

2. Education for a Multi-Cultural Society

The ban on racial segregation under international law is unequivocal. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), Article 3, stipulates, "States Parties particularly condemn racial segregation and apartheid and undertake to prevent, prohibit and eradicate all practices of this nature in territories under their jurisdiction." Romani children in Europe frequently suffer the grave harm of segregation in school. This problem notwithstanding, discussions on Romani children and education are by no means as simple and clear-cut as one might imagine. Below are materials related to that discussion, including:

- ❖ *An article on issues surrounding Romani education in Central and Eastern Europe*
- ❖ *A response by Czech educator Laura Laubeová arguing that segregation is only one component of a wider problem of "tracking" or "streaming" in Central and Eastern European schools*
- ❖ *Statistics on the racial segregation of Romani children in the school system of one Czech city*
- ❖ *Details of recent desegregation action by non-governmental organisations in Bulgaria*
- ❖ *An article reflecting on the relevance of the segregation/desegregation debate for the education of Native American children in New York State, USA.*

ROMA IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

by Claude Cahn, David Chirico, Christina McDonald, Viktória Mohácsi, Tatjana Perić and Ágnes Székely

The relation between Roma and the non-Romani educational systems of central and eastern Europe has historically been troubled. In the view of many Roma, school is traditionally the place where Romani children, stolen by the state, are "turned into gadje (non-Roma)." Early modern policies, such as those of the modernising Habsburg rulers Maria Theresa and Joseph II in the eighteenth century, attempted to change Roma into "Christians", "new citizens" and "new farmers" by removing them from Romani families, placing them with non-Romani ones, and sending them to schools to have their difference educated out of them. These strategies were echoed in the countries of central and eastern Europe after World War II as governments used schools to enforce policies of assimilation — Roma were forcibly settled, expected to conform closely to rigid standards of sameness, and display a demonstrative loyalty to the ethnic majority. Romani children were to learn such norms by having their Romaniness removed in school, and their culture itself was viewed as a package made up of social disadvantage and deviance which a tide of systematic schooling would cleanse.

Following the collapse of communism, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have been characterised by both economic crisis and a dramatic rise in overt racism. The impact of both has important implications for the human rights situation of Roma in schools. First of all, Roma suffer abuse in the normal school system: teachers physically, verbally or emotionally harm Roma. Other pupils, or their parents,

also abuse Roma and school authorities such as teachers or school directors fail to act appropriately to curb, prevent and punish such behaviour. Secondly, most of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe feature school systems which are segregated; Roma are educated in different classes or different schools. This arrangement bears no relation to the minority education called for by some Romani activists. Existing separate classes and schools are invariably worse in quality than classes where the student body is predominantly non-Romani. This effective segregation is more-or-less codified in some countries in the institution of so-called "special schools". Special schools are schools for the mentally disabled. Roma are so fabulously over-represented in such schools that many suspect that, as before in the history of Roma, Romani ethnicity is viewed by schooling authorities as synonymous with social and educational disability. Finally, in many countries Roma simply do not attend school at all or, if once enrolled, are forced back out of the schooling system.

ABUSE IN SCHOOLS

Many Roma suffer abuse in schools including physical abuse by teachers. An ERRC interview with a ten-year-old Romani girl from the village of Bontida, near Cluj-Napoca in Romania, in March 1998 revealed that her schoolmaster had pulled her ear so hard that it had bled and medical assistance was required. Ms Annamarie Kovács, a primary school student from the Hungarian town of Dömsöd, approximately fifty kilometres south of Budapest, related similar problems to the ERRC when interviewed in November 1997:

One day we laughed at the maths teacher in class. The maths teacher told Ms Ciboja, our form-teacher, about it. Ms Ciboja came to punish us for laughing at the maths teacher. She told us, 'You stinking little Gypsy whores!' Everyone heard it — she said it in front of our whole class. Ms Ciboja said all sorts of other bad things about us and she slapped Anita, the other Romani girl in our class, on the face. Then she told us to go home. I didn't go to school for about a month after that — why should I? I won't go someplace where they humiliate me like that. The headteacher didn't know

about the incident though, and the school wanted us to pay a fine because I didn't go. So my mother went to school and explained why I hadn't gone. Still, nothing happened to that teacher. She wasn't reprimanded and she never apologised. I started to go to school again, but I didn't go to Ms Ciboja's classes and they failed me because of absences.

One Romani boy who had been enrolled in both German and Macedonian schools told the ERRC in an interview conducted in August 1997 that he preferred German schools because, "in Macedonian schools, teachers hit me." Three former teachers interviewed by the ERRC in the Czech Republic recalled meeting with extensive and explicit racism from other teachers in the staffroom.

