

ROMA CHILDEN IN ROMANIA - SCHOOL EDUCATION

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It is estimated that over 12 million Roma live in the world today. Roma originally came to Europe from India and have been living in various parts of the continent ever since. Their number in Europe is estimated to be at least eight million, the largest number being in Romania: values after the last census – 570,000 Roma and estimated values - 1,800,000 – 2,500,000 million.

The situation of the Roma children in Romania can be understood only by looking back into Roma history in Romania. Forward to take measures for present, one has to know the background from the past. For more than 500 years, Roma in Romania were slaves, so they were not considered human beings, but exchange objects, out of any social structure. Roma children were sold and bought, sometimes at less a price than a cow or a copper pot. Taken away from their parents, Roma girls were offered, as pleasure instruments, by their masters to their guests. The name itself attributed to Roma by Romanians – “tsigan” – meant “slave” in the Romanian language of those times.

After the abolishment of slavery, in the middle of the 19th century, there were no state policies for the integration of Roma into Romanian society. Lacking elite, so models of reference, and lacking resources of development, Roma remained out of history, not far away from the status of slave, failing to integrate in the society.

Liberated from slavery, Roma were simply thrown out from masters' lands and from their huts, with no means of survival, with no resources to carry on with their lives, so many of them went back to their former masters, begging for food and shelter, in exchange for hard work, doing anything for survival. That way, they continued to be half slaves, servants by the masters' houses or working the land, only for shelter and food, with no access to development resources or to school education.

Step by step they began to lose their cultural identity and to internalize their inferior status in society as if this status was the way things had to be for them. Nowadays, these Roma live in ghettos, marginalized and rejected by the majority, many times in conditions of extreme poverty, facing racial discrimination, open and institutionalized, in shape of forced evictions and displacements, ill treatment by police forces, racism in school systems, social exclusion and hate speech in media and in important political and academic environments.

Violation of human and minority rights, status of a second class citizens, social exclusion and even the collective ethnic violence against Roma shape themselves, in majority of cases, into institutionalized racism.

Roma that saved themselves from going back to the half slave status were the former king's slaves, who enjoyed a relative freedom of movement and had the chance to develop their traditional crafts, such as work in copper, iron, gold, silver or wood. During the slavery age, they were allowed to be nomad, in exchange for taxes' payments to the king. After the liberation from slavery, they carried on with their nomadic life, developing their crafts and surviving by the use of their specific abilities. For quite a long time, Roma traditional crafts were very important for the Romanian economy, a mainly agricultural one, which needed very much the work Roma did. Nomadic Roma preserved their language and culture, their traditional social structure, their view about world; they developed their pragmatic approach to life and their solidarity laws within the community. In spite of the fact that they were useful to the Romanian economy, the prejudiced thinking and negative stereotypes, reinforced by a general negative state of mind about otherness, developed the Romanian collective memory approach to Roma into despise and hate. Far-right ideologies quickly followed and the racial discrimination became state policy. This far right policy arrived to its peak during the Second World War, when the genocide against Roma took place, by the Deportation of Roma to Transnistria. Official figures speak about more than 35,000 Roma exterminated, among which more than 6,000 were children.

Public policies towards Roma developed between racism of exclusion, which culminated with extermination and racism of domination by assimilation, which leded, by systemic destruction of ethnic identity, to ethnocide.

After the War, the communist regime promoted a clear and open policy of forced assimilation of Roma, including by forcing nomadic Roma to settle and to work in agriculture, many times by deporting them from one region to another.

After centuries of institutional racial discrimination, manifested either by social exclusion culminating with extermination, or by forced assimilation, after 1989, Roma were recognized as national minority, fact that supposed gaining civic rights. Today's Romanian Government's policy towards Roma pretends to be at least "politically correct", following Romania's aspiration to become a member of the European Union and the fact that Roma situation is one of the political criteria for the pre-adhesion process. Roma are recognized as national minority; Romanian Government adopted the national strategy for Roma situation improvement (Government Decision 430/25.04.2001), there was established a network of County Offices for Roma, Romani language is taught in schools as mother tongue.

In spite of all these, Roma situation, instead of improving, got worse: there is no real political will to put the strategy into practice, Government allocates no financial support for the strategy, local authorities act in an open racially discriminatory way against Roma, ignoring the strategy, putting Roma in special ghetto-neighborhoods, forcefully evicting them from their settlements, police torture and ill treatment continue, as well as the lack of access to justice and discrimination in work, housing and school system.

