
Neven
HRVATIĆ

THE EDUCATION
OF THE ROMA
IN CROATIA:
PREREQUISITES
FOR A BETTER
QUALITY OF LIFE?

In this study, since lifestyle and housing of the Roma are closely related to education (schooling), the importance of a systematic approach to education is emphasised.

The Roma even after more than a thousand years of migration¹ have maintained a distinctive culture, lifestyle and habitation. They have also more or less managed to successfully adjust to the local social, economic and religious environment. Two characteristic forms of coexistence have determined the life of the Roma today. If they lived isolated in separate rural (or suburban) settlements they preserved an original awareness of their ethno-cultural identity but with permanent underdevelopment and poverty in comparison to the rest of society. In cases where they lived together or mixed with the majority, the local population gradually lost determinants of their ethnic identity, were almost assimilated and improved their life standard.²

The Romani people have maintained these basic lifestyle characteristics since the beginning of migration until today. Even though there are smaller differences between particular tribal groups, they have common characteristics of social relations. The Romani lifestyle is a collection of distinctive approaches; a style developed in continual conflict between isolation and assimilation. For the Roma, life in the group meant real social, economic and psychological security regardless of the low life standard. Independence from the social surroundings determined mutual solidarity within the group as well as a global oppositional attitude towards external factors (local population, milieu).

This lifestyle, typical in their original homeland, India was hardly acceptable to Europeans who, since their arrival, have wanted to get rid of them or make them adjust to an ordinary sedentary lifestyle, somewhere on the outskirts of the village or city.

The nomadic lifestyle is not only a reality for the Roma but a state of spirit, which produces some advan-

tages: the possibility to choose and do different jobs, space mobility-dynamic, adaptability, and connection in the work and living community.

Regarding education of the Roma, these advantages still need to be identified and structured in the entire school system. This should include all segments and the majority of Romani children who today are both in reality and formally outside the processes of education.

The Roma as a nomadic people – social structure and forms of housing

The Roma have resided in the Republic of Croatia for more than six centuries. The first written document that mentions the Roma comes from Dubrovnik and is dated 1362. Ten years later (1373) the Roma are mentioned in Zagreb in the “*Poviestnoj spomenici slobodnog kraljevskog grada Zagreba*” (*Historical charter of the free royal city of Zagreb*) written by I. K. Tkalčić in 1885. The first Roma came to Croatia with the largest groups that arrived in Europe between the 10th and 14th century across Asia Minor and South East Europe.

The position of the Roma in the Austrian empire in the 18th century (that relates to the area of Croatia as well) is demonstrated by the orders of Empress Maria Theresa (the first in 13th November 1761 and the second “a(ller)h(öchste) Entschliessung” on 28th November 1767) as well as Emperor Joseph II’s order in 1783.

The latter order relates to the structure of everyday life of the Roma.³ Along with the prohibition on nomadic migration (except to fairs), the Roma had to accept the folk costume of the village, official language, one personal name and surname, and house numbers in the settlement. They were allowed to work in the blacksmiths trade (in those districts where this was useful and necessary), as well as to a limited extent, in music. Begging and intermarriage was forbidden to the Roma and abandoned Romani children needed to be looked after like orphans (Matasović, 1928).

Large Romani groups came to Croatia in the 19th century from Romania (slavery of the Roma in Romania was abolished in 1855). They belonged to the Romani Koritar group, worked with wood and settled in the areas of Međimurje and Podravina. They speak *Ljimba d’ bjaš*, one of the Romanian dialects (*vlaç*-dialect), *Romani chib* and the present-day *Kalderaši* and *Lovari* constitute the core of today’s Romani population in Croatia.⁴

The Roma were an autochthonous ethnic minority in Croatia, but since they lived in cities (Dubrovnik, Zagreb,

