8% under 40 <sup>97</sup>	–	8.2% over 40; 10.8% under 40 <sup>98</sup>

Note: Empty cells in the table below indicate that the corresponding data are unavailable.

<sup>93</sup> National Institute of Statistics, *Anuarul statistic al României* [Statistical Yearbook for Romania] (Bucharest: National Institute of Statistics, 2009).

<sup>94</sup> Gabriel Bădescu et al., *Barometrul Incluziunii Romilor* [Roma inclusion barometer] (Bucharest: Open Society Foundation, 2007), p. 82.

<sup>95</sup> Gabriel Bădescu et al., *Barometrul Incluziunii Romilor* [Roma inclusion barometer] (Bucharest: Open Society Foundation, 2007), p. 82.

<sup>96</sup> National Institute of Statistics, *România în cifre* [Romania in numbers] (Bucharest: National Institute of Statistics, 2010), p. 37.

<sup>97</sup> Gabriel Bădescu et al., *Barometrul Incluziunii Romilor* [Roma inclusion barometer] (Bucharest: Open Society Foundation, 2007), p. 82.

<sup>98</sup> Gabriel Bădescu et al., *Barometrul Incluziunii Romilor* [Roma inclusion barometer] (Bucharest: Open Society Foundation, 2007), p. 82.

TABLE A2. Students enrolled in reserved places for Romani students from 2000 to 2007

School year	School year							Total
	2000– 2001	2001– 2002	2002– 2003	2003– 2004	2004– 2005	2005– 2006	2006– 2007	
High school	69	192	424	699	996	1,087	1019	<b>4,486</b>
Vocational school	361	458	562	854	1,068	1,243	1,261	<b>5,807</b>
Total for high schools and vocational schools	430	650	986	1,553	2,064	2,330	2,280	<b>10,293</b>
Higher education	91	104	170	243	222	251	339	<b>1,420</b>

Source: Mihai Surdu and Judit Szira, Analysis of the Impact of Affirmative Action for Roma in High Schools, Vocational Schools and Universities (Budapest: Roma Education Fund, 2009).

TABLE A3. Distribution per specialization of the reserved places for Romani students in universities

Specialization	Number of students
Arts, sports, other	153
Economic sciences	141
Engineering	71
Humanistic sciences	271
Legal and administrative sciences	93
Medicine and pharmacy	22
Exact or applied sciences	34
Unavailable data	635
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,420</b>

Source: Surdu, Mihai, Szira, Judit (coordinators), Analysis of the Impact of Affirmative Action for Roma in High Schools, Vocational Schools and Universities (Budapest: Roma Education Fund, 2009).

# ANNEX 2: ADMINISTRATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

TABLE A4. Administration of public education

FUNCTION	RESPONSIBLE ORGANS BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION				
	Early childhood (ages 0–3) <sup>99</sup>	Pre-primary	Primary	Secondary	Higher
1 Establishes and closes institutions	– Undecided	– County School Inspectorate	– County School Inspectorate	– Country School Inspectorate	– Ministry of Education
2 Funds institutions	– Undecided	– State budget – Municipality	– State budget – Municipality	– State budget – Municipality	– State budget – Institution of higher education
3 Decides on admissions	– Undecided	– Kindergarten	– Primary school	– Secondary school	– Institution of higher education
4 Sets curriculum	– Ministry of Education	– National Center for Curriculum and Evaluation for Preteritary Education	– Ministry of Education	– Ministry of Education	– Institution of higher education
5 Assigns teachers to institutions	– Municipality – County School Inspectorates	– County School Inspectorates	– County School Inspectorates	– County School Inspectorates	– Institution of higher education
6 Assesses institutional performance	– Undecided	– Kindergarten director	– School director	– School director	– Institution of higher education – Ministry of Education

<sup>99</sup> Early childhood education was introduced by the Law on National Education 1/2011. The organization and funding of these educational units will be decided by the Romanian government within 12 months after the promulgation of the Law (that is, by January 2012).



