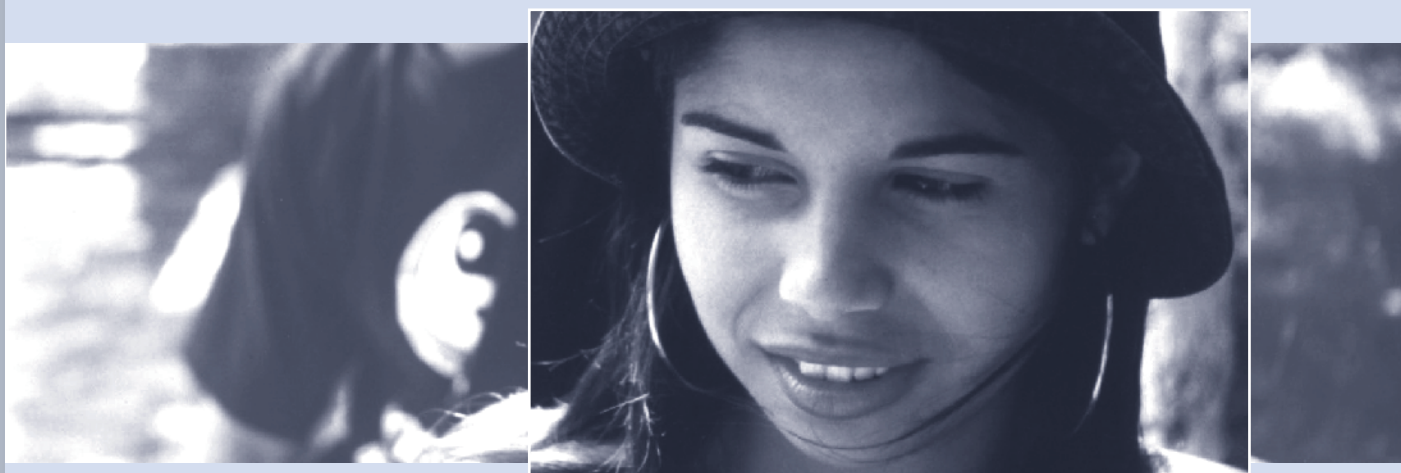


Country Assessment  
and the Roma Education Fund's  
Strategic Directions

## Advancing Education of Roma in Serbia



# **Advancing Education of Roma in Serbia**

Country Assessment  
and the Roma Education Fund's Strategic Directions

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# Preface

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

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

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

# Acknowledgements

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

8 The main author of this document is Tünde Kovács-Cerović, senior advisor at the Roma Education Fund. She received contributions from Petar Antić, Roger Grawe, Vivien Gyuris, Marijana Jašarević, Nataša Kočić-Rakočević, Alexandre Marc, and Dragica Pavlović-Babić.

Tom Popper did the language editing.

# 1. Executive Summary

## Political, Economic, and Social Context

Serbia is a lower-middle-income country with a gross domestic product per capita of \$3,243 in 2005.<sup>1</sup> Since 2001, after a delayed transition, the country has progressed steadily toward a modern market economy. Macroeconomic stability, achieved swiftly in 2001 and 2002, was broadly maintained. During the first five years of transition, the economy grew on average 5.5 percent per annum, peaking in 2004 with 9.3 percent GDP growth, one of the highest growth rates among transition economies. In 2005, growth remained strong at 6.3 percent.

Poverty and unemployment represent a major concern in Serbia. During the past decade, a long period of instability, wars, international isolation, and economic turmoil adversely affected the living standards of a vast majority of the population. The country's poor economic performance in this period led to a decrease in real earnings and was accompanied by deterioration in social protection and health services.

As a result, poverty rose sharply in the 1990s. Although only 10 percent of the population falls below the poverty line,<sup>2</sup> one third of the country's inhabitants live just above the poverty line. These people remain in danger of slipping into absolute poverty if any adverse economic developments occur.

Serbia's population is somewhat less than 8 million, with 108,000 registered Roma inhabitants, but estimates put the real Roma population at 450,000-500,000, or 6.2 percent of Serbia's total population. This estimate is used by the government and civil society to address the uncertainty in defining the real demographic data of Roma in Serbia. The population count is difficult, due to refugee movements in the '90s. Hence the Roma population of Serbia consists of three major social groups: (i) native Roma, (ii) Roma refugees and internally displaced persons, and (iii) Roma readmitted to Serbia.

Fifty percent of Serbia's Roma live in almost 600 Roma settlements scattered throughout the country, with major concentrations around Belgrade, in Vojvodina and in Southeast Serbia. About 300 of these settlements are in urban areas, the remainder in suburban or rural areas. Forty-four percent of the Roma settlements are unhygienic slums, and only 11 percent are developed. Roma settlements are beset by legalization barriers and, in urban areas, resettlements.

The poverty rate among Roma is significantly higher than among the Serbian population in general. Among poor Roma, women and children are particularly at risk, with poverty rising significantly for larger households and those headed by females. Poverty is also closely correlated with the education and employment status of the head of household. Roma face significantly higher unemployment rates across all age cohorts and all educational outcomes than non-Roma. Roma are overrepresented in unskilled jobs (which account for 90 percent of employed Roma) and in seasonal and part-time work. Roma unemployment is also significantly higher across all educational levels, a situation that indicates Roma – even those relatively few who complete secondary or tertiary education – face serious obstacles in realizing the returns of education.

<sup>1</sup> World Bank (2006): *Serbia Country Brief 2006*, <http://www.worldbank.org.yu>.

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



Political representation of the Roma has been rather weak in Serbia. However, from 2007 there are two Roma members of parliament and some Roma representatives are active in municipal councils. The most important Roma political organisation, the National Council of the Roma National Minority, was founded in 2003, based on the provision of the *Federal Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities*. During the '90s, an active NGO sector emerged, and this helped improve the situation of the Roma in Serbia. The majority of these NGOs are cultural and artistic associations, while around 30 of them deal with the implementation of different Roma-support projects.

## Education

The education system in Serbia has been in transformation since 2001, facing all the typical challenges of a prolonged transition process. Developments are underway in almost all areas of the system, with some areas more advanced and others facing persistent impediments.

The most pertinent problem is the low enrolment and very high dropout rate of Roma children, compounded by their misplacement in special schools and classes. The Roma in Serbia face a variety of barriers to education, falling into the following categories:

- ⇒ Serious barriers exist for the enrolment of Roma children into pre-school and primary education, due to lack of financial means of the Roma family, lack of space in pre-school institutions, lack of residence permits of a significant proportion of Roma and conditionality of enrolment upon a medical check-up and assessment of school-readiness.
- ⇒ There is a systemic gap in education provision affecting Roma. Enrolment into primary education is age-bound: until the age of 8½, children are eligible for late enrolment into first grade, and only after the age of 16 they are eligible for enrolment into adult education schools. Many Roma children fall into the gap between 8½ and 16 years, and stay out of school permanently.
- ⇒ School management is unsupportive for inclusive education; discrimination in schools is often overlooked. School inspectors are usually not trained to detect discrimination or exclusion during their school visits. Only around 10 percent of the schools of Serbia have school development plans which also aim to implement socially inclusive programmes, addressing the needs of Roma children in non-discriminatory ways.
- ⇒ There is a lack of qualified teachers trained to work in multicultural and multiethnic environments, in particular among Roma children. The system of Roma teaching assistants or mediators is being established only currently.
- ⇒ The school curriculum is demanding in terms of requiring excessive factuality and preliminary skills and knowledge from the students. Also, there is a lack of institutional support for helping attain the necessary language skills for Roma children speaking exclusively the Romanes language or Roma returnees from EU countries speaking other European languages.
- ⇒ Lack of free textbook provision.
- ⇒ Performance assessments are biased: Roma children usually become underachievers in school tests and exams, and thus they usually do not pursue further education. A big part of the problem is that the assessment system is culturally and linguistically biased, and there is no systemic support provided to help Roma children overcome these barriers.
- ⇒ School financing is unsupportive of inclusive education: Financing schemes are not adjusted to demographic conditions, schools in poor municipalities with major Roma concentrations are unable to cover basic education costs, pre-school education is not free of charge, free school

meals are not provided, financial incentives are linked to special education, and the education and social welfare financing schemes are separated.

In summary, the Roma in Serbia face a discouraging set of enrolment barriers to education, and, consequently, their participation in education is one of the lowest in South Eastern Europe. Due to low attendance, segregated education in the system is not yet a major issue, except in special schools, which are mainly composed of Roma students. However, as there currently is no legal anti-segregation legislation it is expected that this issue will surface immediately after some of the enrolment barriers and issues are resolved, and it needs to be mitigated early on.

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

As of February 2007, the REF had received around 30 project proposals from Serbia, and of these, eight have been approved. Two projects have already been completed and will be soon evaluated. Currently, there are six active projects, for a total amount to €1,022,864.

The first project on Expanding Access to Pre-school Education of Roma Children, *vis-à-vis* the support received from the REF, offers small grants (€1,000-€3,000) and professional support to 30 educational institutions implementing Roma inclusion projects at the pre-school level. This project has been already completed.

The second project aims at implementing pilot programmes in 20 schools, to develop a new functional basic education curriculum for 250 second-chance young adult students who have not completed basic education. The project provides both general education and first professional certificates in 15 occupations, selected on the basis of local labour market needs.

The third project supports participatory research into barriers to, and potentials of, Roma education in the multiethnic region of Vojvodina. The research involves almost 20 focus groups and has the objective of improving Roma education.

The fourth project provides support for a pilot programme to include Roma parents from five Roma settlements in Valjevo in parent councils, school boards and the Council for the Education of Roma.

The fifth project aims at addressing the issue of desegregation and discrimination of Roma children in the Serbian education system. The project is training school inspectors and Roma monitors to help overcome the implementation gap between the Action Plan for Education of Roma adopted by the government and everyday practices in educational institutions.

The final project supported by the REF in Serbia promotes the establishment of a novel university-based interdisciplinary programme and mentorship scheme, which will become institutionalized in Novi Sad University and can serve as a model for other higher education institutions.

## Strategic Directions for Future REF Activities in Serbia

1. Considering the enrolment barriers of Roma children and the multiple incentives for dropping out, the REF's long-term strategic directions in Serbia will be as follows:
  - ⇒ To help provoke the necessary changes in the legal and institutional framework to reduce drop out rates, and include children out of school especially those aged 9-16.

- ⇒ To provide support for the inclusion of Roma children in the compulsory preschool education programme started in September 2006.
- ⇒ To develop scholarship and mentorship support for Roma in secondary education
- ⇒ To help address the issue of overrepresentation of Roma in special schools, by exploring alternatives for mainstreaming children into an inclusive education system and eventually abolishing the special education system.
- ⇒ To support donor coordination of Roma education activities in Serbia.

2. Assistance and support to the Roma community should include the following potential activities:

- ⇒ Training Roma professionals in education.
- ⇒ Supporting institutional developments and capacity building of the Roma communities involved in education related activities.
- ⇒ Finding adequate mechanisms for complementing the lack of support available for Roma children, such as supporting Roma initiatives for promoting the active engagement of Roma parents in the education of their children.
- ⇒ Supporting initiatives helping Roma students cope with negative experiences in education.

3. The REF's policy development support to the government should include the following potential activities:

- ⇒ Institutionalizing affirmative action for secondary and tertiary education and reviewing new legislation currently in preparation.
- ⇒ Developing a per-student financing mechanism, including the adoption of an adequate financial coefficient for Roma students.
- ⇒ Supporting fiscal decentralisation, and securing adequate revenues for poorer local authorities with high Roma populations.
- ⇒ Supporting the new policy on civil registration, abolishing all enrolment barriers stemming from registration and identification gaps for Roma.
- ⇒ Introducing education in Serbian as a second language for Roma students.
- ⇒ Providing additional classes for students in need, as a systemic, legally binding provision of the education system.
- ⇒ Promoting municipal level school inspections for detecting, monitoring, and preventing discrimination and segregation.
- ⇒ Implementing the reform of vocational educational training with modular instruction, rules allowing easy re-entry into the system, and a provision making it possible for students to acquire qualifications at all levels.
- ⇒ Using school development planning and school self-evaluation to support inclusive education.
- ⇒ Ensuring that in-service teacher training includes quality programmes to raise teachers' sensitivity and enhance skills required for working in diversified classes.