The economical situation of Roma in Romania describes a state of extreme poverty, as a consequence of an institutionalized racism. From the cultural and social point of view, Roma are considered a sub-culture, a marginalized social group, less citizens than the majority population.

Social exclusion, racial discrimination and state's lack of interest to adopt pro-active policies addressed to Roma are the roots of Roma population's extreme poverty, the Roma being the most disadvantaged population in Romania. Most of the Roma families are dependent of the social welfare (16% after UNDP, „Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency Trap”, 2003), but still it cannot ensure them with a decent living.

Three quarters of Roma live in poverty and more than half (five times more than the majority population) live in conditions of severe poverty. Poverty rate for Roma was, in 2001, of 75.1%, comparing with the majority population where, in the same year, it was of 24.4%. Severe poverty rate for Roma was, in 2001, of 52.2%, comparing with the majority population where, in the same year, it was of 9.3%.

3.1% of Roma lack identity papers and the same for 4.8% of Roma children between 0-13 years old (Gelu Duminičă, Marian Preda, „Roma's access on the labor market”, ECA, Bucharest, 2003), so they are excluded from all civic rights and from their regular access to social services.

In what concerns Roma's access to labor market, only one third of Roma have a constant job and only 50% have a job which needs qualification (Romanian Government and CASPIS – Anti-Poverty Commission for Social Inclusion Promotion, „Social Support for Roma Population”, 2003). Most income of Roma families develops from daily work, many times on black labor market, with very low payment and high risk of being kicked out.

Only 47% of Roma have access to labor market, comparing with 61.7% in the case of majority population. Approx. 80% unqualified Roma who are included on the labor market have graduated 8 classes. 71.7% of Roma are daily workers. (Zamfir, Preda, „Roma from Romania”, 2002)

Housing conditions of Roma are very bad: only 25.6% of Roma households have access to any heating system, only 41.4% have access to water, comparing to 67.4% in the case of the majority population, only 26% of Roma families have a phone, comparing to 81% in the case of the majority population. 44.9% of Roma houses suffer of dampness and 39% of Roma sleep on the floor, because they have no bad („Roma in an Expanding Europe. Breaking the Poverty Cycle. A World Bank Study”, 2003). Residential segregation is almost a general phenomenon when it comes to Roma settlements. More than that, public local authorities use to evacuate and displace Roma families from their houses or places of residence, sometimes without any legal basis and without any housing alternative.

Due to the racial discrimination manifested in healthcare services, including the fact that many family doctors refuse to register Roma on their lists, and due to poverty, many Roma have no access to quality medical services. 63% of Roma have no medical insurance (UNDP, „Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency Trap”, 2003), so they have no access to any healthcare services. Life span of Roma from Romania is with 15-20 years shorter than for the majority population, being around the age of 50-55 years („Roma in an Expanding Europe. Breaking the Poverty Cycle. A World Bank Study”, 2003). Chronic illnesses are quite spread among Roma. Roma children are badly fed. Mortality among Roma children is four times higher than among non-Roma children (Romanian Government and CASPIS – Anti-Poverty Commission for Social Inclusion Promotion, „Social Support for Roma Population”, 2003).

Police illegal raids in Roma communities, police abuse against Roma manifested by the excessive use of force and arbitrary use of weapons, forced displacement of Roma families, segregation of Roma children in schools can be easily defined as racially motivated actions. Roma children are the most affected victims of these abuses, both from the physical and psychological points of view.

Roma children's access to school education is limited. One out of five Roma cannot send his child to school due to the lack of decent clothing („Roma in an Expanding Europe. Breaking the Poverty Cycle. A World Bank Study”, 2003). The lack of identity papers is used, by school authorities, as a pretext for denying Roma children of their right to enroll into school. There are schools that refuse the enrollment of Roma children because they have no stable residence.

Roma in Romania tend to have a higher level of illiteracy and a lower level of school education than the total population. A 1992 study found that, compared to the estimated national illiteracy rate of 2 to 4% (Ministry of Education, Romania 1998), 44% of Roma men, and 59% of Roma women were illiterate in 1992, and an estimated 27% of Roma never attended school, or if they had, it was only for a few years. There is also evidence of worsening trends in recent years. Data from two nationally representative household surveys found that for Roma, the share of the population that had not completed basic education grew from 36% in 1994 to 44% in 1998. A more recent study from 1998 reported that 17% of Roma children between the ages of three and six participated in preschool, in comparison with 60 percent of the whole population.

