

## 10 Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

“Do you know, I was once in another school where my friend goes to?! And that is very nice because they have everything there... and do you know that all the children talk in Romanes, but in my school I cannot talk in Romanes because there are other children who do not understand me... I really would like more to go to that school than mine. Ohh... but you know, also the teacher speaks Romanes but not in my school.”

Roma/Gypsy boy, seven years old

“I also have some *Gigani* [Gypsies] in my school but they are always quiet, and they do not talk as much as we and the others do. They never play with us and we never play with them. When the teacher asks them something, they are always quiet and then they get bad marks. I do not know why they do not want to learn in the school or why they don't answer when the teacher is asking them questions.”

Non-Roma/Gypsy boy, seven years old

### Summary

#### Context

Macedonia is a small country of two million people, which achieved independence in 1991. Throughout the 1990s, the country kept more or less the same educational structure as during the previous regime, with a comprehensive overview initiated only in 2000.

#### Roma/Gypsy population

Roma/Gypsies are recognised as a national minority. Estimates of the size of the Roma/Gypsy population diverge widely, from the official figure of 48,000 up to the quarter of a million claimed by Roma/Gypsy organisations. The population is made up of a large number of diverse groups. Most speak a dialect of Romani, though there are some native speakers of Turkish or Albanian. Most of the population is considered Muslim. Roma/Gypsies usually live on the outskirts of urban areas, often in very large numbers. Most Roma/Gypsy settlements are very poor and lack basic infrastructure. The Roma/Gypsy population suffers from very high levels of unemployment. Despite low social status and undoubted instances of discrimination, the human rights situation of Roma/Gypsies in

Macedonia has been considered relatively good. School buildings in Roma areas are often of poor quality, and many teachers consider working in them as detrimental to their career. Educational disadvantage is generational, with over 20 per cent of adult Roma considered illiterate, and there can also be cultural obstacles to children (especially girls) staying in school.

### **Roma/Gypsies and education**

There are no official data on preschool attendance but it is widely believed that very few Roma/Gypsy children attend. Small-scale surveys indicate that up to 20 per cent of Roma/Gypsy children do not attend compulsory primary school and that their drop-out rate is far higher than the national average. Few Roma/Gypsies complete secondary school and the percentage of Roma/Gypsies in tertiary education is minimal.

### **Language provision**

Lack of preschooling means many Roma/Gypsies are not familiar with the Macedonian language when beginning school. Recognised minorities are entitled to education in their native language at all levels, though this is

effectively confined to Albanian, Serbian and Turkish communities. Most Roma pupils learn in schools where Macedonian is the language of instruction. In 1996, provision was made for Romani-language education. However enrolment has actually declined in the four schools offering this service. There are few materials or trained teachers for Romani education.

### **Special schools**

Roma appear to be over-represented amongst children in special schools. They are often placed there for socio-economic rather than educational reasons.

### **Balance of NGO and government activity**

Specific Roma educational initiatives have been almost exclusively developed by NGOs and operate in areas with large Roma populations, aiming to improve preschool attendance and increase familiarity with wider educational requirements. NGOs have also supported projects designed to improve Roma representation in higher education and in helping Roma refugees.

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Since March 2001, after this report was completed, the situation in FYR of Macedonia<sup>1</sup> has changed considerably. A new round of conflict involving ethnic Albanian armed groups and government security forces broke out in early 2001 and has since rumbled on. Centred on mountainous villages around the towns of Tetovo and Kumanovo, continuing government offensives aimed at dislodging the rebels have proved inconclusive, while around 25,000 people have fled to neighbouring Kosovo. Smaller numbers have crossed into the Preshevo valley in southern Serbia, itself subject to tensions with the return of Yugoslav government forces to the ground buffer zone, which had been imposed by NATO following the Kosovo crisis in 1999. As well as cross-border movements, some 15,000 people have been displaced internally within FYR of Macedonia itself. At the time of writing, access for humanitarian organisations to the affected villages remains extremely limited. It is thought that several thousand villagers have so far not left and continue to be exposed to death, injury and deteriorating living conditions. As this report was written prior to the conflict, its implications for the Roma minority and their access to education were not discussed in this report.<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

The establishment of the parliamentary democracy in FYR of Macedonia was based on the Amendments to the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, adopted by the Assembly at the end of 1990. Against the backdrop of the collapse of the former Yugoslavia, these amendments created an institutional framework for the development of a federal unit into an independent state. Following the amendments, the Assembly adopted a number of laws creating the necessary conditions for the first multi-party parliamentary elections in FYR of Macedonia. After elections in November 1990, the first multi-party Assembly of FYR of Macedonia was constituted.

On 8 September 1991, a referendum was held aimed at gauging public opinion on the establishment of Macedonia as a sovereign and independent state. Based on the results of the referendum, the Assembly adopted a Declaration which confirmed the referendum results and established the basic principles of the international capacity of the state. The process of gaining independence of the state and the establishment of the political system of parliamentary democracy was rounded off with the adoption of the new Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia on 17 November 1991.



## The Roma/Gypsy population

### Demography

Although Roma/Gypsies are recognised as a national minority in FYR of Macedonia, there are no reliable data on this group. According to official statistics, in 1994, out of a total population of just over 2 million, the number of Roma/Gypsies living in FYR of Macedonia was 47,408, that is 2.3 per cent of the population. However, in reality this figure is probably much higher. Roma/Gypsy leaders are said to have estimated a number as high as 250,000, that is 12.5 per cent of the population.<sup>3</sup>

Many Roma/Gypsies live in settlements on the outskirts of towns and cities. The biggest concentrations are found in Skopje, Prilep, Tetovo and Kumanovo. Shuto Orizari-Shutka, for example, is one of the biggest Roma/Gypsy communities in FYR of Macedonia. Three years ago, this community was declared a municipality by the Macedonian government and now has a Romani mayor.

### Different Roma/Gypsy groups

In terms of their history, it is generally argued that the origin of Roma/Gypsies in what is present-day FYR of Macedonia can be traced back to the

first arrival of Roma/Gypsy groups into Europe. Those Roma/Gypsy groups that stayed tended to settle in rural areas and then later also in towns. As Roma/Gypsy communities came into increasing contact with the population as a whole, problems of prejudice and discrimination increased.

As with other countries in Europe, Roma/Gypsies in FYR of Macedonia do not form one homogeneous group, but a complex mixture of groups. The most significant are *Arlie* or *Erlie*, *Džambazi* or *Gurbeti*, *Kovaci* or *Arabadjie*, *Maljoci*, *Gavutne* and many others. The majority of Roma/Gypsies in FYR of Macedonia are Muslim (92 per cent).<sup>4</sup>

### Language

Most Roma/Gypsies in FYR of Macedonia speak Romanes as their first language. However, there are communities for whom Romanes is not their first language. For example, Roma/Gypsy communities living in the western part of FYR of Macedonia, such as Tetovo, Gostivar and Debar, speak only Albanian and Turkish. In the eastern part of FYR of Macedonia, there are Roma/Gypsy communities who speak both Turkish and Romanes. In the same area, especially in the towns of Stip and Kocani, there are also groups of

**Table 10.1 FYR of Macedonia's Roma/Gypsy population**

	1953	1981	1994
Total population	1,304,514	1,909,136	2,075,196
Roma/Gypsies	20,462 (1.6%)	43,125 (2.3%)	47,408 (2.3%)

Source: Statistics Centre of Macedonia

Roma/Gypsies who speak only Turkish and identify themselves as Turks. In south-western FYR of Macedonia there are communities living there that identify themselves as Egyptians.<sup>5</sup>

### Socio-economic status

Most Roma/Gypsy settlements face problems typically associated with poverty. Very often there is no water-supply system, and most of the houses are unfit for minimum standards of living. A large proportion of Roma/Gypsies living throughout FYR of Macedonia are unemployed. Research conducted by the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) found that “Roma are afflicted by a level of massive chronic unemployment which far outstrips official statistics.”<sup>6</sup> Many Roma thus rely on state social-welfare programmes. These welfare programmes are limited to a per-capita monthly allowance and rarely allow for a minimum standard of living. As a result, those on social welfare are compelled to search for informal means of income, such as selling various articles, food and clothing in public markets. Some also find work in public institutions, such as those responsible for waste disposal.

### Inter-ethnic relations

The human-rights situation in FYR of Macedonia has been subject to less criticism than most other countries in the region. The majority of findings of international researchers and non-governmental organisations seem to agree that the situation of Roma/Gypsies in FYR of Macedonia is marginally better than in most other countries in South-Eastern Europe, most notably in terms of discrimination. For example, Human Rights Watch, Helsinki stated:

“Comparatively speaking, the Roma community in Macedonia is better off than in other countries of the region.”<sup>7</sup>

The Minority Rights Group has also said:

“Insofar as group rights and societal status are concerned, the Roma of Macedonia appear to enjoy a far more advantageous situation than do their counterparts in Greece, Bulgaria or Romania.”<sup>8</sup>

Still, the picture is complicated. A number of national and international organisations dealing with human-rights issues have observed cases where the fundamental human rights of members of the Roma/Gypsy community have been violated. For example, the ERRC has systematically monitored the situation of Roma/Gypsies in FYR of Macedonia. As identified in its 1998 report, *Pleasant Fiction*, the biggest concerns in terms of the violation of human rights among Roma/Gypsy communities are:<sup>9</sup>

- discrimination against Roma/Gypsies in public places, eg, on the streets, in clubs
- discrimination in terms of gaining employment, eg, numerous examples of Roma/Gypsies unable to gain employment because of their identity
- difficulties in obtaining Macedonian citizenship – there have been numerous cases in which Roma/Gypsies have been unable to obtain citizenship, as the procedure discriminates against those defined as “stateless”
- police brutality against Roma/Gypsies – many cases have been reported by local human-rights organisations.

## Minority rights

The new Constitution of FYR of Macedonia confirmed the character and organisation of the state. FYR of Macedonia is defined as a sovereign, independent, democratic and social state, in which the sovereignty originates from the citizens and belongs to the citizens. The Constitution laid down the constitutional basis for a new organisation of the state authority and for developing parliamentary democracy, in which citizens' freedoms and rights and their protection form the basis of the system. The Constitution established the rule of law, the division of state power, political pluralism and free general and democratic elections, free expression of ethnic affiliation, the legal protection of ownership, freedom of the market and entrepreneurship, local self-government and respect of generally accepted provisions of international law.<sup>10</sup>

According to the Constitution, all citizens have equal freedoms and rights regardless of sex, race, colour, national or social origin, political or religious beliefs, property or social status (Art. 9/1). Ultimately, all citizens are equal before the Constitution and the law (Art. 9/2).

The Constitution in particular stipulates that minorities have the right to freedom of expression, to the preservation and development of their identity and the preservation of their national characteristics (Art. 48/1). It further guarantees the protection of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identities of its minorities (Art. 48/2). Those belonging to national minorities have the right to found cultural and

artistic institutions, scientific and other associations for the expression, preservation and development of their identity (Art. 48/3). This article also proclaims the right of minorities to study in their own language during primary and secondary education, under the terms of the law. This does not preclude the learning of the Macedonian language (Art. 48/4).

## The right to education

Education is dealt with by the Constitution in the section entitled Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It stipulates that all citizens have a right to education (Art. 44/1/2) and that primary education is compulsory and free (Art. 44/3). Citizens are declared as having a right, under the terms of the law, to establish private educational institutions at all levels of education, with the exception of primary education (Art. 45). Finally, universities enjoy guaranteed autonomy (Art. 46/1), although the terms of establishment, work and termination of universities are regulated by law (Art. 46/2).

### Preschool education

Preschool education in FYR of Macedonia is regulated by a special law for preschool education.<sup>11</sup> After Macedonian liberation in 1945, more of a focus was placed on preschool education and serious efforts were made to include it as part of the general educational system, although maintaining a non-obligatory status. However, it was not until after the school reforms in 1958 that the first law for pre-educational institutions was introduced (NRM 23/59). This law was an attempt to

regulate all significant and relevant issues concerning preschool education. This triggered the subsequent expansion of the preschool network and thus opened up new opportunities for the equal treatment of all children regardless of origin.

In 1974, a new law for the education of children of preschool age (45/74) was drawn up, formalising the place of preschool education in the general system of education. This law covered children aged one to seven years attending kindergartens. For the first time, the education of children in preschool was subject to formal recognition and regulation.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the area of preschool education was further regulated by two laws: the Law for the Social Protection of Children (1981, 6/81) and the Law for Preschool and Primary Education (1983, 19/83), both of which now underpin current preschool education provision.

At this time, pre-education was provided through two types of institutions:

- **Kindergartens/preschool institutions** – state institutions founded by the government, based on proposals made by the Ministry for Employment and Social Policy. The curricula in these institutions are carried out in the appropriate mother-tongue languages: Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian.
- **Zabavishta** for ages five to seven – entities which are not legally independent and which operate within existing primary schools. Each school may establish a *zabavishta* once certain criteria outlined by law have been fulfilled and the Ministry of Education has granted

consent. The curriculum in these institutions is also taught in the relevant mother-tongue languages: Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian.

### Primary education

The first important regulation developed for primary education in what is now FYR of Macedonia was the Constitution of 1946. It stipulated that primary schools would become separated from the church and that primary education would be compulsory and free for all (Art. 37)(NRM Art. 1/47). The first legal document on primary education in the state was introduced in 1948. According to this law, primary schooling is for seven years and is obligatory for all children aged 7-15. Schooling would be carried out for three years in a gymnasium and then four years in an elementary school (NRM 38/48). In 1958, with the new General Law for Schooling, the duration of compulsory schooling was extended to eight years, and it was further stipulated that all schooling take place in one institution. This forms the basis for the current education system.

A new Law for Primary Education was introduced in September 1995 (RM 44/95).<sup>12</sup> It follows the constitutional framework, ensuring that primary education is obligatory for all children aged 7-15 years (Art. 3). Institutions delivering primary education are categorised as follows:

- **Primary schools.** The state and social community are required to provide the terms and conditions to ensure that all children attend school, to provide conditions for the implementation of education and to design and provide the curriculum content.





- **Special schools and classes within primary schools** provided for children with disabilities, both in terms of physical and learning difficulties.
- Institutions for the **primary education of adults**.
- Primary schools and other institutions for **musical and dance (ballet) education**.
- **Other institutions**, such as children's houses and pupil/student houses.

It also sets out the following principles:

- Teaching is delivered in the Macedonian language using the Cyrillic alphabet.
- Political and religious groups and activities are forbidden in primary schools, as is religious education.
- Primary schools are public (state) institutions and the establishment of private schools for primary education is not allowed.

While compulsory education is free of charge, schooling requires additional financial resources, for example, for school lunches and the purchase of school materials and books. To ease the difficulties associated with such costs, the Ministry of Education in 1998 guaranteed that all pupils in primary schools receive textbooks free of charge.<sup>13</sup>

### **Secondary education**

After finishing primary school at the age of 15, students have the option of continuing their education in secondary school. Although not compulsory, all citizens have the right to a secondary education regardless of sex, race, skin colour, national or social origin, political or religious belief, property and social status (Art. 3/1/2).

Art. 2/2 of the Law for Secondary Education, 1995 (44/95)<sup>14</sup> stipulates that secondary education

is provided in high schools. These can either be run as public schools (state, local and city schools) or as private schools. Whereas it is the government that founds state schools, private schools can be established by domestic or foreign legal entities, or indeed individuals, as specified under the terms of the law. Private schools require a licence issued by the government. This licence details the profile of the school, the number of students and teachers, the equipment and space used, the language that will be used during classes and the curriculum. The government can, under the terms of the law, withdraw a licence at the request of the ministry. The local government can establish either local schools or city schools only in the case of special (vocational) high schools. (City schools apply only to Skopje, as it is considered a special local unit.)

Within this provision, secondary education is organised into the following types of school:

- **Gymnasiums.** These are open to regular students who have finished primary school.
- **Vocational high schools.** Students who have finished primary school can enrol at these schools on either a full-time or a part-time basis. The course lasts for three to four years, with additional specialist training. Those who have not completed primary school can still enrol at vocational schools, but only for up to two years, and this would be in parallel with their professional education. The curricula for vocational schools can also be taught in other institutions, such as those for adults.
- **Art schools.** These are open to students who have completed primary education, with the consent of the Minister.

- **Special schools for disabled students.**

Students follow a curriculum for specific jobs or work. Here, the students are categorised according to the type and level of their difficulties.

Students have to undergo a process of open competition in order to enter secondary education. Students must be under 17 years old to be eligible; for disabled people, the upper age limit is 25. Registration is terminated for a student if s/he: finishes, does not register appropriately, signs out, is in prison longer than six months, or repeats the same year of study twice.

### Higher education

After much discussion and controversy, a new Law on Higher Education was drawn up on 25 July 2000.<sup>15</sup> The main focus of discussion was on the ethnic dimension of higher education. The law attempts to incorporate European principles whilst at the same time making reasonable decisions to satisfy all interested parties in the country. During the preparation of this law, many EU experts from this field were consulted and their views were considered.

As a result of this law, all citizens of FYR of Macedonia are guaranteed the right to education in higher education institutions (Art. 6/1). The autonomy of the higher education institutions is guaranteed by the Constitution, as well as by the law. This autonomy allows higher education institutions to perform their activities under the principles of intellectual freedom. It also gives them freedom of management.

Higher education institutions in FYR of Macedonia consist of universities, faculties and higher expert schools. There is also an Academy of Arts, which is treated as a faculty by the law. According to the law, the higher education institutions may be institutions established by the state, or private institutions founded by national or foreign persons and legal entities under certain legal conditions. In the case of private universities, the founder must guarantee that s/he will be in a position to refund the money of the students if the institution ceases to function and to cover their costs of transferring to another university. Once all conditions are fulfilled, the founder can start the process of establishing the institution. The founder has to prepare a plan and has to appoint a Founding Commission.

#### Recent educational initiatives<sup>16</sup>

In June 2000, the government released its *Draft Strategy for Development of Education*, which is a result of an agreement between the World Bank, the Royal Dutch Embassy in Skopje and the Ministry of Education of FYR of Macedonia. A Special Commission of 24 Macedonian and 4 Hungarian experts in the field of education drafted the national strategy, which provides a framework for future reforms with a view to improving the overall system. In the initial draft, Roma/Gypsies are not explicitly referred to, nor are needs associated with bilingualism and/or multilingualism dealt with. The proposed timescale for the implementation of these initiatives is also unclear.