Abuse in schools comes not only from teachers. Non-Romani children also laugh at and humiliate Romani children in school and teachers do not intervene effectively. Education for tolerance is close to non-existent in Central and Eastern Europe. For example, a thirteen-year-old Romani girl from Alexandria, Romania, told the ERRC in a 2000 interview that, "[My schoolmates] said that I was Gypsy and that I was not supposed to be there." In another case reported to the ERRC in a school in northern Czech Republic in 1997, the parents of non-Romani children requested that their children not be seated next to the only Rom in the class. The teacher complied with the request and seated the Romani boy by himself. It was only when his mother, a social worker, went to the school and suggested that the teacher should not support racism in this way, that her son was returned to his seat.

Abuse in the normal school system leads to segregation. This process has been documented as far back as 1926, with the opening of the first of two "Gypsy schools" in the then-Czechoslovakia, the Uřhorod schools No. 13 and No. 14 in the Transcarpathian region of what is present day Ukraine. The 1938 doctoral thesis of Marie Nováková on these schools tells of one of the reasons for their establishment: "...the families of the other children protested that 'they didn't want their children to sit on the same bench as dirty and flea-ridden Gypsies'."

SEGREGATING ROMA: SPECIAL SCHOOLS

The educational systems of Central and Eastern Europe are demanding and continue, with a few notable exceptions, to place an emphasis on the memorisation of large quantities of facts provided by the teacher, a figure who is often authoritarian. At the core of schooling philosophy in the region is streaming: rather than aim at the best education for all, schools aim quickly to differentiate between weaker students and would-be achievers. A small number are prepared for university education, and by the time children reach the end of the eighth class, most of them have their future clearly delineated. Romani children — for reasons ranging from early-age language differences to the cultural specificity of both curricula and pedagogical methods and the abuses described above — do not as a rule perform well early on in their schooling lives. They are, in the overwhelming majority of cases, streamed into classes offering substandard education. At worst, and in countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, commonly, Romani children are transferred early in their educational lives to so-called “special schools”: schools for the mentally handicapped.

ERRC research in the Czech Republic in 1999 revealed that Romani children were twenty-seven times more likely to be found in schools for the mentally disabled than non-Roma. Pedagogues interviewed by the ERRC in the Czech Republic and Hungary agree that in most cases, placement of Romani children is made not on the basis of real mental disability, but rather because of racial discrimination. One special schoolteacher in the Czech Republic told the ERRC: “I have five or six Roma in my class. At least three or four could perfectly well be in elementary school.”

In Hungary there are financial incentives for parents with children in special schools. In the current economic climate in Hungary, in which 60-80% of Roma are unemployed and are living in dire poverty, additional payments for children in special schooling are a mechanism for the perpetuation of separate, substandard schooling for Roma. ERRC research in the eastern Hungarian towns of Hajdúhadház in the year 2000 revealed that 90% of the special school

population in the town were Romani.

Once in such schools, children are rarely transferred back. In the Czech Republic there exists a mechanism called “the diagnostic stay”, through which children are sent from normal schools to special schools for periods of up to six months to determine whether they have learning disabilities or not. In reality, children are rarely, if ever, transferred back to normal schools following the completion of the “diagnostic stay”. The diagnostic stay is particularly insidious in that it is designed for so-called “borderline cases”, children whom educational psychologists — the persons charged with recommending children for special schools — are unsure about. In practice, all Romani children are deemed borderline, since psychologically perfectly normal Romani students are frequently seen as candidates for failure in the Czech educational system. The situation is similar in Hungary, where educational experts have noted that Roma are simply much more likely to be recommended by teachers for evaluation by psychologists, than non-Roma. According to an educational psychologist at a special school in the city of Novi Sad in northern Yugoslavia, Roma are over-represented among students considered to be mildly mentally handicapped at the school at which he worked, but not among those students considered severely mentally handicapped because, “If both parents have not completed primary school or have been to special school themselves, are unemployed or do not speak Serbian properly, differences will appear when such children come to school.” Such children were, according to this educational psychologist, “pseudo-retarded”: although not developmentally handicapped, the educational system regarded them as such.

In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, children who finish primary school in special schools are in practice frequently blocked from continuing their education in anything other than remedial technical schools offering vocational training for future low skilled labour: the so-called “schools for mops and brooms”. In Hungary, legislation stopping children who had graduated from special schools from continuing in anything other than a parallel system of substandard secondary schools was changed in 1992. In practice, however, children graduating from special schools in Hungary still do not cross the line from spe-

cial primary education into normal secondary education. Thus, in effect, those who attended such schools are condemned to a lifetime of unemployment or, where available, poorly paid unskilled labour.