The share of Roma who continue beyond compulsory basic education is also dramatically lower than for the rest of the population. One study found only 7% of Roma men and 3% of Roma women completed secondary school, compared to 73% of men and 63% of women in the general population (OSI 2002). This study also reported that there was some evidence that the proportion of Roma completing secondary school has increased over the last two decades.

Considerable variation may exist among Roma groups in terms of participation in education. Roma children are proportionally more likely to regularly attend school if their fathers are employed, if they live in mixed rather than predominantly Roma communities (60% compared to 33%), and if their mothers have had more than eight years of schooling (73%) compared with mothers with no schooling (21%).

There still are cases of Roma children forced to attend segregated classes or schools where the quality of education does not meet the standards: study conditions are under the minimum accepted, teachers are under qualified and educational materials are missing.

Further data suggest that the proportion of Roma pupils who drop out of school increases with age. 24.4% of Roma children older than of 10 years no longer attend school (Zamfir, Preda, „Roam from Romania”, 2002). Only 20% of Roma children attend pre-school education, comparing with 66.1% for the total population of pre-school age (2000-2001). Only 50% of Roma children regularly attend school and 80% of the children who do not attend school are Roma; 23% of Roma children of school age are illiterate („Roma in an Expanding Europe. Breaking the Poverty Cycle. A World Bank Study”, 2003). At the age of seven, over half of all Roma children attend school, either regularly (49%) or occasionally (7%). By the age of nine, school attendance becomes the norm, with over 66 percent of Roma children enrolled full or part-time. However, between the ages of nine and thirteen, an increasing number of Roma students drop out of school. By age fifteen, the proportion of children attending regularly decreased by one third compared to rates of attendance at age 14. Over 15% of Roma 16 year olds reported that they never attended school. The case studies confirmed the sharp decline in Roma school attendance after the fourth grade. The number of Roma students repeating the fourth grade was also higher than for other grades. Only 8.9% of Roma graduated

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medium studies and only 0.3% superior studies („Roma in an Expanding Europe. Breaking the Poverty Cycle. A World Bank Study”, 2003).

Both Roma and education personnel cite poverty and economic constraints as significant obstacles to education. Poor parents often cannot afford the necessary school supplies, shoes, clothing, and food. Teachers have observed that many Roma students report to school without proper food and clothing.

The motivation of parents and their attitudes and expectations toward education also have an important influence on school attendance. Many parents resisted sending their children to school, citing reasons such as the need for their children to work, fears of discrimination and maltreatment of their children. Another category of constraints to Roma education relates to discrimination and exclusion. Many Roma were reluctant to send their children to school due to fear of prejudice and lack of acceptance in the regular schools. Other parents complained of discrimination against Roma and favoritism toward non-Roma students. Discrimination ranged from teachers ignoring their needs, pejoratively calling them “gypsies,” and even violent treatment.

The prejudiced thinking about Roma and the racism against Roma children in schools is a fact, reinforced by the type of education promoted by Romanian mainstream school system: mono-cultural, ethnocentric, misunderstanding and even hating what is different, with no openness towards otherness, with no intercultural strategy.

Due to the hard work of some dedicated people, individually engaged with Roma education cause, and due to the pressure and lobby actions of the Roma civil society, the Romanian Ministry of Education initiated some positive programs for Roma children education: a network of County School Inspectors for Roma was established; the Rromani language teaching in schools, as mother tongue, developed; a significant number of teaching materials in Rromani language were published; Roma teachers training was initiated by summer schools and distance learning; special places for Roma in high schools, colleges and some faculties were created in the frame of affirmative action; a Rromani language and literature department was established at the University of Bucharest; intensive and vocational learning classes came to support the way back to school for Roma children who abandoned school.

The Romanian Ministry of Education and Research has organized a number of educational initiatives specifically for Roma students. The “Second Chance” project is an experimental project which was organized in 1999 in cooperation with the Centre for Education 2000+, part of the Soros Open Network. The program provides the opportunity for young Roma school drop-outs (aged 14–24 years) to complete basic primary and secondary school, together with additional vocational training. Graduation certificates are provided to those who successfully complete a 3.5 year program, giving students the possibility to register for the primary school graduation examination and facilitating access to the labor market. As of 2001, the project had been implemented in eleven schools in six counties of Romania, with 300 students enrolled in the programs. In addition, 120 teachers have been trained in remedial education and student counseling, 16 monitors are responsible for monitoring the implementation process, and more than 150 Roma mediators were trained and employed to facilitate cooperation between school and Roma communities (Phare Program).