Key intervention areas and corresponding activities outlined in the Draft Strategy include:

- **Development of educational institutions** (4.1.1.), especially infrastructure and equipment. Among other things, this includes:
  - the definition of minimum standards and norms for the infrastructure
  - opening up means of using private financing for education
  - adaptation of the infrastructure for the education of adults
  - the establishment of educational resource centres to support educational institutions
  - addressing the educational needs of the population through formal/informal education.
- **Educational process** (4.1.2.), especially the introduction of changes in the predominant pedagogical culture, so that it is more interactive, participatory, and provides for better development of skills. Possible activities include:
  - the establishment of an independent “Innovation Fund”
  - the development of mechanisms and procedures for increased student participation
  - the development of systems for accreditation of textbooks and teaching tools
  - training programmes for teachers.
- **Teaching staff** (4.1.3.), with activities such as:
  - the establishment of standards for evaluation of the quality of teachers
  - redefining curricula and syllabuses for initial education of teachers
  - creation of a national system for mandatory training of teachers
  - development of a system for expert and pedagogical upgrading of teachers

- creation of conditions for part-time employment
  - training of teachers for education of adults.
  - **Structural adjustment** (4.1.4.) in preschool, secondary, post-secondary and university levels, in the areas of curricula, programmes and management of schools. Included here, among others things, are:
    - the introduction of a “zero year” in primary school
    - creation of alternative, flexible and economical solutions for preschooling, such as NGO resource centres
    - introduction of post-secondary education
    - introduction of vocational secondary education for adults
    - implementation of short programmes oriented toward the labour-market needs of people without qualifications and certificates.
  - **Curricula and syllabuses** (4.2), especially with a view to addressing the problem of an overemphasis on theoretical learning and lack of emphasis on functional skills. Therefore, some of the activities foreseen include:
    - the preparation and development of standards (at global, national and institutional levels) for the development of curricula and syllabuses
    - development of educational and professional standards
    - redefinition of the ratio between general and professional education, theory and practice
    - prioritising the native and the official language, foreign languages, maths, computer science and social sciences in the preparation of the curricula and syllabuses for primary and secondary education
  - adding content and approaches that support multicultural awareness (in different subjects and at all levels of education).
  - **Quality evaluation and assessment** (4.3), with a view to improving the quality of the educational system, the transparency of educational standards and the criteria for evaluation and grading, and more adequate monitoring of results at the end of each level of education, amongst other things. Activities are to include:
    - definition of standards of achievement for students
    - preparation of concepts for final exams and graduation for all high schools
    - eventual replacement of entrance exams for the next level of education with the results of the graduation exam
    - standardisation of the final exams in secondary and post-secondary education
    - introduction of national assessment of students
    - provision of autonomy for the Assessment Unit
    - the reorganisation and introduction of institutions with a view to creating the capacity for monitoring, assessing and evaluating education.
- There are also aspects of the strategy that deal with the legal framework, management and financing, information collection, and research and development. The Draft Strategy is an open document offering guidelines for the implementation of activities to improve the educational system. Although issues relating to

Roma/Gypsies have yet to be considered, according to discussions at the Ministry of Education a special working group on Romani issues is to be set up. Some key areas that may be considered are those related to different forms of preschooling, including the proposed “zero year”; curricula development for teacher training; criteria and standards for assessment and evaluation of students’ achievements; the development of multicultural curricula; and adult education and professional training.

### Education in minority languages

According to the Law on Primary School Education (1995), and the Law on Secondary Education (1995), national minorities have the right to carry out education in their mother tongue, while the study of Macedonian language is compulsory. Indeed, it is noted that, along with the Macedonian language, primary and secondary education have been carried out in Albanian, Turkish and Serbian languages for the last 54 years.<sup>17</sup> Kindergartens and preschools are also carried out in the minority languages of Albanian, Turkish and Serbian.<sup>18</sup> Through its curriculum content, primary education, as the basis of education for all children and adults, also provides opportunities for the acknowledgement and development of ethnic and cultural identities of minority nationalities. In schools where there is likely to be the need to teach in minority languages, teachers are required to be familiar with and able to teach in the relevant language(s) (Art. 67/2). A primary school is obliged to test the teacher’s knowledge of the appropriate language(s) (Art. 67/4). Minorities in primary schools who receive education in their mother-

tongue language are to be provided with textbooks in that language (Art. 80/3).

Secondary education is conducted in the Macedonian language using the Cyrillic alphabet (Art. 4/1). For members of minority groups education in public schools can be carried out in the language and alphabet of the minority, in a manner and under the terms provided by this law (Art. 4/2). The students covered by Section 2 of this article are obliged also to learn the Macedonian language. Classes in foreign languages are also available, for example, in English, German, French, Italian, and Spanish.

## In practice

### The right to education of Roma/Gypsy children

In FYR of Macedonia efforts have been made towards incorporating new models of education in the preschool and primary phases to improve education for all, including Roma/Gypsies. One example of this was in 1994, when a number of preschool institutions began implementing the Step-by-Step model. Initially, it was designed to be experimental, but has since become the working model in many preschools and primary schools across FYR of Macedonia. Another model, “Active studying – Interactive learning”, has also been in place in primary schools since 1994-95. From 1997-98, this has been translated to *zabavishta* institutions. In addition to these models, a number of others were also explored during the course of the 1990s. For example, “Step Further”, “Mozaik” and “Subject Planning”. All these had significant implications for traditional ways of

learning and working in preschool education and primary schools.

In FYR of Macedonia, most experts from the educational sector agree that one of the most important issues for educational development is the question of how best to incorporate preschool and primary education to form a basis for the educational system as a whole. In light of this, the new models mentioned above are welcomed as helping in this process. Various ideas and methods for linking the preschool and primary education systems are already underway, most notably in the case of the *zabavishta* institutions, which have purposely been made an organic part of primary schools.

In spite of such efforts, it has been noted in various reports that problems persist. For example, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination stated:<sup>19</sup>

“Concern is expressed at the low levels of participation, in particular in secondary and higher education, of certain minorities, notably of Roma children and Albanian girl children in rural areas.”

Likewise, the *Report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance* of 1999 states that, despite considerable efforts on the part of the government, considerably lower numbers of students from certain minority groups, namely Albanians and Roma/Gypsies, receive secondary and higher education.

### Educational problems for Roma/Gypsy children

Mr Sejdo Jasarov, a Romani teacher in several schools where the majority of children are Roma/Gypsies<sup>20</sup> describes what he sees as the main deficiencies of the education system in relation to Roma/Gypsy children, especially in their first two years of schooling:

“In my opinion the reason why the Roma receive a poor quality education is because nobody has paid attention to the early stages of their education until now. To begin with, when a 7 year old starts primary school, for many Roma children this is their first experience of school. Very few Roma children go to pre-school. Let’s take one Roma settlement, Shutka, as an example. As far as I know, nobody from Shutka sends their children to pre-school – there is no pre-school in Shutka, so how can a Roma child living in Shutka be compared with his non-Roma brother or sister? At the stage where a non-Roma child is learning and knows how a computer works, our Roma child is only thinking and knows how to sing and dance. Don’t get me wrong, I’m happy that our kids have these talents – and to an extent, these could be a starting point. You know what I mean? Take the music – the rhythm and numbers – of mathematics, we can combine these things to give children the basic educational knowledge they need to prepare them for schooling.

I think that there are some Roma NGOs which are taking such an approach, and then we can get results. With this kind of preparation the Roma children will use the Macedonian

language, which is a large factor in their difficulties for most of the Roma children from the ghettos. Yes, while I was a teacher I had children in my class who were coming without any basic knowledge of Macedonian. And then I had to speak and explain things in Romani”.

A Romani director of a school in which nearly all of the pupils are Roma/Gypsy children explains some of the issues he has faced since working there.

“When I started managing the school I was shocked and confused at the situation in the school, because the school did not have windows, many of the classroom doors were broken, there was not enough school equipment and many of the tables and chairs were broken. I did not know where to start. Then I asked the Ministry of Education several times, and some other foundations, to rebuild the school. As always the Ministry did not have much money to give for the rebuilding of the school, but luckily in that period there were some foundations that were interested in giving help to the Roma and they invested some money here. But the process of rebuilding the school has not finished and we are still looking for some donors who would like to help make the situation for the Roma kids more comfortable.

I have a lot of problems with the non-Roma teachers and their thinking about their positions here. Many of them think that they are being punished by the Ministry of

Education because of the fact that they have been posted here and have to work in a Roma community.

I had one very interesting case where a teacher was punishing the kids by giving them very bad marks. There was a case when the kids, after the school celebrations of the New Year took some small things from the classroom because they wanted to decorate their houses/rooms in the same way as it was in their school for the New Year. The teacher saw this and immediately wrote a bad mark for those kids.

Our school is faced with various problems, one being capacity. The school is built for 800 students but we have 2,000 here. In this situation, I am forced to have larger groups of students in the classrooms. Recently, there have been a lot of people who want to send their kids to the school, but that will be an extra problem for the existing ones.

The sanitary conditions in the school are very alarming. This is quite an unclean area and we have to clean the school more often than in other schools.

The school has 103 members of staff, 80 are teachers, out of whom just four are Roma. The school needs the most basic essentials to give the kids normal schooling. Other directors are “fighting” to have computers in their schools and here I have to fight about tolerance, basic conditions, getting understanding from the government and the capacity of the school to receive more students.”



### School abandonment

Overall attendance in primary and secondary schools has varied over recent years. In 1989, official statistics showed that attendance for primary schools had reached 93 per cent. However, by 1993 this had fallen to 85 per cent. Since then there seems to be some evidence that this figure is rising: according to an official report published in 2000, 95 per cent of the relevant age-group is included in primary school.<sup>21</sup> The levels of non-attendance are much higher for minority pupils, and in particular Roma/Gypsy Turkish and Albanian children, as well as those from rural areas. The same report stated that “the largest part of the children that are not attending elementary school are of Roma nationality” [sic]. A survey of Roma/Gypsy families carried out in the context of the UNICEF document<sup>22</sup> gives some indication of this: out of the 2,632 children of primary-school age (7-14 years) included in the survey, about 20 per cent were not in school. This figure is actually an improvement on recent years,

and many attribute it to NGO-related efforts aimed at creating conditions for increased school attendance and sustainable learning.<sup>23</sup> However, for older Roma/Gypsy children the figure is much higher: out of the 1,143 children aged 15-18 years included in the survey, about 65 per cent were not attending secondary school.

According to the Ministry of Education, in the 1999-2000 school year there were just 8,279 Roma/Gypsy pupils in primary school out of a total population of 247,898.<sup>24</sup> According to the Open Society Institute (OSI), and based on the study of Shuto Orizari, the number of Roma/Gypsy children who should be in compulsory primary school is 9,378, if we use official census figures, and 27,000 according to the unofficial figures. This helps give some indication of the numbers of Roma/Gypsies who fall outside the education system. The primary reason given by many parents for the failure to enrol Roma/Gypsy children in kindergarten and primary



school is the lack of family income, and conditions which lead the families to be more concerned with survival than educational development.<sup>25</sup>

The official figure for the drop-out rate from primary schools is less than one per cent.<sup>26</sup> However, according to the Ministry of Education, eight per cent of enrolled Roma/Gypsy students dropped out of school in 1998-1999.<sup>27</sup> As children are generally not held back from the first to the fourth grade, it may be assumed that the majority of these drop-outs occur in the upper primary grades, from the fifth- to eighth-grade levels.<sup>28</sup>

In a discussion with the local NGO *Nadex* and the director of the Brothers Ramiz and Hamid School, where Roma/Gypsy students make up 99 per cent of the student population, the author of the OSI report found that general trends point to a situation in which 380 students start the first grade, yet only 100 finish the eighth grade. OSI also heard from a school in Veles that among Roma/Gypsy families who often travel for agricultural-related work, only one or two children finish the eighth grade for every 20 who start school. According to a school director in the town of Stip, out of 16 Roma/Gypsy children who started the first grade, just four are due to finish the eighth grade.<sup>29</sup>

According to an official report for 1995/96, Albanian and Turkish minorities were more likely to drop out of secondary school than their Macedonian peers; no mention was made of Roma/Gypsies. In the 1998-99 school year, the

Ministry of Education registered just 478 Roma in secondary education. A UNICEF study carried out in the settlement of Shuto Orizari in Skopje<sup>30</sup> also gives some indication of the number of Roma/Gypsy students in secondary schools. Just 2,107 Roma/Gypsy children attend primary school in this settlement, while 459 do not attend and 66 attend occasionally. At the secondary level, the figures are even starker. There were just 406 students registered, with 712 not attending at all and 25 attending only occasionally. There are a number of possible reasons for the over-representation of minority groups among those who drop out, which according to Kamberski, an expert from the Institute for Pedagogy in Skopje, include:<sup>31</sup>

- poverty which, for example, leads to temporary emigration of parents and thus children abroad, early involvement of children in work, and lack of means for the child to be supplied with the necessary equipment for school, such as textbooks and clothes
- traditional and religious beliefs in certain areas, especially among rural settlements with Albanian and Turkish nationalities, such as not letting girl children attend school after the fifth grade
- inefficiency of state bodies and schools, such as insufficient documentation, inefficient monitoring of parents and tutors, and lack of follow-up with non-attending children
- low motivation to stay at school, due to poor performance, bullying, and discrimination in the classroom
- physical distance from school and the lack of free transport.

At the university level, in the 1998-99 school year, there were 41 registered Roma/Gypsy students, that is 0.3 per cent of the total student population. In 1999/2000, this increased to about 50 students. Although the proportion of Roma/Gypsies in university is still extremely low, it is still an increase on the number of Roma/Gypsy students who were registered initially in 1994, when revised affirmative-action measures were introduced.<sup>32</sup>

In terms of achievement levels among Roma/Gypsy adults, out of the 5,743 parents included in the survey of Shuto Orizari, 18 per cent were illiterate; 22 per cent had not completed primary school education; 43 per cent had completed primary school, 2 per cent had not completed secondary school and less than 1 per cent had completed higher education. The remaining 13 per cent had completed secondary education.<sup>33</sup> Overall achievement levels are lower amongst Roma/Gypsy girls and women. From the fifth grade, there are higher drop-out rates amongst girls. In Shuto Orizari 28 per cent of the women surveyed were illiterate; 27 per cent had not completed primary school; 37 per cent had completed primary school; 6 per cent had not completed secondary school; less than 1 per cent had completed higher education.<sup>34</sup> Figures provided by a Romani women's community organisation located in the largest Romani settlement, in the town of Kumanovo, reflect this pattern: 23 per cent of the women were illiterate; 62 per cent were semi-literate; 13 per cent had a primary education; and just 2 per cent had a secondary education.<sup>35</sup>

### Language provision

The language of instruction in preschools, primary schools and some secondary schools in FYR of Macedonia differs, depending on the ethnic make-up of the student body, preference of the parents and availability of human and material resources for carrying out lessons in languages other than Macedonian.<sup>36</sup>

In the 1998-99 school year, 67 per cent of all pupils were in classes where Macedonian language was the language of instruction; 30 per cent were in classes held in the Albanian language; 2 per cent were in Turkish language classes and less than 1 per cent were in classes held in Serbian language. At the secondary school level, 84 per cent were in classes held in Macedonian language; 15 per cent in classes with Albanian language; and less than 1 per cent in Turkish language.<sup>37</sup>

While the number of students in primary schools studying in Macedonian and Serbian is decreasing, the number studying in Albanian and Turkish is increasing. According to the State Office for Statistics, in the school year 1990-91, 71 per cent of all students attended schools in which only the Macedonian language was the medium of instruction, and 27 per cent were in schools where Albanian was also the medium of instruction.<sup>38</sup> However, by the school year of 1997-98, the percentage of students studying in just Macedonian language had decreased to 69 per cent, and the percentage of those studying in Albanian had increased to 29 per cent. This trend is explained as being mainly a result of demographic movements and is expected to continue. It could also be an indication of an

increase in access to teaching in Albanian and Turkish.

In primary school classes held in the Macedonian language, pupils registered as “Roma” represented five per cent of the total student population in both 1998-99 and 1999-2000. In Albanian-language classes, Roma represented 0.24 per cent of the total student population in 1998-99 and 0.25 per cent in 1999-2000.<sup>39</sup> The ethnic affiliation of students is determined on the basis of self-identification, and is recorded in the process of registering the child in primary school, when the child and parent(s) meet with the school psychologist and pedagogue.<sup>40</sup>

Most Roma thus attend classes which are taught in the Macedonian language. In practice, this is either in the context of a school where all classes are held in Macedonian, and Roma are therefore in ethnically mixed classroom settings, or in schools where both Albanian- and Macedonian-language classes are held. In the latter case, Roma may be in ethnically mixed classes, or form the large majority of students in the classes carried out in Macedonian, or with some small representation in Albanian language classes.<sup>41</sup> The Ministry of Education noted that:<sup>42</sup>

“in primary and secondary schools there are no incentives for activities in which students from different nationalities would take part. The lack of school and off-school communication is creating a base for development of prejudice and negative stereotypes toward members of different ethnic background.”

Predominantly Roma/Gypsy-student classes, or even mixed classes, are relatively common in primary schools. However, by the secondary level, the number of Romani students has been drastically reduced. Some Romani students state that moving into an environment with fewer Romani classmates and friends was a difficult transition.<sup>43</sup>

It was not until 1996 that optional educational programmes were provided in the Romani language. However, enrolment in these courses has been declining.<sup>44</sup> The practice was implemented in four primary schools. It involved the publication of a textbook and a standardised grammar of the Romani language. These formed the basis of training for a number of Romani teachers who subsequently became teachers of the Romani language. However, this was only for a short period of time; currently no schools deliver lessons in the Romani language. Overall, only 0.1 per cent of teachers in FYR of Macedonia belong to the Roma/Gypsy minority.

In 1997, the Macedonian parliament passed a Law on Languages (Official Gazette no. 5/97), which allows for education at the Pedagogical Faculty in Skopje to be carried out in minority languages.<sup>45</sup> However, although Roma/Gypsies are recognised as a national minority in FYR of Macedonia and thus have the right to carry out education in their mother tongue, no schools deliver lessons in the Romani language, nor are there national textbooks available in Romani. Most Roma/Gypsy students attend schools teaching in the Macedonian language, whilst others attend schools teaching in Albanian or Turkish languages.<sup>46</sup>

The only known schools offering extracurricular primary-school “facultative” courses on Romani language, songs and folk tales are two schools in the Shuto Orizari municipality of Skopje.

The reason often given by state officials for the lack of further implementation of more courses is the lack of qualified teachers and the low-level interest of Romani parents and students.

They also note the “lack of codification” (standardisation) of the Romani language.<sup>47</sup>

In April 2001, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) was told during its preparation of the *Second Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* that the Macedonian government is making efforts to improve the quality of Romani language teaching through the preparation of new curricula and courses in the Romani language in order to train teaching staff.<sup>48</sup> In its report, ECRI encouraged the government to further expand and develop such positive initiatives.

### School curricula

According to the 1996 document *Primary Education – Content and Organisation of the Educational Process*, published by the Council of Teachers, a body of the Ministry of Education and Physical Culture, the main goals of primary education in FYR of Macedonia overall are:

- to provide students with individual development in accordance with their level of ability and their age
- to allow students to gain knowledge and skills about nature, society and mankind
- to enable them to use these skills in their lives and further education

- to develop their sense of responsibility, truth, and the meaning of work
- to develop a sense of aesthetics, cultural traditions and national consciousness
- to enable them to respect and fulfil their civil rights and duties.

