

## “Equal access to quality education for Roma“

Monitoring report for Montenegro (2007)<sup>1</sup>  
Podgorica, 24 April 2008

### REPORT BRIEF FOR THE PRESS

*Some journalists asked me why I am so interested in Roma. My answer was the following: “How can I not be interested in Roma issues? It is one of the biggest social injustices that still prevail in this region so that it is only too natural to feel the urge to address that.” (George Soros, President of the Open Society Institute, an extract from the keynote speech delivered at the Conference «Roma in Enlarged Europe» in Budapest - June 2003 held under the auspices of the Open Society Institute and the World Bank)*

#### WHAT DOES THE „DECADE OF ROMA INCLUSION“ STAND FOR?

The “Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015” is an unprecedented international effort to combat discrimination and to close the gap in welfare and living conditions between the Roma and the non-Roma, in order to break the cycle of poverty and exclusion. The initiative is supported by the OSI

---

<sup>1</sup> English version and translated report available at: [www.eumap.org](http://www.eumap.org) and [www.osim.cg.yu](http://www.osim.cg.yu)  
For detailed information contact: [tsrzentic@osim.cg.yu](mailto:tsrzentic@osim.cg.yu)

and the World Bank, and endorsed by nine Central and Eastern European countries. The declared objective is to accelerate progress in improving the social inclusion and economic status of Roma.

The Roma, with an estimated population of between 8 and 12 million spread across the whole continent, are one of Europe's largest and most vulnerable minorities. Throughout Europe, Roma remain excluded from many aspects of society, denied their rights and entrenched in poverty. The particular problems faced by Roma in accessing quality educational opportunities have been widely recognised. There is no single type of Roma but a rich variety of cultures, traditions and other characteristics. They speak different languages and practice a number of religions. Due to the negative attitudes when it comes to this population, many Roma have sadly been afraid to display their Roma identity openly. This is one reason why the number of Roma in national censuses is usually much lower than the real figure.

### ***WHAT DOES MONITORING REPORT “EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ROMA” WANT TO ACHIEVE?***

The EUMAP reports on “Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma” aim to:

- support the goals of the Decade in the key area of education, and establish a framework for regular monitoring throughout the Decade;
- provide an assessment of the state of implementation of Government education policies for Roma;
- promote consultation with Roma communities on education issues
- provide data on key education indicators.

Each of the reports contains **case studies** from selected Roma communities. These case studies have provided relevant local examples, which is particularly important because of the fact that data on educational status of Roma can be incomplete at the national level. The case studies also provide a baseline survey for follow up monitoring, in order to document changes in educational outcomes at the local level over the course of the Decade.

So far two volumes of the monitoring report “Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma” have been published. The first volume of reports covers four countries: *Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania* and *Serbia* and it was published in 2007. The second volume, which includes Montenegro and other three countries that participate in the Decade: Croatia, Republic of Macedonia and Slovakia. General overview section of the monitoring report for Montenegro contains main findings across all countries covered with this project.

### ***HOW ARE COUNTRY REPORTS STRUCTURED IN GENERAL?***

Each of the country reports has seven main parts:

Section 1 includes the executive summary and recommendations;

Section 2 looks at available data on school enrolment and retention of Roma students, in comparison with general trends;

Section 3 reviews governmental policies and programs on Roma, as well as general educational policies impacting Roma education, and looks at their state of implementation, in particular with respect to the “Decade of Roma Inclusion”;

Section 4 addresses the main constraints preventing Roma from fully accessing education; it also looks at the impact of segregation (schools serving exclusively Roma neighbourhoods or villages, in separate classes within mainstream schools, or in special schools for people with intellectual disabilities) on access to education.

Section 5 looks at the quality of education that Roma receive;

Section 6 i.e. Annex 1, the section on administrative structures briefly details the organisation and operation of the school system in each country;

Section 7 i.e. Annex 2 there are additional details from the case studies and these were integrated throughout the body of the report.

#### ***WHAT DID THE REPORT FIND ABOUT THE AVAILABLE DATA ON ROMA EDUCATION?***

Even in the countries where the data have been collected they are rather fragmented and so uneven quality that they have been rendered of no use to policy makers. It is particularly so when it comes to the quality of Roma education once they get into the school system. This gave rise to ambition to do a field study (case studies) as a method for collecting substantive data in this field.