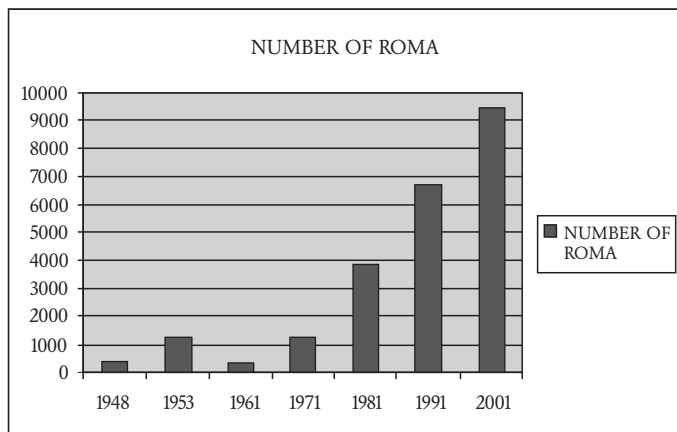
Šibenik...) and integrated quickly in medieval life doing useful jobs for the rest of the population, they lost their basic Romani characteristics within 100 years (i.e., did not speak the Romani language, abandoned their original customs and nearly “disappeared”). The first Romani groups that came to Croatia did not survive as a separate community (Romani ethnic characteristics are rarely prominent in historical sources throughout the century), and a similar process is characteristic today in urban spaces and places where the Roma live in better conditions. Romani groups that lived in isolated settlements or a difficult nomadic life were successful in preserving their ethnic identity.

Although the number of Roma according to the censuses from 1948 to 2001 grew, matching the situation in Europe (the estimation is around 7 to 8.5 million Roma) it can be assumed that the number of Roma in Croatia is significantly higher than the official statistics (2001 - 9,463 Roma - table 1). This number is somewhere between 30,000 and 40,000, even though the estimations, in view of the different methodologies, considerably differ.

Census year	1948	1953	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
No. of Roma	405	1,261	313	1,257	3,858	6,695	9,463

The Census of Population, Households, Dwellings and Agricultural Economy 1991, Zagreb, Central Bureau of Statistics, (1992); Statistical Yearbook of Croatian Counties, Zagreb, Central Bureau of Statistics (1995); Statistical Yearbook, Zagreb, Central Bureau of Statistics (1995); The Census of Population, Households and Dwellings 2001, Zagreb, Central Bureau of Statistics.

Table 1
The number of Roma according to the censuses 1948–2001



Graph 1
The number of Roma according to the censuses 1948–2001

The continuation and formation of tribal and economic systems among the Roma was parallel during migration. Although social structure has its starting point in the family, the tribe was in fact a characteristic form for

the Roma. The nomadic way of life shaped a strong feeling of belonging among the Roma, who are a homogeneous whole, despite their dispersion. The tribal community was connected through kinship ties, customs, and language and economic interests (Barthélémy, 1990), as well as lifestyle and housing.

The description of this complex process of social structure development depends on established criteria, but the central component is common and characteristic:

1. *family (nuclear)* - father, mother and small children. Similar to the tent (the caravan) is home for the Romani family;
2. *extended family* - *vitsa* (clan) - a community of relatives made up of a few families (brothers with their families);
3. *communal family* - *big vitsa* (clan) - usually has a few dozen members and common ancestors by which they are called. The surnames are the same regardless of the departure of individuals from the big *vitsa* and dispersion;
4. *tribal group* - is made up of two or more big *vitsa* (clan), and can be from ten to more than a hundred tents. They usually recognise the “authority” of the tribal leader (*Lovari, Kalderaši, Arlije...*). They rarely exist in this form if they are mobile, due to organisational difficulties and economic reasons (involvement in work connected to a trade in some area).

The Roma who live in settlements to a certain extent differ from nomads, but elements of this structure exist today. This is most evident in Međimurje, where the Roma live in fourteen satellite settlements according to related rules. The number is between a few dozen to a few hundred (Trnovec).

Today, the Roma live as “**inhabitants**” in **permanent settlements** (more than 50% of the Roma in Europe live in a sedentary way), as **half-nomads** who temporarily take cover during the winter or as **nomads** in tents. Romani settlements have taken on an urban form but some have not changed over the centuries.⁵

The migration of the Roma and/or forms of housing to a large degree depended on the dominant occupations within the tribal group. Since these trades were the basic economic activity that the Roma “maintained” over the centuries, their role was crucial in structuring their lifestyle (residence). In recent times, when these trades do not have primary importance (blacksmithery, woodwork, horse trade, music, collection of scrap metal), the Roma more frequently engage in different types of work, which to a certain extent, determines a different type of habitation.

Since trades are vital for economic support of the Roma, it needs to be stressed that work activity also caused the dispersion of the tribal groups, because their services in particular areas (villages and cities) were limited and their search for work was continual. Some Romani groups, who specialised in particular trades and accepted a sedentary way of life, have almost completely lost some of the essential determinants of ethnic identity (language, customs...) in their continual contact with the local population.