Progress of primary schools is measured according to these goals. These goals are monitored in two ways: first, by pedagogical experts and, second, by inspectors. The Pedagogical Bureau of Macedonia, a department of the Ministry of Education and Physical Culture, looks at whether the goals and objectives of primary education are realised and how curricular plans and programmes are implemented. The Educational Inspectorate performs the inspection of legal provisions in schools. Inspectors are nominated by the Minister, on the advice of the chief republic educational inspector, and with consent from the government. In addition to these bodies, there is internal supervision in schools, with the director of the school usually being responsible for monitoring internal work.

Secondary-school curricula are set by the government according to Article 9 of the Constitution. The Pedagogical Bureau of Macedonia prepares the curricula and plans for secondary schools. These are then implemented by the Minister for Education and Physical Culture, who is responsible for deciding in which public schools new and experimental educational programmes are to be tested, the nature of provision and ways of issuing and using of new books.

### “Special schools” and the education of children with special education needs

Currently, there is no governmental body to maintain statistics on the schooling of children with special educational needs.<sup>49</sup> The Ministry of Education’s *Education for All Report – 2000* notes that such data would not really be valid in the current state, as “many children with special education needs live with their families and are not included in any service offering help”.<sup>50</sup> Though not considered valid, a figure of 18,000 adults and children defined as “retarded” is registered in the Book of Rules.<sup>51</sup>

At the preschool level, only 60 children were participating in special institutions for children with hearing or visual impairments, or learning disabilities. All such institutions at this level are in Skopje. In general, the integration or acceptance of children with special education needs in regular kindergartens is not an institutionalised norm.

In a 1997 survey of kindergartens, only 27 out of 50 kindergartens responded to the questionnaire. From amongst the respondents, 20 kindergartens reported that they had accepted a total of 77 children with special educational needs, 60 of whom were reported to have come from poor families. The other seven kindergartens stated that they never accepted children with special education needs “because their kindergartens are only for healthy children”.<sup>52</sup>

While primary education is compulsory for all children, the integration of children with special needs in the educational system of FYR of Macedonia is noted as a current weakness.<sup>53</sup> At most, some 15 per cent of the children with special needs are included in primary education.

The only known figures for children with special education needs integrated into regular primary schools are in Skopje, where 3,000 students are registered, and in Tetovo, where 110 are registered.<sup>54</sup>

The right to an education in the place where you live is meant to be realised in local schools, in special classes in local schools, or in special schools or special institutions. However, it is stated that “Many children with special education needs do not have this right.”<sup>55</sup> There are ten special institutions and schools for primary education: six are located in Skopje, two in Trumica, one in Bitola and one in Veles. These institutions fall under the administration of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Twenty-eight primary schools with “special classes” are distributed throughout 25 municipalities of the country.<sup>56</sup>

Children believed to have developmental difficulties are referred to a “commission on categorisation”, formed of “a pedagogue, psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker and an expert dealing with handicapped defectives”.<sup>57</sup> If the evaluation of a child results in the “diagnosis and categorisation” of him/her being mentally retarded, or having a hearing, speech or sight defect, a chronic disease or combined defects, then the child can be admitted into a special school or institution.

However, a report by OSI states that in the city of Veles, where one of these schools is located, a local primary-school director and a local Romani NGO reported that Romani children without special needs attend the school for children with

mental or physical disabilities.<sup>58</sup> The president of the Romani NGO *Romani Bajt* allegedly reported that most of the 67 students are Roma, and that only 5 to 10 have real problems, while the others attend for social and economic reasons. Likewise, he stated that he had spoken with some of the parents of the children, and found that some also go to the special secondary schools in Skopje, and that there is an arrangement with a local factory to provide low-paying jobs to the “graduates” of these schools. The school was said to have a lot of support from charities, and the students receive books, materials, clothes and meals.

In interviews conducted by the author of the OSI report, the director of one of the local schools stated that five children had transferred to the special school in the 1999-2000 school year, though in her opinion only one had real problems. The transfer was initiated by the parents, without the required testing for “categorisation” by the teacher and psychologist. Having consulted the Pedagogical Institute, she stated that she was informed that the certificate of categorisation should be accorded. In discussing the issue with the director of the special school, she was told that all of the children tested below the appropriate line of intelligence.<sup>59</sup> The OSI report comments:<sup>60</sup>

“In this case, there seems to be a social-economic motivation of parents for placing their Romani children into the school for children with special needs in Veles, and it was reported that some also continue in the “special” secondary schools in Skopje. It is unknown whether this is an isolated case, and the situation should be further investigated,

both here and in other schools in the country. Such an inquiry should include the roles and responsibilities of each actor/institution implicated in the transfer and acceptance of children who should otherwise be in normal primary schools.”

## NGO practice in the area

### Centre for Social Initiatives Nadez

The Centre for Social Initiatives (CSI) *Nadez* was created in 1997 and is based in Shuto Orizari. The organisation runs a number of projects, two of which are Roma-focused:

- a self-help programme on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Shuto Orizari, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Work, Netherlands
- a project aimed at promoting the education of Roma/Gypsy children and youth in the municipality of Shuto Orizari, supported by OSI-Macedonia.

The latter project began in October 1998 and was due to finish in June 2001. It started as a model project aimed at demonstrating to government that Roma/Gypsy children are no different from their peers, apart from the fact that Macedonian is not their first language. It is ultimately designed to help prepare young Roma/Gypsy children (preschool age) for their first grade in primary school, and thus support the education of Roma/Gypsy children in primary and secondary schools. Other aims of the project are:

- to encourage Roma/Gypsy children to attend school

- to initiate opportunities and provide practical assistance for school and after-school activities for pupils from primary and secondary schools
- to provide advice and assistance, as well as professional help and support
- to encourage and improve positive relations between parents and other members of the family, for the sake of the children
- to organise optional educational activities
- to raise public awareness and promote public participation, while stressing the specific needs of Roma/Gypsy children.

The project is based around the running of a centre which Roma/Gypsy children are encouraged to attend. It runs a number of programmes, such as:

- **Preschool children's programme.** 100 children aged five to seven years participate. The goal is to teach children the Macedonian language and thus help them prepare for school.
- **Summer programme to prepare for the first grade of school.** 70 children who are registered in primary school for the first grade participate. It takes place in the summer and aims to prepare children for a better start in the first grade.



- **Programme for practical assistance in performing school tasks.** 150 children aged 7 to 16 years participate. The centre gives help to children with their homework and helps them to understand the subjects in school.
- **Programme for acquiring elementary knowledge.** 30 children from primary school participate. Children who attend require extra support in mathematics and the Macedonian language.
- **Co-operation with the families of the pupils.** There are contact meetings with all the parents of the children who come to the centre. These include visits to the parents' homes as well as inviting parents to visit the centre.

### The Macedonian Centre for International Co-operation, Operation Days Work and Dan Church Aid

The Macedonian Centre for International Co-operation was founded in 1993 as a non-governmental and non-profit organisation. It works in the area of sustainable development, rehabilitation and humanitarian assistance. Operation Days Work (ODW) is a solidarity organisation of Danish high-school students formed in 1985. Dan Church Aid (DCA) was founded in 1922 and is a Danish church-related, non-missionary relief and development agency working with partners in five continents.

In 2000, DCA and ODW carried out an information and fundraising campaign called "Roma 2000". The campaign was aimed at raising general public awareness, in particular among Danish high school students, about the situation of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, with

the aim of raising money for an education programme for young Roma/Gypsies in Macedonia. As a result of this, a programme was developed by the Macedonian Centre for International Co-operation entitled "Applied education for young Roma in Macedonia". It began in January 2001 and will run until December 2003.

The programme, in its own words, aims to:

- raise awareness of the importance of education among the Roma communities
- raise awareness among the non-Roma communities to encourage the involvement of Roma in the country's school system.
- raise awareness among the government and other institutions of the importance of educating Roma young people
- raise the number of Roma young people completing primary school
- provide vocational training courses for Roma young people
- increase opportunities for employment and self-employment of Roma young people
- assist teachers and schools that work with Roma pupils/students.

The target group is Roma/Gypsy young people aged from 12 to 25 years and in particular, those who have dropped out and those who only attended primary school. This does not preclude working with the Roma/Gypsy population as a whole, as well as with teachers working with Roma/Gypsies and non-Roma/Gypsy pupils. The main aim of the project is to increase the involvement of Roma in education and try to raise their employment possibilities.



### The Foundation for an Open Society in Macedonia

The Open Society Foundation in FYR of Macedonia has specific programmes targeting Roma/Gypsies and education.<sup>61</sup> In 2000-01, the OSF “Roma Program” continued to operate a number of programmes related to the schooling and the education of Roma/Gypsies. The programmes include continuing support for:

- Roma/Gypsy high-school and university students with mentoring and scholarships
- launching of the “Romaversitas” programme
- new community learning centres providing support and services with a view to creating equitable educational opportunities for Roma/Gypsy children, young people and parents
- English-language training for Roma/Gypsy students and professionals.

In co-operation with other NGOs, such as the Italian Consortium of Solidarity, the Open Society Institute Roma Participation Program, and the King Baudouin Foundation, assistance has also been afforded to Roma/Gypsy refugee students and their families. In the past, the FOSIM Roma Program has also provided support for the purchase of textbooks and school materials, and support for Roma/Gypsy children from low-income families to participate in Step-by-Step kindergartens.

### Other Civil Society Actors<sup>62</sup>

Many Romani communities, NGOs and individuals have been involved in giving humanitarian assistance to Romani communities in Macedonia, including refugees arriving during the height of the Kosovo crisis. The type of assistance afforded has included clothing, food packets and, in some cases, school textbooks and materials for refugee students.

Some Romani and non-Roma NGOs carry out community-development activities, including those related to education, with support from US and European private foundations, embassy support schemes, and in bilateral partnerships.<sup>63</sup> However, it has been noted that “co-operation amongst different donors is very limited [and] there is no mechanism established for sharing information and joining resources”.<sup>64</sup>

The Macedonian UNICEF office has generated some activities, especially the commissioning of reports concerning Roma/Gypsies, namely the *Situation Analysis on Roma Women and Children*, published in 1999, and the forthcoming *Vulnerability of Roma children in the Municipality of Shuto Orizari*. Other activities mentioned were support for local preschool and catch-up courses, along with a project working with street children in Bitola. These include in-service teacher training which covers the use of interactive methods and “mentoring”. Mentoring and scholarships for Romani university students, accompanied by affirmative-action measures for universities, has meant an increase in the numbers of Roma/Gypsies attending universities.

## Voices of Roma/Gypsy children

These interviews were conducted in October 2000 in Kumanovo.

*JS, Roma/Gypsy, seven years old*

“When I have to go in the school in the morning, I have to wake up at 6.15am, as I have to be in the school by 6.50 because my class starts at 7.00. I do not like that, I hate that. But I like school in the afternoon, the second period... Before the classes start in the afternoon, I have some time to play with my friends. But sometimes I do not like to go to school because I do not have the same toys and other things like my friend does when he goes to school.”

“Do you know, I was once in another school where my friend goes to?! And that is very nice because they have everything there. I like that school more than mine. They play together... and do you know that all the children talk in Romanes, but in my school I cannot talk in Romanes because there are other children who do not understand me. I do not know why, but I understand when they are talking between themselves. I really would like more to go to that school than mine. Ohh... but you know, also the teacher speaks Romanes but not in my school.”

“Also when I was in the school where my friend goes, I saw a movie there... they had a class when they watched a movie or a video. They also have a lot of pens and for the whole day, they are painting. Also when they paint, the teacher is playing music, which children can

choose... the teacher asks you what cassette you want to hear, and then she plays the cassette.”

“I do not know why they sit in a circle... their tables are in a circle. But in my classroom, I sit behind everybody else and sometimes I cannot see properly what the teacher is writing on the blackboard.”

*EE, Roma/Gypsy, fifth grade, Kumanovo*

“I like going to school. I have some Roma friends there, but they do not want to learn very much. I am also Roma and I do not know why they do not want learn. I have good marks in school.”

“You know, my *Gadje* [non-Roma] friends very often are saying: ‘Look at those *Gigani* [Roma], they are so untidy and they do not want to learn in school’. But they then say to me: ‘Sorry E, I do not think of you like that even though you are Roma. You are different from them.’”

“Sometimes I do not want to go into school because my class teacher beats us. He beats girls with his hand on their heads, and boys are beaten with slaps.”

A number of other short interviews were conducted with Roma/Gypsy and non-Roma/Gypsy children from other areas in Macedonia:

*RS, Roma/Gypsy boy, eight years old, Kriva Palanka*

“You know when I go to the school, my teacher always wants me to sing for her, saying that all Roma know how to sing and that must know how to sing. And I sing songs of Tose Proevski... I like to sing his songs. Then my

teacher tells me: ‘No, I want some *Giganski* [Gypsy] songs because they sound good. Why are you singing Tose Proevski?’”

*IS, Non-Roma/Gypsy, second grade, Toli Zordumis School, Kumanovo*

“We once visited a real class where just *Gigani* [Gypsies] go. My teacher said: ‘OK children, because Easter is coming soon we will go and visit some *Gigani* who really do not look like you. They do not learn the same things that you learn here. They are from Sredorek.’”

*DI, Non-Roma/Gypsy boy, seven years old, Stip*

“I also have some *Gigani* [Gypsies] in my school but they are always quiet, and they do not talk as much as we and the others do. They never play with us and we never play with them. When the teacher asks them something they are always quiet and then they get bad marks. I do not know why they do not want to learn in the school or why they don’t answer when the teacher is asking them questions.”

## Recommendations

Given that FRY of Macedonia has ratified:

- the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (ratified 1993)
- the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratified 1993, entered into force 18 January 1994)
- the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ratified 1993, entered into force 18 January 1994)
- the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial

Discrimination (ratified 20 March 1999, entered into force 26 May 1999)

- the Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified 1992, entered into force 2 December 1993)
- the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education (1993), as part of the Law for acceptance of all international documents previously ratified by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1991)
- the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ratified 9 November 1995, entered into force 10 April 1997)
- the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ratified 10 April 1997, entered into force 10 April 1997)
- the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ratified 10 April 1997, entered into force February 1998, with the Law for Ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1997))

and that it has signed, but not yet ratified:

- the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (signed 25 July 1996)
- the European Convention on Nationality (signed 6 November 1997)

Save the Children recommends that:

### **The Government of the Republic of Macedonia**

- Ratifies the European Social Charter, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the European Convention on Nationality.

- Invites the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education to conduct a field visit in order to assess the implementation by the Macedonian government of its obligations in relation to the right to education in general, and in particular the right to education of Roma children, with reference to special schools.
- Produces accurate and comprehensive statistics on Roma/Gypsies, including educational data on access of Roma/Gypsy children to school and on their attainment.
- Extensively consults with Roma/Gypsy communities when devising national policy plans for implementing the right to education of Roma/Gypsy children.
- Integrates Roma/Gypsy representatives in all the areas of policy formulation, structural planning and service provision.
- Addresses related problems, such as unemployment and poverty, which inevitably affect the equal access of Roma/Gypsy children to education.

**The international organisations, including the UN Commission on Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education and the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and the European Union**

- Closely monitor the international obligations undertaken by the Macedonian government in respect of the right to education, paying particular attention to the right to education of Roma/Gypsy children in Macedonia.

## FYR Macedonia: Notes on the text

1 For ease of reading, FYROM will be referred throughout this report as FYR of Macedonia.

2 Data on refugee and IDP movements are approximate and are for early June 2001.

3 European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), *Pleasant Fiction: the Human Rights Situation of Roma in Macedonia*, Country Report Series, No.7, Budapest, 1998, p. 34.

4 ADI, *Report on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in Macedonia*.

5 For more information, see: Elena Marushiakova *et al.*, *Identity Formation among Minorities in the Balkans: The cases of Roma, Egyptians and Ashkali in Kosovo*, Minority Studies Society Studii Romani, Sofia, 2001.

6 ERRC, *Written Comments of the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) Concerning the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, For Consideration by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance in Strasbourg in June 1998*, 1998, p. 11.

7 Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *A Threat to Stability: Human Rights Violations in Macedonia*, Human Rights Watch, New York, 1996, p. 56.

8 Hugh, Poulton, *The Roma in Macedonia: A Balkan Success Story?*, RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 2, 1993, p. 42.

9 ERRC, *Pleasant Fiction: the Human Rights Situation of Roma in Macedonia*, Country Report Series, No.7, Budapest, 1998.

10 Details of the Constitution are available from the Ministry of Information of the Government of Macedonia website: <http://www.sinf.gov.mk/Macedonia/EN/Political.htm>.

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## II Romania

*A study found that only 17 per cent of Roma/Gypsy children aged between three and six years old participated in preschool in 1997-98, compared with 60 per cent for the population as a whole in 1996-97. A study in 1997-98 showed that for children aged between seven and ten years, school participation was 94 per cent for the entire population of Romania, but only 70 per cent among Roma/Gypsies. Part of the discrepancy can be explained by poverty. According to the 1997 Romania Integrated Household Survey, the poverty rate among Roma/Gypsies was 79 per cent, compared to a national poverty rate of 31 per cent.*

“I pick cherries. My mother washes them and in the evening after school, I go and sell them.”

“Where?”

“Here, in Mangalia.”

“But, why do you sell cherries?”

“To buy notebooks, shoes, clothes...”

Interview with a Roma/Gypsy pupil

### Summary

#### Context

Following the violent overthrow of the Ceaucescu regime in 1989, and as a result of concerns respecting the large and articulate Hungarian minority, the first post-communist government was not enthusiastic about minority issues. From the mid-1990s, a number of initiatives were taken and structures put in place for negotiating and addressing minority concerns, including those of the Roma/Gypsy population. The Constitution provides minorities freedom to develop their culture and languages, but does not define or officially recognise any specific minority community. During the 1990s, education reform sought to rid the system of the ideological baggage of the previous regime, encouraging private schools and decentralising authority and financial support. This has had the effect of greatly increasing the cost to families of education. Recently, the receipt of child allowances has been linked to school attendance.

#### Roma/Gypsy population

Roma/Gypsies have been a notable feature in the lands that form Romania for many hundreds of years. Estimates of the size of the Roma/Gypsy minority range from 500,000 to 2.5 million (a little over 1 million is a realistic figure). The population is highly diverse and known by a wide variety of names.

Only a small proportion is partially nomadic. Most Roma/Gypsies speak one dialect or other of Romani, though many are native Romanian- or Hungarian-speakers and bilingualism/multilingualism is common. Though geographically widely dispersed, Roma/Gypsy communities are concentrated within certain regions of the country. Historically, Roma/Gypsies have had low social status and many thousands became victims of genocidal policies during WWII. Communist assimilation measures led to significant economic integration and urbanisation, but also to increasing hostility during the later years. Roma/Gypsies have been particularly hard hit by the change of system, especially the large numbers who live in deprived rural areas. They experience high levels of unemployment and impoverishment. Increased social tensions have led to numerous instances of human-rights abuses and the (attempted) migration of tens of thousands.