The Ministry of Education and Research organized the following programs between 1998 and 2006:

- There were established, beginning with 1999, special positions for inspectors on Roma education as part of the County School Inspectorates. In the 42 counties there are currently working 18 Roma and 24 non-Roma inspectors.
- Annual providing of seats reserved for Roma candidates for high-schools and vocational schools. In 2005 there were 2,500 places allocated for Roma children in high-schools and in vocational schools.
- Annual providing of seats reserved for Roma candidates for universities and colleges (the program had a weak start in 1992/1993 school year, it was extended in 1998/1999 to 149 seats in eight universities and it was developed annually: in 2002 there were 393 seats for Roma candidates, in 2003 - 422 seats in 39 universities and in 2005 – 398 seats. To those we must add another the 350 seats for training Roma teachers at the Open Distance Learning Department CREDIS of the Bucharest University, allocated between 2000 and 2004, as a result

of the partnership between the Ministry of Education and Research, the Bucharest University, UNICEF and the Phare Program implemented by the Ministry of Education and Research.

- Financing by county school inspectorates of 420 Roma language and history teachers positions for Roma youngsters that teach those subjects to more than 24,000 Roma children (in September 2003).
- Remedial classes for Roma children who drop out.
- Teaching of Rromani language, culture and history in schools, so, in the school year 2004/2005, 24.129 Roma children benefited of this additional curriculum of Rromani language, culture and history and 420 Roma teachers were employed in schools for this purpose.
- Organizing, yearly, the Rromani language National Contest: 7 editions so far (2000 – 2006).
- Organizing, yearly, summer schools of Rromani literature and culture for children (1998 – 2005).
- Teaching in Rromani language: starting with September 2003, for the first time in the Romanian school system, there was opened, at the local community demand, a class with integral teaching in Rromani language, at Maguri School / Timis County, then, yearly, a new class with teaching in Rromani language was opened.
- Bilingual education: by a partnership between the Roma NGO Roma Center “Amare Rromentza” and the County School Inspectorate from Calarasi, there was established, in 2004, the first bilingual kindergarten in the languages Romanian and Rromani, in Sarulesti / Calarasi County.
- Elaborating school curricula of Rromani language, culture and history and publishing manuals of Rromani language, culture and history for classes between the first and the eleventh.
- Publishing educational materials for Roma schooling: dictionaries, text-books, audio-tapes of Rromani language, history and literature.
- Organizing, yearly, summer kindergartens for children who did not attend pre-school education.
- Scholarships for Roma students who attend the Distance Learning Department of the University of Bucharest in order to become teachers;
- Organizing, yearly, summer schools of Rromani language for Roma future teachers: 9 schools so far, one financially supported by the Government (1999), one by the Ministry of Education (2000) and 7 by UNICEF (2001 – 2006).
- From 1999, in partnership with “Save the Children”, yearly summer schools and on-going training for non-Rroma teachers who work with Roma children, and from 2004 onwards, with the partnership extended to UNICEF, Project for Ethnic Relation U.S. and the Department for Interethnic Relations of the Romanian Government, the “National Multi-annual training program for Non-Rroma teachers who Work with Roma Children” – 450 non-Rroma teachers were trained.
- Training of trainers in the field of the educational Rromanipen (the impact of Roma history and culture on the school participation and performance of Roma children) – 126 Roma and non-Rroma teachers were trained.

In spite of all these good steps forward to ensure the Roma children’s equal chances in school, the Ministry’s programs are mainly focused on schooling and projects for eradicating illiteracy, but less and many times not at all on intercultural education, education for identity, changing curricula or changing pedagogical methodology.

Roma children are discriminated in schools, both by their teachers and their colleagues. Verbal and physical abuses are frequent and teachers either do not take any attitude against these racist attitudes or even reinforce them. Roma children are pejoratively named “tsgani” and they are accused by their Romanian colleagues that they are dirty and they steal. For any minor breaking of rules, such as speaking during courses, Roma children are excessively punished, including by being beaten by their teachers.