4. The REF's analytical and advisory work in Serbia will concentrate on the following areas:

- ⇒ Segregated Roma education in Serbia: Analyzing the mechanisms underlying poor practices and recommending possible strategies resulting in transferring children from special schools and classes to regular education.

- ⇒ The possibilities of Roma parent involvement in the Serbian context: Although there is a growing experience with parent involvement as an indispensable support mechanism for successful education of students through many Roma NGO projects, there is a need for a clear overview of possible practices coupled with an assessment of their long-term effectiveness, based on which sustainable approaches could be built.
- ⇒ Legal regulation of enrolment for 9 to 16-year-olds and the establishment of an effective system of education provision for late enrolers and children who dropped out.
- ⇒ Curriculum development for teacher education universities that is pertinent to Roma students.

## 2. Country Profile

### Roma Population in Serbia

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Based on the last census, which was made in 2002 and does not include data from Kosovo, the population of Serbia is 7,498,001, of which Serbs constitute 82.86 percent of the population, Hungarians 3.91 percent, Bosnians 1.81 percent, the Roma population 1.44 percent, and Yugoslavs (self-declared) 1.08 percent. Groups with less than 1 percent include: Croats, Montenegrins, Albanians, Slovaks, Vlachs, Romanians, Macedonians, Bulgarians, Bunjevci, Muslims, Rusyns, Slovenians, Ukrainians, Goranci, Germans, Russians, and Czechs.<sup>3</sup>

Out of the total number of population registered during the 2002 census, 56.8 percent live in an urban setting. The cohort size at the age of 7 is currently about 86,000, and in recent years it has been declining by about 1,100 each year. The gross domestic product per capita in 2005 was \$3,243,<sup>4</sup> and it has been growing rapidly since 2000, at almost 5 percent per annum. Serbia receives relatively significant international aid, which amounted to \$146 per capita in 2003.

The expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP has risen to 3.9 percent in 2005,<sup>5</sup> from a low of 2.5 percent in 2000. However it is still well below the 1997 level of 4.4 percent and below the norm for Serbia's income level.

Population data based on the official census from 2002 register 108,400 Roma inhabitants.<sup>6</sup> Unofficial estimates by nongovernmental organisations put Serbia's population of Roma as high as 800,000, but a consolidated estimate of 450,000-500,000 Roma in Serbia is currently used, by both the government and the civil sector. This would mean that Roma constitute about 6.2 percent of the population. Based on this estimate, the size of the Roma cohort at age 7 is currently 10,000.

The Roma population is one of the youngest populations in Serbia. The most numerous age group in the Roma population is children up to 14 years of age, which make up 40.7 percent of the total. Some 31 percent of Serbia's Roma are young people aged 15 to 24, and only around 4 percent of the Roma population belong to the group older than 60 years of age.<sup>7</sup> The relative youth of the Roma population clearly contrasts with the age of Serbia's general population, of which only 22.3 percent is 0-19 years of age and 23.1 percent are over 60.<sup>8</sup>

Uncertainty with respect to demographic data in Serbia is worsened by important population mobility during the 1990s mostly related to refugee movements. Roma refugees who arrived to Serbia rarely got registered. Furthermore, after 2000, tens of thousands of asylum-seeking Roma in Western countries were readmitted to Serbia. Hence the Roma population in Serbia consists of:

<sup>3</sup> Data obtained from the Population census in Serbia without Kosovo in 2002, the Government of the Republic of Serbia, <http://www.srbija.sr.gov.yu/pages/article.php?id=37>.

<sup>4</sup> Source: World Bank Serbia Country Brief 2006.

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF: State of children in Serbia 2006.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.szs.sv.gov.yu/popis/popis>.

<sup>7</sup> Strategy for Decreasing Poverty in Serbia, Addendums and Annexes, *Poverty Decrease in Roma Population* (page. 33), Belgrade 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Census data from 2002.

- ⇒ Native Roma, speaking Romanes and/or Serbian or, in some cases, Hungarian.
- ⇒ Refugees and internally displaced persons, speaking Romanes and/or Serbo-Croatian, or for a large percentage, Albanian.
- ⇒ Readmittees, speaking Romanes and/or European Union languages especially German.

### *Poverty and Inequities*

Fifty percent of Serbia's Roma live in the 573 Roma settlements scattered throughout the country, with major concentrations around Belgrade, in Vojvodina and in Southeast Serbia (see map in Annex). About 300 of these settlements are in urban areas, the remainder are in suburban or rural areas. Forty-four percent of these settlements are unhygienic slums, and only 11 percent are developed. Roma settlements face problems with achieving legalization and, in urban areas, they face the threat of resettlement.<sup>9</sup>

It is estimated that around two thirds of the Roma population live in the most difficult accommodation conditions and the worst environmental surroundings.<sup>10</sup> Around 80 percent of the Roma population lives in the poorest areas and settlements, a ratio that is worse than any of Serbia's other ethnic communities.<sup>11</sup> The worst and most endangered settlements are in most cases inhabited by Roma. These are settlements of extreme poverty, with unhealthy conditions and bad or no public utilities.<sup>12</sup> It is estimated that 35 percent of the Roma settlements do not have a water system, 65 percent do not have a sewage system, 45 percent do not have proper streets, and around 10 percent do not have an electric supply network.<sup>13</sup>

According to recent assessments, Roma are significantly poorer than the Serbian population in general. Based on recent World Bank estimates 60.5 percent of the Roma population are considered "very poor," as compared to 6.1 percent of the general population. When these numbers are adjusted to indicate the depth of poverty, the gap is even greater. Among poor Roma, women and children are at particular risk, with poverty rising significantly for larger households and for female-headed households. Poverty is also closely correlated with the education and employment status of the head of the household. A new UNICEF study<sup>14</sup> indicates especially high poverty level for Roma children: 66.6 percent of children from Roma settlements and even 83 percent of those living in slums are under the poverty line. Roma face significantly higher unemployment rates across all age cohorts and all educational levels than non-Roma, with rates 2.5 times the general average for the prime working age cohort of 35-44 years. Even employed Roma are more vulnerable, with only 20 percent of Roma household heads having a full-time job compared to 60 percent for the general population. Roma are overrepresented in unskilled jobs, which are held by 90 percent of employed Roma, and in seasonal and part-time work. Roma unemployment is also significantly higher across all educational levels – a situation that indicates Roma face serious

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and NGO Center for Ethnicity Research, Belgrade (2002): *Roma Settlements, Living Conditions and Possibilities for Integration of Roma in Serbia*.

<sup>10</sup> Mitrović, A., (1990): *On the bottom – Roma Population on the Edge of Poverty*, Naučna knjiga, Belgrade.

<sup>11</sup> Macura, V., Petovar, K., Vujović, S., (1997): *Belgrade Poor Areas – Review of the Condition and Possibilities of Improving Living Conditions*, IAUS, Belgrade.

<sup>12</sup> Petrović, M., (2002): *Possibility of Solving the Slum Problem*, The draft version of the General plan for Belgrade, City planning institution of Belgrade.

<sup>13</sup> Jaksić, B., Basić, G., (2002): *Roma Settlement, Living Conditions and Possibility of Integration of Roma in Serbia*, Centre for ethnicity research, OXFAM.

<sup>14</sup> UNICEF (2007): *State of Children in Serbia 2006*, pp. 25.

obstacles to realizing the returns to education, even among those relatively few graduating from secondary and tertiary institutions.

The Roma population is highly represented in those professions that are the lowest on the stratification level. Little more than 40 percent of Roma are engaged in working class employment, mostly manual. There is higher representation in the group of “experts and artists,” including musicians and other artists, regardless of their level of formal education. However, the greatest percentage of Roma is engaged in occupations that do not require any professional expertise, such as employees engaged in maintenance of facilities and cleaning, carriers, warehouse persons, construction workers, etc. These are all, as a rule, underpaid occupations.<sup>15</sup>

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Roma are four times more likely to be affected by chronic illness and disease than the general population. The infant and the under 5 mortality rate is 26 per thousand and 29 per thousand respectively, almost three times as much as for the general population in Serbia.<sup>16</sup>

Among the numerous health problems present in the Roma population, the most common are:<sup>17</sup> a significant number of women give birth at home with very poor sanitary conditions; a large number of children are not vaccinated; tuberculosis is a very common chronic condition; many children have serious skin diseases, and asthma is a common condition both with children and adults.

<sup>15</sup> Strategy for decreasing poverty in Serbia, Addendums and Annexes, *Poverty Decrease in Roma Population* (page. 33), Belgrade 2002.

<sup>16</sup> UNICEF (2007): State of Children in Serbia 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Strategy for decreasing poverty in Serbia, Addendums and Annexes, *Poverty Decrease in Roma Population* (page. 33), Belgrade 2002.

### 3. Political, Economic and Social Situation

#### Government Structure, Mandate and Finance

The last parliamentary elections in Serbia took place in January 2007, and at the moment this document was being written negotiations were in progress between the parties for the establishment of the new government. In Autumn 2006 also a new Constitution was adopted.

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The previous Serbian Government has been in place since February 2004. It was composed of representatives of three political groups from the conservative centre: the Serbian Democratic Party, the G 17 Plus Party, and the coalition of the Serbian Renewal Movement and New Serbia. As a minority Government (101 seats of 250) it was also supported by the Socialist Party of Serbia. The line ministries were distributed among the coalition members, and the senior management (ministers and deputies) of respective ministries are most often members of the same party.

The Serbian government has pursued a programme of fiscal and structural adjustment since 2001, with a positive impact on overall growth. This programme has been strongly supported by the international community, including the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and other partners. One of the key pillars of the programme has been a reduction in the overall size of government. This is logical given that Serbia continues to have the largest public sector in the region. Reductions have taken place through a strict programme of fiscal adjustment, which has resulted in a shift from a budget deficit of 3 percent of GDP in 2003 to a surplus of 2.5 percent of GDP projected for 2006. The improved budgetary situation has been achieved through a combination of revenue growth, including the introduction of value added tax in 2005, and expenditure restraint: Expenditures fell almost 4 percentage points during this period, with the greatest decrease in transfers and subsidies and also substantial reductions in the government salary bill as well. Given that overall demand in the economy continues to be strong, resulting in significant pressure on Serbia's external accounts, government finances are expected to continue to remain very tight, and the increases in revenues will likely be channeled largely into government savings, with small increases in public investment. In this environment, there will be little scope for new programmes that are not compensated by reductions elsewhere in the budget. The education sector, which takes up a substantial share of the government wage bill, can be expected to face continuing pressure for efficiency gains.

Serbia currently has a highly centralized government structure in terms of both finances and responsibilities. Municipalities and cities have yet to be assigned major responsibilities for service delivery or ownership of public assets, such as schools and hospitals. As a result, the share of local revenue in GDP is low, around 6 percent. The bulk of these resources – 80 percent – are transferred from the central authorities, and half of that amount is subject to the Annual Law on Tax Sharing, the result of a highly political negotiation. This system fosters great inequality in the per-capita revenues received by municipalities. The upper quartile of municipalities receive more than twice the per-capita revenue of the bottom quartile, and the four cities receive more than twice the per-capita revenue of the top quarter of smaller municipalities. Discussions are currently underway to reform local government finances and to increase the substantive responsibility of local authorities. Given the inequities in the current system, there is a danger that poorer localities with large concentrations of Roma could find themselves even worse off financially, while being asked to bear greater responsibilities.