Even where segregation does not involve the labeling of the greater part of the ethnic group as "mentally disabled", Roma are often relegated to separate, substandard schooling. For example, authorities in several towns in southern Poland took advantage of the existence of a private schooling project aimed at reducing illiteracy among Roma and transferred all local Romani children into the separate classes, literate or not. De facto segregation has existed in Hungary since the 1960s. From 1962, so-called "c-classes" were established for "socially deprived" children, with the "c" meaning lowest level on a scale of a-c. In 1971, sociologists István Kemény and Gábor Havas reported that these classes were predominantly Romani. According to a report by sociologist Péter Radó, in 1997 there were separate classes made up predominantly of Roma in 132 of 840 normal schools surveyed. An interview with an English-language teacher in the Hungarian town of Kecskemét suggests that the ideology underpinning separate classes is that of racial inferiority; Ms. J.H. told the *ERRC* in May 2001 that, "I have no Roma in my class. I think the reason is that I teach only the best children, only the cleverest children, so I don't have to teach the Romani children. The Roma always receive the lowest grades ... To tell you the truth I don't really like them. We have a lot of problems; they are very very different."

ONE STEP BEYOND: ROMA OUT OF SCHOOL

While the issue of racial segregation in schools in the region is of major concern, the fact remains that many Romani children never have the opportunity to attend even sub-standard schooling. A combination of bureaucratic obstacles and poverty work effectively to exclude many Romani children from the schooling system entirely. A lack of identity documents, has been used by school authorities in Romania, for example, as a pretext for denying Romani children access to schools; it has been estimated by one NGO operating extensively in the field that 1200-6000 Roma in Romania may be stateless,

a situation which the authorities have been slow in tackling. Statelessness is a serious problem for Roma throughout the region, adversely affecting those without papers in many areas of life, education being just one. There is also often pressure on Romani children, those who have successfully negotiated the hurdles of registering, to leave school. Hungary features an arrangement, for example, whereby children may become "private students" and thereby be exempt from the "normal" school programme if, in the wording of the 1993 Hungarian Education Act, "it is justified by the student's abilities, disabilities or his or her special situation." This programme is, more often than not, used by teachers simply to remove Romani students from their classrooms. A headmistress of a school in Kecskemét explained to the *ERRC* in May 2001 that private students, "learn at home, and then every half a year [they] have to come into school and take an exam. The students who learn in this way ... are not successful. It is almost impossible to learn individually." *ERRC* research in the eastern Hungarian village of Berettyóújfalú in March 2000 discovered that all nine private students at the Toldi Miklós school were Romani, the majority of whom were repeatedly failing exams. There were no other private students at any of the other five schools in Berettyóújfalú at that time.

Moreover, although education until the mid-teenage years is compulsory in nearly all of the education systems of Central and Eastern Europe, school abandonment is alarmingly high among Romani children in comparison with their non-Romani peers. According to a Romanian government-sponsored study in 1998, approximately 40% of Romani children under the age of eight did not receive any education at all, and an expert in Romani education working at the Romanian Ministry of Education, Professor Gheorghe Sarau, told the *ERRC* that about 65% of Romani children had abandoned school by the 3rd and 4th grades of primary school. The reasons for the failure to attend school once the difficulties in registering have been overcome are several, ranging from a failure to deal with language difficulties in the early years of schooling to poverty. In much of the region, grinding poverty disproportionately affects Roma. The inability of Romani parents to afford to buy the necessary clothes, such as gym

shoes, textbooks or notebooks and pens for their children directly affects their children's success and attendance at school. In Macedonia, for example, where unemployment was recently registered at over 45%, nearly all Roma with whom the ERRC met were unemployed and many were living solely on social welfare payments of 4,100 denars (approximately 140 German marks) per month for a family of four, paid irregularly. Schoolbooks cost from 1,619 denars (approximately 55 German marks) for pupils in the first class, to 3,600 denars (approximately 120 German marks) for pupils in the eighth class. A family of four living on social welfare payments in Macedonia would therefore have to pay one month's salary a year simply for textbooks and notebooks for their children. Poverty affects other aspects of the education of Romani children as well. For example, in the Romani Veliki Rit settlement in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, the majority of houses in the settlement lack electricity and thus the children encounter significant difficulties in doing their homework in the evening. Such difficulties cause the children to fall behind their non-Romani peers, leading to the failing of exams and a general disinterest in school. The neglect of Romani history and culture in curricula is also a factor in a Romani child's continued attendance, as is the abuse they are likely to receive in the classroom.

MINORITY RIGHTS: MINORITY SCHOOLING FOR ROMA

The rights of minorities in the states of Europe have become an issue of great concern in the years following the end of communism, especially in the light of the war in the former Yugoslavia and tensions emerging between minority groups and so-called nation-states in the wake of 1989. The issue of minority education resides at the centre of this debate. International concern over violence between ethnic Hungarians and Romanians in the region of Transylvania in Romania in 1990 spurred political demands that the Hungarian university in the city of Cluj be reopened. Concerns over the situation of ethnic Greeks in southern Albania has similarly played out in the provision of arrangements for minority schooling at the level of secondary

schools for Greeks in Albania. The legal basis for such arrangements was codified at European level when the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities entered into effect on February 1, 1998.