### **Roma and education**

Lack of monitoring of Roma/Gypsy educational conditions, or even of initiatives specifically targeting Roma/Gypsy pupils, means that there are few reliable data on school success. Surveys indicate that Roma/Gypsy school attendance is significantly lower than the national average and that Roma/Gypsy participation in secondary and higher education

is very low. Few Roma/Gypsies attend preschool, though opinion is divided on whether this affects subsequent educational success. Special provision for nomadic Roma/Gypsies allows them to register in school without a permanent address. In addition to government initiatives to encourage Roma/Gypsies into school and to stay there, Romani school inspectors have been appointed in 16 counties. The state also endorses positive discrimination, allocating a number of school and university places, as well as scholarships, specifically to Roma/Gypsy students and allowing vocational schools to have quotas for Roma/Gypsy pupils.

### **Language provision**

Mother-tongue education is allowed at all levels and Romani has been an option in school since 1990. Romani teachers are trained in three colleges and in 2000, over 4,000 pupils learned in the language. Romani language and literature is taught at the University of Bucharest, which attracts a number of Roma/Gypsy students.

### **Special schools**

Data on pupils in special schools are not disaggregated by ethnicity, though Roma/Gypsy children form a very large percentage of the 100,000 children in orphanages.

*continued overleaf*



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### **Balance of NGO and government activity**

During the 1990s, many Roma/Gypsy organisations and political parties were formed. They have representation in the advisory Council of Nationalities, and over 100 Roma/Gypsies have been elected to local government. Though the heightened political profile of Roma/Gypsies has contributed to notable actions by the state, many specific Roma/Gypsy-related education initiatives are the product of voluntary or NGO efforts or have been developed with the support of international institutions. NGO activities include curriculum development, projects designed to familiarise Roma/Gypsy communities with educational requirements, Romani-language classes and preschool facilities. NGOs have also sought to co-ordinate the activities of various agencies in order to tackle the multiplicity of issues in a holistic way. The state appears to consider NGO activity as complementary to its own and a means of attracting additional resources into the field. There are also instances of co-operation between NGOs and the state, notably in the area of developing Roma/Gypsy-oriented textbooks.

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## Introduction – the Roma/Gypsy population

### Demography

According to the official 1992 census, the largest minority in Romania is the Hungarian minority, officially referred to as Magyar, standing at about seven per cent of the population. Estimates on the numbers of Roma/Gypsies<sup>1</sup> in Romania vary considerably, from under half a million (the official 1992 census) to up to 2.5 million (The Gypsy Research Centre, Paris). With a population of some 23 million, these figures translate into a proportion of between 2 per cent and 10 per cent. Other minority groups are shown in Table 11. 1.

There are a number of difficulties associated with self-determined ethnic recording. First, some persons of Roma/Gypsy origin perceive themselves as being Romanian citizens, albeit also members of an ethnic minority. Second, there are those who prefer not to identify themselves as Roma/Gypsies because of the fear of discrimination. Finally, births are not always registered, especially for those Roma communities which adopt an itinerant lifestyle. Research undertaken in 1992, independent of the census, gives at least some indication of some of these shortfalls. On the basis of the number of individuals identified by others as Roma/Gypsies, it suggests that the population of Roma/Gypsies, at 1,010,646, that is, 4.4 per cent of the population, is much higher than the 1992 census figure.<sup>3</sup>

Figures on the distribution and composition of Roma/Gypsies throughout Romania are also

**Table 11.1 Romania: Population census, 7 January 1992**

Ethnic origin*	Number	%
Romanian	20,350,980	89.4
Magyar & Szekel	1,620,199	7.1
Gypsy <sup>2</sup>	409,723	1.8
German, Saxon	119,436	0.5
Ukrainian	66,833	0.3
Russian – Lipoveni	38,688	0.2
Turkish	29,533	0.1
Serbian	29,080	0.1
Tatar	24,649	0.1
Slovakian	20,672	0.1
Bulgarian	9,935	
Jewish	9,107	
Croatian	4,180	
Czech	5,800	
Polish	4,247	
Greek	3,897	
Armenian	2,023	
Other	8,420	
Not stated	1,047	
Total	22,760,449	100.0

\*Ethnic identity was based on the free consent of persons to disclose their ethnic origin.

problematic. However, a number of general observations can be made. First, the majority of Roma/Gypsies in Romania are settled. The process of Roma/Gypsy sedentarisation began much earlier in South-Eastern Europe than it did in Western Europe. For Romania, cases of



enforced sedentarisation can be traced back to the fourteenth century, during the period of slavery.<sup>4</sup> Only a small number of Roma/Gypsy communities, such as the *Kalderash* group, still preserve their semi-nomadic life.

Secondly, it is generally understood that Roma/Gypsies are not spread evenly throughout Romania, but are concentrated in certain areas. According to unpublished research by Romani CRISS, large numbers of Roma/Gypsies can be found in counties across Transylvania, as well as in the central and north-eastern parts of Romania, including “Wallachia” and Crisana and the Intra-Carpathian counties.<sup>5</sup> According to the official census, most Roma/Gypsies seem to be in Mures county, where Roma/Gypsies represent 5.7 per cent of the entire population; Sibiu (4.1 per cent); Bihor (3.6 per cent); Arad (2.8 per cent) and Bistrita-Nasaud (2.8 per cent). Other concentrated areas of Roma/Gypsy communities are in the south, in the counties of Giurgiu (3.5 per cent); Calarasi (3.3 per cent) and Ialomita (3.2 per cent). In Bucharest, though Roma/Gypsies number 32,984, they represent only 1.4 per cent of the entire population.

### Different Roma/Gypsy groups

It is possible to identify different Roma/Gypsy groups according to how they were categorised during the period of slavery. Roma/Gypsies were subject to collective and hereditary enslavement in the Danubian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia – many parts of what is today Romania. Roma/Gypsies were divided into categories and subsequently enslaved by the crown, the monasteries or the aristocracy (Boyars). For many this meant domestic, settled slavery. Over time,

the ancestors of the *Vatrasbi* category (from “vatra” – fireplace, ie, settled, domestic slaves), also called *kberutno* (ie, those who live in houses), lost their group distinctions and came to form the largest community group, retaining some partially preserved regional and occupational characteristics.

Other groups, mostly descendants of the *Leyasha* category (nomadic), have preserved their identity and traditions. Many Roma/Gypsy slaves during this time were able to continue nomadism and practise traditional occupations, subject, that is, to the payment of an annual tax. These latter groups became a source of migration and many emigrated to the Ottoman Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This migration peaked in the nineteenth century, after the abolition of slavery in 1865, and shifted in direction towards Central and Western Europe and Russia. These relatively well-preserved groups and subgroups in Romania (located in Wallachia, Moldova, and then later the annexed territories of Transylvania, Banat, Maramuresh and Dobruzha) include *Căldărarsi* (or *Kaldarari*), *Zlatara*, *Kolari*, *Gabori*, *Kazandzhi*, *Pletoshi*, *Korbeni*, *Modorani*, *Tismanari*, *Lautari*, *Ursari*, *Spoitori* and others (the last two communities are linguistically closer to the Balkan dialect group). Roma *Căldărarsi* (or *Kaldarari*) live throughout Romania and speak their own Romanes dialect.

Generally speaking, the mosaic of Roma/Gypsy communities in Romania is extremely complex and has not yet been subjected to any in-depth research. Whilst it is possible to distinguish between Roma/Gypsy communities according to the region where they live, their profession or the

language they speak, it is important to be aware of the complex divisions and overlaps that exist among different groups, meta-groups and sub-groups. In terms of occupation, for example, although there are *Ursari* (bear-trainers), *Căldărarsi* (or *Kaldarari*) (tinsmiths/coppersmiths), *Grastari* (horse-dealers) and *Rudari*<sup>6</sup> (woodworkers), multiple groups may practise such occupations. Likewise, it is not possible to distinguish nomadic groups from those which are settled; some groups may be partially nomadic and partially settled.

### Language

A large proportion of Roma/Gypsies in Romania, such as the *Căldărarsi* (or *Kaldarari*), *Spoitoari*, *Corbeni*, *Gabori*, *Ursari* and others, continue to speak Romanes as their first language. There are also many groups, such as the *Vatrashi*, who are primarily Romanian-speakers, only a small number having preserved Romanes as an additional language. There is also a significant number of Hungarian-speaking Roma/Gypsies in Transylvania with a preferred Hungarian identity.<sup>7</sup> Finally, there are many groups who are multilingual. For example, Roma *Gabori*, who mainly live in Transylvania (most of them in the Tèrgu-Mures county) and who trade in clothes and kitchenware, are mainly trilingual, speaking Romani, Romanian and Hungarian.

### A brief history of Roma/Gypsies in Romania

In spite of the diversity and disparities in numbers, Roma/Gypsies do form a large minority and do maintain a visible presence in Romanian society. While this high visibility is clearly related to their numerical size, it is also a product of their particular history, ie, enslavement during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Over the

centuries after the period of slavery, a process of sedentarisation and integration began, partly evident in the census data for 1893 and 1930. According to the 1930 census, 84.5 per cent of self-declared Roma/Gypsies lived in villages and 15.5 per cent in towns, with 37.2 per cent declaring Romanes as their mother tongue. The village population at this time became closely engaged in agriculture, and public opinion was such that Roma/Gypsies were perceived as being well on their way to integration.

In the 1930s, a Roma/Gypsy intellectual elite began to evolve. In 1933, two organisations were formed that aimed to emancipate Roma/Gypsies and improve overall conditions. Attempts were made to assert the term “Roma” as opposed to “Țigan”. Such organisations helped to inform public opinion about the social problems facing Roma/Gypsies. The idea of there being “a Gypsy Question” was a product of the Antonescu regime. At first, there was a secret debate about genetic cleansing. However, this was soon placed on the public agenda under the Antonescu regime, when Romania adopted as state policy political and ideological measures directly taken from Nazi Germany. In 1942, more than 35,000 Roma/Gypsies were transported to Transdneister in advance of German occupation, of whom about half died of cold or starvation.

During the communist period, further pressure was exerted on the Roma/Gypsy minority to settle and work in agricultural co-operatives or as manual labourers in industry. Their living standards improved, as they were included within the country’s medical, educational, housing and compulsory-employment systems. At the same

time, however, those Roma/Gypsies who were unemployed or employed in traditional trades or crafts were open to the threat of prosecution.

Roma/Gypsies became subject to overt discrimination, particularly during Ceaucescu's dictatorship. References simply were not made to Roma/Gypsies in official documents. Following the census of 1977, which revealed the existence of a high number of Roma/Gypsies, there were renewed attempts at their assimilation. By the 1980s, it was officially declared that Roma/Gypsies had given up their "parasitic way of life". With continuing economic decline in the 1980s, however, Roma/Gypsies were to become the indirect targets of Ceaucescu's "systemisation" programme. Although aimed at the Hungarian minority, entire Roma/Gypsy communities were relocated *en masse* in regions with a large Hungarian minority. Many of these communities were settled in modern high-rise apartments. In addition to this, urban Roma/Gypsy settlements across Romania were subject to liquidation, forcing Roma/Gypsy communities into unofficial ghettos and high-rise apartments. The resulting "urban ghettos" still exist today.

### Socio-economic status

Following the collapse of the communist regime, we have seen an overall increase in the rate of poverty for the population as a whole, in both absolute and relative terms. The majority of Romanians consider themselves significantly worse off than during the communist era. While in 1989, the number of those living under the national poverty line in Romania was estimated to be at around one million, by 1998 this had grown to almost eight million people, that is,

a third of the total population. By 1999, the proportion living below the national poverty line had increased further, to 41 per cent.<sup>8</sup> However, estimates markedly shift depending on what measure of poverty line is used. For example, according to the absolute poverty line for the Europe and Central Asia Region (\$US2 per day), just 7 per cent of all Romanians were living in poverty in 1998.

Growing poverty has been underpinned by delays in legislative and economic reform, or incomplete reform. Romania experimented with gradual reforms for almost a decade, a combination of stop-and-go policies. These proved to be very costly, so that by 1998 GDP was still at 76 per cent of its pre-transition level, with further declines in 1999 and 2000. A decline in living standards mirrored the decline in economic activity, notably in the level of current consumption per capita. Poverty was aggravated by an increase in inequality, due partly to new occupational risks, like unemployment, and partly to new opportunities, such as the freedom of entrepreneurship, albeit limited.

Since 1989/90, the Roma/Gypsy minority has continued to face harsh economic and social conditions and is subject to pervasive discrimination, both direct and indirect. Rising levels of anti-Roma/Gypsy discrimination and violence have been well documented by human-rights organisations such as the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), and by international bodies such as the European Commission. In the first years following the overthrow of the Ceaucescu regime, Romania was the site of approximately 30 anti-Roma/Gypsy pogroms,

the outcome of which included killings and the expulsion of entire Roma/Gypsy communities from villages. A report by the ERRC dated September 1996 suggests that anti-Roma/Gypsy community violence continued and was at its peak between 1990 and 1994.<sup>9</sup> However, further examples of anti-Roma racism have since been recorded. For example, in March 2000 the ERRC expressed concern about a recent accusation of police thuggery against several Roma/Gypsies, including women and children who were allegedly beaten. Tear gas was apparently used in the streets to scatter a group of children, and the police used racist epithets.

In addition to such reports, the European Commission reported in 2000 that continued high levels of discrimination are a serious concern in the case of the Roma/Gypsy minority, and that the government's commitment to addressing this situation still remains low. The European Commission reiterated its position that elaborating a national Roma/Gypsy strategy and providing adequate financial support to minority programmes are still priorities within the protection of the rights of Roma/Gypsies, and that progress has been limited to programmes aimed at improving access to education.<sup>10</sup>

As a result of such systematic discrimination together with extremely poor living conditions, many Roma/Gypsies were among the Romanians who emigrated to Germany and Austria in the early years of transition. However, in September 1992, having agreed to provide financial assistance for their resettlement, Germany repatriated 43,000 Romanian refugees, of whom over half were reported to have been from the Roma/

Gypsy community. Such repatriations continued during 1993 and 1994 and subsequently thereafter. These repatriations directly affect the right to education of returnee children, and in particular Roma/Gypsy returnees, as they have to undergo stringent bureaucratic procedures in order to register and thus gain access to formal schooling.

Romania has also seen a growth of internal migration. The rural population of Romania stands at 45 per cent, but increasing numbers, including Roma/Gypsies, are migrating to towns and cities in the hope of finding work. For Roma, this has resulted in the further growth of ghetto-like settlements on the edges of cities and towns. In some of these locations, it has led to an informal system of supplementary social security, where rents go unpaid but evictions are not acted upon. Likewise, gas and electricity bills remain outstanding, but supplies are not disconnected. In advance of the November 2000 election, the government announced that it would meet the costs of unpaid utility bills for 1,300,000 low-income families. Whether this would be directed to Roma/Gypsy families, and whether or not it has been implemented, remains to be seen.

A recent study by the International Management Foundation noted that the only ethnic group whose poverty incidence departed significantly from the average was the Roma/Gypsy minority.<sup>11</sup> Unlike among other minority groups, such as the Hungarian or German minorities, in 1997 the incidence of poverty among Roma/Gypsies was 3.5 times higher than the average poverty rate and their consumption 40 per cent lower than the average consumption per equivalent adult. According to the 1997 Romania Integrated

Household Survey the poverty rate among Roma/Gypsies was 79 per cent compared to a national poverty rate of 31 per cent.<sup>12</sup> Research into the reasons for such disproportionate levels of poverty is limited. The factors cited most often include the unequal distribution of incomes and resources, barriers to welfare support, and discrimination.

Poverty and discrimination are inextricably linked within a cycle of deprivation, which in turn impacts on access to formal education. Increased poverty can contribute to school abandonment, and a lack of education can reduce economic functionality, thereby fuelling poverty. Young people with low levels of educational attainment are one of the social groups at greatest risk of severe poverty.

According to one source, whereas the unemployment rate of the general population was 6 per cent in 1993, for Roma/Gypsies it was 50 per cent.<sup>13</sup> The restructuring and closure of state enterprises has significantly contributed to steep rises in unemployment. The effects have been particularly devastating in mono-industrial areas where entire communities are decimated. Traditional skills and training have become

redundant in many places and training for new technologies and industries is not necessarily accessible.

The unemployment rate amongst young people is two to three times higher than the average. In 1998, the 15-24 age group accounted for approximately 45 per cent of those registered as unemployed by the International Labour Office; of these almost 40 per cent lived in the rural areas. Therefore, even for those young people who complete their education through to graduate and postgraduate level, jobs are scarce and wages low.<sup>14</sup> The taking up of a second job, to supplement a professional job, is a common survival strategy and serves to increase competition for part-time semi-skilled and unskilled employment. This places further pressure on those with low educational attainment to derive income from self-employed and marginal activity.

In addition, Romania has a significant unofficial economy and suffers from corruption at all levels of public and private life. Some of these burdens can be linked to aspects of the former communist regime, for example, lack of sufficient management training and skills necessary to

**Table 11.2 Registered unemployment rate (annual average % of labour force)**

Country	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Albania	7.0	10.0	9.0	27.0	22.0	18.0	12.9	12.7	13.9	17.8
Bulgaria				13.2	15.8	14.0	11.4	11.1	14.0	12.2
Romania			3.0	8.2	10.4	10.9	9.5	6.6	8.9	10.3

Source: UNICEF TransMONEE Report, Romania, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Italy, 2000.



transfer to a market economy, but others have arisen out of the process of liberalisation itself.

Taking into account all the above, it is the rural-based economy of Romania that is most often cited as the main barrier to education for all. In 1998, 45 per cent of the population lived in rural areas. A labour-force participation survey carried out in 1997 revealed that 28 per cent of the working population in rural areas had only primary education or no formal education at all, compared with 3 per cent of the urban population. Rural schools were identified as being in worse physical condition, and most rural schools lacked basic teaching materials.<sup>15</sup> Basic problems of transport also persist, whereby

children from some villages are simply unable to reach schools situated far away.

### **Roma/Gypsy civic and political representation**

As in many countries in Central and Eastern Europe, there has been an emerging NGO sector in which Roma/Gypsy organisations, such as Romani CRISS and many others, play a key part. Among the Roma/Gypsy communities in Romania, representation, consultation and participation present a complex and problematic process in both social and political terms. Numerous Roma/Gypsy political organisations have been created, many reflecting group or occupational interests most of which are male dominated. Over 100 are registered as NGOs,



but it is estimated that only about 30 of those are active. The activities of these NGOs can be seen to fall broadly into three types: political activism, representation of specific interest groups and service provision. Supplementing, if not dominating, these Roma/Gypsy NGOs are the large number of NGOs which are not ethnic-specific, but work within the fields of human rights, education, poverty alleviation and community development.