FUNCTION	RESPONSIBLE ORGANS BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION				
	Early childhood (ages 0–3)	Pre-primary	Primary	Secondary	Higher
7 Assesses pupil performance	– Undecided	– Teacher	– Teachers	– Teachers	– Professors
8 Assesses teacher performance	– Undecided	– Kindergarten director	– School director	– School director	– Rector
9 Assesses director performance	– Undecided	– County school Inspectorate	– County school Inspectorate	– County school Inspectorate	– Faculty council – University senate
10 Establishes and closes special schools	– Undecided	– County school Inspectorate	– County school Inspectorate	– County school Inspectorate	–
11 Funds special schools	– Undecided	– County Council	– County Council	– County Council	–
12 Decides on special school admissions	– Undecided	– County Centers for Resources and Educational Assistance	– County Centers for Resources and Educational Assistance	– County Centers for Resources and Educational Assistance	–
13 Sets special education curriculum	– Undecided	– Ministry of Education	– Ministry of Education	– Ministry of Education	–

# ANNEX 3: STUDENT PERFORMANCE ON INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

Romania participated in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2000, 2006, and 2009. In each of the three rounds of testing in which the country participated, students from Romania performed at a statistically significant level below the OECD average on mathematics, reading, and science scales.

TABLE A5. Results of PISA 2000–2009

Area	Romania 2000		Romania 2006		Romania 2009		OECD 2009		Difference Slovakia – OECD average (2009)
	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	
<b>Mathematics</b>	426	4.3	415	4.2	427	3.4	496	0.5	-69
<b>Reading</b>	428	3.5	396	4.7	424	4.1	493	0.5	-69
<b>Science</b>	441	3.4	418	4.2	428	3.4	501	0.5	-73

source: National Evaluation and Examination Center; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.<sup>100</sup>

Slovakia has also participated in Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS) since 1995. Whereas the performance of students from Slovakia on the science scale has been above average in all four testing cycles, performance on the mathematics scale fell below the scale average for the first time in 2007.

<sup>100</sup> National Center for Evaluation and Testing, *Programul internațional OECD pentru evaluarea elevilor: Raport național [OECD International Programme for Student Assessment: National Report]* (Bucharest: National Center for Evaluation and Testing, 2002); Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *PISA 2006: Science Competences for Tomorrow's World – Volume 1: Analysis* (Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007); Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *PISA 2006: Science Competences for Tomorrow's World – Volume 2: Data/Données* (Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007); Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *PISA 2009 Results: Learning Trends* (Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010).

Romania has also participated in Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS) since 1995. Whereas the performance of students from Romania on both mathematics and science scales was consistent over a period of twelve years, it was also at a statistically significant level below the scale average in 2007.

TABLE A6. Results of TIMSS 1995–2007

Area	1995		1999		2003		2007		Scale average (2007)	Difference Romania – scale average (2007)
	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.		
<b>Mathematics</b>	474	4.6	472	5.8	475	4.8	461	4.1	500	-39
<b>Science</b>	471	5.1	472	5.8	470	4.9	462	3.9	500	-38

Source: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center.<sup>101</sup>

Romania also participated in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2001 and 2006. Whereas students from Romania scored slightly above the scale average in 2001, their scores fell below the average in 2006.

TABLE A7. Results of PIRLS 2001 and 2006

Area	2001		2006		Difference 2006–2001
	Mean	Scale average	Mean	Scale average	
<b>Combined reading literacy</b>	512	500	489	500	-23
<b>Literary subscale</b>	512	500	493	500	-19
<b>Informational subscale</b>	512	500	487	500	-25

Source: National Center for Education Statistics.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Ina V.S. Mullis et al., *TIMSS 2003 International Mathematics Report: Findings from IEA's Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study at the Fourth and Eighth Grades* (Chestnut Hill: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2004); Ina V.S. Mullis et al., *TIMSS 2003 International Science Report: Findings from IEA's Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study at the Fourth and Eighth Grades* (Chestnut Hill: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2004); Michael O. Martin et al., *TIMSS 2007 International Mathematics Report: Findings from IEA's Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study at the Fourth and Eighth Grades* (Boston: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2008); Michael O. Martin et al., *TIMSS 2007 International Science Report: Findings from IEA's Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study at the Fourth and Eighth Grades* (Boston: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2008).

<sup>102</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, *The Reading Literacy of U.S. Fourth-Grade Students in an International Context: Results From the 2001 and 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 2007).