Minority schooling, especially at the level of primary and secondary education, is commonly of two kinds. In its minimal form, language and culture classes are provided so that members of the minority in question may learn their native language, history and customs. In its maximal form, members of the minority are taught "international" subjects such as maths and biology in the native language. Some states have undertaken minimal programmes in the Romani language. Since 1991, Hungarian universities have offered credit courses in Romani. Four primary schools in Skopje, Macedonia offer Romani language lessons to students. Such programmes need to be well funded and spread beyond the urban centres in which they are presently located. In Romania, much work is being done to create Romani-Romanian dictionaries and picture books to assist Romani children in becoming bilingual, a Romani language curriculum has been created for schools and a faculty exists at the University of Bucharest for the study of the Romani language and literature, in which Romani-language teachers are also being trained.

Roma-specific schooling programmes at present sometimes involve provision of Romani teaching assistants in the classroom. Such programmes exist, at present, in Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine. They are often run and/or sponsored by non-governmental organisations, and systematisation of successful projects in this field is often called for by Romani activists and is currently taking place in Romania. There are also a number of private initiatives or non-governmental schools for Roma, such as the Ghandi School in Pécs, Hungary. The Ghandi School is a boarding school for high-achieving Romani secondary school pupils; the school has a distinctive philosophy involving the removal of the children from their homes and their training for Romani leadership. Yet, even in a seemingly maximal minority school, teaching is primarily in Hungarian. Minority schooling models developed elsewhere, such as bilingual schools educating tolerance for both

members of the minority and of the majority are rarely discussed and seem not to be part of the current mainstream discourse on Romani education in central and eastern Europe. Non-Roma with whom the ERRC has spoken see the idea of schools where Romani culture and language would receive equal weight as the national culture as anathema, and do not want to consider sending their children to such — at present, purely hypothetical — schools.

ALIENATION AND EFFECTIVE CHANGE

Centuries of discrimination have alienated Roma from the present educational systems in the region in ways similar to their alienation from other areas of society. Discrimination in education reproduces the effects of discrimination across generations. Governments and authorities have not shown a willingness to act firmly to punish abuse in school or to desegregate schools. Most countries of the region remain without effective anti-discrimination legislation, or the will to tackle pervasive discriminatory practices. An end to or at least amelioration of the effects of the streaming system is similarly not envisioned anywhere. Thus, for the time being, the majority of Romani children within the education systems of central and eastern Europe are still at ground zero in the struggle to achieve equal access to quality education.

FURTHER INFORMATION

More information on Roma and education at the European Roma Rights Center web site: errc.org/publications/indices/education.shtml

A general background to the importance of education for all is provided for by a UNICEF report, “No Excuses”, available at: www.unicef.org/pubngen/noexcuse/noexcuse.pdf

For more details concerning the education of Roma in the Slovak Republic, see: Eva Sobotka, “1+1 = 3: Roma in the Slovak educational system”, Central European Review, Vol. 3, No. 2, 15 January 2001, available on-line at: www.ce-review.org/01/2/sobotka2.htm

DEBATE POINTS

What is “segregation”? Can you give some examples?

Can you imagine segregation arising even without the active ill will of the segregators? Can you give some examples?

How intense do you believe objections would be to mixed Romani/non-Romani classes and schools in your country? Would your parents object to mixed classes? What about your teachers?

What other issues do the authors raise concerning Roma in education? What, do you believe, can be done to overcome problems described in the article?

THE DESEGREGATION OF "ROMANI SCHOOLS": A CONDITION FOR AN EQUAL START FOR ROMA

On September 15, 2000, approximately 300 Romani children from the Romani neighborhood of Vidin, Bulgaria, started the school year by being bussed to one of the six mixed regular schools in the town. The program for equal access of Romani children to education, initiated by the Vidin based non-governmental organization *DROM* and supported by the *Open Society Institute*, was a major challenge to the pattern of continued educational segregation of Romani children in Bulgaria. The successful implementation of the Vidin program, which today includes some 600 Romani children, has prompted a debate about using it as a model throughout Bulgaria.

According to the 1992 census, the general educational level of Roma in Bulgaria was much lower than that of the majority population. Roma with high school diplomas constituted 4.9 percent of the Roma population older than 6 years and those with university diplomas constituted only 0.1 percent of the same population. The respective shares for Bulgarians were 36.5 and 8.9 percent. These low educational levels are the result of several decades of denial of equal educational opportunities to Roma. In 1998, 70 Romani organizations proposed the Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society, which included school desegregation plans. A year later, the government formally adopted this comprehensive policy plan, but authorities have to date failed to take action to end school segregation.

About 70 percent of school age Romani children in Bulgaria attend all-Romani schools located in segregated Romani neighborhoods throughout the country. These

schools were established in Romani neighborhoods from the 1950s to the 1970s and were labeled by the authorities at the time as "schools for children with inferior lifestyle and culture." In the 1970s and 1980s the policy of the educational authorities was to channel all Romani children to these schools. Starting in 1966, the Ministry of Education established primary schools with special curricula for intensified manual skills training in Romani neighborhoods. The special curriculum for these schools was not abolished until 1992.