#### ***WHAT ARE SOME GENERAL CONCLUSIONS OF THE MONITORING REPORT ABOUT MONTENEGRO?***

The Government has made serious efforts to understand and recognise the importance of education for Roma, implementing a project designed to integrate Roma children into the education system. Despite this unique initiative, many issues affecting access to and quality of education for Roma remain unresolved and in some cases overlooked by Government policy.

As a participant in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015, Montenegro is part of a larger regional initiative to address the situation of Roma. However, there are still basic obstacles to improving education for Roma in Montenegro, barriers that the Government must take steps to eliminate.

The Report identified the following problems:

- Regarding the lack of available **data**, there is a distinct discrepancy between the official data on the Roma population and the data provided through surveys, official institutional registers and research analysis exists, however – fewer than 3,000 Roma registered in the 2003 census. Data regarding Roma participation and performance in education are very limited and this seriously calls into question the accuracy of continuous monitoring and evaluation of Roma-related programmes.
- **Access to pre-school education** is limited by the shortage of places in available facilities. This shortfall disproportionately affects Roma children, as priority is given to families where both parents work, which is rare among Roma. What needs to be pointed out is that there

should be a plan in place to ensure as bigger presence of Roma in pre-school institutions as it is a well-known fact that pre-school programs are irreplaceable tool to prepare children for school, and when it comes to RAE children, pre-school education becomes ever more important resource that helps them acquire language skills and bilingual techniques whereby they start their social integration.

- **Residential** segregation has not officially been acknowledged in any Government documents, nor does it exist there in a form present in other countries covered by this monitoring. Yet there is a certain level of residential segregation in some areas is known to give rise to Roma-majority schools.
- The report addresses the issue of **language barrier** as a strong impediment that hinders Roma children's access to mainstream education. The authors of this report suggest that systemic solutions be found to have Roma assistants professionally engaged in teaching and to come up with incentives and positive discrimination measures so as to have more RAE representatives trained and educated to do that job.
- In relation to the **school placement procedure**, there is no information that would indicate that Roma children are placed in special classes of mainstream schools, although there are some schools in which Roma pupils make majority and that especially so in the neighbourhoods inhabited by significant number of Roma.
- Provisions have been made to supply Roma children with textbooks, but there are no materials specifically about Roma, and no enough teaching materials that would specifically refer to Roma or those written in Romanes. REI has paid considerable attention to teacher training, introducing pedagogical practices recognizing specific features of the Roma culture and tradition, although bilingual techniques are not included in the available pre-service courses.
- Regarding **quality education** for Roma children, the fact that there are no enough Roma teachers is quite apparent, and case study research conducted for this report suggests that many teachers are reluctant to study Romanes. A very limited number of Roma teaching assistants have been working in the classrooms as part of the REI, although there has been a lack of clarity regarding their place in the school structure. Resolving this administrative issue should be a priority, as Roma assistants can effectively help to bring Roma children into school and succeed once there.
- A lack of real communication and **cooperation between Roma communities and schools** is a serious obstacle to improving education for Roma; the REI has made efforts to better involve Roma parents in the daily work of the schools, but this is also a longer-term process that should be monitored.
- As part of its efforts to be considered a candidate for EU membership, Montenegro has initiated a debate on **anti-discrimination legislation**, but no such law has been adopted so far.

***WHICH RECOMMENDATIONS ENSUED FROM THE MONITORING REPORT FOR MONTENEGRO?***

For each country report there are detailed recommendations aimed at improving the access to quality education for Roma. These are directed at the national level (national governments, ministries and national education agencies) and will international level (European Union and to international organisations).