The issues of representation and accountability for all NGOs are complicated by the fact that 90 per cent of all NGOs are concentrated in urban areas, despite the large rural population in Romania. According to one survey, most rural young people (more than 60 per cent) think that NGOs tend not to address rural needs, and 45 per cent feel that they are badly informed as to the actual existence of NGOs.<sup>16</sup> However, some Roma/Gypsy NGOs, even if based in urban areas, are grassroots organisations and thus claim to develop extended programmes in Roma/Gypsy rural communities.<sup>17</sup>

Roma political parties have also emerged, and although they have had little impact at the national level, they have achieved some success at local levels. Minority participation in parliament is guaranteed by Article 59 of the Constitution, which provides for seats for those organisations of citizens belonging to national minorities which fail to obtain the electoral threshold of five per cent. In 1996 and again in 2000, the Roma Party obtained parliamentary representation under this provision. A number of Roma/Gypsies have also been elected to parliament as members of non-ethnic political parties, and Roma/Gypsy

votes were split between several different parties for the 2000 presidential campaign.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to this, some Roma/Gypsy representatives have been included in formal government structures. In 1993, a Roma Party member was elected to the Council of National Minorities. In 1997, officers on Roma issues were appointed in the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education. At a local level, 147 local councillors were elected on the Roma party list and two Roma/Gypsy mayors were elected. The Inter-Ministerial Sub Commission for Roma provides for the participation of Roma/Gypsy delegates as well as of governmental officials from eight ministries. However, it is not clear how representative these appointed government staff are, nor indeed to what extent they are accountable to Roma/Gypsies in general. The involvement of Roma/Gypsies in Romanian politics has been primarily a top-down process restricted to a small number of individuals. Where Roma/Gypsy organisations have attempted to tackle the government directly, their efforts have been largely ineffective. For example, when an official distinction was drawn between Romania and Roma by using the term “Rroma” (ie, with a double “Rr”), many organisations, such as Romani CRISS, welcomed this as an important breakthrough in terms of recognising and promoting Roma identity. However, in 1999, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Prime Minister and parliament made a decision to replace this term “Rom/Rrom” with “Țigan”. The decision was made without consulting Romani organisations or indeed the population as a whole. Organisations such as Romani CRISS are still advocating on this issue.<sup>19</sup>

Whilst it is important to observe that a number of Roma/Gypsies play leading and successful roles in political, economic, social and cultural spheres, a significant and disproportionate majority of Roma/Gypsies remain out of reach of positions of power.

## Minority rights

It seems that there is no definition of “national minority” in Romanian law, nor is there any specific legislation on the right to be recognised as a distinct minority group. In practice, the concept of national minority is understood to refer to the “historical minorities” that have lived in Romania for hundreds of years. This usage of the term is reflected not only in the 1992 census, which records the existence of 16 national minorities, but also in the national minority representation of the Council of National Minorities and in parliament.

Article 4(2) of the Constitution states that Romania is the common and indivisible homeland of all its citizens, irrespective of race, nationality, ethnic origin, mother tongue, religion, sex, opinion, political affiliation, fortune or origin.

Article 6 addresses the right to identity and equal opportunities. It provides that:

*1 The state recognises and guarantees the right of persons belonging to national minorities to the preservation, development and expression of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity.*

*2 The protecting measures taken by the Romanian state for the preservation, development and expression of identity of the persons belonging to national minorities shall conform to the principles of equality and non-discrimination in relation to other Romanian citizens.*

Equality of rights between all citizens of the country, as specified in the Constitution, guarantees equality of opportunities for all citizens. While recognising and guaranteeing the right to identity and non-discrimination for those belonging to ethnic minorities when implementing measures for preserving, developing and expressing their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity, the state must *take into consideration* the principles of equality and non-discrimination in relation to Romanian citizens other than the ethnic minority concerned.

On 31 August 2000, the Romanian government published an ordinance entitled “On Preventing and Punishing All Forms of Discrimination”, which prohibits all forms of discrimination in various fields. In relation to education, the ordinance provides for the prohibition of discrimination on any grounds in the access to the public and private education systems and in all stages and levels of schooling. The ordinance also provides for affirmative action in favour of minorities when they do not enjoy equal opportunities. When an offence is proved against an individual, sanctions remain relatively weak, with the imposition of fines ranging from 563,751 Romanian lei to 11,353,331 Romanian lei, that is, \$US20-400.<sup>20</sup> At the time of writing the average monthly income in Romania was between \$US80 and \$US100.

The ordinance gained the approval of parliament in November 2000 in advance of the general election. However, the government's consensus and the Prime Minister's signature are needed for the ordinance to enter fully into force. Since the former Prime Minister did not sign the ordinance, it has therefore only partially been enforced. The current Prime Minister has postponed signing the ordinance; it has so far got through the first chamber and is waiting to go through the second. It is expected that the main principles of the ordinance will remain in place, but that small changes will be made.

Article 32(3) of the Constitution stipulates that people belonging to national minorities have the right to receive education in their mother tongue, as well as have lessons on the language itself. The means for exercising such rights are settled by law.

The Department for the Protection of National Minorities (DPNM) was set up in January 1997. The department replaced the Consultative Council for National Minorities, which had been established in 1993 to monitor the specific problems of people belonging to minorities. Until recently, the DPNM reported directly to the Prime Minister. However, it now sits within the Ministry of Public Information and reports to two sub-state secretaries. This has clearly impeded its ability to have a direct impact on government policy. It is organised into three sections: the central executive, the local section and the consultative section. It also maintains a National Office for the Social Reintegration of Roma and has permanent contacts with the Council for National Minorities, an advisory board to the government consisting of representatives of all

national minorities living in Romania. The DPNM performs a variety of functions. These include preparing draft legislation in its sphere of competence, preparing opinions on legislation and other legal acts concerning the rights and obligations of national minorities, monitoring internal and international legal standards concerning the protection of national minorities, and providing financial support to minority organisations.<sup>21</sup>

An Inter-Ministerial Committee for National Minorities has been established and has contributed to strengthening the mechanism for Roma/Gypsy participation and the decision-making process on Roma/Gypsy issues. A Working Group of Roma Associations was also set up to facilitate liaison with public authorities. An agreement on elaboration of a strategy for the protection of the Roma/Gypsy minority has been signed between the DPNM and the Working Group. In June 1999, an Inter-Ministerial Subcommission for Roma was established as a subsidiary body of the Inter-Ministerial Committee. It comprises Roma/Gypsy delegates and government representatives.<sup>22</sup> The Subcommission is mandated to assist the Inter-Ministerial Committee in the development of strategies for the implementation stage of the national strategy. However, given that it is made up of relatively low-ranking officials, progress remains slow and it appears that relations between the two bodies have so far been ambiguous.<sup>23</sup>

Notwithstanding this progress in establishing the institutional framework for the improvement of the conditions of Roma/Gypsies, the European Commission, in its 1999 regular report on

“Progress towards Accession”, notes that there has been no evidence of similar practice taking place at the ground level.<sup>24</sup> The European Commission emphasises that it is very important for both the government and Roma/Gypsy communities to remain committed to the elaboration and implementation of a strategy for the protection of Roma/Gypsies. In its report, the Commission states that particular attention must be paid to ensuring that all initiatives are properly budgeted for at regional and local levels.

As a result of the general elections in November 2000, Romania has a new president and government, namely Ion Iliescu and the Party of Social Democracy in Romania, which won nearly 50 per cent of the total mandate.<sup>25</sup> It is a relatively straightforward task for ordinances to be annulled, and as of January 2001 the new government has suspended or abolished more than 20 ordinances passed by the former government.<sup>26</sup> Government structures and their personnel will be subject to continual change over forthcoming months. At the time of writing, however, the aforementioned Committee and Working Group were still operational.

On 19 January 2001, the Romanian parliament’s lower house adopted the law on public language use, which was then promulgated on 21 April 2001. The Local Public Administration Law not only decentralises public administration, but also gives minorities the right to appeal to local authorities and related bodies in their own languages in areas where they represent at least 20 per cent of the population. Signs will be written in minority languages and local government decisions will be announced in

minority languages as well. Some 11,000 towns and villages are estimated to fall into this category. However, as the senate approved a slightly different version of the law, a mediation commission will decide on the final text to be approved by a joint parliamentary session.<sup>27</sup> This law, in theory, provides an instrument for the recognition of the right to an identity and to participation in decision-making at a local level on the part of minorities, thus potentially benefiting Roma/Gypsy minority groups. However, in light of claims made by the mayor of Cluj-Napoca, that the Hungarian minority in Cluj Napoca does not exceed 20 per cent (contradicting official figures) and is therefore not eligible for rights under this provision, it is not clear how effective the law will be in practice.<sup>28</sup>

### **Mechanisms for addressing human rights violations**

Articles 55-57 of the Constitution provide for the creation of an ombudsperson, “the Advocate of the People”. The senate appoints the ombudsperson, for a term of office of four years, to defend citizens’ rights and freedoms. Article 57 provides that the ombudsperson shall report before the two parliamentary chambers, annually or on their request. The reports may contain recommendations on legislation or measures of any other nature for the defence of the citizens’ rights and freedoms. The first ombudsperson was appointed in May 1997 by virtue of the enactment of Law No. 35 and Senate Decision No. 17 of that year. The ombudsperson’s role is to examine individual communications alleging human rights violations. Although the ombudsperson’s office initially had a section devoted to minority issues, this has since closed;

minority issues now fall within the competence of the section dealing with public order, military issues and other matters.<sup>29</sup>

The ordinance on discrimination, as detailed above, provides for the establishment of the National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination 60 days after its initial drawing up. However, funds have yet to be provided for setting it up. Further still, the ordinance does not mention the nature of this mechanism and the tasks that this body will be mandated to undertake for combating discrimination. At the time of writing, this Council had not yet been established.

### Minority rights and international law

Romania is currently a party to a total of 52 legal instruments of the Council of Europe. Romania plays an active part in intergovernmental co-operation within the Council of Europe in connection with the rights of people belonging to national minorities. Upon acceding to the Council of Europe, Romania accepted the jurisdiction of the Commission to receive complaints and also the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights. There is a Council of Europe Information and Documentation Centre in Bucharest.

Romania has agreed to all the documents of the OSCE adopted by that organisation since the Helsinki Final Act signed on 1 August 1975. As a member of the OSCE, Romania participates in the mechanisms of the OSCE: the Ministerial Council, the Committee of Senior Officials and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. It also participates in meetings relating to the human dimension of the OSCE. Romania co-operates with the OSCE High

Commissioner for National Minorities. As of 2001, Romania will chair the OSCE.

Romania participates in specialist United Nations forums concerned with human rights, including the rights of people belonging to national minorities. There are offices of the International Labour Organisation, the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), the High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organisation for Migration in Bucharest.

The current Constitution of Romania was adopted on 8 December 1991, after approval by referendum. Article 20(1) of the Constitution declares that the constitutional provisions concerning citizens' rights and freedoms will be interpreted and applied in conformity with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with covenants and other treaties to which Romania is a party. Article 20(2) continues by asserting that where any inconsistencies exist between domestic legislation and covenants and treaties on fundamental human rights to which Romania is a party, international regulations shall take precedence. It must be emphasised that this priority is extended to international regulations *only* in the sphere of human rights.

### The right to education<sup>30</sup>

Article 5(1) of the Education Law of July 1995 states that Romanian citizens have the right to equal access to all levels and forms of education, irrespective of social and material conditions, sex, race, nationality, and political or religious affiliation.

In relation to minority rights, Article 8(2) states that peoples belonging to national minorities have the right to learn and be educated in their mother-tongue language. Article 118 also declares that persons belonging to national minorities have the right to study and to be trained in their mother tongue at all levels, in all forms of education, according to this law. Article 119(1) gives the possibility, according to local needs, for national minorities to request and organise on a legal basis, groups, classes, sections or schools in the mother tongue of national minorities.

As far as curricula are concerned, Article 120(3) affirms that curricula and manuals of universal and Romanian history will reflect the history and traditions of national minorities in Romania. Furthermore, Article 120(4) states that at the secondary level national minorities can request lessons in history and culture, as appropriate, that are taught in their mother tongue. The Ministry of Education, though, has to approve all curricula and manuals used in such lessons.

Article 121 declares that pupils belonging to national minorities who learn in the Romanian language have, at their request and according to the law, the possibility of studying the mother tongue, literature, history and traditions of the respective national minority.

Finally, Article 180 states that it is the parent (or legal tutor) who ultimately bears responsibility for deciding upon the child's right to learn in the Romanian language, or in the language of a national minority.

In addition to the general Education Law, the Minister of National Education adopted various

instructions related to the issue of education and national minorities. Instruction No. 3533 of 31 March 1999 concerns the study of their mother tongue in schools by pupils belonging to national minorities. Article I(1) states that the study of the mother tongue begins in the first grade of primary school. Article III(1) states that from the 1st to the 12th grade, lessons in their mother tongue shall be of three or four hours duration per week.

There are some additional provisions, which aim at facilitating the education of Roma/Gypsy children and young people. For example, for families who often travel, children may begin school at any time, without being subject to the condition of a stable place to live. It is also stated that school management and teachers have no right to influence children's and parents' options concerning the study of the Romani language.

Order No. 3577 of 15 April 1998 promotes access to education for Roma/Gypsy students by establishing positive-discrimination measures for admission into some universities. One hundred and fifty places have been allocated for candidates belonging to Roma/Gypsy communities in different subjects and in different universities throughout the country: Bucharest, Iasi, Sibiu, Craiova and Timisoara. This was repeated in 1999 with the enactment of Order No. 5083 of 26 May 1999.

Order No. 3316 of 24 February 1998 provided measures aimed at the nominal registration of illiterate pupils and their integration into school classrooms. This included an initiative based on the provision of "school caravans", which has yet



to become fully operational. However, it is important to note that nomadism in the Balkans, including Romania, is very different from that practised in Western Europe. All nomadic Roma/Gypsies have permanent winter homes and travel seasonally with periodic breaks. This makes the translation of models from Western Europe, such as caravan schools, at best problematic.

Order No. 3363 of 1 March 1999 regulates the nomination of school inspectors in relation to the education of Roma/Gypsies. As a result of this order, school inspectors of Roma/Gypsy origin have been nominated in 16 counties of Romania. In the remaining counties Roma/Gypsy educational professionals apparently were not available, so non-Roma/Gypsy inspectors were appointed.

Order No. 4281 of 18 August 1999 introduced a programme for combating the marginalisation and social and professional exclusion of young people who have abandoned compulsory education. This is mainly targeted towards young Roma/Gypsies.

Order No. 4542 of 18 September 2000 deals with access of young Roma/Gypsies to vocational schools, high schools, colleges and faculties. From the academic year 2000-01, Roma/Gypsy communities will be able to request local authorities to establish quotas for Roma/Gypsy students. Local education authorities will then be in a position to determine which institutions need quotas and how many.<sup>31</sup>

The amendments to the 1999 Law on Education also made it possible for universities to establish teaching in minority languages. Programmes refer to the provision of education in national minority languages, and aim to reflect each minority's history and culture not only in the framework of the teaching itself, but also in the provision of textbooks and necessary material support, as well as in the training of educational personnel.

According to the government, education is by law a national priority.<sup>32</sup> After 1989, educational provision in Romania went through a thorough process of deconstruction which principally



removed ideological indoctrination from education and other restraints imposed by communist educational policy in areas such as languages, history and social sciences. The huge scale of this process cannot be underestimated, nor can the pace of change. Secondary education was diversified and conditions for developing private higher educational institutions were introduced. Areas of study, such as social work, which were banned under the communist regime, were established. Between 1991 and 1992 a period of consolidation prevailed, allowing these extreme changes to bed in.

Between 1993 and 1999 significant restructuring occurred, marked by the development of a coherent educational policy, the diversification of higher education and a revision of the education system that reflected new economic, social and cultural requirements. Changes were made to the Education Law in 1995, 1997 and 1999, in addition to which several other associated legislative provisions were introduced. For example, the Education Law adopted in 1995, is a piece of legislation of special significance, drafted along innovative lines with a view to ensuring the development of the Romanian education system on the basis of humanistic traditions and the values of democracy. It aims to enable individuals to develop freely, fully and harmoniously.

In Romania, education is free and compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16 years. According to UNICEF's TransMONEE report, Romania secured an improved basic gross enrolment rate for children of compulsory school age, from 93.6 per cent in 1989 to 97.0 per cent in 1999.<sup>33</sup>

In principle, education receives a fixed quota of four per cent of GDP within the annual budget. Conditions of economic austerity, however, have undermined this figure. According to the OECD, the budget allocation for education amounted to only 2.5 per cent to 3.5 per cent between 1990 and 1995.<sup>34</sup>

Some of the measures introduced in 1999 by the Ministry of National Education, which aimed to modify further the education system in Romania and bring about greater harmonisation with European norms, may put the notion of free education in doubt. Fiscal crises have threatened funding for education, particularly at preschool and primary levels, reducing subsidies and devolving responsibilities to local governments and families, which often lack the necessary resources. Therefore, the transfer of a series of educational costs to the population may diminish the possibility of equal access to preschool, primary, secondary and higher education. For example, as ownership and administration of preschools have been transferred to municipalities, churches and the private sector, local governments and families have assumed a growing share of the financial responsibility. Therefore access to preschool education is now dependent on the family's ability to support additional costs, such as lunches, textbooks and other educational materials that were previously subsidised by the state. The same trend has been happening in primary education. Furthermore, several taxes have been introduced which must be covered by pupils. These include applications to admission examinations at high schools, vocational schools and universities, delivery of study certificates and voluntary contributions.

This has deterred the poorest families, many of which belong to Roma/Gypsy communities, from sending their children to school.<sup>35</sup>

Children under the age of six years may attend crèches and kindergartens.<sup>36</sup> Preschool education for the very young is intended to provide both nursery and daycare, with an increasing emphasis on preparation for formal schooling for slightly older children. The main curricular objectives of preschool education include learning in and using the Romanian language as well as other minority and foreign languages.<sup>37</sup> This level of education is provided in both public and private institutions, although the large majority of institutions are at present under public management. Private preschool institutions are located predominantly in urban areas.<sup>38</sup> According to the OECD, the availability of preschool education for children aged 3-6/7 years of age has improved from 55.2 per cent in 1994-95 to 65.5 per cent in 1996-97.<sup>39</sup> However, the data available on preschool enrolment are not all concurrent. The World Bank, for example, states that preschool enrolment in 1994 was much higher, at 85.7 per cent, and that between 1989 and 1994 the pupil/teacher ratio improved slightly from 20.3 to 10.01.<sup>40</sup>

Between the ages of 6 and 16 years children attend general education school which is compulsory for nine years. General secondary schools, for which there is an entrance exam, provide education suitable for entering college or university. There are also specialised secondary schools where the emphasis is on industry, agriculture, teacher training and art.