Migration, as a global process, is especially characteristic for the Roma and their lifestyle. Some Romani groups have an absurd position because their sheer poverty hinders their inclusion in nomadic movements, so they remain forgotten, even though migration is the foundation of their lives.

Romani migration is unique, specific and original, since the Roma, in comparison to other nomads whose space for expansion is limited and reduced, are the only people that “wander” throughout the world within a coherent and clearly structured civilisation. The Romani lifestyle emerges from complex historical and social opportunities at the beginning of migration, which later became a way of life, even for groups of half-nomads and for the Roma who continually live in some area.

Besides the migration process, the place and position of the Roma in particular states depends on many other factors such as: the absolute and relative number of Roma in comparison to the majority population, the attained degree of democracy, the historical experiences of coexistence, and the length of residence in the country. Clearly, the full realisation of human and minority rights is the basis for modelling a specific school system for the Roma such that education will become a part of the affirmative policies towards the Romani population.

The status, lifestyle and housing of the Roma in Croatia and the relation towards education – research results

The real-life situation of the Roma in Croatia and their marginal position (demographic data, social and economic structures, lifestyle and migration, and education of Romani children) cannot be read unambiguously from statistics.

The project “The social and developmental position of the Roma in Croatia” - 1998-1999 carried out by the Institute of Social Sciences *Ivo Pilar*, Zagreb was implemented to cover these themes. In the latest project, “The locations of settled Roma - the state and improvement of

settlement development as well as aspirations for types of housing”, emphasis is on housing as an important determinant of position and lifestyle of the Roma (socio-ecological features of the Romani settlement). Some of the results are also significant in the area of education. Namely, low levels of education, a lifestyle that was (or still is) predominantly nomadic, customs, a lack of concern or long-term insufficient concern on the part of the authorities all caused the Roma in Croatia, regardless of different occupations, languages, religions or other characteristics to be more or less socially marginalised.

Spatial marginalisation of the Roma matches other types of marginalisation: economic, cultural and political:

- The Roma are mainly located at the peripheries of cities (and of villages), partly because they do certain types of work;
- A part of the Romani settlement in cities is clearly separated and spatially isolated, which results in reduced contact with the non-Roma population (spatial segregation);
- Most Romani settlements do not have the basic technical infrastructure and the quality of social services is extremely low (lack of kindergartens, schools, health clinics, public transport...).

The consequences of spatial marginalisation are evident in many different areas and to a large measure obstruct the integration of the Roma into society (the community).

Since every coherent strategy of improving the position of the Roma in Croatia includes many relevant components, the area of housing not only presents a starting-point, but a permanent activity in various directions:

- ensure full-time employment among the Roma who are part of the potential work force;
- to make it possible for Romani groups to share residence (urbanisation of the settlement, measures against aggressive and concealed assimilation), along with gradual inclusions into the local community and the promotion of social measures;
- support for the cultural and traditional achievements of the Roma (education, language, artistic works...).

Their specific housing conditions, as already mentioned, to a large measure influence the position of the Romani ethnic minority in Croatia.

The Roma mainly live isolated on the periphery of a settlement. When they live close to an inhabited place they are often separated by some barrier, like a stream or river or railway tracks from their neighbours.

Our research was conducted in 43 Romani settlements (with 968 participants) in ten counties where a considerable number of Roma live.

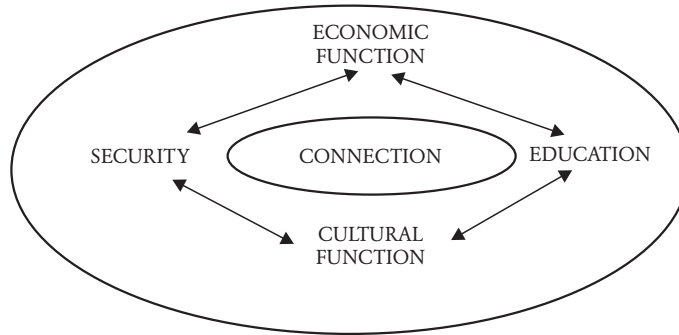
With regard to education of Romani children, especially important are the obtained results that are related to: *characteristics of the Romani family, educational qualifications, which Romani dialect is spoken, the biggest problems of the household and settlement, the perception of needs (the most needed) in settlements, and social distance.*

Since features of the Romani family/household are dealt with in another section of this book, the characteristics of the Romani family that are important for the conceptualisation of specific points of the education system are outlined here.