The schools in Romani neighborhoods were initially seen as a positive development since they contributed to the inclusion of Roma in the educational system. Gradually, however, the quality of education declined because of the continual neglect of the educational needs of Romani children, a policy of tracking unqualified teaching staff to these schools, and failure to restore the standard educational process.

Despite their formal status as regular schools since 1992, all-Romani schools in fact remain "special schools" which offer low quality education and put the overwhelming number of Roma in a disadvantaged position compared to their peers at mixed schools. The all-Romani schools today are usually overcrowded and lack basic facilities; classes are not held regularly; some Romani students who graduate from these schools can hardly read or write; and in many cases teachers do not have the qualifications required by law. Underlying negative prejudices towards Roma held by non-Romani teaching staff often result in degrading treatment of Romani schoolchildren.

Educational experts and Romani leaders have expressed concern about all-Romani schools for years, yet the state has failed to address the problem of educational segregation. Moreover, Bulgarian authorities have not interfered effectively in the numerous cases in which Romani children have been denied access to mixed regular schools and were

tracked instead to the over-crowded "Roma schools".

A recent conference in Sofia, co-organized by the *Open Society Institute's Roma Participation Program*, the *European Roma Rights Center*, the *Bulgarian Helsinki Committee*, and the *Human Rights Project* and attended by governmental and non-governmental actors involved in efforts to desegregate the Bulgarian school system, shed light on the following points:

- ❖ Discriminatory school segregation of Roma puts them in a disadvantaged position compared with other children and raises barriers between the Romani community and the rest of society. The effects of segregated schooling have an impact on all of Bulgarian society, particularly its economic development and its chances for smooth accession to the European Union.

- ❖ Efforts to reform all-Romani schools have failed and many of the problems stem from indirect forms of discrimination such as chronic under-funding of Romani schools and unqualified teachers.

- ❖ The Bulgarian government could be vulnerable to legal action based on international and European anti-discrimination instruments and should commit all available resources to eliminating educational segregation.

- ❖ The public candor about discrimination and educational segregation by elected public officials such as Bulgarian President Petar Stoyanov is a very positive development and an opportunity for Romani advocacy organizations to increase cooperation with the government.

- ❖ Integration policies must consider the interests and concerns that government officials, teachers, parents, and children have about desegregation.

- ❖ The success of desegregation efforts in Vidin indicates that the integration of Romani children in mainstream schools can be achieved and that the Romani community wants to integrate.

- ❖ High levels of transparency and participation by all interested parties were key to Vidin's success. Cooperation among international agencies and donors, the national government, local officials, NGOs, and parents and teachers is also critical.

- ❖ The government should be the primary actor in implementing the school desegregation process nationwide. Government and media outlets should become more active in raising awareness about discrimination and make it clear to the public that desegregation benefits all of Bulgarian society and is not a privilege bestowed upon a selected group.

- ❖ Obstacles to further desegregation efforts will range from Constitutional challenges, to entrenched public prejudice to teachers and parents who may feel threatened by change, to lack of co-operation among government officials, NGOs, and local communities.

Inclusive School – Myth or Reality?

by Dr Laura Laubeová*

Many non-governmental organisations, independent researchers as well as teachers have made highly-publicised arguments about the segregation of Roma in the Czech school system, and specifically into so-called “special schools” — schools for the mentally handicapped. While these arguments have shed important light on aspects of problems in Czech schooling — and these problems are at present numerous — arguments focusing exclusively on the problem of racial segregation in Czech schools are flawed in their basic assessment of the problem, because they do not take a holistic approach to school reform. In point of fact, Czech schooling is detrimental to a majority of the children who pass through it, not only Romani children.

Education is highlighted as a priority in the programme of every political party in the Czech Republic, appropriately recognised as a precious capital with the potential for increasing society's wealth. Protection of minorities and respect for human rights belong to basic principles of all democracies. However, in the field of education, human rights and minority rights have been constantly neglected, not only in the Czech Republic. After several years of public debate, the Czech Ministry of Education released a White Book on Education in 2001. The document, officially titled “The National Programme of Development of Education in the Czech Republic”¹ focuses on the following aims:

1. Implementation of a system of lifelong learning for all;
2. Adaptation of educational and study programmes to meet the everyday needs of society;
3. Monitoring and assessment of the quality and effectiveness of education;

ROMANI CHILDREN IN REMEDIAL SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN OSTRAVA, CZECH REPUBLIC, SPRING 1999

School	Total student body	Romani pupils	%
Kapitana Vajdy	193	31	16.06%
U Haldy	166	27	16.26%
Ckvalovova	191	49	25.65%
Na Vizine	190	110	57.89%
Karsova	156	121	77.56%
Tesinska	159	135	84.9%
Ibsenova	136	128	94.11%
Halsova	169	161	95.26%
Total	1360	762	56.03%

ROMANI CHILDREN IN NORMAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN OSTRAVA, SPRING 1999

The ERRC gathered statistics on the number of Romani and non-Romani pupils in 69 of the seventy normal primary schools in Ostrava in Spring 1999. In addition to the schools listed below, the ERRC visited a further 32 normal primary schools in Ostrava not attended by a single Romani pupil. In total, in Spring 1999, at least 16,722 Czech children in Ostrava attended school every day without a single Romani classmate.