The recommendations relevant for international level are given in the overview report, while the **recommendations relevant for the institutions in Montenegro** are set forth in section 1.2 (p. 22-30):

<b>DATA COLLECTION</b>	
- Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- develop methods of ethnic data collection, including the use of school collected data, which are disaggregated by ethnicity in order to monitor the effects of their policies on ethnic minorities, including RAE;</li> <li>- create reliable data collection systems and cross-sectoral cooperation at the governmental level in order to create a unified database including information about RAE.</li> </ul>
- Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- improve the overall collection of data related to education, disaggregated according to ethnic group, including Roma and other ethnic minorities, to the full extent permitted by relevant EU legislation, with adequate safeguards for protecting sensitive information and the identity and privacy of individuals; make that data publicly available;</li> <li>- work in cooperation with the National Statistical Office to perform research at the national level as to identify the number of RAE children in different age groups that are not included in the formal educational system.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>	
- Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- undertake regular reviews of the degree of implementation of the key policy documents addressing issues of access to high-quality education for Roma;</li> <li>- allocate separate funds for the implementation of the education section of the Decade Action Plan.</li> </ul>
- Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of the education section of the Decade Action Plan, revising its priorities, measures and activities, in accordance with real achievements;</li> <li>- develop clear indicators to monitor and evaluate the implementation of education initiatives related to RAE, especially the Roma Education Initiative, and make the evaluation of this publicly available;</li> <li>- work on creating reliable data collection systems, and consolidate data in a central database, which would be an ongoing reliable source of information on important indicators for education for RAE;</li> <li>- track achievements of Roma children enrolled in special schools so as to enable a prompt response in cases of incorrect placement;</li> <li>- ensure the collection of disaggregated data within the planned national testing system.</li> </ul>

<b>Improving access to education</b>	
<i>Structural constraints, legal and administrative requirements, costs</i>	
- Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- fulfil the measures detailed in the Decade Action Plan for education with regard to point 2.5, providing additional construction and adjustment of infrastructure inhabited by Roma (goal 7);</li> <li>- work towards improvement of access to personal documents and health care for Roma as one of the preconditions for their successful access to education;</li> <li>- develop policies for refugees and displaced people to gain access to education despite their not having the appropriate papers.</li> </ul>
- Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ensure that adequate space is available to accommodate all children in kindergarten and primary schools, through the expansion of existing facilities or the construction of new ones;</li> <li>- develop financial and other incentives for pre-schools to enrol children from disadvantaged families, to counteract the tendency for pre-schools to give priority to families with two working parents;</li> <li>- implement positive discrimination/affirmative action towards RAE children at the level of pre-school education, bearing in mind its importance as a first instance for addressing and subsequently overcoming language barriers.</li> <li>- develop a policy targeting RAE who are finishing secondary school, in order to facilitate their enrolment in university, making the necessary resources available to implement this policy;</li> <li>- enforce existing regulations regarding compulsory education, to ensure that RAE children are actually attending school;</li> <li>- introduce a national system to provide necessary educational materials (in particular, textbooks and exercise books) free of charge to disadvantaged children in kindergartens and primary schools.</li> </ul>
- Local education authorities	- organize stakeholders involved in RAE issues at the local level and create multi-stakeholder local teams that would develop, promote and implement policy documents, such as the National Plan of Action for Children, at the local level.
<b>Residential segregation/geographical isolation</b>	
- Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- create incentives to encourage local authorities to take steps to improve the infrastructure serving RAE communities and lead to desegregation;</li> <li>- Take measures, such as providing free transportation, to allow RAE from segregated areas to attend integrated schools of their choosing;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- increase accountability of local institutions dealing with Roma-related issues;</li> <li>- provide financial and other incentives for schools to establish better cooperation with Roma civil society in order to overcome barriers to the wider participation of RAE children from isolated communities in formal education.</li> </ul>
<b>School and class placement procedures</b>	
- Government	- fulfil the measures detailed in the Decade Action Plan for education under point 2.1.2, developing a specific enrolment policy for Roma children, and in point 2.1.4 of transferring into regular schools of Roma children who have wrongfully been enrolled in special schools.
- Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- review any new testing procedures that the newly forming placement commissions are to use for bias and cultural appropriateness for RAE children;</li> <li>- develop mechanisms for retesting children already placed in special schools, and provide them with adequate educational support to assist their return to mainstream schools;</li> <li>- implement the newly introduced school placement scheme that shifts placement procedures to the local level.</li> </ul>
<b>Language</b>	
- Government	- fulfil the measures detailed in the Decade Action Plan for education related to incorporation of elements of Roma culture in curricula for children, and provide adequate human resource base for work with Roma children in their mother tongue.
- Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ensure systematic solutions for the professional engagement of Roma teaching assistants, and find incentives and positive discrimination measures to include more RAE in the training and education necessary for this job;</li> <li>- develop pre-school programs that strengthen readiness for school among RAE children, by placing particular emphasis on language acquisition and bilingual techniques;</li> <li>- support and foster in-service and pre-service teacher training courses covering language acquisition and methodologies for bilingual education;</li> <li>- ensure that teacher training institutions have the proper curriculum and courses to prepare teachers of Romanes.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations for improving the quality of education</b>	
<b>School facilities and human resources</b>	

- Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ensure there is synergy between the ongoing education reform and the strategies in place for the education of Roma children, such as the Decade Action Plan for education, and other strategies, and ensure that those schools with a high percentage of Roma children benefit from the reform as much as other schools;</li> <li>- find financial resources for necessary infrastructure investments in schools enrolling a higher number of RAE children;</li> <li>- increase the number of Roma teachers and Roma teaching assistants to be engaged in the formal educational system by implementing affirmative action measures, primarily through scholarship schemes;</li> <li>- further build capacities of teachers to apply anti-bias and interactive techniques while working in integrated classrooms;</li> <li>- provide necessary preconditions for Roma teaching assistants to become official members of the school community and promote them further as driving forces of change in the integration of RAE children.</li> </ul>
<b>Curricular standards</b>	
- Government	- fulfil the measures detailed in the Decade Action Plan for education under Goal 6, prepare and implementation of adapted literacy programs for the Roma population and children who have not enrolled in school on time.
- Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ensure that extra or out-of-school support classes are adequately provided and funded to help RAE children keep abreast of strenuous curricular standards;</li> <li>- support the production of bilingual educational materials for work with RAE children as indicated in the Decade Action Plan;</li> <li>- ensure the incorporation of elements of Roma culture in at least history and literature materials, and ensure that diversity and multiculturalism are adequately reflected in all curricula.</li> </ul>
<b>Classroom practice and pedagogy</b>	
- Government	- provide adequate teaching staff for work with Roma children.
- Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ensure the continuous training of teachers, education inspectors, the Bureau for Educational Services and school managers in pre-service and in-service training, in the following: child-centred pedagogy, interactive teaching methodology, individualized approach, anti-bias education, methodologies for second language learning, multicultural education, and effective ways of involving parents and communities;</li> <li>- promote the further engagement of Roma facilitators as mediators between the school and RAE community and provide additional training;</li> <li>- improve the existing system of teacher accreditation;</li> <li>- include a mentoring scheme for teachers working with RAE children;</li> <li>- support and foster in-service and pre-service teacher training courses covering language acquisition and methodologies for bilingual education.</li> </ul>

	-
<b>School-community relations</b>	
Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- enhance cooperation between schools and RAE civil society representatives interested and involved in initiatives relevant for the education of Roma; foster dialogue on possible courses of action;</li> <li>- support schools to find create ways to involve parents and communities in school life and the learning process;</li> <li>- further consult Roma civil society representatives on issues important for the education of Roma children, such as promotion of education as a value among the Roma community/parents.</li> </ul>
<b>Anti-discriminatory measures</b>	
- Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ensure the implementation of anti-discrimination measures;</li> <li>- pass comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, including in the field of education, and ensure its effective implementation;</li> <li>- strengthen the capacities, and allocate proper financial resources to the Ombudsman office to address complaints with regard to potential discriminatory attitudes;</li> <li>- consider the creation of another anti-discrimination body at the national level empowered with concrete responsibilities for investigating.</li> </ul>
- Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- promote “equality in education” in practice, by means of targeted public campaigns or other available tools;</li> <li>- pay special attention to double discrimination of Roma girls and women and develop specific programmes that would help raise awareness of the importance of education and would involve them in relevant RAE-community targeted activities;</li> <li>- educate teaching staff, pupils and parents on their rights in education and against discrimination.</li> </ul>
<b>School inspections</b>	
- Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- give appropriate authority and support to the Bureau for Educational Services to act as mentors and support to schools and teachers working with Roma children.</li> </ul>
- Bureau for education services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- further develop specific quality assurance mechanisms in schools with a higher number of Roma, and support schools in achieving that level of quality;</li> <li>- monitor integrated classrooms and offer timely and substantive feedback to teachers engaged in integrated (Roma/non-Roma) classrooms.</li> </ul>