According to the OECD, primary education attendance (grades one to four) increased from 93.8 per cent in 1992-93 to 99.4 per cent in 1994-95 and then slipped to 96.7 per cent in 1996-97.<sup>41</sup> Again this does not match the figures provided by the World Bank, which show a constant decline in enrolment rates from 98.3 per cent in 1990 to 94.6 per cent in 1994.<sup>42</sup> Also, at this stage of schooling there has been an improvement in the pupil/teacher ratio, which decreased from 21.1 to 15.4.<sup>43</sup>

Secondary education includes attendance at *lycées*, for which the numbers have increased significantly. It also includes vocational schools and apprentice schools, where numbers of students have declined, although the numbers of schools and teachers have increased. Such fluctuations reflect the difficulties encountered in predicting the employment trends in an economy that is both in transition and in decline. Secondary education accounted for the most severe fall in the enrolment rate: it was 90.7 per cent in 1990 and fell to 67.8 per cent in 1998. According to the European Steering Committee for Youth, the causes of this dramatic drop are: families' financial incapacity to keep children in school, a lower value being placed on the role of education in public opinion, and high unemployment among secondary-school graduates, which affects decisions on whether to continue with further education.<sup>44</sup>

Secondary-school studies are concluded by undertaking a baccalaureate examination which opens up the option of higher education. For students who have attended a vocational *lycée* a certificate of vocational competence is issued.

For those not wishing to go to higher education, there is the option of post-secondary education, which provides for specialisation in areas such as agriculture, telecommunications and health; entrance is competitive. There are also “foreman schools” for older students who have practical work experience, but require a technical qualification or retraining. The number of post-secondary schools has more than doubled between 1989 and 1998. The numbers of students and teaching staff trebled during this period.

According to UNICEF, higher education attendance has increased significantly from 6.9 per cent in 1990 to 16.3 per cent in 1994.<sup>45</sup> Participation in both long- and short-term undergraduate and postgraduate courses now requires that students pass entrance exams. Progression within the framework is dependent upon assessment of ability. The sector has been characterised by the extension of private universities (94 per cent of private university students study economic, legal or pedagogic subjects), where fees are somewhat higher than in state provision. The quality of private higher education is generally considered to be better in all fields other than in medicine.

Equality of access has traditionally been affected by access to “coaching”. Coaching is a private supplement to education, usually consisting of individual tuition, and is most common for specific subjects such as mathematics and languages, but also in the run-up to exams before entry into, and beyond, higher education. The reforms of 1999 were an attempt to move away from a reliance on individual coaching. However, both the push and the pull factors that maintain

this coaching system remain. First, many Romanians recognise the importance of formal education and see it as a passport to economic security. Secondly, teachers receive very low salaries, which are insufficient to meet their basic living costs, so that providing private tuition offers teachers a necessary means of economic survival. All these factors combined affect both directly and indirectly the equality of access to formal education on the part of Roma/Gypsies.

## In practice

### **The right to education of Roma/Gypsy children**

As already emphasised, there are few data available on Roma/Gypsies in Romania. This is also the case regarding their participation in formal education. No national figures exist on how many Roma/Gypsy children attend school. In spite of this, over the past five to six years, the Romanian government has introduced various pieces of legislation and policies in the field of education, particularly aimed at improving the educational situation of Roma/Gypsy children. For example, post-secondary school distance-learning mechanisms were established in autumn 2000 in the Faculties of Languages (Romani language and literature) and of Political Studies at the University of Bucharest. Around 60 Roma/Gypsy students enrolled, some of whom were required to apply for scholarships.

At the request of Roma/Gypsy parents in several high schools throughout the country, the government further intended to open additional classrooms within existing schools. Although in theory these classes are not only for Roma/Gypsy

children, but also for all those who are illiterate, Roma/Gypsy children tend to constitute the majority of children attending such classes. In addition, this raises the question of whether segregated education is the right approach. For example, in Coltau segregated schooling has been identified as a specific problem: a two-tier system has given rise to a situation in which the material conditions, overall quality and number of teachers in Roma/Gypsy schools is markedly lower than in the neighbouring school for the Hungarian minority.<sup>46</sup> Some argue that, in order to teach the Romani language in some mainstream schools, separate groups need to be organised for this specific subject. However, there have been attempts, mainly on the part of some local school authorities, to use the Romani language-teaching issue as a justification to organise segregated so-called Roma classes. This practice has resulted in discrediting the teaching of Romanes itself. However, some sources claim that this practice is to be discontinued.<sup>47</sup>

Officially, “Roma schools” do not exist, in the sense that schools have not been created specifically for Roma/Gypsy children. Neither are there schools where the curriculum is exclusively Roma-specific. However, unofficially there are schools where all, or nearly all, the pupils are Roma/Gypsy children and where provision is of an inferior quality to mainstream schooling. These schools are located in villages and urban districts where the majority population is Roma/Gypsy, which is then reflected in the composition of the school population.

Further initiatives were announced in March 1999. As discussed previously, the Ministry of

Education adopted a decision to appoint a Roma/Gypsy inspector in each of Romania’s 41 counties, as a result of which school inspectors of Roma/Gypsy origin have been nominated in 16 counties. One role of the Roma Inspectorate is to make specific recommendations and/or suggest initiatives. For example, in a school in Iasi which caters for 1,200 pupils (50 per cent of whom are Roma/Gypsies), the school inspector helped to initiate a project for one year that aimed to give 30 Roma/Gypsy children the opportunity to graduate to fourth grade. Likewise, in Tamna-Mehedinti, the inspector strongly encouraged the establishment of Romanes language classes. However, the extent of their powers when identifying bad practice remains unclear. The Roma Inspectors’ network seems to be still quite weak in terms of logistics and the level of support received from local educational authorities. This lack of support and infrastructure prevents them from accomplishing a systemic evaluation of education provision for Roma/Gypsy children. Although they are able to contribute to monitoring processes in terms of design and making recommendations, they often cannot act upon or implement their recommendations.<sup>48</sup>

The Minister of Education also announced that the authorities were to introduce a mechanism of positive discrimination favouring Roma/Gypsies in state education institutions. Over 500 places are now reserved on a fees-paid basis for Roma/Gypsies. For example, the “Second Chance” programme established in a secondary school in Cluj Napoca aims to encourage students to continue their education beyond the compulsory age.<sup>49</sup> Although restricted to just

30 places, the emphasis is on the participation of Roma/Gypsy students. Another example is the quota admission to some universities reserved for members of Roma/Gypsy communities. The Romanian government reports that in the academic year 2000-01, 25 scholarships for young Roma/Gypsy students have been allocated to five university colleges.<sup>50</sup> Other universities offered 162 places for Roma/Gypsy students in this year.<sup>51</sup> However, with a focus on vocational as well as academic skills (unlike for other students) this attempt at positive discrimination could still be seen as limited.

Despite this increasing level of apparent support on the part of the Romanian government

regarding the issue of Roma/Gypsies and education, there are obvious problems associated with the lack of any monitoring and evaluation. It also contrasts sharply with their treatment of Roma/Gypsies in other spheres of policy. The Romanian government continues to attract criticism from various international bodies for its treatment of the Roma/Gypsy population. For example, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its Concluding Observations of 7 February 1994, expressed its concerns about the low level of school attendance of Roma/Gypsy children. In more general terms, the Committee found a need for more effective measures to combat prejudices against this minority.<sup>52</sup>



Likewise, the UN Committee on Racial Discrimination, in its Concluding Observations on 19 August 1999, mentioned the situation of Roma/Gypsies as a subject of particular concern. It notes that no improvements had been observed in the high unemployment rates and that educational levels among Roma/Gypsies remained low. According to the Committee, this situation contributes to the continued and unacceptable prevalence of their negative, stereotyped image among the rest of society.<sup>53</sup>

### Preschool provision

Only a small number of Roma/Gypsy children attend kindergarten (preschool education). The numbers of Roma/Gypsy children of preschool age (three to six years) who attend kindergarten is three times lower than that of the majority population. According to a study conducted during April and May 1998, only 17 per cent of Roma/Gypsy children aged between three and six years participated in preschool (for the academic year 1997-98) compared with 60 per cent for the population as a whole (for the academic year 1996-97).<sup>54</sup>

Some organisations believe that this low take-up rate of kindergarten provision may have negative effects on school results, because Roma/Gypsy children who do not attend preschool education miss out on preparation for school. This has particular implications for those Roma/Gypsy children whose first language is not Romanian. Some NGOs have responded to this by providing preschool provision specifically for Roma/Gypsy children. For example, Save the Children Romania (*Salvati Copiii*) has run two kindergartens for Roma/Gypsy children.

By contrast, other organisations believe that non-attendance or low attendance of Roma/Gypsy children in preschool formal education does not necessarily have a detrimental impact on the children's future school career. This is based on a certain lack of trust felt by some Roma/Gypsy organisations and families towards preschool formal education. For some it is very difficult to trust an institution which is seen as hostile and discriminatory towards Roma/Gypsy children. Forms of preschool education carried out at home by Roma/Gypsy families are seen by some as equally if not more important than the preschool education provided by the state.

### School abandonment and non-attendance

Although there are no precise figures on the number of school-age Roma/Gypsy children, it is generally observed that a large number of Roma/Gypsy pupils leave school early, particularly after the fourth grade, that is from 12-13 years upwards. There have been some attempts to estimate in more detail patterns of enrolment and drop-out. Such research has mainly been done on a sampling basis. Some of the results of this research are reproduced here but we do not claim them to be representative of the situation as a whole.

According to the 1992 national census:

- Roma/Gypsies aged under 16 represented 43 per cent of their group
- 27 per cent of boys and 35 per cent of girls did not complete primary school
- 5 per cent of Roma/Gypsies completed high school
- only half of the children aged seven to ten attended school regularly

- 40 per cent of children under the age of eight do not attend kindergarten or school.

A survey carried out in 1992 recorded that 27 per cent of Roma/Gypsies had never attended school, 5 per cent attended secondary school and less than 1 per cent attended university. It also showed that 51 per cent of Roma/Gypsy children aged ten years attended school regularly, 19 per cent did not attend at all, 16 per cent attended only occasionally and 14 per cent had dropped out.<sup>55</sup>

Further research conducted with a sample of 1,272 families in Bucharest showed that:<sup>56</sup>

- two per cent of Roma/Gypsy children were not enrolled in school
- the school drop-out rate for Roma/Gypsy children was seven per cent compared with one per cent for non-Roma/Gypsy children.

Other research carried out in the school year 1997-98 showed that for children aged between seven and ten years, school participation for the entire population of Romania (including Roma/Gypsies) was 94 per cent. When these figures were disaggregated, however, it showed that school participation for Roma/Gypsy children from the same age-group was only 70 per cent. Similarly, for the age-group 11 to 14 years, school participation for the entire population of Romania was 98 per cent, yet for Roma/Gypsy children was only 68 per cent. Finally, whereas for children as a whole aged between 15 and 18 years school participation was 62 per cent, for Roma/Gypsies it was 21 per cent.<sup>57</sup>

The same research, however, did show an improvement in school participation for Roma/Gypsy pupils between 1992 and 1998. The participation of Roma/Gypsy children aged 7 to 16 years was estimated as being about 5 per cent higher in 1998 than in 1992 for both primary and secondary schools. This could partly be attributed to the fact that in 1994 measures were introduced whereby only those families of children who attended classes could receive their allowance.<sup>58</sup> However, at the time of writing no research has been carried out that explores other factors.

The head-teacher of a school which consists of mostly Roma/Gypsy pupils in Cojomo (a large rural village located in the mountains) explained that it was normal for half of the pupils to be absent at anyone time.<sup>59</sup> It is possible to identify a number of reasons for non-attendance and eventual dropping out on the part of Roma/Gypsies, such as stigmatisation and racist bullying in schools together with the lack of multicultural curricula acknowledging Roma/Gypsy culture identity. Other factors include:

- **Poverty:** some Roma/Gypsy communities live in extreme poverty, for example, in Pata Rat, which is an illegal site located on a rubbish tip. Most children are compelled to work and lack basic infrastructure such as electricity and water. These factors significantly restrict their access to and participation in mainstream schooling. The only educational support of any kind for this particular community is provided by a foreign NGO, *Médecins Sans Frontières*.<sup>60</sup>
- **Poor health:** the Ministry of Health has recently signed an agreement providing free health care for Roma/Gypsies, as part of its strategy for integrating Roma/Gypsies shortly

to be presented to the EU. However, beyond the distribution of cards certifying free medical care, it is not clear at this stage how this will work in practice.<sup>61</sup>

- **Large rural population:** a significant proportion of Roma/Gypsies live in rural communities where, regardless of ethnicity, access to secondary education is often restricted by lack of transport. Schools are also more affected by extreme weather conditions, eg, winter closure. Attending school beyond fourth grade is not viewed as being productive or necessary, particularly within rural communities, due to the particular lack of employment opportunities, and it is often considered to be a burden by those who expect their children to contribute to family income.

Some efforts have been made to address some of these problems. For example, rural schools now have the power to modify the school year structure in accordance with the agricultural calendar. New provisions apply that aim to improve school transport in rural areas. In addition, a special package of measures combining social, material and financial support has been targeted at the Roma/Gypsy population with the aim of securing greater levels of school attendance, thereby facilitating their access to higher education. With more of a focus on Roma/Gypsies specifically, and in particular on those who have abandoned school, the government issued a number of orders. These include orders on the eradication of illiteracy, on overcoming marginalisation and social and professional exclusion and on the organisation of vocational work.<sup>62</sup>

### Special schools and childcare institutions

According to Western charities, almost 100,000 children remain institutionalised in Romania. While Roma/Gypsies make up no more than ten per cent of the Romanian population, it is claimed that they account for a much higher percentage of infants in orphanages. Some sources claim that Roma/Gypsy children make up over 80 per cent of the orphanage population.<sup>63</sup>

Children in Romania with special educational needs are also traditionally placed in institutions or “special schools”. There are 246 special schools in Romania. The number of children with registered disabilities in special schools is 48,237. The number of students with disabilities included in mainstream schools is 4,822.<sup>64</sup> There is no ethnic breakdown of the special-school student population, and therefore no official data exists on the number of Roma/Gypsies present.

These institutions are differentiated according to the type and degree of disability, eg, speech deficiency, learning difficulties and behavioural problems. They are established at county level, and multidisciplinary commissions are responsible for overseeing the evaluation of children based on criteria approved by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health. The selection process is carried out by the Commission of Complex Examination, which is run by the School County Inspectorate. This Commission is organised according to Law 84/1995.<sup>65</sup> Each position in the Commission is gained through public competition; its membership consists of one co-ordinator (psychologist, psycho-pedagogue), two psychologists (specialised in school



psychology), one psycho-pedagogue, one medical expert and one social assistant.

Using various tools, such as personality tests (eg, RAVEN) and national standardised tests, the Commission establishes the level and type of disability of the young person in question. On this basis it makes a number of recommendations, including appropriate education, type of special curriculum, personalised intervention programmes and monitoring programmes. On completion of the test, a Certificate of Complex Expertise of Child for School Inspectorate County Notification is drawn up. Based on this notification the child is then registered in a special school.

At Someseni, a school in Cluj Napoca, children identified as having special educational needs are provided for within the secondary school. This is consistent with the policy preferred by the Roma school inspector for that area. In his view there is a fundamental difficulty with the overall system of special schools. He argues that in Romania children attending special schools attract additional funding for both the school and for families. This sets an agenda, which he believes goes against the best interests of the child, since the quality of education is lower and the chances of obtaining future employment are considerably reduced. Thus, although there may be short-term immediate benefits for families, the long-term implications for the children are huge.<sup>66</sup>

Educational reform has included provision for the processes of de-institutionalisation. As part of this, inspectors have been appointed with specific responsibility for children in institutions.

They are required to ensure that there is sufficient co-operation between special-education institutions and mainstream schools to enable smooth transition from the former to the latter. One model is to integrate a few children with special needs into each class, whilst at the same time reducing absolute class sizes. Another model is to establish classes of 8-12 pupils with special needs within mainstream schools. Teacher training includes guidance on working with such children, and specialised classroom back-up (eg, speech therapists) is made available within mainstream establishments.

The National Agency for the Protection of Children's Rights, established by the Emergency Ordinance No. 192/1999, plays a central role in this. It aims to de-institutionalise children, create a range of preventive services, support the further development of foster care and alternative family placements, and develop strategies to prepare children for independence.

### **Registration in schools**

Birth registration and initial school enrolment are issues that often arise when discussing access to education for Roma/Gypsy children. Documentation such as identification documents, birth certificates or civil marriage certificates are required for gaining access to many public services, including education, welfare benefits, health services, public housing and property rights.

Numerous domestic and international organisations have expressed concern about the increasing number of Roma/Gypsy children whose birth has not been registered with the

Romanian authorities and who lack any form of identification. According to the 1992 census, seven per cent of Roma/Gypsy children did not have a birth certificate. Since then some progress has been made with the issue of birth certificates and thus registration in schools.<sup>67</sup> Recent studies show, however, that five per cent of Roma/Gypsies living in Romania still do not have a birth certificate and four per cent of Roma/Gypsies over the age of 14 do not have identity cards.<sup>68</sup> For those Roma/Gypsy communities that are nomadic or at least semi-nomadic, registration issues pose a particular problem.

In 1995, authorities charged with the protection of minors reported that more than 2,500 of the children institutionalised each year (many of whom are Roma/Gypsies) were missing identity documents. The families of children lacking identity documents are not entitled to receive the child-support allowance (approximately \$US4 per month). A significant proportion of the more than five million children who *do* receive child allowance are Roma/Gypsies, and these families depend heavily on these child-support allowances, which form a significant proportion of the family income.<sup>69</sup>

It is estimated that between 1,200 and 6,000 Roma/Gypsies might be stateless in Romania after giving up their Romanian citizenship in hopes of being granted asylum in Western countries.<sup>70</sup> As discussed earlier, there are particular bureaucratic obstacles associated with Roma/Gypsy children returnees, which prevents them from returning to school. Readmission policies are complex and make it difficult to register at schools.

### Language provision

Given that a large proportion of the Roma/Gypsy population in Romania speaks Romanes, the issue of language provision has dominated much of the debate about meeting the educational needs of Roma/Gypsies. Although in many Roma/Gypsy homes children are raised to speak Romanes as their mother tongue, this does not preclude the learning of Romanian. Most, if not all, Roma/Gypsy children therefore are bilingual if not multilingual. However, rather than addressing issues to do with bilingual teaching and learning, and the skills and sensitivities required on the part of teachers, debates and legislation focus instead on whether and if so how the Romanes language should be taught in schools. For example, the state's efforts at securing fuller "social integration" of Roma/Gypsies, have been mainly concerned with a school programme that offers the opportunity to learn Romanes. There is an option of devoting four hours a week to teaching Romanes in years 1-4, and three hours a week in years 5-12.