*Responsibility for Education*

The Ministry of Education and Sports is responsible for the entire education system, from pre-school to the university level, both for general education and vocational education and training. For the Province of Vojvodina, where there is a large ethnic Hungarian population, certain administrative, inspection and management responsibilities for education are held by the Provincial Secretariat for Education, which is part of the Vojvodina Government. For education in minority languages, the National Minority Councils have authority over curriculum and textbook approval in subject areas of relevance to minorities. For Roma, this responsibility goes to the education committee of the National Council of the Roma National Minority.

Neither the ministry nor the secretariat has a Department for Minorities or Roma. In the ministry there is one Roma advisor.

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**Roma Representation in Government/Parliament**

There are 18 registered Roma political parties in Serbia. Two of these parties, Unija Roma Srbije and Romska Partija, are active, but until 2007, none of the Roma parties were represented in parliament or the government. Unija Roma Srbije and Romska Partija participated in the parliamentary elections held in 2007, and, for the first time, both Roma parties won one seat each in parliament. This accomplishment was made possible partly due to Article 81 of the Law on Election of the Members of the Parliament stating no 5 percent of the vote limit for minorities to gain entry into parliament. But the election of Roma members of parliament was also the result of changes within the Roma community: Roma are beginning more and more to vote for their political representatives, which was not the case until now. There are also Roma representatives in several municipal councils.

**Responsibility for Roma Affairs and the Decade**

Before the split between Serbia and Montenegro, the national coordinator for the Decade of Roma Inclusion was the Deputy Minister for Human and Minority Rights, a ministry on the Serbia and Montenegro Union level. A Secretariat for the Roma National Strategy and an Office for Roma National Strategy was situated in this ministry.

With the separation of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro after the 2006 referendum in Montenegro, the Ministry for Human and Minority rights ceased to exist. A newly established<sup>18</sup> Department for Human and Minority Rights in the Government took over the activities of the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and the activities of the Secretariat for the Roma National Strategy – including coordination of the implementation of the action plans for the Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005-2015.

At the level of the Serbian Government, there is a Council for National Minorities,<sup>19</sup> which includes the National Council of the Roma National Minority. The Council for National Minorities

<sup>18</sup> Based on a Decree of the Government of the Republic of Serbia reached on June 8, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> The Council consists of the ministers in charge of the ministries relevant for the national minorities' issues and presidents of the national councils, secretaries and two additional persons. The president of the Council is the president of the Government of Serbia.

serves as the contact point on Roma issues for the prime minister. Most Decade-related activities are coordinated in close cooperation between the Secretariat/Office for the Roma National Strategy, the president of the Roma Council and the Government Coordinator for the Minority Councils, involving also the working groups for the for Decade of Roma Inclusion Action Plans. Roma NGOs have strong representation in these working groups.

In the Vojvodina Government, the Secretariat for Minority Rights has recently also set up a Roma Unit, with the aim of coordinating activities related to the Decade.

The City of Belgrade has established a Coordination Centre and the Council for Roma Inclusion. In a number of municipalities in Serbia, coordinators for Roma issues are being hired.

There are currently no data on the financing of the Decade for Roma Inclusion available.

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## **Status with Key International and Regional Partners**

When it comes to international organisations, Serbia is currently only a member of the Council of Europe and the United Nations – in both cases, the country gained membership in the early part of the new millennium.

The EU accession process for Serbia is in its beginning phase: The feasibility study was accepted in spring 2005, and negotiations started in autumn of the same year, but later stopped. There are several conditions to the accession process, including cooperation with the War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague. Serbia is not participating in any EU organisations (except for the Stability Pact), and the country is not eligible for EU programmes in education, except Tempus. EU funds have been accessed through a special programme, CARDS, administered through the European Agency for Reconstruction.

In May 2006, the Union of Serbia and Montenegro was terminated, which resulted in Serbia gaining the status of an independent state in June 2006. The status of Serbia is expected to face additional challenges in the near future, due to possible independence for Kosovo.

## **Political Opposition and Its Relationship to Roma Issues**

In the period of the 2004-2007 parliament there were three major political opposition parties represented: the right-wing Serbian Radical Party, which was in government during the '90s and was seen as responsible for the war in ex-Yugoslavia, the Democratic Party, which was in government in 2000-2004, is currently the majority party in the governing coalition in Vojvodina and in about 50 percent of the municipalities, and is the party of the current president of Serbia, and the left-wing Socialist Party of Serbia, which was the governing party continuously until 2000. Most of the preparatory activities of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, including the development of the action plans, were organised and coordinated during the term of the Government 2001-2004. Hence, there still is a certain commitment of the members of the then ruling Democratic Party to Roma integration, and this commitment is also visible on the municipal level.

The Radical Party has the reputation of being a nationalist right-wing party, but there is no active anti-Roma policy visible in their agenda.

## Anti-Bias and Anti-Discrimination Legislation

Serbia and Montenegro abide by the following international laws: the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education. Domestically, however there is as yet no general legislation nor regulations against discrimination. A law against discrimination has been prepared but has not yet been presented to the parliament. The text of this legislation, offering effective protection against discrimination, has been prepared by the Institute for Comparative Law. An expert committee of the Council of Europe has given a positive opinion on the draft; but the institutional initiative for presenting it to the parliament is still lacking.

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One paragraph in the Law on the Systemic Foundations of Education (2003, Article 46) deals with the prevention of discrimination in education, but data on the frequency and effectiveness of its implementation are not available.

## Civil Society

### *History and Linguistic Characteristics of the Serbian Roma Population*

The Roma population inhabited Serbia in the period of the Ottoman empire, but there are indication that they already lived in this region under the medieval Byzantine rule in the middle of the 11th century, and between 1289 and 1309 they also populated present Macedonia.<sup>20</sup>

For the most part, Roma were Christians, but under the Ottoman rule, a large number of Roma converted to Islam. Within Turkish sources there is a separate mention of Christian Roma and Muslim Roma and there are evidence that within Muslim society, Muslim Roma constituted a separate community. The main professional occupations of the Roma at that time were blacksmith, horse traders, and musicians.<sup>21</sup>

The rights and obligations of the Roma population in the south Slavic countries under the Ottoman rule were defined by social and legal regulations that were valid for all citizens of the Turkish Empire. However, there were some obligations that were imposed only to the Roma, and the obligations of Christian Roma differed from those of Muslim Roma. Roma were obliged to pay special duties for instances, a so called "Gypsy tax," which remained valid even after Serbia's liberation from the Turks. Roma were exempted from this tax duty in 1884.<sup>22</sup>

During the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Roma were not included among the national minorities. The first organisation identified with the Belgrade Roma, was established in 1927 and known as "The first Serbian-Gypsy institution for collective support in cases of death and illness." In 1935, the "Association of the Belgrade Gypsies-Roma Bibija Tetkica," was established.<sup>23</sup> The first issue of first private newspaper for Roma in the Balkans, "Romano Lil" was published in Belgrade in March 1935.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Rajko Djurić (1987): *Roma Migrations*, Belgrade, BIGZ.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Dragoslav Acković (2000): *Gypsies-Roma in the Past and Today*, "Self organisation of the Belgrade Roma between the two world wars," Belgrade.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

After 1941, genocide of Roma and Jews started in Serbia. However, due to lack of complete and organised archives, the exact number of Roma killed is unknown.<sup>25</sup>

Following the Second World War Roma cultural activities developed fast. With the establishment of the association “Rom” in Belgrade on June 1, 1969, the representatives of the Roma population came forward with a clearly defined programme and political demands. This association contributed to the creation of a more favorable atmosphere for Roma and initiated the process of identity building among the Roma. In 1974 the union of the Roma associations of Republic of Serbia, consisting of 40 Roma associations, was established.<sup>26</sup> At that time, the first publications in the Romanes language appeared and the TV and radio started broadcasting shows in Romanes.<sup>27</sup>

Although the Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia treated the Roma better than other East European regimes, the Roma were the poorest in the country.

The Roma groups that live in Serbia are the Grubets, Arlias,<sup>28</sup> Lovars,<sup>29</sup> and some others smaller group. A Banat Grubet dialect is used in Vojvodina, while Arlia is mainly used in southern Serbia.<sup>30</sup> Lovars are another Roma group settled in Vojvodina. According to data of the latest census, around 76 percent of Roma listed the Romanes language as their mother tongue.<sup>31</sup>

There are almost 300 registered associations of citizens in Serbia engaged in Roma issues. However, most of these organisations are not active. There are two types of associations of citizens in the Roma community: (i) traditional cultural and artistic associations – organisations that are supporting Roma identity building; and (ii) expert project-oriented organisations. During the '90s, in parallel with the development of the NGO sector, and supported mainly by the Open Society Institute, a number of cultural and artistic associations began project activities intended to improve the social and economic conditions of Roma. About 30 such expert project-oriented organisations that deal with Roma issues are really active so far.

As the most important Roma political organisation, the National Council of the Roma National Minority was founded in 2003, under the provision in the Federal Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities. Members were elected by legally set electors. This body represents the Roma community and participates in decisions concerning use of language and alphabet, education, information, and culture. It has 35 members, including a president; three vice presidents; an executive committee with six members and its own president, and committees for education, housing, culture, social and health care, political participation, NGOs, employment, and internally displaced persons and returnees. Its mandate is for four years (until June 2007) but re-election might happen earlier. Recently a Council for Integration of Roma has been established on the Vojvodina Government level as well.

<sup>25</sup> Danijela Jovanović, (2006): *Roma in the Jewish Camp Zemun 1941-1942*, Balkanski knjizevni glasnik-BKG no.5, <http://www.poluostrvo.c-part.org/broj5/danijelajovanovic5.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> Rajko Djurić (1987): *Roma Migrations*, Belgrade, BIGZ.

<sup>27</sup> Council of Europe, (Education of Roma children in Europe) Roma History, (State policies under communism), Elena Masurikova, Veselin Popov.

<sup>28</sup> ROMLEX, Romani dialects, <http://romani.uni-graz.at/romlex/dialects.xml>.

<sup>29</sup> Cambridge University Press, 0521631653-Romani: A linguistic Introduction, Yaron Matras, [http://www.llc.manchester.ac.uk/Research/Projects/romani/downloads/2/CUP\\_book\\_excerpt.pdf](http://www.llc.manchester.ac.uk/Research/Projects/romani/downloads/2/CUP_book_excerpt.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> ROMLEX, Romani dialects, <http://romani.uni-graz.at/romlex/dialects.xml>.

<sup>31</sup> Census 2002, Book Three: religions, mother tongues, ethnicity, and nationalities.

*Roma Initiative and Overall Situation of the Roma Community*

During the 1990's, a large number of pilot projects were developed. Early 2000's the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights launched some of the first comprehensive activities by supporting the development of a draft strategy for integration and empowerment of Roma, with the active involvement of NGOs dealing with Roma issues. Following this initiative NGOs and the National Council of the Roma National Minority were involved in the creation of the action plans for the Decade of Roma Inclusion, which the Government of Serbia adopted on January 27, 2005.

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In 2005, based on the initiative and support of the Minority Rights Center, an NGO that deals with Roma issues, three expert boards were formed to address the areas of education, employment, and health care. The aim of the expert boards was to monitor and support activities of government institutions in the implementation of the Decade Action Plans. These boards consist of 22 representatives of NGOs. In October 2005, as a result of the work of these boards, a League for the Decade was formed to contribute to the efficient implementation of the action plans in the areas of education, employment, health care and housing. The League was founded by the Fund for Open Society Serbia, the Minority Rights Center, the Children Roma Center, Civil Initiatives, the Yugoslav Association for Culture and Education of Roma, the Yurom Center and the National Council of the Roma National Minority.