Roma children are considered to be potential drop-outs, because seen, in a prejudiced way, as belonging to family environments which are not in favor of education. Of course, sometimes Roma family is not in favor of school, for a lot of good reasons, among which assimilation and lack of motivation in what concerns the very small degree of Roma employment after finishing a certain level of schooling, but this does not at all mean that the Roma family is against education, at least for the simple fact that education is a lot more than only schooling or school education. In this view, the Ministry’s efforts are focused on how to bring back Roma drop-outs to school, but almost nothing is done for changing or improving the school itself, which continues to be a hostile place for Roma children, rigid and interested only in the majority culture, stigmatizing Roma

identity – seen as subculture and even lack of culture -, with a high level of official or non-official racial discrimination. Roma children in school feel as strangers, they cannot recognize their own cultural values in school education, more than that, their Rromani identity is marginalized and ignored. The name “tsigan” is a frequent insult addressed by Romanian teachers to pupils who are bad examples for the others.

In order to understand the collective pattern of thinking inherited by the Rroma children, which oppresses their individual consciousness and blocks their access to themselves many times for the whole life, there is necessary to look into the collective pattern of Romanian thinking towards otherness. Being all its history in a permanent process of ethnic birth, the Romanian thinking built its models by excluding and violently rejecting the otherness, especially the Rroma, considered the scapegoat of history, the embodiment of all majority's frustrations and fears. Old Romanian sayings define the negative stereotypes towards Rroma perfectly: „the Gypsy is a Gypsy even at Easter times”, „the Gypsy is from far away”, „the Gypsy is not human as the grass is not a tree”, „the Gypsy when became a king, hanged his father”, „he drowned as the Gypsy at the shore” etc.

This prejudiced thinking entered and is perpetuated by the school and by the educational policies in Romania, if not all times directly, by explicitly rejecting the Rroma child, but mainly by the racist attitude of school authorities and teachers. In the school, the ethnic identity is systemically destroyed, due to a mono-cultural ethnocentric educational pattern, by which the school practice towards Roma children is the cultural assimilation. This means that the Roma children can only be “civilized” if they become Romanians. The unique model of reference imposed by the Romanian school is the majority inflexible and self-sufficient model.

The Roma child from the ghetto is somehow accustomed to be perceived as an inhabitant of a marginal and deviant world, as belonging to a social group considered parasite, to a “criminal minority”, he is habituated with police raids, stamping his whole family, forced evictions and displacements, extreme poverty and hate. In spite of being accustomed to all these, instead of becoming immune, this poison of stigmatization is internalized and he begins seeing his future as irreversibly negative, resulting from a decided fate, from an ancestral curse and from the “native sin” of being a Roma. This fact becomes even worse in school, space of “ethnic purification”, which, on one side, aims to swallow “the cultural and the linguistic soul” of the child, as Gellner would say, and on the other side, stigmatizes the self for good, imprisoning it in a negative perception of the future.

In school's mainstream the Rroma child cannot recognize any representative pattern of his own culture, with the exception of the Rromani language, but not even that one as a teaching language, but only as a subject among others. More than that, by a false affirmative action, sometimes the Rromani language is put in a bad light by being imposed to the Rroma child that do not speak Rromani. On the contrary, in bilingual communities, the teaching language for recovering from illiteracy is Romanian.

The school does not promote intercultural education: there, the child is forced to forget his identity, all his home values are disdained, his family culture is considered subculture or even lack of culture. There are only two possible options for the Roma child: either to internalize the stigma and to consider his own culture as inferior, so to reject his Rromani identity and to assimilate into the majority pattern, or to reject and abandon the school that is trying to erase his cultural memory. The apparent paradox of this racism of domination is that, even for the first situation by which the way is to assimilation, the self-hate and the conversion to the majority pattern do not help very much forward to the social integration of the Roma child and he remains excluded. The abandonment of ethnicity has no reward; he continues to be the “Gypsy”: put in the last line not to disturb the class, with no education, from a poor background.

Estranged from his own specific perceptions about world and life, the Roma child feels, even if not all the time at the level of consciousness, that he is a prisoner of a deforming institution, where he cannot recognize himself, which instead of protecting him, rejects him and betrays his fragile expectations. The result is an irreversible life skidding, a breakdown between the projection of the individual self, coming from the family patterns, and the perception of these patterns as being wrong by the school collectively, coming from the negative stereotypes under which the Roma values are looked down in the majority society.