The study of Romanes in Romanian schools began in 1990, and special classes for Romani language and literature teachers were established in three teacher-training colleges in Bucharest, Bacău and Tèrgu-Mures. Students on the programme include not only young people of Roma/Gypsy origin, but also Romanians who have elected to go on to work as teachers in schools with a majority of Roma/Gypsy pupils. After 1992, Romanes was also introduced into primary-school teacher training.<sup>71</sup> In 1998-99, the government established a department of Romani language and literature within the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Bucharest,

with places for ten students.<sup>72</sup> In 2000, the Ministry for National Education reported that 4,200 pupils in 37 counties were studying Romanes and that there were 60 Roma/Gypsy language teachers, a rise from 159 pupils and 8 teachers in 1997-98 (see Table 11.3).<sup>73</sup>

Mr Gheorghe Sarau a new inspector for Roma/Gypsy education is seen by many as contributing to the rising numbers of Roma/ Gypsies receiving education in their mother tongue as well as the numbers of Roma/Gypsy teachers. According to his figures, there were 200 Roma/Gypsy teachers, out of whom:

- 60 participated in a three-week training course for Romani language and methodological and

**Table 11.3 Situation of pupils belonging to national minorities attending schools where teaching is provided in Romanian, who also (by request) study their mother tongue, 1997/98 and 1999/2000**

Mother tongue	Total establishments		Total pupils		Total teaching staff	
	1997/98	1999/2000	1997/98	1999/2000	1997/98	1999/2000
Ukrainian	51	81	7,213	8,132	50	39
Russian (Lipoveni)	18	16	1,547	1,630	13	29
Turkish	46	54	2,212	3,133	62	48
Polish	12	10	398	397	8	13
Bulgarian	5	4	460	478	5	17
Serbian	6	11	251	381	13	14
Slovakian	2	3	37	88	3	4
Czech	5	6	139	123	6	6
Croatian	7	7	557	539	8	10
Greek	3	4	77	193	3	4
Gypsy (Roma)	3	210	159	4,200	8	60
Armenian	2	1	56	11	2	1
Italian	2	1	43	19	2	1
German	2	9	66	519	2	28
Other/not known		24		2,845		82
Total	164	441	13,215	22,688	185	356

Source: Romanian Report on the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities and The Ethos of Education for National Minorities in Romania 1999/2000 School Year, Ministry for National Education in Romania, 2000.

didactic training. This took place in the summer of 1999 at Satu Mare and was organised by Sarau with financial support from the government, FSD Bucharest and FSD Cluj Napoca Branch

- 45 participated in similar training at Calimanesti organised by Sarau with money from the Ministry of National Education, the UK and French Embassies and Romani CRISS
- 30 of those who completed the course in Satu Mare (1999) participated in a methodological-didactical module offered by Soros Open Network Education 2000+ at Sinaia in July 2000.

In 2001, the Ministry of National Education and UNICEF are expected to organise a third training session on Romani language for a further 90 teachers.

Projects aimed at teaching Romanes are often the product of individual initiative rather than state input. A typical example is that of the School ROMROM, a class for Roma/Gypsy children held at the home of a teacher from Caracal. A number of NGO initiatives have also developed aimed at supporting the study of the Romani language in schools or centres of extra-school educational assistance (these run before or after the official daily school programme). At present some mainstream schools offer courses in Romanes for those Roma/Gypsy children whose parents request it. However, Romanes is still not the teaching language in other school disciplines. Those classes that do exist in Romanes are only a result of initiatives on the part of individual Roma/Gypsy teachers. They do not receive any support or

recognition from the official public school authorities.

In terms of formal teacher training in relation to intercultural education, universities including Bucharest are encouraged to take measures to organise the study of languages and literature of national minorities, including Romanes.<sup>74</sup> However, the programme of the teacher training college in Bucharest shows a number of shortcomings. First, the programmes seem very theoretical. Secondly, there seems to be no concern for civic education although books on this subject have been introduced at the lower and upper levels of secondary school. Thirdly, it appears that there are no elements for identifying and being aware of differences and similarities between people, or their consequences at the social and personal level.<sup>75</sup> Finally, training primary-school teachers to be aware of equal-opportunities and discrimination issues is not a permanent feature of their initial training. If these issues are tackled, it seems to be only on an *ad hoc* basis.<sup>76</sup> Ultimately, it remains that although there has been a significant increase in the number of students receiving teaching in Romanes as part of overall schooling, there are still no units specifically designed for the teaching of Romanes as there are for other minorities (see Table 11.4).

NGOs are proving to be important actors in the field of teacher training. Save the Children Romania, for example, organised, five training courses in 2000 in Brasov, Tèrgu-Mures, Sibiu, Mangalia and Baia Mare. This training was for 188 teachers working with Roma/Gypsy children from 34 counties. It aimed to give teachers information about Roma/Gypsy history, culture

**Table 11.4 Schools in Romania by languages of tuition, 1999/2000**

Language of tuition	Total number of schools		Total number of pupils	
	No.	%	No.	%
Hungarian	2,388	9%	193,635	5%
German	277	1%	18,353	0.4%
Ukrainian	18	0.06%	892	–
Serbian	31	0.1%	1,066	–
Slovak	35	0.1%	1,323	–
Czech	3	0.02%	159	–
Croatian	3	0.01%	114	–
Roma/Gypsy	0	–	0	–
Total	2,755	10%	215,542	5.2%

and traditions, and help contribute to a positive change in the overall approach towards Roma/Gypsy children. The Project on Ethnic Relations also organised a series of training activities in Tèrgu-Mures for Roma/Gypsy and non-Roma/Gypsy teachers who have Romani children in their classrooms. These seminars provided an opportunity for teachers to learn about the language and cultural traditions of Roma/Gypsies as well as different teaching methodologies for multicultural classrooms.<sup>77</sup> However, it is difficult to assess within the scope of the report how effective such training is in the long term, in the absence of any formal evaluation.

Increased importance is also being attached to co-operation between Romanian authorities and NGOs working in the field of textbooks on Roma/Gypsy education and culture. A collection of Roma/Gypsy literary texts (for years one to four) was first published during the 1995-96

academic year. The Educational Publishing House has since published a special textbook to support the teaching of Romanes, and the Ministry of Education has prepared a curriculum for years one to four. It is estimated that at present there are over 200 textbooks, studies, dictionaries, research and other material on the issue of Roma/Gypsies in Romanian, Romani and Hungarian languages.<sup>78</sup> For example, there is a multilingual “Communication Manual” for the first year of study, which has had a print run of about 20,000. There are also some texts in the Romani language for years two to four (20,000 copies), a Romani language text by Gheorghe Sarau for grades five to eight (5,000 copies), a primer, published in September 2001 (2,000 copies), and an arithmetic text (experimental basis only). There is still no authoritative textbook on Romani history and culture, in spite of the fact that there is an officially agreed curriculum for this subject.



No in-depth research into the impact of such textbooks has so far been carried out. Roma/Gypsy organisations have requested that the Ministry of Education organise and support the establishment of a working group to evaluate the use of such textbooks, consisting of both Roma/Gypsy and non-Roma/Gypsy education experts. The Ministry of Education is currently conducting a large impact study of textbooks and teacher training with the Institute of Educational Sciences and school professionals. However, this does not include a focus on Romani textbooks.<sup>79</sup>

In spite of the production of textbooks on Romani language, the process of standardising Romanes for this purpose has encountered a number of difficulties. The main difficulty is that a wide variety of dialects is spoken among Roma/Gypsy groups across Romania. For example, in Lungani, a small, heavily Roma/Gypsy-populated rural village in northern Romania, a particular

dialect of Romanes is spoken as the first language. A series of textbooks were introduced to the local school, written in Romanes. However, the Romanes used in these textbooks was not the same dialect, and therefore significantly limited their use in this context.<sup>80</sup>

As well as the need to be sensitive to different Romani dialects, the content of curricula must also be reviewed. So far, efforts in respect to this have been far from fruitful. It seems that the current Romanian textbooks and curricula hardly refer, if at all, to children belonging to ethnic groups other than the majority. Little information is provided on personalities from minority groups or on how minorities have contributed to Romanian history.<sup>81</sup> In particular it appears that many aspects of Roma/Gypsy history are hidden from school curricula in a number of ways:<sup>82</sup>

- Romani words (eg, *gadjo*, *mishto*, *nasol*) which are used by both Roma/Gypsies and

Romanians are not acknowledged in dictionaries or textbooks and are considered at best as slang.

- The history of Roma/Gypsy slavery is not mentioned at all.
- Aspects of Roma/Gypsy customs and their way of life are not referred to.
- Images of children in textbooks reflect only the majority population.

The reformulation of curricula, examinations, textbooks and other education policies, from before and since 1991, are carried out by relatively small teams of “experts”. Continuing in this tradition, working groups consisting mostly of three to five national experts, sometimes more, are currently solely responsible for designing the course syllabuses for the new curriculum. These teams usually consist of Romanian and foreign specialists, with little widespread or substantive participation from either practitioners or from members of minority communities.<sup>83</sup>

The 1999 amendments to the Education Law included further provisions designed to improve access to education for minorities, with special emphasis on the needs of Roma/Gypsies. Universities can now be established with teaching provided in a minority language backed up by the provision of textbooks in that language. Notwithstanding governmental efforts in this field, in the absence of self-referential education, education policies regarding Roma/Gypsy children seem to be still generating stigma in schools and reinforcing negative perceptions of the “other”. For example, mixed classes introduced in schools in Calvini and Vaslui,

although aimed at avoiding segregation, served to reinforce it. With the underlying aim being to bring all pupils in line with Romanian culture and norms, no attempt was made to form links with members of the Roma/Gypsy community and, in particular, the parents. As a result, most local Roma/Gypsy children do not attend.

However, this is not limited to practice on the ground. The overall education policy of the Romanian government seems still to be dominated by assimilative overtones, where the emphasis for change is placed with the “out-group”, in this case Roma/Gypsies, rather than with the majority society and systems. The main goal of the Ministry of Education seems to be concerned only with ensuring attendance of Roma/Gypsy children in either mainstream schools or Roma/Gypsy-specific schools. No emphasis is placed on injecting schools with multicultural values, or with introducing Romanes language, culture and history to the pupil population as a whole. There is no move towards alternative pedagogy or equal education opportunities respecting cultural differences.

As a result, problems soon emerge with the practical application of such legislation. For example, in response to the legislation that stipulates the right for Roma/Gypsy pupils to receive tuition in Romanes for a certain number of hours per week, school principals often find various ways to prevent its implementation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some school principals try to convince Roma/Gypsy parents that the Romanes language is useless for their children, whilst others threaten to cut their

school allowance if parents insist that their children learn Romanes. The refusal to allow classes in Romanes has also occurred at higher levels. For example, the School Inspectorate for the Calarsai County rejected an application from the Mihai-Viteazul school to teach the Romanes language.<sup>84</sup>

The following breakdown of teaching staff according to teaching language in Table 11.5 shows there are still no Roma/Gypsy teachers in mainstream schooling, despite the increase in the number of Roma/Gypsy teachers hired specifically for language tuition.

Whilst preservation of the Romanes language is important, the debate rarely, if at all, focuses on the skills required for teaching bilingual and multilingual children. In 1997-98, the only bilingual units were for Turkish-Tartar students. One argument is that parents have a responsibility to their children to raise them to speak in the principal language in which they are to be educated. However, this fails to take into account that Roma/Gypsy parents themselves may not have passed through the education system. On the other hand there are some who advocate an increased level of teaching at all grades in the Romanes language, placing an emphasis on the establishment of Roma/Gypsy-specific secondary schools. This latter policy proposal is problematic, however, as it can further reinforce separation, isolation and a two-tier education system.

**Table 11.5 Teaching staff by level and teaching language in pre-university education 1999/00**

Teaching language	Overall total	Preschool teachers	Primary-school teachers	Secondary-school teachers
Total	311,335	36,648	62,858	211,829
Total minorities	15,708	2,807	3,894	9,007
Hungarian	14,186	2,474	3,463	8,249
German	1,212	269	333	610
Ukrainian	57	17	15	25
Serbian	76	11	19	46
Bulgarian	6	6	0	0
Slovakian	139	24	55	60
Czech	17	3	8	6
Croatian	15	3	1	11



## NGO practice in the area<sup>85</sup>

It has been estimated that over half the funding for Romanian NGOs originates from foreign donors. It is only in recent years that some local funders have started to provide small grants to NGOs. These Romanian donor agencies, however, still rely on raising their funds from abroad. Limited central government funds are available to NGOs in some areas of health and social care and youth work. However, funding procedures are still relatively *ad hoc*. While a legal framework for the funding of NGOs by local government exists, funds are very limited and their allocation suffers from many of the same problems experienced at central level.<sup>86</sup>

This trend seems to be most apparent in the field of education. For instance, the initiatives described in this section are delivered by NGOs only. Typically, projects are funded by external donors on a 12-month funding cycle that may or may not be renewed. Yet there is reluctance on the part of the government to fund such NGO activities. As a result, a climate of uncertainty exists for teachers, parents and pupils involved in these projects.

Grants and loans from external sources for education development in Romania are substantial on a per capita basis and in relation to the levels received by neighbouring countries in Central and Eastern Europe. A study prepared by the Institute for Educational Sciences estimates that the equivalent of more than \$US500 million has been committed to education in Romania in recent years. The largest among these commitments

are from the World Bank and the EU PHARE Programme.<sup>87</sup> Florin Moisa, Executive President of the Resource Centre for Roma Communities in Romania, has stated that 2 million euros had been allocated to Romania through the PHARE programme for the period April/May 2000 to September/October 2001, aimed specifically at the improvement of the Roma situation in Romania.<sup>88</sup> At the time of writing, however, the government had not yet implemented any strategies for allocating this money, which according to Moisa is due to the lack of political will. According to Monica Dvorski, Programmes Director of Centre Education 2000+, in March 2001 the government had so far not allocated any funding to NGOs working in the area of education.<sup>89</sup>

In addition to this, the short-term nature of NGO funding in Romania presents particular problems for developing services in communities such as those described above. Engaging with such communities takes time. This is especially true in light of the transient nature of many communities, and the lack of community structure and identifiable leadership in some. Underpinning the lack of long-term engagement is the fact that donors are often uninterested in promoting services in communities where severe and multiple problems exist and success is difficult to demonstrate. As several of the early projects are coming to a close, it will be important to ensure that there are clear follow-up and exit strategies from the external agencies, and plans for the sustainability of project impact and scaling up of programmes where appropriate.<sup>90</sup>

### Centre Education 2000+ – a macro-project

Between 1998 and 2000, the Open Society Foundation Romania, in partnership with the Netherlands National Institute for Curriculum Development and the MATRA programme, ran an ambitious macro-project, “Equal opportunities for Roma children through school and school-related activities”. It was concerned with developing models of school improvement and education reform that would not only be suitable for local implementation, but could also be replicated in other contexts. In addition, the project sought to promote bilateral communication and co-operation amongst institutions and agencies responsible for the implementation of education reform relevant to Roma/Gypsies at a local level.

In the first year, 12 schools were selected in communities with large numbers of Roma/Gypsies. A further 17 schools joined the project in the second year. The schools were generally representative of the Romanian education system, ie, schools from both urban and rural areas with a mixture of homogeneous and heterogeneous school populations. Schools were encouraged to meet with each other to develop a management style that enabled them to meet the specific educational needs of local communities. A focus was placed on local decision-making and accountability, with a view to enhancing the awareness of and access to education for young Roma/Gypsies. Specific attention was given to co-operative learning as opposed to competition, intercultural education and oral history. Parental involvement was actively encouraged and remedial teaching was seen to demonstrably assist

Roma/Gypsy children with their low self-esteem. The schools were primarily viewed as pilots from which it was hoped good practice could be disseminated to other schools, but also to other spheres of social provision relevant to Roma/Gypsy communities. In addition, the project has produced a first reader in Romanes together with a range of publications for teachers offering examples of “good practice”.<sup>91</sup>

Catalina Ulrich, one of the programme co-ordinators for the project, believes the most significant problem currently faced by Roma/Gypsy children is low self-esteem, and that the greatest challenge to their effective participation in schooling is the need to establish links with and facilitate the involvement of the parents.<sup>92</sup> At the launch of their new programme, “Improving Education for Roma Focus on Romania”, she also highlighted a number of other issues, such as the importance of the children and parents involved having a sense of ownership of the programme. One of the ways in which they have gone some way in achieving this is by using mainly materials produced by Roma/Gypsies themselves.

The overall objective of the new initiative is to support education for Roma in accordance with their specific needs. In particular, it aims to encourage co-operation between governmental and non-governmental bodies in education and actively to involve communities in school life. As well as providing five preselected schools with grants for equipment and teaching materials, it will offer a series of “teacher guides” on topics such as “Intercultural Education”, “Classroom Management” and “Remedial Teaching”. It is

funded under the Stability Pact Initiative for South-Eastern Europe. The funds for the project (\$US150,000) were donated by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and will cover the running costs for 2001. However, the project's reliance on short-term funding and the lack of institutional sustainability continues to pose the greatest threat to its continued effectiveness.

#### **Fundatia Familia Si Ocrotireas Copilului – a micro-project**

*Fundatia Familia Si Ocrotireas Copilului* (FOC) is an NGO operating in Ferentari. This is an illegal settlement situated in Sector 5 of Bucharest. It has a population of about 400, nearly all of whom identify themselves as Roma. The community and, in particular, its children face multiple social problems as a result of both extreme poverty and discrimination.

Through the school, and in partnership with the community members, FOC aims to operate a holistic approach in working with children and families at risk of extreme marginalisation. Although most of the children with whom the project works are Roma/Gypsies, they are not exclusively so. Although operational in the area since 1995, FOC has only recently turned its attention specifically to the role of schooling.

FOC provides an integrated service to the community and employs social workers, educators and counsellors, backed up by a group of volunteers. Within the local school, FOC provides a separate classroom in which it gives half-day education for two groups of 15 pupils. These pupils are identified as being either at risk of abandoning school or, having done so, have

decided to return to school, but require additional support in returning. Because FOC is located within the community, interventions are agreed on a contractual basis between FOC, the child and the family. The schools are not part of this process, although they give full discretion and support to FOC in meeting the aims of the project.

Educational input is broadly defined and delivered on a small-group or individual basis, with content determined by the needs of the individual child. Teaching children to read and write is considered a basic objective. Considerable emphasis is placed upon social education and the development of interpersonal skills. The project does not receive any governmental funding, but relies entirely on foreign donors for its income. It is currently funded on a short-term basis by *Terre Des Hommes* and hopes to attract finance from UNICEF in 2001.