*Other Key Actors in Civil Society and Relations to Roma*

During the 1990s, in the context of the dissolution of ex-Yugoslavia and the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, a vibrant civil society emerged in Serbia, mostly in opposition to the Serbian Government. The priority areas for civil society during the Milosević-era were to combat nationalism and xenophobia and to assist in accommodating the influx of refugees. At that time, the engagement of civil society focused on human rights, peace, and conflict resolution, and on education for democracy. Roma related issues were in the shadow of the drama of the wars in ex-Yugoslavia, and they were rarely addressed. Only after 2000, in parallel with the emergence of the Roma NGO sector, did NGOs turn their attention toward Roma issues.

Currently, a large part of Serbian civil society is addressing discrimination against Roma, assisting in the educational integration of Roma, and providing humanitarian and legal assistance to Roma refugees and internally displaced persons.

## 4. Education System

### Governance Structure

The education system is governed by the Ministry of Education and Sports and by the Provincial Secretariat for Education of Vojvodina, which assumed some management and governance tasks in 2002. There are also two recently established education institutions – the Institute for the Development of Education and the Institute for Evaluation – with responsibilities for educational development. There is one education institution for Vojvodina, the Pedagogical Institute of Vojvodina. The central background institutions do not have departments or advisors for minority or Roma education. But the Pedagogical Institute of Vojvodina has as its main task the development of minority education, including education of Roma, and often this institution takes up a coordinating role involving National Minority Councils. The National Council for Education, with responsibility for setting curricula and standards, set up in 2006 based on a 2004 law, has only one representative selected jointly by all national minorities.

The internal organisation of the ministry is by education levels, and each level is headed by deputy or assistant ministers. There is also a Section for Education Development and International Cooperation and a Section for Finances. The Ministry of Education and Sports has 13 regional administrative units, called School Authorities, and each municipality has a small unit covering education related issues. The ministry employs only one Roma advisor, at the central office.

A decentralisation process started after 2001, with the reinforcement of the pedagogic, administrative, and financial autonomy of schools. As part of this scheme school boards are comprised of three parents, three teachers and three municipal representatives, and have the mandate to appoint school principals. Decentralisation has also increased the responsibility of municipalities to provide legal inspection, determine the network of schools for compulsory education – and finance maintenance, investment, and teacher-training costs. However, these decentralisation initiatives still lack both a clear concept and concrete implementation. The regional school authorities are only detached units of the central government, and the municipal units lack capacity. Also, municipal and regional level planning is not yet mandated, though several municipalities have local development plans, some of which also encompass a Roma education component. Political discussions regarding decentralisation of education seem to have recently re-started, focusing primarily on financing and school rationalisation.

### Financing

Schooling in public schools is free of charge by law, including four hours of pre-school provision during the last pre-school year. Salaries and investments are funded from the national budget, based on the number of eligible classes and teachers – not on a per-student basis. Investment, maintenance, school supplies, refurbishment, and teacher training costs are met from local revenues. More than 80 percent of the budget for education covers salaries. However, parents cover the costs of textbook purchases and other school supplies for their children. Lunches, snacks,

and extracurricular activities are also paid for by the parents, and often parental contributions are requested for supporting school refurbishment. Private tutoring is a widespread practice, especially in towns and cities, and it is paid for by parents who can afford it. About 30 percent of Serbia's secondary school students resort to private tutoring and 10 percent do so at the primary level, too. In addition to these expenses, there are charges for supplementary exams, and students enrolled as "non-regular students," an option at secondary level, are charged tuition fees. Tertiary education is nominally free of charge, although universities are allowed to expand student intake above the state funded limit and charge tuition fees to the students from the expanded list – a practice which most faculties follow.

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At all levels, gross inefficiencies can be detected. These include: low and unevenly distributed teacher-student ratios, as is seen in small rural schools where there can even be inverse teacher-student ratios; secondary vocational-technical schools for unemployable professions; an overdeveloped network of special schools; low teaching loads of 18-20 instruction hours per week, etc. In order to cope with inefficiencies and lack of reliable and up-to-date data on the education system, the development of a comprehensive Education Management Information System (EMIS) was started in 2002. The system covers finances, facilities, staff, students, and some basic quality indicators. In 2003, preparations for the per-student financing formula started. Both the information system and the plans for per-student financing were slowed down, due to political changes in 2004, but the EMIS has become functional by end of 2006, and the formula financing discussions seem likely to be on the agenda soon.<sup>32</sup>

Savings realised by reducing systemic inefficiencies could cover the costs of full Roma participation in public education.

## Facilities

School and pre-school facilities are still state-owned. The network of schools is based on the demographic situation of the '60s and '70s which has changed considerably. Buildings are currently often dilapidated and lack modern equipment. The buildings are also often oversized in rural and city-center areas, while lacking space in suburban areas, where Roma settlements are very often located. Schooling is most often organised in two shifts, so there is neither time nor space for significant extracurricular activities or additional classes for students in need. The demographic decline in Serbia has only recently begun to affect the school system, because of the population increase during the 1990s, caused by the influx of about 800,000 refugees. Rationalization of the school network is due in the near future but will probably be very difficult to achieve, and the discussion on transferring ownership of facilities to municipalities has recently begun.

## Language of Instruction

The language of instruction is Serbian, but in areas where national minorities live, it can also be in the language of the national minority at all education levels – based on the request of parents and the

<sup>32</sup> Strategy of the Ministry of Education and Sports 2005-2010 (<http://www.mps.sr.gov.yu>).

availability of teaching staff. Hence, at pre-primary, primary, and secondary level, and partially also on the tertiary level, complete instruction is provided in Albanian, Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, Ruthenian, and Croatian. Optional instruction of the mother tongue is provided in Bulgarian and Romanes in cca 30 primary schools. Roma students are most often enrolled in schools where the language of instruction is Serbian, but in Vojvodina they also attend Hungarian and Slovak instruction schools.

## Education Cycles, Progression Criteria, and Examination System

Currently, education is provided in four cycles: pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary level. Pre-primary education is voluntary, but from autumn 2006, a compulsory pre-school period has been introduced. Education is compulsory until the age of 16. Primary education, which includes grades one through eight, is comprehensive. It is organised as class-instruction in grades one through four, and subject instruction afterwards. The transition from fourth to fifth grade is sharp, both in respect of curriculum requirements and teachers' attitudes. These changes often result in a negative school experience for students, and this is the age when the dropout rate for Roma students increases dramatically. Selection based on achievement is introduced for enrolment to secondary and tertiary education. The distinction between academic and vocational education starts after compulsory education, at the secondary level. About 80 percent of the cohort finishing compulsory education enters secondary education, and about 25 percent of those finishing secondary education continue with tertiary education. However, the dropout rates at all levels are significant. Dropout rates are higher among: the higher levels of education, the rural population, children of parents with a low socio-economic status, the Roma population, and girls. Currently, there are no external school-leaving examinations. Instead, enrolment exams are used, which are judged in combination with school mark averages, for students entering secondary and tertiary education. Capacity building and other preparation for the introduction of school leaving examinations started in 2002, but currently it is not clear when implementation would start.

The Ministry of Education and Sports, in cooperation with the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and the National Council of the Roma National Minority, has ensured affirmative action measures for enrolment in secondary schools and on universities from 2003 onwards. The legal basis for affirmative action is included in the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities (Art. 4) and the Framework Convention on Protection of National Minorities (Art. 4). However, since affirmative action measures are not precisely defined in the area of education, the criteria, methodology, and scope of these actions were subjects of negotiations every year.

## Special Schools

There is an overdeveloped network of 74 primary and secondary education special schools catering children with learning disabilities and other special needs, with 7,431 children enrolled. Additionally, 82 regular primary schools, and 6 secondary schools have special classes for the same purpose, catering for 3,715 students.<sup>33</sup> These schools and classes have smaller class sizes. They use reduced curricula, are led by special education teachers, and do not offer re-entry into the regular system. Enrolment is based on referral from a municipal level "categorisation committee." Children in special

<sup>33</sup> Institute for education development (2007): *Directions for the Development of Educating Children and Students with Special Needs* (draft).



schools get hot meals, free textbooks, and are eligible for a small subsidy for social care. Due to biased categorisation, lack of non-Roma special education students, and the social benefits attached to special education, Roma children are overrepresented in these schools – in some schools even 80 percent of the students are Roma. Hence, special schooling has become a means of segregation in Serbia, but no comprehensive action for ensuring transfer back into the regular system has started, nor has a plan for downsizing the special education system been adopted yet.

## Social Support for Students

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Student loans and scholarships are provided from the national budget, for both secondary and tertiary students. The amounts for both are low, around €50 monthly, and are tailored to cover the costs of accommodation in student dormitories, with a 20 percent addition for other expenses. Scholarships are merit based, and the financial status of the students' family only contributes 5 percent to the selection criteria for scholarships. Hence Roma students usually do not qualify for them. Loans are offered for vocational schools preparing for professions in which there is a serious shortage of labour, as determined by the employment services. Yearly, about 11,000 scholarships and 200-300 loans are distributed for secondary school students, so that about 3.5 percent of the total number of students at secondary level receive some kind of aid. A draft law on students' standards has been prepared and is under discussion, but affirmative action and social needs-based scholarships are not foreseen in the draft.

On the other hand, social assistance for families who are eligible for this benefit is conditional upon the enrolment of their school-aged children in school. This enrolment must be proven by a certificate from the school, submitted by the parent to the social services office on a regular basis. Although this requirement could be a useful mechanism for motivating school attendance, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence that it is violated in practice.

## Key Legislation and Other National Documents

Education is regulated by an umbrella law on the system of education (from 2003, with amendments in 2004), a set of laws for each respective cycle of education (from which only the law on higher education is of a recent date), and an abundance of sub-legal acts, or Rulebooks. Furthermore, an omnibus act sets the responsibilities of Vojvodina with respect to education, and the Law on Minority Rights sets the responsibilities of National Minority Councils with respect to various matters, including education.

Starting from the 2006/2007 school year, in accordance with the provisions of Article 85 of the Law on the Basis of the Education and Upbringing System, a preparatory pre-school programme is part of the obligatory education, which lasts for minimum six months.<sup>34</sup>

Currently, a new Law on Pre-School Education, drafted in autumn of 2005, is prepared for adoption. Roma organisations have reacted critically to the draft. They note that it does not capture provisions of affirmative action, and it does not incorporate pre-school-related elements of the Decade of Roma Action Plan on Education, including providing Roma teaching assistants, establishing two years

<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Education and Sport, information (Official gazette RS 62/03, 64/03, 58/04 and 62/04), <http://www.mps.sr.gov.yu/code/navigate.php?Id=329>.

of free pre-school for Roma children, etc. Furthermore, the proposed Law on Pre-School Education does not ensure mechanisms for a significantly higher enrolment of Roma children. Hence, there is a real concern that the implementation of the new law could easily contribute to an additional exclusion of Roma children.

A new Law on Textbook Publishing has been prepared in 2004/2005 but not yet discussed. In addition, a new Law on Students' Standards is being prepared, but this legislation does not foresee increased support for students coming from socially and economically deprived backgrounds. Also, a draft of the Law on Student Organisation was prepared in 2005, but it has not yet been discussed in the parliament.<sup>35</sup> The revision of the legislative acts regulating other education cycles (primary, secondary, and vocational-technical) are due soon as well.

