

In cooperation with the  
Education Support Program and the  
Roma Participation Program



Esélyt a Hátrányos Helyzetű  
Gyerekeknek Alapítvány  
Chance For Children Foundation  
<http://www.cfcf.hu>

The report is available online at <http://www.eumap.org>  
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## LEAD

The monitoring report “Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma in Hungary” is a comprehensive analysis of basic educational indicators, as well as of the major barriers and constraints that prevent from Roma in Hungary to enjoy equal access to quality education. In 2007, the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, the report shows that many Roma children in Hungary continue to face discrimination, isolation or exclusion from education.

According to Lilla Farkas, a co-author of the report, “when addressing access to quality education for Roma and impoverished majority children we must shift our focus away from legal amendments. There is now an urgent need for re-training teachers in modern teaching techniques and also rethinking the design of urbanisation policies. Where the whole community is excluded and isolated, measures must reach farther to truly grant equal access.”

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Segregation in schools is expensive and we will all have to pay for it**

Budapest, 13 June 2007 – As one of the Governments leading the ‘Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015’, Hungary has achieved a high profile for its efforts to address the many problems facing its Roma population. The Government has adopted a series of initiatives aimed at giving Roma children better access to education as a step towards improving their inclusion and opportunities for the future. According to a report released today, however, critical elements included in these Governmental policies have been overlooked in practice so far, hindering the possibility of any true progress.

The monitoring report “Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma in Hungary” released today was produced by the EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program of the Open Society Institute in cooperation with the Change for Children Foundation. It is a comprehensive analysis of basic educational indicators, as well as of the major barriers and constraints that prevent Roma in Hungary from enjoying equal access to quality education. In 2007, the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, the report shows that many Roma children in Hungary continue to face discrimination, isolation or exclusion from education.

Segregation is officially illegal in Hungary. However, research indicates that the segregation of Roma children into segregated schools and classes has been on the rise over the past 15 years. In

particular, the Government has so far not adequately addressed the needs of Roma in schools located in segregated residential areas where there is no or little non Roma population with which to integrate.

The Hungarian edition of the report was launched today in Tiszabura. Despite being a member of the OOIH, the National Network of Educational Integration designed to combat segregation, the school in this rural area still has an overwhelmingly Roma student body.

Without addressing the larger context of geographic isolation, poverty and deprivation in which children live, the report makes clear, educational integration cannot succeed. According to Lilla Farkas, a co-author of the report, “when addressing access to quality education for Roma and impoverished majority children we must shift our focus away from legal amendments. There is now an urgent need for re-training teachers in modern teaching techniques and also rethinking the design of urbanisation policies. Where the whole community is excluded and isolated, measures must reach farther to truly grant equal access.”

The report released today also highlights the absence of an effective inspection mechanism for schools. In contrast with other countries in the region, Hungary has no comprehensive system for monitoring schools’ compliance with basic education legislation; instead, local governments are responsible for exercising control over schools in their jurisdiction. According to the report, local inspections have proven ineffective in identifying problems such as segregation, and the report cites an example where OKÉV, the national body with limited powers of inspection, has also failed to condemn segregation where it is evident.

Drawing upon material collected in three case studies, including Tiszabura, the OSI report exposes serious shortcomings in the training and support to teachers in the classroom. Even the Decade Action Plan developed by the Government makes no specific mention of the need to improve this essential area. While teachers may attend courses to develop their abilities to work with modern, child-centred methods, when they return to their classrooms they often revert to a traditional, lecture-based approach. Without access to ongoing support and continuous education, the report argues, teachers may continue to rely on nineteenth-century methods to teach the children of the twenty-first century.

The monitoring report is accompanied by 44 detailed and concrete recommendations addressed at the Hungarian Government with the aim of contributing to offer Roma children in Hungary a better future.

#### Notes to the editors

The monitoring of *Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma* is a multi country project covering the nine countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. The monitoring is carried out by the EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program (EUMAP) of the Open Society Institute (OSI), in cooperation with OSI’s Education Support Program (ESP) and Roma Participation Program (RPP). Local partner NGOs and experts conduct the research in each country. The full text of the reports in English and in translation is available online at <http://www.eumap.org>. More information on OSI is available at <http://www.soros.org>.

The Hungarian report was prepared in cooperation with the co-author of the report, Dr. Lilla Farkas, lawyer at the Chance for Children Foundation; and with Szilvia Németh, education specialist and researcher, Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development; Attila Z. Papp, researcher, Hungarian Academy of Science/Research Institute of Ethnic and National Minorities; Julianna Boros, researcher, political sociologist; Zsófia Kardos, researcher, Koping Datorg Zrt.