#### **The Center for Education and Professional Development – Step-by-Step, Open Society Foundation**

The Center for Education and Professional Development is a member of the Soros Open Network and is focused on implementing the Step-by-Step programme, an alternative model of educational provision for 0-13 year olds. This new method of education rests on the idea that the intellectual development of children starts from the nursery and has to be guided by both the family and educational institutions.<sup>93</sup>

The programme was first introduced in Romanian schools in 1996. A number of schools in all but seven counties in Romania have adopted this

approach. More recently, Step-by-Step has been introduced to schools where at least 60 per cent of the pupils are Roma/Gypsies. Key features of the approach include individualised learning, social education, work in small activity groups and the ongoing involvement of parents within the formal school context. Step-by-Step also provides a midday meal to children. This is significant in light of the fact that school children in Romania are expected to provide their own lunches.

The Step-by-Step programme has been established in the Prahova county in a number of schools. For example, in September 2000, Step-by-Step started a kindergarten class in Poina Varbilau, a small rural village some 30km from the main town, Ploiesti. About 80 per cent of the population are Roma/Gypsies. This particular community does not speak Romanes and when parents were consulted on whether their children should be taught Romanes, they felt it to be more useful for them to learn English.

At the time of writing, the class catered for 31 children, 20 of whom were Roma/Gypsies. The teacher, a local resident, received special training in the Step-by-Step methodology. The involvement of parents is seen as vital. Parents helped establish the project by decorating the classroom, and are responsible for its upkeep. The classroom also doubles up as “parents’ room”. Parents accompany children on school trips and involve themselves in classroom activities. The programme was seen as an opportunity for helping to develop parenting skills, which were encouraged with the help of booklets translated from Dutch.

Ploiesti also has a large Roma/Gypsy population. Unlike the Roma/Gypsies in Poina Varbilau, this community leads a semi-nomadic lifestyle. At the state kindergarten, 31 out of the total 44 pupils were Roma/Gypsies. When first attending the school, Roma/Gypsy children tended to feel more isolated than most. Methods of small-group activity were therefore used. Many children came from homes that lacked basic facilities such as toilets or running water, so it was felt that basic skills associated with these needed to be incorporated into the learning.

The school, in accordance with the Step-by-Step methodology, actively encourages parental involvement in the school. However, such activities contravene legislation which purports to ban Roma/Gypsy parents on the grounds of “health and safety”. For example, the “sanitary police” had recently visited the school and wanted to impose an on-the-spot fine, thus revealing one example of legislated bad practice that reinforces discrimination.

A Step-by-Step kindergarten programme had also been established within a secondary school in Ploiesti. The school, which caters for 467 pupils, about a third of whom are Roma/Gypsies, covers the 8-14/15 age range. The Step-by-Step kindergarten class within this had 28 children, 17 of whom were Roma/Gypsies. Unusually, this particular class had two teachers instead of one. The class worked in activity groups with the active participation of parents. According to the teachers, the response of Roma/Gypsy parents was mixed: while some seemed highly motivated in promoting their children’s education, others seemed scared of the knowledge and abilities

that their children would acquire. The children themselves, when interviewed, expressed much enthusiasm for the school.<sup>94</sup>

### Salvati Copiii – Save the Children Romania

*Salvati Copiii* has developed a national plan of action aimed at supporting the interests of Roma/Gypsy children (see box below). This has been agreed upon by various Roma/Gypsy and non-Roma/Gypsy organisations, and by some governmental institutions. The ultimate objective

is for this plan to be incorporated into the Romanian government's national strategy on Roma/Gypsies. The plan has been sent to all relevant ministries, including the Education Ministry.

According to its preamble, the plan is based on the principle of a real democracy, including the provision of equal rights, chances and opportunities for all citizens and children. It recognises that children belonging to minority

#### Salvati Copiii's National Plan of Action

- All educational provision should be made by the authorities in consultation with Roma/Gypsy representatives, in order to make education appropriate and relevant. In the national programmes in support of Roma/Gypsy children, elected representatives from Roma/Gypsy communities should be included in order to represent the interests of Roma/Gypsy children. Where possible, Roma/Gypsy children and adults should be included as well. The responsibility for implementing these provisions lies with the Ministry of National Education, the school inspectorates of the counties, Roma/Gypsy NGOs and Roma/Gypsy communities.
- Educational authorities, Roma/Gypsy and non-Roma/Gypsy NGOs should work together to train teachers for preschool and school education, and to incorporate an intercultural curriculum. The responsibility for implementing this lies with the Ministry of National Education, school inspectorates of the counties and NGOs.
- Action should be taken to promote the value of education among Roma/Gypsy families. Support and advice facilities should be set up close to the settlements of Roma/Gypsy communities. The responsibility for implementing this will lie with school inspectorates of the counties, school units, NGOs, the Alliance for Roma/Gypsy Unity and the Department for Child Protection.
- Cultural institutions should be responsible for the publication of teaching materials concerning Roma/Gypsy history, culture and traditions. Such institutions should be the Ministries of Culture and National Education, the Department for the Protection of Minorities and NGOs.
- The curriculum should include information about Roma/Gypsy history and culture. Those responsible should be the Ministry of National Education and Roma/Gypsy NGOs. Due to the fact that at certain times of year Roma/Gypsies and children accompany their parents to work in other areas, these children should be accepted by schools in those areas, on the basis of an operative correspondence between school units. Implementation of this proposal should be carried out by the Ministry of National Education, school inspectorates of the counties and school units.
- It is essential that children retain knowledge and understanding of their mother tongue. Therefore all kindergartens should make this available through appropriate support, including bilingual materials and Romani teachers of Roma/Gypsy origin. This process should be continued at all stages of the educational system, according to pupils' requests. The responsibility for implementing this lies with the Ministry of National Education, school inspectorates of the counties, Roma/Gypsy NGOs and Roma/Gypsy communities.
- In recognition of the strong oral culture of Roma/Gypsy communities, broadcasting authorities should be urged to schedule educational programmes in the Romani language at times accessible to children. The broadcasting authorities, national television, commercial broadcasters, the Ministry of National Education and NGOs should be responsible for this.

communities have the right to their own culture, religion and language in order to have access to all public services.

The preamble estimates that about half of the Roma/Gypsy population of school age do not attend school on a regular basis; some of these children have never attended school and a very small percentage ever reaches higher education. The result is a high rate of illiteracy, which affects all aspects of Roma/Gypsy life. The preamble

claims that Roma/Gypsy families' attitude towards education is generally one of reticence, based on a fear that their own children will suffer because of the attitudes of other children and teachers. It also acknowledges that there is still a widespread lack of information on the Romanes language, history and culture in school books and curricula for children belonging to the majority of the population.

- School authorities and Roma/Gypsy NGOs together should find the best solutions for school evaluation and orientation. Roma/Gypsy children who have not had access to preschool education should be enrolled, one year before their school age, in preparatory classes. Responsible bodies should be the school inspectorates of the counties, school units and kindergartens, Roma/Gypsy NGOs and Roma/Gypsy communities.
- Roma/Gypsy children should be integrated in mainstream education. In special cases, Article 8 of the Education Law, concerning transport to the nearest school, would apply. Those responsible should be the education authorities and Roma/Gypsy NGOs.
- Children and adolescents who failed education at the prescribed age should have the opportunity to attend part-time courses in schools as close as possible to their homes. The Ministry of National Education, school inspectorates of the counties, school units and Roma/Gypsy communities should be responsible for implementing this.
- Teachers who have Roma/Gypsy children in their classes should receive specific training. The Ministry of National Education, school inspectorates of the counties, teachers' clubs, and county centres for psychic and pedagogical assistance should be responsible for this.

- Based on NGO proposals, the Ministries of Culture and National Education should plan and allot funds in order to preserve Roma/Gypsy culture and the Romani language, by stimulating specific talents and organising in schools certified technological courses for Roma/Gypsy traditional professions. Responsible bodies should be the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and NGOs.
- The provision of school and professional training for Roma/Gypsy children is the base for their future social integration, and will give them the chance to find better places to work. Ultimately, this will lead to the improvement of Roma/Gypsy families' standards of living.

The National Plan of Action also sets a strategy for the protection and promotion of Roma/Gypsy identity and culture. Because of the widespread racist attitudes and labelling of Roma/Gypsy children, it calls for a media campaign to combat stereotypes, discrimination against Roma/Gypsies and other forms of xenophobia and intolerance. This campaign will be carried out by television and radio broadcasts, governmental institutions, NGOs and journalists. Finally, the National Plan of Action also includes a strategy for health issues.

Save the Children Romania organises teacher training for teachers working with Roma/Gypsy children (as discussed previously). It also runs different projects for Roma/Gypsy children, such as:

- kindergartens for Roma/Gypsy children in Tecuci and Sanger-Mures
- classes in the Romanian language for children in a school in Craiova
- an information caravan that goes to Roma/Gypsy communities in five counties offering information on the rights of Roma/Gypsy children
- education on non-discrimination in three counties
- the production of several publications for Roma/Gypsy children, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Romani language.



## Voices of Roma/Gypsy children

These interviews are taken from the transcript of the film *Equal Chances* produced by *Salvati Copiii*, Save the Children Romania. Interviews were conducted with 10 Roma/Gypsy communities during the period April – May 1998.

*“What grade are you in?”*

“1st grade.”

*“And how old are you?”*

“I’m 12.”

*“How old are you?”*

“I’m 14.”

*“Do you still go to school?”*

“No.”

*“How many grades did you finish in school?”*

“Six.”

*“And how long have you been going to the garbage pit?”*

“Since I was a little kid... I’ve been going to both – to school and to the pit... since I was 5.”

“I pick cherries. My mother washes them and in the evening after school, I go and sell them.”

*“Where?”*

“Here, in Mangalia.”

*“But, why do you sell cherries?”*

“To buy notebooks, shoes, clothes...”

*“Do you enjoy school?”*

“I enjoy it, but I don’t have the things I need to go, we don’t have the money for books and notebooks.”

*“What is the most important thing for you?”*

“To learn! It’s good to learn...”

*“Why?”*

“Because if I didn’t learn, I wouldn’t know anything.”

*“Do you enjoy school?”*

“Yes.”

*“Why do you like it?”*

“I like reading.”

“Sometimes, we feel sad because we have such a horrible school. Others have lovely schools... but we have an ugly school.”

*“Why are the other schools lovely?”*

“They have central heating and beautiful desks.”

*“How do the teachers talk to you?”*

“‘Go to hell!’ ‘Shut up!’... They hit our hands with a stick, pull our hair ...”

*“Do you have any Romanian friends?”*

“Yes.”

*“And Roma ones?”*

“Yes, both Roma and Romanians.”

*“Who do you get along with the best?”*

“All of them. I have no problems with any of them.”

*“Would you prefer to be Romanian, English or French?”*

“No! A... a Romanian Roma.”

“The Magyar [Hungarian] children at school treat us badly.”

*“Why don’t you have Magyar classmates?”*

“Because they stay away from the Roma and they don’t speak to us at all.”

*“Are you in separate classes?”*

“Yes.”



*“Can you speak Romani?”*

“No, there is no one here to speak Romani to. No one speaks it in our village.”

*“Would you like to go to school?”*

“Yes.”

*“And what would you like to learn at school?”*

“To learn, to read...”

“If one of the children gets ill, we carry them on our back up to the ambulance.”

*“How far?”*

“5km.”

“There are 20 boys and girls in Colt’u who can’t read or write. They are 16 to 20 years old.”

*“And did they go to school?”*

“Yes, they went to school here, in the village, to the Hungarian school. But they didn’t learn a word of Hungarian.”

*“Would you like to read and write?”*

“Yes, very much.”

*“Why?”*

“Because here, in our community, I do activities with the children... we put on plays about the life and customs of the Roma people. We’ve even taken our theatre group to Bucharest. I would like to write down my ideas by myself. But I have to ask someone to spend hours with me to write down my ideas on what I want to do with the children.”

These interviews were conducted by Charlie Bell during the period November – December 2000 as part of the research for the report, with the help of Veronica Vasilescu, Ioana Herseni, Ioana Puscascu and Catalin Ganea.

*C, 8 years old*

*“Do you have brothers and sisters?”*

“I had a brother and a sister. Both died. I have one brother. He is in the fifth grade now.”

*“And what do you like about school?”*

“They teach us to write. We eat. They tell us stories. We can sit on the chair and say something new every day. We learn poems.”

*“And do you have any special friends?”*

“Everybody. All the boys and all the girls.”

*“Do you sometimes miss school?”*

“Yes, sometimes I’m ill.”

*“And what do you want to do when you are older?”*

“I want to be like my father. I want to wash cars.”

*A group of 8-18 year olds, attending a special remedial project part-funded by two NGOs, but located in a secondary school in Iasi*

*“So why have you taken this second chance to return to education?”*

“I was in Germany. They did not provide education for us there.”

“I need to read and write in order to get my driving licence.”

“I want to emigrate and my chances are better if I know some things.”

“I want to be a doctor, teacher or lawyer to help Roma people.”

*A special class in the Someseni secondary school in Cluj*

*“What don’t you like about school?”*

*“When our teacher shouts at us.”*

*A 15 year old attending the FOC project at School No. 136, Ferentari, Bucharest*

*“How many children in this class are Roma?”*

*“We do not discriminate by ethnicity here.*

*We face the same problems and live in the same community. Yes, we have problems that are common to us all. You must understand that to focus on our race will divert the authorities from finding the solutions to these problems.”*

*A 17 year old attending a vocational school in Cluj*

*“What do you know about the new anti-discrimination ordinance that has recently been introduced? Do you think it will help Roma people?”*

*“Sure we know about it. But it is just a law. We will have problems when we want to get a job, but here at school we are treated equally and fairly.”*

*Another member of the same class*

*“Is it helpful to have teaching in the Romani language?”*

*“No. None of us speak it. It is only spoken by the old people aged over 70. We are Romanian. The Romani language will not help us get jobs.”*

*A group of Roma/Gypsy students at Iasi University*

*“If you were Minister of Education for a day what changes would you make to promote education for Roma?”*

*“I would not want to be Minister for Education. Our education system is fine. I would prefer to be Minister of Finance and allocate money to implement it effectively.”*

*“I would make education to eighth grade compulsory for all Roma and hold parents accountable for ensuring that their children attended school. Yes, that would be a priority.”*

*“Having reached University you have obviously faced and overcome considerable discrimination. Do you face discrimination here?”*

*“Most of us have been lucky. Our parents have money and have supported us. We do not face discrimination at University. Well, that’s not true. We receive too much positive discrimination from the staff and sometimes that gives us problems with the other students.”*

*“And what about teaching in the Romani language?”*

*“It is good to preserve our culture but it is of little practical use.”*

*“Yes, I do not speak Romani, but I would like my son to be able to.”*

## Recommendations

Given that Romania has ratified:

- the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratified 9 December 1974, entered into force 23 March 1976)
- the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ratified 9 December 1974, entered into force 3 January 1976)
- the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ratified 15 September 1970, entered into force 15 October 1970)
- the Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified 28 September 1990, entered into force 28 October 1990)

- the Convention Against Discrimination in Education, 1960 (ratified 1964)
- the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965 (ratified 1970)
- the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ratified 20 June 1994, entered into force the same date)
- Protocols Nos. 1 to 10 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ratified 10 June 1994)
- Protocol No. 11 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, on the restructuring of the control mechanism established by the Convention (ratified 1 August 1995)
- the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ratified 11 May 1995, entered into force 1 February 1998)

and that it has signed but not yet ratified:

- the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (signed 17 July 1995)

Save the Children recommends that:

### **The Government of Romania**

- Implements the international obligations stemming from the different international treaties it has ratified.
- Ratifies the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.
- Invites the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education to conduct a field mission in order to assess the shortcomings of the Romanian education system, in particular with regard to

the right to education of Roma/Gypsy children.

- Includes in the legislation adequate provisions banning discrimination in the sphere of education, providing effective remedies for victims of discriminatory treatment.
- Clarifies the statistical data regarding the Roma/Gypsy population, and related figures such as the number of Roma/Gypsy children attending school and their attainment.
- Amends current legislation in order to ensure the teaching in and of the Romani language and the establishment of specific educational institutions providing education for Roma/Gypsy identity (Roma/Gypsy history, culture, arts, etc), supported by adequate financial resources.
- Develops a partnership on an equal basis with Roma/Gypsy representatives in shaping education policies for Roma/Gypsies and ensures Roma/Gypsies equal participation in implementing and evaluating such policies and processes.
- Supports, including by sufficient financial resources, a self-referential education policy to include:
  - programmes to eradicate stigmas and develop self-esteem among Roma/Gypsy children, including multicultural programmes in the Children's Clubs
  - kindergartens in Roma/Gypsy communities and the development of preschool education
  - education in the mother tongue, by progressively teaching in the Romani language, supporting the development of teaching materials in the Romani language and supporting the development of appropriate teacher training.



- the establishment in schools of counselling centres for Roma/Gypsy parents and of programmes for Roma/Gypsy parents to take part in school processes and decisions
- the development of ethnic-identity assertion and anti-discrimination programmes for institutionalised Roma/Gypsy children and other Roma/Gypsy children in difficulty
- the development of distance education for Roma/Gypsy and rural communities, by supporting the development of teaching materials and communication networks in the country and abroad, encouraging educational activities within the international Roma/Gypsy network.
- Supports, including by sufficient financial resources, intercultural education to include:
  - a national campaign of intercultural education and the prevention of racial discrimination in schools
  - compulsory intercultural education for teachers
  - compulsory anti-racial/intercultural education in schools
  - adequate training in intercultural education, for children of the majority, teachers and other education professionals, for public servants, police and army staff
  - adoption of multicultural school curricula and the development of teaching materials, including textbooks on civic/anti-racial education and Roma history/culture
  - training for school mediators
  - promoting the participation of Roma/Gypsy parents in schools
  - intercultural permanent/adult education, including through the mass media.

**The international organisations, including the UN Commission on Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education and the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and the European Union**

- Closely monitor the international obligations undertaken by the Romanian government in respect of the right to education, with particular attention to the right to education of Roma/Gypsy children.

**Romania: Notes on the text**

1 For some Roma organisations and other human-rights groups, the ethnic designation of Rom (pl. Roma, adj. Romani) is a matter of self-identification and self-determination. Therefore, members of Roma associations have recommended the use of these terms. Some of the Romani organisations also recommend the use of the double “Rr”, which corresponds more specifically to its pronunciation in the *Kalderash* dialect. Notwithstanding these linguistic justifications, the government, in order to avoid what it claims to be confusion between the ethnic designation and other patronymic stems such as Romania, Rome, etc, has used the double “Rr” spelling. This report, in order to be consistent with the report as a whole, uses the terms “Roma/Gypsy” or “Roma/Gypsies”, recognising that *Țigani* is still used by some communities and that not all those groups who identify themselves as Roma use the “Rr” spelling.

2 *Țigani* was the official term used in the 1992 census.

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5 Unpublished research of Romani Criss cited by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov in their comments to this report.

6 *Rudari* are one of the groups of Romanian-speaking Gypsies (often with a non-Rom consciousness) that are found throughout Europe. They are also referred to in other contexts as *Karavlabs* (in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example) and *Boyashi/Boyasha* (in Croatia, for example).

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