## Status of the Education System: Key Indicators

Table 1: Status of the Education System<sup>36</sup>

	Pre-primary (3-7 years)	Primary School (G1-G8)	Secondary	Tertiary 2000/2001
Staff <sup>b</sup>	8,715	44,791	26,231	–
Number of students	39.2% <sup>c</sup>	667,570 <sup>b</sup>	302,612 <sup>b</sup>	–
Number of Children in One Cohort <sup>b</sup>	85,000 (approximately)	85,000 (approximately)	85,000 (approximately)	–
Number of institutions <sup>b</sup>	1 per municipality	3,587 (including branch schools)	490	5 Universities 22 Tertiary
Pupil-teacher ratio	14 <sup>a</sup> (2000-2001)	14.4 <sup>c</sup> (2005)	10.9 <sup>c</sup> (2005)	18 <sup>a</sup> (2000-2001)
Graduation rate <sup>c</sup>	–	92.4	85.7	–
Gross enrolment ratios <sup>a</sup> (%) <sup>36</sup> (2000-2001)	44%	98%	89%	36%
Net enrolment ratios <sup>c</sup> (2005)	39.2%	95.6%	76.4%	–

<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Education and Sport, provisions: <http://www.mps.sr.gov.yu/code/navigate.php?Id=436>.

<sup>36</sup> Percentages of children in school are represented by Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) and Net Enrolment Ratios (NER). GER is the number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for that level of education. NER is the number of pupils in the theoretical age group who are enrolled expressed as a percentage of the same population.

<b>Percent of Public Expenditure on Education<sup>a</sup> (2002-2003)</b>	12%	46%	23%	19%
System-wide indicators of the status of Serbian schools:				
Education as of percentage of GDP:	3.9% for 2005 <sup>c</sup>			
Literacy rate <sup>a</sup> 15+:	96.4%			

<sup>a</sup> Source: UNESCO statistics [http://stats.uis.unesco.org/ReportFolders/ReportFolders.aspx?CS\\_referer=&CS\\_ChosenLang=en](http://stats.uis.unesco.org/ReportFolders/ReportFolders.aspx?CS_referer=&CS_ChosenLang=en).

<sup>b</sup> Source: Ministry of Education and Sports statistics, 2004.

<sup>c</sup> Source: State of children in Serbia 2006, UNICEF, 2007.

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## Student Performance Based on International Assessments

Serbia participated for the first time in 2003 in both PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies),<sup>37</sup> the two most comprehensive international programmes to assess performance of students approaching the end of compulsory schooling. The Serbian students' performances are summarized in the following table:

Table 2: PISA 2003 Results

Area	Serbia		OECD		Difference Serbia – OECD
	Mean <sup>38</sup>	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	
Mathematics	437	3,8	500	0,6	- 63
Reading	412	3,6	494	0,6	- 82
Science	436	3,5	500	0,6	- 64

<sup>37</sup> OECD (2004): *Learning for Tomorrow's World: First Results from PISA 2003*, Paris: OECD Publications <http://www.pisa.oecd.org>.

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

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

<sup>38</sup> The way how results are reported in both PISA and TIMSS is the following:

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

Table 3: TIMSS 2003 Results<sup>39</sup>

Area	Serbia		International		Difference Serbia – Int'l
	Mean	S.E.	Mean <sup>39</sup>	S.E.	
Mathematics	477	2,6	467	0.5	+ 12
Science	468	2,5	474	0.6	- 6

As with many countries, Serbian students perform better on TIMSS than on PISA,<sup>40</sup> they are roughly at international average level on TIMSS. However, in the results on PISA the difference between Serbian and average OECD performance is about one year of schooling lower in math and science, and almost two school years lower in reading. These differences may have serious implications for international competitiveness.

The impact of socio-economic status<sup>41</sup> on student performance in Serbia is low. The Index of SES explains 13.6% of variance in performance in mathematics which is estimated as below-average. This finding describes the Serbian education system as non-selective and fairly equitable (although in the low achieving range) in respect of SES in comparison to other participating countries.

## Education Indicators of Roma

The most pertinent problems for Roma is their very low enrolment rate and very high dropout rate, as well as their misplacement in special schools and classes.

Table 4: Education Indicators of Roma Students in Serbia

Proportion of Roma attending pre-school education among 3 to 6-year-olds <sup>c</sup>	4%
Proportion of Roma enrolling in first grade <sup>d</sup>	82.5%-89.6%
Proportion of Roma from settlements enrolling in first grade <sup>c</sup>	73.6%

<sup>39</sup> Lower International Mean on TIMSS than on PISA is mostly due to a wider range of less developed countries participating in TIMSS than in PISA, and the fact that the sampling for the two studies is different: TIMSS targets students at the end of primary schooling, usually while preparing for their final exams, while PISA targets 15-year-olds, who are often already in the first grade of secondary schools, somewhat detached from the curriculum areas assessed.

<sup>40</sup> This is due to the fact that the tasks in PISA are much more cross-curricular and that the sampling for the two studies is different, and is more favourable in Serbia for TIMSS than for PISA. TIMSS targets students at the end of primary schooling, usually while preparing for their final exams, while PISA targets 15-year-olds, who are often already in the first grade of secondary schools, somewhat detached from the curriculum areas assessed.

<sup>41</sup> The Index of socio-economic status (SES) is composed of variables which indicate economic, social and cultural status of the student's family. It is expressed on a scale constructed in a way that OECD average is 0.0 and the standard deviation is 1 (two-thirds of students are distributed between -1 and 1).

Proportion of school-aged Roma in school	70% <sup>c</sup> (but could be much lower – estimate based on recent Ministry of Education and Sports data indicating 17,323 Roma children in school)
Proportion of Roma children not continuing primary education beyond fourth grade <sup>d</sup>	50%
Achievement on standardized tests 3rd grade (2004) <sup>f</sup> (500 is national average for both subjects)	Mathematics: 366 Serbian language: 346 for Roma, (Lower than average by 1,5 SD, or approximately 2 academic years)
Proportion of Roma children not completing eight or nine years of primary education	62.7%-78.8% <sup>d</sup> 87% <sup>c</sup>
Proportion of Roma children enrolled in special education schools and classes (2002-2003)	12% of Roma enrolled in education are in special school/class <sup>e</sup>
Dropout rate of Roma between first and eighth (ninth) grade <sup>d</sup>	49%-52%
Proportion of Roma (from settlements) continuing at secondary level	10.2 % <sup>c</sup>
Proportion of Roma completing vocational education and training <sup>d</sup>	6.2%
Enrolment rate for Roma in vocational education and training <sup>d</sup>	8.1%
Tertiary level enrolment <sup>d</sup>	0.9%

<sup>c</sup> Source: State of children in Serbia 2006, UNICEF, 2007.

<sup>d</sup> Source: Needs Assessment Study, 2004.

<sup>e</sup> Calculation based on MOES data number of Roma children in school and in special school (17.323 and 2105 respectively).

<sup>f</sup> National assessment of students in 3rd grade, MOES.

## Extent and Nature of Roma Segregation and Enrolment Barriers

Roma in Serbia face a whole set of administrative barriers to education. These barriers fall into the following categories:

1. Serious barriers exist for Roma enrolment into pre-school and primary education:
  - ⇒ Non-compulsory pre-school education is partly subsidized by the local municipality and partly paid for by parents.<sup>42</sup> When there is a lack of space, priority for enrolment is given to

<sup>42</sup> A recent UNICEF study (UNICEF, 2007) shows that Roma children are not attending non-compulsory pre-school out of financial reasons in 38% of cases, as compared to 12% of non-Roma stating the same reason.

children whose parents are both employed. Even Roma who can pay the attendance fee most often do not meet this requirement, and given the usual lack of space, cannot enrol in pre-school, except for the four-hour preparatory programme.

- ⇒ Enrolment into primary education, as well as children in preparatory pre-school, is based on a residence permit showing which is the child's neighborhood school. Many Roma living in settlements do not have a residence permit, because settlements are not officially registered, which means that the neighborhood school (or any other school) is not obliged to enrol them. Schools are not yet facing a dramatic population decline and are not financed on a per-capita student basis, so they have little incentive to enrol extra students. The development of per-capita financing, with higher coefficients for minority children, started in 2002, but is still not being fully developed or implemented.
- ⇒ The same problem is present in an even more serious form for the tens of thousands of Roma who are internally displaced persons from Kosovo or who are returnees. In a significant number of cases, these people lack residence permits. Due to frequent migration, a high percentage of Roma children born during the wars in the '90s face additional problems regarding their birth certificates. In most cases they do not speak the languages in which instruction is organised in Serbia.
- ⇒ Enrolment into primary education is conditional on a medical check-up and assessment of school-readiness. Since unemployed and unregistered Roma face difficulties in accessing health care, organizing the medical check-up is often an additional barrier for them. The assessment of school readiness is conducted in those languages in which complete instruction is offered, and it requires familiarity with paper and pencil and other mainstream culture-based competencies. Roma children often show low results and are encouraged to enrol in special schools. Abolishment of the medical and readiness screenings started in 2002, but the initiative was not followed up after 2004. The Decade Action Plan for Health includes actions to overcome access barriers to health care, but implementation is still lacking.

2. There is no systemic provision for mastering the languages required for instruction in the education system in Serbia – which affects Roma whose mother tongue is Romanes, or, in the case of returnees, EU languages, most often German. Some Roma speak Albanian but do not live in the areas in Southern Serbia where schooling in Albanian is provided.
3. There is a systemic gap in the education provision affecting Roma. Enrolment into primary education is age-bound: until the age of 8½, children are eligible for late enrolment into first grade. After that, their appropriate grade placement is appraised by an ad-hoc committee set up by the school, and after the age of 16, they are eligible for enrolment into adult education schools. Many Roma children fall into the gap between 8½ and 16 years, and the ad hoc committees are neither functional nor interested in extra intake of students who will require additional staff time while not generating revenue. Since there is no regular legal and financial grounds for organizing schooling in this age group, these children are left out completely. Currently there is no government strategy to overcome this problem, and only some schools offer semi-legal assistance with the issue.
4. There is no legal way for students who have dropped out of primary or secondary education to get back into the system. The only possibilities available for those who have dropped out are the following:

- ⇒ For those dropping out of primary school, the only possibility is enrolment into adult education primary schools after the age of 16, at the next grade level. Currently this education does not provide qualification certificates other than graduation from adult education primary school.
  - ⇒ After dropping out of secondary education, the only education available is vocational training organised by the National Employment Services. This training does not provide nationally recognized professional certificates and usually comes with attached fees.
5. Entrance to secondary and tertiary education is competitive, based on grade averages and enrolment exams. This preparation mostly involves private tutoring, hence Roma students most often end up in non-attractive, non-competitive schools offering education for non-employable professions, or they abandon further schooling altogether. Entrance to tertiary education is conditional on graduation from a four-year secondary school, and is based on a competitive entry exam for students whose tuition fee is covered by the national budget. Intake of self-financing students is less competitive, but tuition fees are high. The National Council of the Roma National Minority usually succeeds in enrolling additional students into the list covered by the budget, based on affirmative action. However, there is no systemic provision to enforce this affirmative action, aside from lobbying.

To sum up, Roma in Serbia face a daunting set of enrolment barriers to education, and, consequently, their participation in education is one of the lowest in South Eastern Europe. Due to low attendance, segregated education in the system is not yet a major issue, except, of course, in special schools, which are mainly composed of Roma students. However, as there currently is no legal anti-segregation legislation it is expected that this issue will surface immediately after some of the enrolment barriers and issues are resolved, and it needs to be mitigated early on.

### Qualitative Assessment of the Education System<sup>43</sup>

The education system in Serbia has been in transformation since 2001, and it faces all the typical ups and downs of a prolonged transition process. As a result, developments are under-way in almost all areas of the system. Some reforms are moving ahead while other important reforms seems very difficult to advance. For a detailed qualitative assessment see the table in Annex A.

#### *School Management*

School management and governance has changed, to involve parents and municipal representatives in school boards. The boards include three parents, three municipal officials and three teachers. But political tensions around school principal appointments emerge in many cases, and, in practice, the role of parents and students in governance is often just symbolic.