The structure of existence and functioning of the Romani family is connected with a pre-Indian tradition, original elements that emerged during migration, the adopted archetypal behaviours from the east and peoples where they lived for longer periods, as well as contemporary relations. There were two almost obsolete ways of family formation among the Roma: purchase (exchange) and kidnapping of girls, which are now more or less a symbolical custom. As a rule, marriage takes place between members of the same tribal group. A large number of children is a common feature of the Romani family, though an improvement in the standard of living decreases this number. Children are the main preoccupation in the family; the mother mainly looks after children as well as the household. Through family relations, status in the tribe is regulated; relatives are connected regardless of whether they live in the same area. The position of women is often marginalised, which creates real and psychological problems with regard to the functioning of the family. Children between 10 and 12 years of age often have an important role with regard to the work activities of their parents, which disqualifies them in regular schooling. However, it needs to be emphasised that a child, regardless of age, is protected and secure in a family. The contemporary Romani family has multiple functions: security (biological function), upbringing function, economic function, cultural function, and connection (cohesion).

There is no doubt that the family is a fundamental element of the social structure of the Roma, with a specificity that emerges from a tradition of tribal authority and law. The relations between individual families within a tribal group are regulated by a “judicial” system called the *kris*, which means justice, as well as institutions, councils,

Diagram 1
The wider functions of the
contemporary Romani family



and advice. The competencies of this system are wide: in the resolution of disagreements, arguments, kidnapping of girls, and disrespect for Romani laws. The social structure (tribal and economic system) and the functioning of the Romani family are the basis for shaping an ethnic Romani identity: names, worldview, historical symbols, cultural features and language. Considering the components of social structure among the Roma, a wealth of forms is observed as well as a clear structure of special laws, traditional norms and codes of behaviour.

The new educational function of the Romani family includes aspirations for schooling as well. Earlier, the family was the only place for learning and instruction because the work of the Roma was connected to particular trades in which they continually had to change their places of living. Today, this role is changing since a sedentary lifestyle among the Roma is predominant; this creates suitable conditions for learning and cooperation with school institutions.

Not going to school and/or early dropping out is one of the basic problems of education among the Roma in Croatia (and Europe), which assumes the inauguration of a new approach and implemented models. Since the standard of housing and urbanisation of Romani settlements is one of the important factors that give meaning to educational policies in this area, the possible interventions are necessary.

*Knowledge of the Croatian language and
Romani dialects*

Knowledge of the Croatian language is one of the prerequisites for the inclusion of Romani children into kindergarten/primary school. Even though the number of household members that speak Croatian is relatively high (93.8%), this data does not refer to the degree or level of language knowledge.

Bilingualism among the Roma is most often the case,⁶ since almost all of them speak some dialect of the Romani language (*Romani chib, Ljimba d' bjaš*), as well as Croatian.

The experiences of schools in which there are enrolled Romani pupils have shown that the knowledge of the spoken Romani language is good among these pupils, but their writing skills are poor. In addition, although Romani pupils can understand Croatian, they do not speak it well, which is a problem with regard to the inclusion of these children in primary school.

		Zagreb	Sisak-Moslavina	Varaždin	Primorje-Gorski kotar	Brod-Posavina	Osijek-Baranja	Istria	Međimurje	Other	Total sample
Romani dialects	Romani chib	48.2	8.0	.0	3.8	50.0	8.0	6.1	87.6	2.3	22.3
	Ljimba d' bjaš	4.5	52.3	56.0	87.5	1.1	39.0	63.6	.0	77.8	45.4
	Other	7.1	28.4	13.3	2.5	4.4	31.0	15.2	9.3	16.7	14.6
	Does not speak any dialect	40.2	11.4	30.7	6.3	44.4	22.0	15.2	3.1	3.2	17.8

Source: Field study 2004

Table 2
Which Romani dialect do you speak? (%)

At the beginning of primary school (first and second grade) Romani pupils reach receptive levels of bilingualism, while only a part of the population masters a reproductive degree (independent thinking in the non-native Croatian language, use of a larger number of words and grammatical rules, and repetition of complex sentence forms) at the end of fourth grade. Since a productive degree of bilingualism is a precondition for successful acquisition of the syllabus in higher grades, it is evident why there is a low success rate. Since the Roma are bilingual (multilingual) throughout Croatia, as shown in the results of the research (table 2), this by all means needs to be respected.