# ANNEX 4: LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT FOR IMPROVING ROMNI EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN ROMANIA

## Assistance and Support to the Romani Community

### 1. Producing Romani professionals in education.

Specific affirmative action measures should be created and implemented to attract Roma into the teaching profession.

### 2. Supporting Romani parents and community leaders in recognizing and engaging key education issues:

- Encouraging Romani parents to play an active role in school boards and parent associations
- Detecting and acting on discrimination in schools

## Implementation Support to Educational Authorities

### 1. Supporting ongoing developments in education, ensuring that Roma are not left out or jeopardized by them:

- Providing technical assistance to institutions engaged in teacher training
- Providing technical assistance to schools in implementing intercultural curricula

### 2. Increasing the focus on quality improvement in the education system:

- Extending coverage of quality preschool education to Romani communities
- Establishing a system of mentoring and additional classes for Romani children in grades 7-9

## Policy Development with the Government

### 1. Supporting progressive per-pupil school financing.

- Financing inequities should be monitored with an eye to possible adjustments to per capita financing formulas in order to ensure that schools serving Romani communities have access to adequate resources needed to provide quality education.

### 2. Providing social support for participation in education:

- Ensuring that “Milk and Bread” delivers quality nutrition according to schedule
- Reviewing and revising the size of the benefit offered through “Money for High School”

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**Assistance and Support to the Romani Community**

**3. Building an education support system for Romani children at the family level:**

- Motivating parents to enroll children on time in preschool education
- Creating time and space for homework

**Implementation Support to Educational Authorities**

**3. Supporting cooperation among Romani NGOs, schools and local government:**

- Sharing experience
- Assistance in joint activities
- Facilitating collaboration to overcome segregation in education

**Policy Development with the Government**

**3. Promoting Romani input in education policy:**

- Building the capacity of the National Agency for Roma in the area of education
  - Facilitating dialogue between the National Agency for Roma and other relevant government institutions on education-related issues
-

# ANNEX 5: CENSUS RESULTS

TABLE A8. Population structure by ethnicity (2002 census)

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Absolute size</b>	<b>Relative size (percent)</b>
Romanians	19,399,597	89.5
Hungarians	1,431,807	6.6
Roma/Gypsies	535,250	2.5
Ukrainians	61,098	0.3
Germans	59,764	0.3
Russians-Lipovenes	35,791	0.2
Turks	32,098	0.2
Tatars	23,935	0.1
Serbs	22,561	0.1
Slovaks	17,226	0.1
Other ethnicities	13,653	0.1

Source: National Statistical Institute.

## STRUCTURE OF THE ROMANI POPULATION BY PRIMARY LANGUAGE

From the total number of Romanians of Romani ethnicity, the structure by language is the following: 43.97 percent declared that they speak Romani, 4.47 percent speak Hungarian, and 51.47 percent speak Romanian (with the remaining 0.09 percent speaking other languages).





# ANNEX 6: RELEVANT PROJECTS FINANCED WITH EU STRUCTURAL FUNDS

The projects in the table below were funded through the Sectorial Operational Program Human Resource Development 2007–2013 (POSDRU), under the major domain of intervention (DMI) 2.2, “Prevention and correction of early drop out.”

TABLE A9. Projects funded under DMI 2.2, “Prevention and correction of early drop out”

Project title	Beneficiary	Eligible value (RON)
Choose school	Romanian Patriarchy	4,651,252
Strategic steps for improving access to education for Roma children	Romani Criss—Roma Center for Social Intervention and Studies	18,026,622
Romani children’s education —The way to a stable job	National Agency for Roma	18,292,176
School—A chance for everybody	National Agency for Roma	9,406,320
Quality education —A step forward for equality	Roma Center “Amare Promentza”	3,156,889
Roma children prepare for kindergarten	Save the Children Romania	1,529,014
Choose school	World Vision Foundation Romania	19,096,182
All in kindergarten, all in first grade	Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sport	18,500,000
School after school—	Roma Education Fund Romania	20,856,141
The first step for school and professional success		
Equal opportunities in education for an inclusive society	Roma Education Fund Romania	20,217,610

Source: Sectorial Operational Program Human Resource Development.

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