The neighborhood schooling principle dominates. Although free choice of schools outside a child's neighborhood is possible, it is complicated. There are programmes to address the need for affirmative action measures, and school development planning is increasingly becoming a common practice. About 10 percent of schools are implementing their school development plans (or actively

<sup>43</sup> For a detailed qualitative assessment see table in Annex B.

seeking grants for implementation) which aim at inclusive programmes addressing the needs of Roma children in a nondiscriminatory way.

### *Teachers: Qualification, Selection, Education, and Training*

Teachers are required to have a university degree and an induction period, followed by a state exam after one-to-two years of practice. No competencies and standards are set for the teaching profession. Teacher education is in serious need of reform, but licensing and career advancement is now regulated, and a new, mandatory teacher in-service training system has been established. Teacher training programmes are accredited by the Professional Development Department of a new Institute for Education development. A good selection of teacher training is offered, and it is funded from municipal or national budgets. At least 10 percent of the accredited programmes aim to develop competencies needed for effective instruction in multicultural classes. However, the system has not yet reached all teachers, and the competency in dealing with modern pedagogical issues is generally low.

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### *Curriculum and Textbooks*

The curriculum is defined at the national level. It is content-based and factual, and is developed and approved by the Ministry of Education and Sports. Only a small level of school flexibility is allowed. New curriculum approaches have been tried out recently, but they were abandoned after changes in government. All subjects are covered by textbooks, which are purchased by parents. A new accreditation system for textbooks is under development.

### *Assessment and Evaluation*

The development of a school leaving examination system is under way. Traditional inspection, at the national or municipal level, still dominates, but school self-evaluation has also started in some schools. Formative assessment is not yet practiced in Serbia, except in first grade. Summative assessment is the norm, and it is not regulated in a way that would eliminate teacher bias.

### *Finances*

Education provision is covered from the national budget – which pays for salaries and investment and provides 80 percent of total school financing – and municipal budgets. Salaries are based on the number of eligible teachers in each school and the number of eligible classes and programme requirements. Per-student formula financing is planned, but it has not yet been prepared or implemented.

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

Aside of serious exclusion described above, Roma children enrolled in schools in Serbia are facing systemic, multi-layered barriers in their education, which contributes to a high drop out rate. These barriers include:



1. The ethos of management and school staff is generally not welcoming to Roma children. School management is neither trained nor supported in promoting inclusive education. School management and non-Roma parents are not supportive of Roma parents involvement. Roma parents are not involved in school boards, and discrimination at the school level is not regularly monitored.
2. Roma children are most often not well accepted, motivated or supported by teachers. There are almost no qualified Roma teachers. Teachers generally lack the necessary skills to manage multicultural classes, motivate children from different backgrounds, or conduct interactive and cooperative instruction. There is a lack of qualified teachers in the suburban and rural schools that have a higher percentage of Roma pupils. The establishment of a system of Roma teaching assistants or mediators, has just started and they are only used in a few pilot cases. Teacher bias against Roma and low expectations for Roma students are common.
3. Roma children lack support in mastering an uninviting curriculum. The curriculum is demanding in terms of factuality and in terms of prerequisite skills and knowledge. It is lacking school-based flexibility and is detached from the everyday experiences of Roma children. Meanwhile, there is no institutional provision for language training for Roma who speak Romanes or returnees from the EU who speak another language. And the legal provision for organizing additional classes for students in need is neither systematically enforced nor controlled for quality.
4. Roma children lack support for obtaining books. Textbooks are usually paid for by parents, and there is no legal system for provision of free textbooks for Roma children other than ad hoc actions. The textbooks in use do not present Roma culture. Furthermore, they are not conducive to independent learning, and Roma children often lack parental support to use textbooks.
5. Roma children usually become underachievers in examinations. Roma children are prevented from participation in further education because the assessment system is comprised of culturally and linguistically biased enrolment testing and competitive school entrance examinations. There is no systematic support for Roma children. In-class assessment is also competitive, and no formative or descriptive assessment is used. The municipal and national inspection system does not address this issue adequately and is mostly not accessible for Roma: Inspectors are not trained to detect discrimination or exclusion through regular school visits, and parents' grievances are expected to be submitted in written form.
6. Roma education is not financed appropriately: Financing schemes are not conducive for inclusive education and are not adjusting to demographic developments. Schools in poor municipalities where Roma live are unable to cover basic education costs, pre-school education is not free of charge, free school meals are not provided, additional classes are not provided, financial incentives are allocated to special education, and the education and social welfare financing schemes are separated.

## Knowledge, Data and Capacity Concerns Affecting Roma Education

### *Knowledge and Data Gaps*

1. Regular data collection and processing is vital, and it is currently still a missing link in Serbia. This is evident both on the level of the governmental data collection systems and on the level of the data pertinent to the Roma population:
  - ⇒ The government's data collection programme, the EMIS (Education Management Information System) has started to become functional only end of 2006. Data collection for country education indicators is the role of the newly established Institute for Evaluation, but a decision on which achievement indicators will be collected for which age groups still needs to be defined. Only after both of these institutional arrangements are clearly set, negotiations could begin over what indicators are needed to monitor the education status of Roma.
  - ⇒ With respect to data in the Roma community itself, in addition to the common problems in data collection throughout the region, Roma in Serbia face additional uncertainties due to lack of documentation for Roma internally displaced persons and returnees. If government action on identification documents and civil registration is fully implemented, data gaps regarding Roma are expected to visibly decrease.
2. Although a great number of Roma NGOs are engaged in the field of education in Serbia, there is a critical lack of Roma teachers and education professionals, who could be the driving force for sustained and thoughtful actions to improve the education of Roma. The Roma community currently has a very active role in demanding better education services. The community is well organised through NGO networks and the National Council for the Roma National Minority, which is currently setting up regional offices and municipal coordinators. However, as the implementation of the Decade Action Plan and REF projects unfold, a bottleneck could appear in terms of institutional capacities and human resources in the Roma community. New organisational, networking and capacity building structures are therefore needed in the near future.
3. Certain additional constraints arise from the late transition that Serbia has been undergoing since 2000. The transition is still very visible in the education sector. Currently, the Serbian education system is characterized by three trends:
  - ⇒ In its basic structural features it still preserves the characteristics of the pre-1990s educational system of former Yugoslavia.
  - ⇒ The system still feels the consequences of the dramatic deterioration of the '90s – when education declined faster than the GDP, to the point where teachers' salaries dropped to \$1 per day; there was massive centralization; and education was under the influence of extremely conservative forces in society.
  - ⇒ The complicated processes of education reform that started after 2000 followed a “stop and go” approach. This situation makes negotiations with stakeholders complicated.

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### *Institutional and Other Capacity Issues*

1. The current lack of stable educational policy is hampering medium- and long-term strategic planning for the improvement of Roma education. However, this situation also creates certain

opportunities for launching novel approaches and addressing policy changes in cooperation with key policy makers.

2. Institutional capacities in Serbia are distributed in unusual ways, as a result of political pressures during the 90's and turbulent policy changes since 2000. Hence, most professional capacities are still located in NGOs, emerging think tanks, and some of the state institutes, rather than in the government structures.
3. A major barrier to efficiently addressing educational issues facing Roma is the lack of clear institutional responsibilities in this area. There are multiple paths to decision making, and they are not coordinated. Any initiative must go to the highest level and gain support of a deputy minister and/or advisor. This means initiatives most often need to be processed by those having access to this level, including the National Council of the Roma National Minority, the Office for the Roma National Strategy or the Vojvodina Secretariat for Minorities. These bodies are not specialized in education issues. Initiatives also depend, on the face-value assessment of the minister, or the mayor, in cases of local actions.
4. Donor coordination regarding Roma projects is a necessity but currently there is a lack of institutional resources and commitment for taking leadership in this respect.

## 5. Overview of Government and Partner Activities

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Prior to the establishment of the Roma Education Fund (REF), serious preparation for Roma integration had already started in Serbia, after the adoption of the law establishing the National Minority Councils as organisational structures. In late 2002, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) supported the development of a Strategy for the Integration and Empowerment of Roma. The strategy covered education, health care, employment, and housing, but it also addressed political participation; social care; culture and media; and the status of women, refugees, internally displaced persons, and readmittees. Built on the same momentum, with the support of the Fund for an Open Society-Serbia, the Ministry of Education and Sports developed a special strategy for the improvement of Roma education. The Decade of Roma Inclusion action plans were hence based both on Decade activities and support and also on the already completed strategies. A 2004 Needs Assessment for Roma Education was conducted, to sum up the experiences of a variety of pilot programmes, research results, and statistical data from surveys, the census, and ministry sources. Data from the needs assessment are still used as reference data, because no data collection system has been established since. Unfortunately, the needs assessment was conducted at a turbulent period for education policy – the government and ministry staff were changing and there were major legislative and policy changes. Hence, the legislative and policy related aspects of the needs assessment study are less relevant today.

The Decade Action Plan for Education reflects the key conclusions and recommendations of the Needs Assessment for Roma Education. The plan has been developed with great care by a working group consisting of NGO representatives and professionals, with ministry input. It is a very detailed plan, comprising all possible actions that need to be taken. However, it does not set indicators or targets in terms of expected enrolment, dropout or achievement of Roma students.

### Commitment to Roma Decade, Actions and Progress to Date

On the political level, there is a strong commitment to the Decade of Roma Inclusion from the prime minister, the Department for Human and Minority Rights, the Ministry of Education and Sports, and the Vojvodina Government.<sup>44</sup> The action plans, without budgets, were officially adopted and endorsed by the government. Subsequently, the Roma Secretariat coordinated the process of making budgets for the action plans, in cooperation with the responsible ministries and the Ministry of Finance. The 2006 national budget reflects part of the action plan budgets, and it includes a part of funding requested for education, but gives much less for other action plans, especially the plan for housing. Parts of the action plan on education are also incorporated in the Ministry for Education and Sports' Strategy for 2005-2010.

Progress to date is not yet visible on the legislative level. The most important new initiative for legislative change addresses civil registration, a prerequisite for enrolment in school. Currently, civil

<sup>44</sup> See recent Study on the status of Roma women in Vojvodina, 2007.

registration is tied to residence permits, which require eligible housing. This situation is not suitable for the majority of the socially endangered Roma population. The Department for Human and Minority Rights took up the responsibility to address this issue as a violation of basic human rights, and an inter-ministerial working group was formed in late 2005, but changes in civil registration have not yet happened.

On a *programme level*, the most visible actions are the following:

- ⇒ The National Council for the Roma National Minority, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Department for Human and Minority Rights, is organizing enrolment of Roma students into secondary and tertiary schools based on affirmative action, as well as providing textbook packages for Roma primary education students. This action is to be followed up with development of legal regulations and a guidebook, in cooperation with the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR), OSCE and the Department of Human and Minority Rights.
- ⇒ Several municipalities – including Ada, Kanjiža, Paraćin, Pirot, Niš, Kragujevac, Valjevo, Subotica, Sombor – have developed local action plans for Roma integration based on the Decade Action Plan. This work, which includes setting aside funds, is being done in cooperation with different ministries or international organisations, and it should expand further in the future.
- ⇒ Schools received instructions from the Ministry of Education and Sports on how to avoid the potential dangers of forming segregated classes.
- ⇒ The Ministry of Education and Sports in cooperation with the OSCE started the establishments of a system of Roma Teaching Assistants, piloting it with 20 persons through training and placement.
- ⇒ Initiatives have been undertaken to organise faculty chairs for Romology, and to introduce curricula supporting inclusive education at teachers' faculties. A new curriculum for on the Romanes language and culture has been developed for grades one through four. Other recent developments include a textbook on Romanes grammar, two readers of Roma literature for the first and second grade, and an ethno-historical guidebook of national minorities.
- ⇒ About 20 Roma NGOs are currently running education-related projects, most of which started around 2003. Most of these projects address pre-school and primary education needs by organizing alternative and supplementary education provision in Roma settlements.