The breakdown from the Rroma collective ego, due to the process of internalizing the stigma, so to the inferiorization of the ethnic belonging feeling, leads to a deep self trauma, to a state of dissociation and to a

total life failure, especially at this age when models are searched for and the child looks for ways to solve his conflict with the world.

Losing his personal individual and collective / ethnic spiritual ideal, the child ends by denying himself, rejecting his ethnic background, the only alternative for him to arrive to a higher status in society being the naturalization or the individual social mobility, individual rescue by acculturation, cultural assimilation, abandonment of the *Rromanipen* (Rromani law), so the dissolution of identity.

Things are different in the Roma traditional closed communities, where the child is under the clear protection of a firm educational system, with rules and values very well structured, different from the ones of the majority, in an ethnic autonomy that rejects any kind of acculturation. The impact with the school, as rough as for the Roma child from the ghetto, marked by racism, does not lead to the same trauma, because the school is soon abandoned as being deforming and unsuitable for the Roma culture, also a sure way to assimilation.

In the Rromani traditional family a child is the God, the embodiment of absolute purity, guarantee of *vitsa's* continuity. The rules of *pakiv* – honor, faith and shame – prevent a woman from passing in front of a man; she has to announce the fact that she wants to pass by saying *arakh!* (Take care!) or *ambold!* (turn yourself away!), and the man has to turn his look from her, to let her pass. On the contrary, a woman with a child in her arms, considered pure by the child's presence, can pass anytime in front of a man. Seen as pure, children are allowed to do things that are forbidden to adults, such as wearing short clothes.

The ideal Roma family has an equal number of boys and girls, the twins of opposite sex being considered a special luck. In case of infertility, a great shame and sorrow for the family, considered a result of a curse, adoption is a frequent practice and the adopted child has full rights, just as a natural member of the family. Such practice is normal in a culture where the family extends itself to the level of the community. More than that, the Roma child does not belong to his parents only; he is a common fortune and happiness for the whole community: he can sleep today at home, tomorrow at an aunt or at another relative, with the total agreement of his parents.

The main principles on which the Roma children education in family is based are linked with the fact that they are considered small adults, gifted from birth with will, wishes, emotions and intelligence. To all these, purity is added, the only minus being the lack of experience.

Children are protected and their wishes can become laws, they enjoy a lot of freedom, their progresses are encouraged and praised, but they are early granted with important responsibilities. Boys have to help the father with his craft, girls have to cook and clean the house from early ages, in order to become future good *boria* (daughters in law). The rules of honor, shame and purity begin earlier and they are more visible for girls, beginning with wearing long skirts.

Early marriages, at around 15-16 years old for girls and at about 17-18 years old for boys, very few nowadays, practiced only in very traditional families, are a normal way to control the sexual life of youngsters. It is well known, from the medical point of view, that these are the ages when the sexual instinct is manifested anyway, so the only thing the traditional culture is doing is that it wants to control and protect the individual from any deviation from the recognized model and to bless the act by marriage. Sex life begins at the same ages in the modern culture too, but it is secret and uncontrolled, so it can anytime be dangerous. Traditional culture prefers to keep everything under control. Anyway, sexual education is early for girls, mothers being responsible for their daughters' purity and having the duty to teach them the proper behavior for their status.

Boys are educated to be strong: they are sent to an uncle, to their godfather or to other male relative with prestige in the family and they are asked to swear him - *kuś les te dares!* (Swear him if you are afraid to!) and the child does it, training his courage, his dignity and his relationship force.

Children are educated in the spirit of *phralipe* (brotherhood), all brothers are equal, and children speak with their parents in terms of their first name, with *mo*, *chave* (boy), *chaje* (girl) or *phrala* (brother), especially this last expression being frequently used to address the father. Nobody seem to forbid anything to them by saying „do not do this”, apparently there is no control on them, they are equal with adults and they have no

taboos because they are pure. On the other side, the community rules are taught to them in early ages, in a natural quite slow process of initiation, based on resistance to frustration, *pakiv* (faith, honor, trust) and *lajavipe* (shame), shared responsibility and mutual help.

Nothing from the deepness of these Rroma traditional family values can be recognized in school by Rroma children or parents.