Address	Total Romani	Total Romani	Address	Total Romani
Bartořicka 59	65	1	F. Formana 45	581
Bilovicka	303	1	G. Klimenta 493	367
Bulharska 1532	430	2	Gajdořova 9	292
Matieni 18	208	2	Porubská 831	631
Mitřova 16	548	2	Volgogradská 6	720
I. Sekaniny 1804	639	3	Zelená 42	623
Komenského 668	560	3	A. Kucery 20	746
L. Podšestě 1875	335	3	Deřka 915	723
Porubská 832	585	3	Kounicova 2	415
Pěstí 1	315	4	Mr. Nováka 34	520
Ukrajinska 1533	437	4	Nádražní 117	642
Kosmonautů 13	625	5	Ukřize 28	530
Matieni 5	767	5	Bohumínska 72	343
Total Romani	33,372	753		

Total Romani

4. Support for thorough-going change and openness of educational institutions;
5. Changes in the role and professional prospects of pedagogical and academic workers;
6. Transition from centralised management to shared accountability decision-making.

Among many positive aspects, the White Book suggests to implement these aims through the following measures:

- ❖ Compensating the health and socio-cultural disadvantage of some pupils through targeted support for developmental programmes for such pupils at all levels of schools, by means of the introduction of preparatory classes, inclusion of special schools in the system of standard schools, and optimum integration among other pupils of those who have special needs;
- ❖ Improving the conditions for the education of national and ethnic minorities and foreigners;
- ❖ By means of legislative measures, gradually integrating the first years of multi-year academic secondary school (*gymnazium*²) with the second phase of the basic school, simultaneous with the implementation of differentiated and individualised teaching of heterogeneous groups of pupils and the development of care for talented and gifted children at schools and in extra-curricular activities.

Shortly after its release, the White Book was rejected by the Czech parliament. As a reaction to justified criticism, the efforts of government officials were sincere but not well managed. Although there was a public debate under the name "Challenge for 10 Million" (the population of the Czech Republic), this debate was limited to the Internet and did not reach the majority of teachers or parents. The government also underestimated the necessity to communicate with media and opinion-makers over the issue, a fact which resulted in the absence of strong arguments to provide explanation and support for, and ensure the future implementation of the new educational policies. The reasons for the rejection of the programme by parliament were mainly related to cost — parliamentarians deemed 6% of GDP too much to

spend on education, and took a dim view of teacher salaries targeted at 130% of the average salaries in the Czech Republic. Another objection to the government's White Book, raised by non-governmental organisations and human rights activists, was that although the programme presupposed "the inclusion of special schools in the system of standard schools, and optimum integration of those who have special needs among other pupils," it did not provide concrete practical mechanisms how to implement these. Finally, the issue became a bone of pre-election contention. Thus the government's plans remained utopian.

The Czech educational system acutely needs to be reformed. In the heady period after 1989, we believed that the long-awaited changes would occur quickly and spontaneously. However, it now appears that education is one of the most conservative areas in Czech society. The present educational system was designed almost 230 years ago according to a military model requiring obedience from soldiers as well as of the population in general. I have elsewhere described the dilemma facing teachers in the present system in the following terms: "A traditional school still represents an environment where natural and effective learning can happen only very little. Therefore an arsenal of coercive tools is needed. These are... mainly the system of marking. Those teachers who started with so-called verbal assessment, soon find out that if they want to assess differently they have to teach differently."³ Frontal teaching and teacher-centred education, verbal memorising, and a focus on reproducing information are the main features of Czech schooling. Such a system cannot correspond to the needs of a democratic society in which participation, responsibility and the initiative of citizens are as vital as obedience had been for a society based on serfdom. Further, the predominant objective of education in the Czech Republic is not to develop children's potential and abilities, but rather to prepare them for entrance examinations to gymnasium and university. Such an ethos penetrates all educational processes and is shared in teachers' and parents' attitudes toward schooling. For example, even in the civic education curriculum, students are expected to command an extensive amount of information within the basics of social sciences, rather than acquire practical skills and an active approach that would help to prepare them as citizens for life in a democratic society.