## Donor Funding: In-Country Programmes

There are several donor-funded programmes addressing Roma education in Serbia. International organisations have their programmes, and bilateral donors are also supporting projects, mostly from the NGO sector. The Office for the Roma National Strategy in the Department of Human and Minority Rights is collecting data on Roma projects. According to their information base, international organisations are currently funding the following activities addressing the education of Roma:

- ⇒ UNICEF gives support to the development of local action plans for Roma inclusion in four municipalities, support to Roma Education Centers and training of pre-school teachers, all in Southern Serbia. UNICEF also prepared a regional study on social exclusion of children, and it plans to support Roma women networks in engagement for education, strengthening parent competencies, teacher training, and expanding support to the development of local action plans for Roma inclusion.

- ⇒ Save the Children UK is running a programme for inclusive education of Roma children in the framework of a three-year regional project called “Inclusive education combating discrimination in the Western Balkans: Equal chances for Roma children.”
- ⇒ The International Red Cross is organizing pre-school provision for mostly Roma children in about 30 settlements, in cooperation with a variety of bilateral donors and the Serbian Red Cross.
- ⇒ Fund for an Open Society–Serbia support is currently mostly targeting: the activities of the League for the Decade of Roma Inclusion; a three-year project “Equal chances in secondary education,” which is co-funded with the Pestalozzi Foundation; the continuation of Step by Step pre-schools; and the promotion of inclusive education. The fund is also participating in several publications and reports on Roma.
- ⇒ The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation is funding several international projects, with UNICEF and the Red Cross, and also cooperating with the Ministry of Education and Sports on teacher training provision at three regional teacher-training centers.
- ⇒ The EAR and OSCE are supporting municipal Roma coordinators, who will also be of relevance for Roma education matters.
- ⇒ Several embassies are using small grant schemes to support Roma NGOs, some of which are engaged in education projects as well. There is no clear picture of this support.
- ⇒ The EAR, in cooperation with the OSCE, is supporting the MOES programme to institutionalize the role of Roma teaching assistants in pre-school education.

Although the total investment in Roma education by the listed donors probably does not exceed €1 million yearly, from the REF perspective these donor activities are important. There is clearly a need for participation in in-country donor coordination activities, in addition to those conducted from the home office.

### *Conditions and Constraints*

Serbia benefits from a high level of donor support from the EU and other international and bilateral partners. While much of this support has been geared to restarting the economy following the economic implosion of the 1990s, increasing attention is being paid to poverty and human development issues. Overall donor coordination in Serbia is actually needed to ensure that the different activities financed by donors do not overlap and are in synergy. This is especially true for social issues, including Roma education.

## 6. REF Programme in Serbia

As of February 2007, the REF received around 30 project proposals from Serbia, and of these, eight have been approved. Two projects have already ended. Currently, there are six active projects, and their total approved liabilities amount to €1,022,864. The approved projects aim at visible policy changes in the following areas:

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- ⇒ Inclusion of Roma children in pre-school education one year before compulsory schooling (project finished in August 2006).
- ⇒ Development and provision of a new model to help Roma finish primary school and gain a first vocational certificate through second-chance education.
- ⇒ Piloting a programme on inclusion of Roma parents in school boards and school councils, and development of a regional Roma integration action plan.
- ⇒ Mentoring of Roma students, research of the needs of the employment market and supporting Roma students who have graduated in initiating careers in accordance with their education level, as well as developing the concept of university studies for the needs of the Roma community.
- ⇒ Support of the programme for prevention of discrimination and segregation of Roma children within the education system – a common initiative of the Roma civil sector and representatives of the relevant institutions.
- ⇒ Scaling up of the approach to the obligatory pre-school programme for all Roma children and provision of conditions for successful continuation of their education through a complete support system for the Roma community, educational institutions and municipal governments.

Most of these projects (except the last listed) are pilot projects that would need additional funds if they succeed. To date, implementation progress is in accordance with the approved implementation plans.

### *Project Partnerships*

REF projects have partnership arrangements between Roma organisations and government structures, in the following combinations:

- ⇒ A Roma organisation and national or local government (four projects).
- ⇒ A Roma organisation, a non-Roma professional organisation and government (two projects).
- ⇒ University structures dealing with Roma language and culture (one project).

The project partnerships are reflected in co-financing, which is substantial in some cases and only symbolic in others. These partnership arrangements can have an added value in establishing meaningful working cooperation between the Roma and non-Roma community in Serbia. However, the REF has not yet entered into partnership arrangements with other donors, nor has it received projects from Roma NGO coalitions, which would be very welcome.

## Overall Strategic Framework and Levels of Engagement

Given the multiple barriers to enrolment in education that Roma face, given the multiple “incentives” they have for dropping out, and given the social environment, which is only partially conducive, REF commitment will be essential for improving Roma education in the short- and long-term. The REF’s role in Serbia should be viewed as multi-layered assistance, consisting of policy related activities, support to the Roma community, and support to the government. Table 5 indicates the broad framework of REF priorities from which specific REF activities in Serbia should evolve during the coming years.

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## Strategic Directions for Future REF Activities

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

- ⇒ Helping in setting-up the institutional prerequisites, and foster Roma parental motivation needed for educating 9-16-year-old Roma, who are currently not catered by the education system. This effort should be undertaken carefully, to prevent an increase in the dropout rate from the regular system by creating a parallel “catch-up” system, so it should have a temporary character.
- ⇒ Supporting the inclusion of Roma children in the compulsory pre-school programme that was introduced in Autumn 2006.
- ⇒ Developing scholarship and mentorship support for Roma in secondary education.
- ⇒ Addressing the issue of over-representation of Roma in special schools, in cooperation with intergovernmental and international organisations. This requires involving in-country professionals and Roma NGOs, to develop a clear and viable agenda for mainstreaming all children into an inclusive education system and abolishing or significantly decreasing the special education system. An economic and fiscal benefit study could be useful in convincing policy makers of the merits of this effort.
- ⇒ Supporting donor coordination of Roma education activities in the country.

### *REF Strategy on Research*

Although there is much data on Serbia, and several international organisations have conducted situation analyses and assessments on the education of Roma in Serbia, there are specific gaps where there is a need for focused research, tackling both situation analysis and policy recommendations. These include the following:

- ⇒ A strategy to transfer students from special schools to mainstream education: Given that special education is de facto segregated education for Roma in Serbia, there is a need for: a targeted analysis of the scope of the problem; analysis of the mechanisms underlying the malpractice, including financial and other interest-based mechanisms; and an elaboration of possible strategies to transfer children from special to regular education and to avoid enrolling them in special education in the first place.



Table 5. Levels of Engagement for Improving Roma Education Outcomes in Serbia

Assistance and Support to the Roma Community	Implementation Support to Education Authorities	Policy Development with the Government
<p>1. Create Roma professionals in education through a variety of avenues. The REF will need to be very active in institutional development as well as human resources development involving prospective Roma educators. This work will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Supporting institutional developments and capacity building of the Roma community involved in education related activities.</li> <li>⇒ Calling for proposals for building capacity in the Roma community to address education issues.</li> <li>⇒ Developing a small Roma network on education.</li> <li>⇒ Supporting greater interaction/linkages between local authorities and Roma NGOs.</li> <li>⇒ Encouraging Roma parent associations and Roma members of school committees</li> </ul> <p>2. Find adequate mechanisms to complement the lack of a support</p>	<p>1. Build on already established new systems, ensuring their effectiveness with respect to the education of the Roma as well. These include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Ensure a high percentage of Roma enrolment in compulsory preschool from age 6, by expanding a current projects or by supporting a good system of monitoring enrolment – either by NGOs or the municipal inspectorates.</li> <li>⇒ Ensure fair openings of new profiles for Roma students in the forthcoming reform of vocational training, with modular instruction allowing easy reentry into the system and qualifications at a variety of levels.</li> <li>⇒ Ensure that in-service teacher training provision includes quality programs to raise teachers' sensitivity and impart the skills required for working in diversified classes, and ensure that municipal finances are fairly distributed to cover teacher training in low income municipalities.</li> <li>⇒ Use school development planning, now required from all schools and preschool institutions, and school self-evaluation, to support inclusive education. Support bottom-up development of inclusive schools, encouraging cooperation among these</li> </ul>	<p>1. Development of per-student financing. It is essential to support this development, to negotiate to ensure the adoption of an adequate financial coefficient for Roma students, and to support an overall approach to fiscal decentralization that assures adequate revenues to poorer local authorities with high Roma populations.</p> <p>2. The emerging policy with respect to civil registration should be supported, as should the abolishment of all enrolment barriers stemming from registration and identification gaps for Roma.</p> <p>3. Institutionalizing affirmative action for secondary and tertiary education and reviewing new legislation currently in preparation or in public discussion, with a special view on its correspondence to the Decade Action Plans and affirmative action policies (e.g. draft Law on Preschool Education, draft Law on Students' Standards, and the draft Law on Student Organization).</p>

Assistance and Support to the Roma Community	Implementation Support to Education Authorities	Policy Development with the Government
<p>system for Roma children. This can be done by supporting Roma initiatives increasing and supplementing the active engagement of Roma parents in the education of their children, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Motivating parents to enroll children on time, to ensure full-time attendance.</li> <li>⇒ Creating time and space for homework, to monitor school achievements, prevent dropouts, etc.</li> <li>⇒ Contributing to the development of a cultural production that mediates the successful coping with education experiences of Roma students.</li> </ul> <p>3. Address special schools and segregation. Activities could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Mapping/describing the process of assignment to special schools from the Roma perspective.</li> <li>⇒ NGO monitoring</li> <li>⇒ Special efforts to involve parents.</li> <li>⇒ Advocacy and public awareness.</li> </ul>	<p>schools, with the Roma community, and with municipalities.</p> <p>2. Support current developments in education, ensuring Roma are not left out or jeopardized by them. These include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Development of the EMIS data system. It is essential to be able to rely on the EMIS, regarding Roma relevant data as well. This will involve negotiations with World Bank project leaders and consultants, and with the Ministry of Education and Sport, to include support for additional modules capturing pertinent data related to the education of Roma.</li> <li>⇒ Textbook accreditation, and establishment of school funds for textbooks could also be of interest for REF support.</li> </ul> <p>3. Support changes in the education system that are of pertinence for Roma, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Offering classes in Serbian as second language for Roma students.</li> <li>⇒ Making the provision of additional classes for students in need a systemic, legally binding provision of the schools</li> <li>⇒ Abolishing the special education system.</li> <li>⇒ Ensuring active participation of municipal level school inspection in detecting, monitoring, and preventing discrimination and segregation of Roma in the education system.</li> </ul>	<p>4. It is important to review existing scholarship schemes, as well as the existing social assistance schemes, to develop more effective and better targeted models that can ensure higher attendance and lower dropout. Policymakers need assistance to adopt and implement these measures.</p> <p>5. Rationalization of schools and the teaching force should not be addressed without bearing in mind the educational needs of Roma children who are not yet in the system, or who have already dropped out. Ignoring these children could easily cut down those opportunities and resources that the education system still has, and that could be used to the benefit of the education of Roma.</p>

- ⇒ Opportunities for Roma parent involvement that are specific to the Serbian context: Although there is a growing experience with parent involvement as an indispensable support mechanism for successful education of students through many Roma NGO projects, there is a need for a clear overview of possible practices, coupled with an assessment of their long-term effectiveness.
- ⇒ Legal regulation of enrolment for 9 to 16-year-olds and an effective system of education provision for late enrolers and children who dropped out: This area needs a study that should encompass an overview of useful practices from other countries, an assessment of the size and geographic distribution of children affected, a study of legal impediments contributing to the problem, and legislation that needs to be revised – as well as possible scenarios for setting up a medium-term effective system that is operational only until the regular system starts to cater to all Roma children.
- ⇒ Curriculum development for teacher education that is pertinent to Roma students: Through the Bologna process of higher education reform, teacher training universities will also change curricula, structures and procedures in the forthcoming one or two years. It is important that this process is informed by the need for a more effective education of Roma. A study is needed to address the overview of existing teacher education curricula from the perspective of multicultural education. The study should look at barriers to introducing more effective curricula in this respect, possible options and recommendations, including an overview of options for preparing students for teaching Romanes language and culture. Since the higher education reform process is following international norms, it would be best to conduct such a study for all Decade of Roma Inclusion countries in a coordinated way.