This isolation inside the immutable traditional rules, manifested by the undifferentiated rejection of the values imposed by the autarchic majority, in the absence of public institutions meant to represent the Rroma culture and education patterns, to legitimize and to confirm the Rroma identity models in the mainstream school system, also to produce changes from inside, leads to a huge gap between Rroma and the rest of the society.

There is an urgent need for Rroma to (re)build their own identity values and for these ones to be recognized by the mainstream school system and by the educational public authorities. A series of measures should be adopted in order to promote intercultural education and self-determination in education, the only way to make the synthesis between traditional and modern patterns.

Roma Priorities in Education

Principles

Non-discrimination

Self-determination

Intercultural

Policy recommendations

Equal non-discriminatory access of Roma to quality education at all levels through:

- full and equal participation of Roma experts to decision-making in education policies referring to Roma, at the levels of elaboration, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review;
- monitoring, preventing and combating discrimination against Roma children in school;
- monitoring the quality of education provided in schools with a significant number of Roma children using general accepted standards;
- school compulsory curriculum review through introducing information about Roma culture and history, including referring to Roma Slavery and Holocaust, in history and literature textbooks;
- initial and ongoing intercultural training of teachers and school managers, in order to prevent and combat racial and ethnic discrimination in school;
- compulsory inclusion of Roma parents and students in School Boards, in schools, in view of their full and equal participation to decision-making process, for a better communication and confidence-building between Roma family, community and school;
- provide training and institutionalize the Roma school assistant / mediator, selected on competence criteria, especially from among Roma mothers;
- initiate and develop alternative education (mobile school, school pass, distance learning, short-term intensive programs, vocational attestation through recognition of work experience, home classes, remedial/rehabilitation education programs), in order to facilitate access to school for children coming from nomad / half-nomad families and for drop-outs;
- develop the affirmative action for Roma in schools, colleges and universities, mentoring programs and extracurricular activities that provide tutoring and supplementary educational activities, in order to facilitate Roma access to education and for the improvement of their school performance;
- provide an inclusive school education by adopting special law provisions and policy directions meant to stop the forced segregation of Roma children in special classes or schools, including in those for disabled children, on the basis of so-called psychological tests, when it is not about Roma parents and students will to be taught in their mother tongue or in Roma culture based schools;

Improving the relevance of school education for Roma through:

- strengthen Roma identity and provide an adequate framework for ensuring Roma cultural autonomy, by provide gradual education in Rromani-language at all levels and setting up training and identity representation institutions, educational policies and Roma resource centers, school specialized in Rromani language, history and culture, cultural centers, museums;
- programs aimed at de-stigmatizing Roma identity and enhance Roma self-conscience in order to prevent and combat discrimination in educational institutions and to provide for a intercultural education;
- provide re-training and re-valorization of Roma traditional crafts and trades, by adopting explicit provisions for free movement and temporary settlement of persons who practice itinerant crafts, by supporting the adjustment of crafts to market demand and development of a distribution network.
- To develop programs of self-esteem and self-confidence for Rroma children, by editing Rroma children's publications, by creating drama performances with and for Rroma children, by opening clubs and establishing associations for Rroma children and parents etc.
- To stop the institutionalized assimilation and racism in schools, by initial and in service intercultural education for teachers and educational authorities;
- Rromani language, culture and history to be taught in all schools with Rroma children and to be included in history books for all children, Rroma and non-Rroma;
- Wherever the Rroma children are the majority in the class and the Rroma community asks for, at all levels of schooling, Rromani language to be the teaching language;
- To approach different Rroma subgroups with differentiated educational policies, taking into account the values of the oral history and collective memory;
- To fully involve Rroma parents to all decision taken in school, as equal partners;
- To train Rroma children's mothers to involve more in school decisions, including by becoming teachers, beginning with kindergartens;
- To train Rroma to become teachers, including by distance learning and summer schools of intensive learning for secondary school graduates;
- To develop affirmative action for Rroma by establishing special places for Rroma in different secondary / high schools, colleges and faculties;
- To establish schools (kindergartens, primary, secondary / high schools etc.) with Rromani as teaching language, where Rroma culture, history and crafts to be also studied;
- To establish Rroma Centers for Educational Policies, in a partnership between the public educational authorities and the Rroma civil society;
- To improve the teaching methodology in schools: individual approach to children, flexibility of curricula and time-frame, interactive and creative teaching, children's full participation to decision, way to address the teacher, changing the atmosphere in schools etc.