A research study conducted in 1996-97 on the "Typology of Czech Families" revealed immense inequalities in Czech families mainly in terms of cultural capital (the educational background of parents, social status, value placed on education, etc.) and showed that schools further reproduce instead of redressing these inequalities. Comparative international surveys in Mathematics and Sciences have repeatedly shown that although Czech children score highly in primary schools (at the ages of 9 and 14), they score much worse in secondary school (at age 18). The results of students from non-academic secondary schools (at age 18) are actually poorer than results of pupils from primary schools (at age 14)! In short, the apprentice training centres not only do not stimulate students, but rather actually inhibit their educational potential. Although there are only small differences between students at the primary school level, these are caused mainly by family background. Czech schools do not compensate for inequalities but rather increase differences between families.⁴

Czech pupils repeatedly score well in international surveys in subjects such as mathematics and hard sciences. Detailed analysis of international survey results reveal that Czech pupils perform well on such tests mainly because their performance is based on reproducing knowledge gained by memorisation. Also, as opposed to less successful students from other countries, Czech children show very negative attitudes towards the subjects in which they score highly, as well as toward school as a whole. This should alarm Czech educators and policy makers. Instead, the Czech educational system has since been praised for international success and any criticism and suggestions for changes rejected.⁵

Education in the Czech Republic is thus, at present, not inclusive; this lack of inclusivity here means that schools are able to meet needs and provide opportunity for the potential development of only a small number of children. Schools are tailored for average or typical pupils — even though such children rarely exist in reality — and exclude most children who are "different" not only in terms of abilities, but also with regards to cultural and social background. In other words, Schools tend to increase social inequalities through favouring children from families with cultural capital who are more able to reproduce academic information than children from less favourable family backgrounds.

Czech schools do this at the price of equality. Any pupil who is more able or less able or just different does not fit into the scheme and is viewed as a problem. This factor as well as an often decreasing quality of school ethos, has in recent years resulted in a strange phenomenon: more than one third of pupils around the age of 10-11 — or rather their parents — prefer streaming, i.e. going to a more elite school setting. These schools aspire to enrol in the eight year academic gymnasium. These schools can accept, according to official regulation, only up to 10% of children in a given year. This means that a large number of "average" (in terms of ability) children want to leave the mainstream primary school, either for gymnasium or for a private school, leaving behind those pupils whose parents do not ambitiously seek other schools. The "quality" of mainstream schooling is therefore decreasing, which causes further pressure on parents. As a reaction to this situation and in accordance with the aims of the White Book, the Minister of Education has recently called for the abolition of this kind of gymnasium. This would be, however, an unacceptable limitation of democratic freedoms. Experts warn that early age streaming is detrimental to society as whole, but individual parents want the best for their children and they cannot find it in any typical Czech school.

Apart from parents' efforts to improve education of their children through "voluntary" streaming, there is a much more dangerous trend in the Czech Republic — that of forced streaming at a very early age. One method is pre-school "maturity" psychological testing (or such testing early in the school career), which disadvantages mainly children from less supportive cultural environments and often results in placing these children in the special schools for the mentally handicapped. Another streaming practice is streaming within the same class, used as a generally very "effective" and easy method of teaching. Streaming in this sense means that children are grouped according to abilities and taught separately, which in itself does not necessarily be a problem — if short term and if groups are flexible enough. However, early in-class streaming often means that teachers do not aim to develop the potential of the less able, or "different" as they focus on those "better off". This means that the groups became fixed, and a pupil has little chance of moving up, if placed in a weaker class. There is also a

tendency that if a pupil is weak in one subject, than he or she comes to be regarded as weak in all subjects. And the Pygmalion effect⁶ brings bitter results when streaming into groups is a fixed process.

However, practice as well as research has shown that co-operative teaching (i.e., teaching using less authoritarian models than those presently deployed) and positive use of differences, instead of grouping children according to their abilities is, in the long term, more effective for both the intellectual and the social development of all children. Cooperative teaching is able to bring children of lower ability up to standard, and also dramatically reduces pressure on children in general (presently intense in the Czech Republic). It can also remedy individual cases of isolation or extreme introversion, as well as diminishing the number of children condemned early as "failures".

Children from backgrounds of ethnic or linguistic minorities, who bring further differences to schools, often serve as an indicator of whether a school is good or bad. The argument goes that a good school is good for all pupils regardless of their differences. Experts throughout the world have not been able sufficiently to reconcile arguments for and against separate vs. mainstream schooling. It seems that under certain conditions each can have their pros and cons. According to some experts, including many Roma, separate schooling on secondary level, if well funded and with high quality standards, may compensate for past discrimination and moreover provide special knowledge to Romani students that would help them in the process of enhancing the whole Romani community. A very good example of this kind of school is the Romani secondary school in Kolin. Another example might be girls schools for Muslims in the UK. The danger is, however, that if these schools do not accept also majority students, certain side effects may appear that may aggravate hostility and tension towards others (social cohesion). Such schools, in my view, should be conceived only as a temporary measure, similarly as positive action policies.