## Results Framework Anticipated by REF Activities

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

### *Legal, Financial and Administrative Changes:*

- ⇒ An enforceable legislative framework for affirmative action at all education levels.
- ⇒ An enforceable legislative framework for detecting and preventing discrimination in education.
- ⇒ Appropriate financial mechanisms linked to the decentralisation process to ensure incentives for schools to support enrolment and participation of Roma students, through a weighted, per-student formula or other measures.

### *Education Indicators (Results are Expected in the Mid-Term):*

- ⇒ Near to universal pre-school enrolment, at the compulsory age, within poor Roma communities.
- ⇒ A decreased dropout rate in grades five through eight and an increased completion rate in primary education.
- ⇒ An increased in the quality of education for Roma students.
- ⇒ A decrease in the number of Roma children attending special schools.
- ⇒ An increase in Roma enrolment in high school and tertiary education, with a commensurate increase in the volume and amount of scholarship support.

### *Improved Social Cohesion*

- ⇒ An increase in acceptance of integrated schooling by teachers and non-Roma parents.
- ⇒ An improvement in cooperation between schools and the Roma community/NGOs in the education activities of schools – to be monitored through project reporting.

## **Country Monitoring Framework**

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

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- ⇒ Network of Roma NGOs engaged in education.
- ⇒ State Statistical Office.
- ⇒ Databases of the Ministry of Education, other government agencies, and other donors' data collection routines.
- ⇒ Evaluation and monitoring designed and funded by each REF project.

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



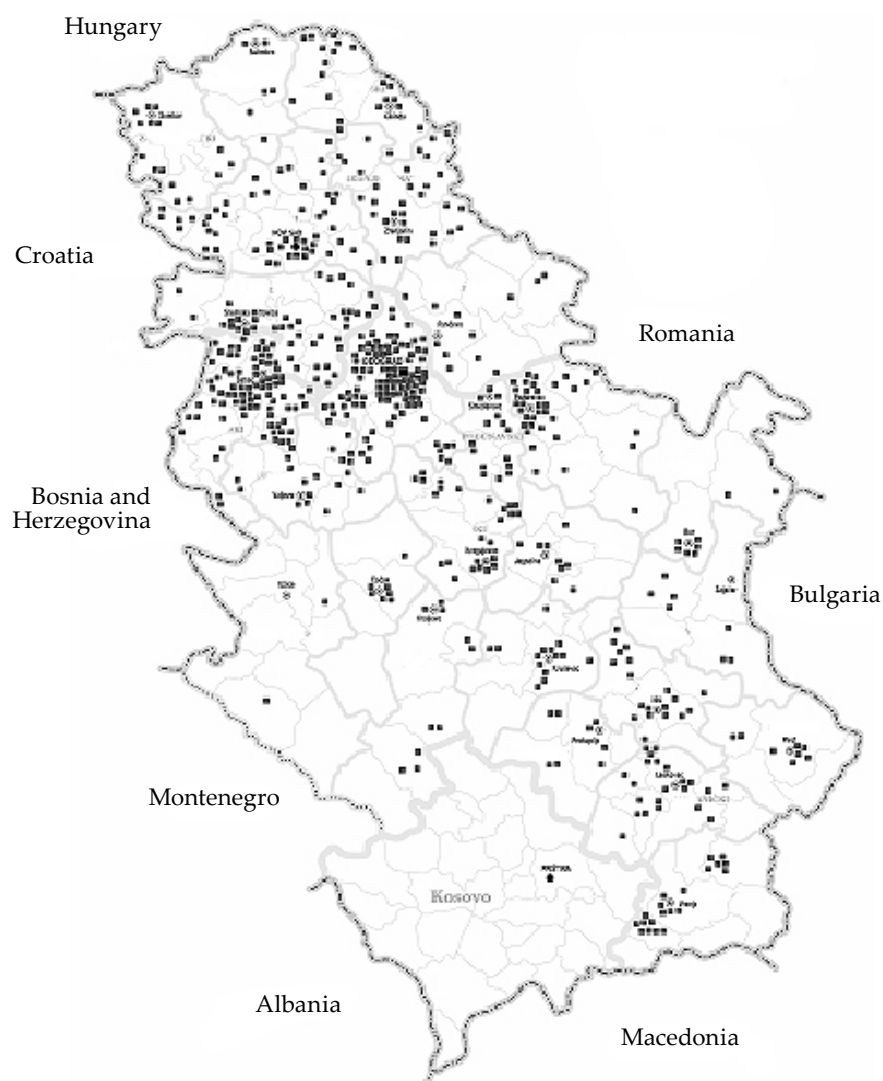
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# Annex A

## Map of Roma Settlements in Serbia





## Annex B

AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts		BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN SERBIA			
Openness		Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
<p><b>SCHOOL MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p>School board composed of three parents, three teachers, and three municipal officials.</p> <p>Neighborhood schooling principle dominates. Free choice of schools is possible, but complicated.</p>	<p>Management is accountable to the school board and municipal and national political leadership.</p> <p>Parent Councils exist, but participation in decision making is marginal. Student participation in secondary and tertiary education is mostly decorative.</p> <p>No parents associations exist. Parental influence on policymaking is only through political parties.</p> <p>There is a high violence rate among youths, and in schools. Violence reduction programmes have been started.</p>	<p>Traditional inspection still dominates.</p> <p>School improvement/development, and quality assurance mechanisms, including assessment of school ethos, is under development.</p> <p>Data on discrimination is not collected regularly.</p>	<p>Equity is generally not seen as an important part of school ethos, but about 10-20 percent of the schools actively promote an inclusive ethos. These include minority language schools and schools in the school development programme.</p> <p>Schools are indirectly prompted to avoid students potentially requiring additional staff time.</p> <p>The neighborhood schooling principle tends to limit choices.</p> <p>Roma and low socio-economic-status parents are not selected for school boards and parent councils.</p>	<p>Management is not efficiency-oriented. Instead, a combination of political and personal benefit-oriented managerial skills dominate.</p>	<p>There are a multitude of regulations, several of which are not enforced. Interpretation of regulations calls for legal a advisor.</p>

BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN SERBIA					
AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
<p><b>TEACHERS</b></p> <p>Teachers must have a university degree, they must work for an induction period, and they must take a state exam after about one year of practice.</p> <p>No competencies and standards are set for the teaching profession, except for career advancement.</p> <p>Teacher in-service training is mandatory. Teacher-training programs are accredited by a national center. A good selection of courses is offered, and funding is from municipal or national budgets.</p>	<p>Teachers are underpaid, and negative selection takes place.</p> <p>The Bologna process is not yet implemented in higher education. Teacher education, especially for teachers of specific subjects, does not provide skills for child-centered and participatory approaches – except for a part of the teacher training provision for practicing teachers. This type of training is developed mostly by NGOs.</p> <p>A participatory approach towards students and parents is not required and not commonly practiced by teachers. Meaningful parent and student involvement or evaluation is not possible.</p>	<p>Teacher training provision is diversified, and the accreditation procedure is standardized and conducted by a professional and independent institution. About 25 percent of the current teacher training competencies are important for teaching in multicultural classrooms, and most of this type of training is provided by NGOs.</p>	<p>There is a lack of qualified teachers for minority education and for rural schools. There are no provisions in preservice teacher education for diversity issues. There are no affirmative action measures for teacher-student intake or teacher employment.</p> <p>In-service teacher training courses on diversity issues have been developed by NGOs. These courses are accredited, and a good selection is offered, but low income municipalities cannot pay for them.</p> <p>The requirement for holding remedial classes is not enforced. Teachers who discriminate against children are neither identified nor punished.</p>	<p>Subject teachers lack basic teaching/learning skills, as well as assessment skills. Teaching is often not efficient and not motivating.</p>	<p>Education and selection is regulated through several rulebooks, in confusing and non-systemic ways, at various levels. The system is open to manipulation and misuse. Qualification (licensing) and in-service training are to be regulated under new rules, but these are not yet implemented.</p>

AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN SERBIA			
	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency
<p><b>CURRICULUM</b></p> <p>There is a national curriculum, which is content based and developed and approved by the Ministry of Education and Sports.</p>	<p>The rigid national curriculum does not allow flexibility at any level. The official curricula is from the majority perspective. There is no tracking.</p> <p>The development of a school-based and outcome-oriented curriculum approach was recently stopped.</p> <p>Extracurricular activities are rare.</p> <p>Courses in the Romanes language and Roma culture are offered as optional subjects in about 20 schools.</p>	<p>The curricula is content based and not outcome based. There are no standards developed yet, but development is under way.</p>	<p>Mastering the curriculum requires parent engagement. Private tutoring is a common practice, but this discriminates against lower socio-economic-status and less educated parents.</p>	<p>The curricula is overburdened with facts and is very academic, so it often lacks relevance for real-life situations. There is a low retention rate of knowledge gained, and low results on PISA and other criterion-based tests.</p>
				<p>The curriculum is over-regulated by the detailed national curricula, which provides a detailed syllabus by grade and by subject.</p>

		BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN SERBIA				
AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts		Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
<b>TEXTBOOKS</b> All subjects are covered by textbooks.	<p>There is liberalized textbook publishing, and selection at the school level.</p> <p>Textbooks are written from the majority perspective, and they often contain stereotypes.</p>	No standards are set for textbook quality yet, but development is under way.	<p>Textbooks are purchased by parents, and schools do not provide assistance in this area.</p> <p>Non-systemic assistance is organized by a variety of actors, and is usually given in unpredictable, stressful and humiliating ways.</p>	Diverse.	Textbook provision is de-regulated and market based.  There are no regulations ensuring systemic textbook provision to all students, or to those in need.	
<b>ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION</b> There is no school-leaving examination system.	<p>There is no transparency, except for entrance exams, and no accountability to parents or the community.</p> <p>Formative assessment was started but abolished. About 300 schools use a pilot form of school-self evaluation.</p>	An external examination system is planned but not yet set up. Only research studies and PISA and TIMSS data is available.	<p>Massive private tutoring is involved, and this is discriminatory towards low socio-economic-status students.</p>		Assessment is regulated only on the level of systemic legislation. Rulebooks and implementation are still not developed.	

<b>BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN SERBIA</b>	
<b>AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts</b>	
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<b>Equity</b>	<b>Efficiency</b>
<b>Regulation</b>	
<p><b>FINANCES</b></p> <p>The national budget covers salaries and investment and other costs are covered from the municipal budget. Salaries are based on number of eligible teachers in each school, calculated from the number of eligible classes and program requirements.</p>	<p>There is no transparency of finances yet, but a new EMIS information system, ensuring transparency, is under development.</p>
<p>Finances are uniform, and there is no formula favoring diversity, openness, developmental programs, minority education, etc.</p> <p>A World Bank program gives school development grants, which also support mainstream schools undertaking inclusive education projects.</p> <p>Financing for special schools is unduly favorable.</p>	<p>Schools in low income municipalities struggle with basic maintenance financing.</p>
	<p>Teacher rationalization is planned, as means to ensure higher efficiency, but no concept developed yet.</p>
	<p>There is a lack of clear regulations.</p> <p>Eligible school finances (CENUS) are calculated and approved yearly by regional officers of the Ministry of Education and Sports, creating the potential for abuse.</p>

# Roma Education Fund



## ROMA EDUCATION FUND (REF)

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

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