Unfortunately, the Czech Republic is notorious for a special kind of separate Romani schooling at primary level, that is, enrolment of Romani children in special schools for mentally handicapped children (*Zvláštní školy*). These may at the first sight look like a very good solution: less children in the classroom, classmates from the same ethnic

and cultural background, no open racism, better qualified teachers and access to qualified specialists, availability of Romani personnel (such as Romani assistants), allocation of more funds per capita, etc. Experience however shows that this kind of school is not effective despite the sincere efforts of many educators and specialists, as it does not correspond to the needs of children themselves nor to the needs of society. These schools have very low expectations and they generally inhibit academic development and the potential of their pupils. They are primarily structured as an institution that should keep mentally handicapped children quiet and not aim to develop their personality. Indeed, paternalism and institutional racism can be more detrimental than open racism, as the damage caused cannot be identified and redressed quickly and easily and require substantial systemic changes in the minds of people. Hopefully, the policy makers as well as ordinary people will soon rethink their views due to a "new wind" that is coming from EU. The European Union has provided a definition of indirect discrimination as apparently neutral measures, criteria and practices which have a negative impact on certain groups.⁷ This represents a very useful tool for acknowledging, identifying and redressing discrimination and institutional racism.

In the above paragraphs, I have indicated several problems hindering education in the Czech Republic. In the coming years, educational policies should focus on several basic principles:

- ❖ Mainstream (inclusive) schooling for all children;
- ❖ In exceptional cases, part-time separate schooling as a temporary measure;
- ❖ Respecting, valuing and positively using difference in the classroom;
- ❖ High quality for all;
- ❖ Curriculum, including the hidden curriculum,⁸ should include multicultural and anti-discrimination aspects;
- ❖ Education should be a priority in every society.

CONCLUSION

Broader social structures have immense impact on education, the most important asset in any society. Racial animus presents one of the most detrimental dangers for our globalised society. Acknowledging, identifying and redressing racism in all its forms is a basic prerequisite of any society's peaceful present and future. One of the major problems Romani (but not only) children face in the Czech Republic is the whole culture of education and teaching. Policies should aim at a systemic change and overcoming of the conservative approach of the past two centuries.

DEBATE POINTS

What does the author mean by "streaming"? Does your school system "stream"? How? Do you think all school systems stream? What harms can arise from streaming, or from excessive streaming?

How does the author's approach to school reform differ from those who state that the problem of schooling in Europe is segregation, and who call for desegregation of schools? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the two approaches?

The author notes that the Czech school system produces some of the highest scoring pupils in international competitions on mathematics and hard sciences and yet she still appears critical of the present state of Czech schooling. Why?

What is "cultural capital"? Can you think of examples? Does the state have an obligation to compensate for unequal distribution of "cultural capital"? Why or why not?

What is "paternalism"?

What do you think of the author's proposals at the end of the piece for basic principles for school reform? Can they be realized? Should they be realized? If you believe they should, what practical measures can you envision to implement them?

NOTES

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¹ More information in English can be found at: www.msmt.cz/cp1250/web/12/WhiteBook.doc

² "Gymnazium" corresponds to grammar school in the United Kingdom and in the classic model provides four year long "secondary" academic education for students aged 14 – 18. Other types of secondary education in the Czech Republic are: secondary professional schools (*sřední odborné školy*) and secondary vocational schools or apprentice training centers (*sřední odborná učiliště*). After 1989, new types of *gymnazium* were introduced: the six-year *gymnazium* (ages 12-18) and eight-year *gymnazium* (ages 10 – 18).

³ See Laura Laubeová, Laura, *The Role of Education in Preventing Ethnic Conflicts. Case of Roma in the Czech Republic* (2000), Cambridge: University of Cambridge, GSFI, Occasional Paper No 15, p.25.

⁴ The information from the above paragraph is derived from a course on educational policy at Faculty of Social Sciences in Prague, delivered by authors of the government White Book, Ing. Ján Koucký and Ján Kovarovič, in 2000/2001 academic year.

⁵ See Laubeová, *Op. cit.*, p.25.

⁶ The "Pygmalion effect" is a powerful factor influencing pupils' academic success and was repeatedly proved through experiments. The "Pygmalion effect" is as follows: If a teacher is told that a certain pupil (randomly selected) is very bright and talented, the teacher is very likely to have higher expectations of this pupil, and will pay more attention to him or her. This has the effect of making the given pupil more likely to be academically successful than the other pupils. The teacher thus, through his or her attitudes, expectations, and belief in the potential of a pupil, enhances pupils' academic attainment and success (or vice versa). The Pygmalion effect is named after Ovidius's Pygmalion, who inspired life into a sculpture of a girl.

⁷ See Directive No 2000/43/EC, "implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin" (the "Race Equality Directive"), available on the Internet at: europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/lif/dat/2000/en_300L0043.html.

⁸ By "hidden curriculum, I mean all factors that influence learning, including the unintentional and unconscious ones, such as attitudes or prejudices of teachers, nonverbal communication, remarks by teachers at break times, seemingly non-related content of other subjects, learning acquired from other resources than just "official" ones — generally everything that may influence the final result of learning. If teachers are aware of the hidden aspects of curriculum, they may use them either in a synergic way (in positive cases) or teach pupils how to cope with controversial issues and minimise impact of negative factors in a given society, school, or class.