The biggest problems of the household and settlement

Education (schooling) of the Roma is undoubtedly an important area with respect to the functioning of the Romani family, as well as the entire settlement, since pre-school and school-aged children are the most numbered group. One way of alleviating this problem is by setting up/building a kindergarten and school in the framework of (larger) settlements. It is not realistic to expect that with the sum of all (possible) existential, health, and housing

circumstances that education will specifically occupy the place that it really deserves. In the segment related to evaluations of the importance of particular problems in the settlement, research results show that around half of the participants consider that a kindergarten (54.7%) and a primary school (48%) are definitely important, while only a small number think that this is not a problem. There are marked differences in particular counties (comparison between Zagreb, Istria and Međimurje) (see table 3) that surface as a result of the different degrees of access, the level of development and proximity of the schools, like the quality of equipment in the settlement.

Since the biggest problems of Romani families stem from poor material conditions (poverty), many consider the availability of more jobs (85.9%) and tidying up the settlement (76.5%) as very important. Poor living conditions and communal standards (spatial segregation exists) are related.

One of the most important life issues for the Roma is poor and inaccessible health protection and services (especially for children) – 59.1% of the participants consider it markedly important to build a health clinic or surgery. A smaller number consider it clearly important to have a social club (42.4%) and religious institutions (37.1%) in Romani settlements. Even though the Roma, in this study, principally claimed to believe in a religion (49% Catholic, 27.9% Islam and 15.6% Orthodox), they are often “temporary” and “occasional” believers. By all means, this can be attributed to their adoption of the religion of the area and even the combination of elements of particular religious beliefs.

Table 3
Evaluation of the importance
of solving particular problems
in the settlement (%)

County problem	County of Istria			County of Međimurje			Zagreb			Total sample		
	Not a problem	Somewhat important	Definitely important	Not a problem	Somewhat important	Definitely important	Not a problem	Somewhat important	Definitely important	Not a problem	Somewhat important	Definitely important
Kindergarten	53.6	21.6	24.7	20.0	18.1	61.9	49.1	12.5	38.4	24.0	21.2	54.7
Primary school	57.3	11.5	31.3	29.6	18.5	51.9	52.7	9.8	37.5	33.5	18.5	48.0
Health clinic or surgery	45.8	9.4	44.8	19.0	14.4	66.7	45.5	8.9	45.5	26.5	14.4	59.1
Social club	49.5	29.9	20.6	25.5	38.9	35.6	39.3	26.8	33.9	25.6	32.0	42.4
More jobs	12.5	9.4	78.1	6.9	11.1	81.9	5.4	11.6	83.0	5.2	8.9	85.9
Tidy/organised settlement	35.4	32.3	32.3	1.9	19.4	78.7	19.6	17.9	62.5	7.5	16.0	76.5
Religious institutions (church, mosques, etc.)	42.7	13.5	43.8	28.8	30.2	40.9	52.7	19.6	27.7	38.1	24.8	37.1

Source: Field study 2004

More indicative are the results related to the biggest problems of the household, where difficulty with schooling of children is expressed by only 4.3% of the participants (table 4).

Education – (kindergarten and primary school) in situations when Romani children do poorly in class, are often absent or disrupt their schooling, have difficult finding employment..., *this is not recognised as a clearly important need, or a real problem by the majority of parents.* And especially not in a supportive role in the social and economic sense, which would have a decisive role in integration processes.

Table 4
The biggest problems of the household (%)*

	Zagreb	Sisak-Moslavina	Varaždin	Primorje-Gorski kotar	Brod-Posavina	Osijek-Baranja	Istria	Medimurje	Other	Total sample
Poor material status (shortage poverty)	47.3	69.8	82.5	72.2	60.0	50.0	55.1	71.0	68.0	64.0
Poor family health	51.8	27.1	12.5	23.4	27.0	32.0	36.7	21.2	20.0	28.0
Difficulty with schooling of children	2.7	6.3	2.5	0.0	5.0	10.0	1.0	5.5	4.0	4.3
Poor housing conditions	23.2	28.1	21.3	20.0	22.0	18.0	11.2	29.0	18.7	22.4
Long distance to place of work	2.7	6.3	3.8	6.6	7.0	3.0	5.1	4.6	5.3	4.8
Unemployment	41.0	33.4	21.3	54.4	23.0	21.0	38.8	22.6	24.0	30.3
Overburdened women (job, family obligations)	0.0	0.0	2.5	1.1	1.0	2.0	4.0	1.8	1.3	1.5
Other	24.1	27.1	48.8	21.1	54.0	60.0	29.6	39.7	52.0	39.1

two answers were possible

Source: Field study 2004

*Social distance*⁷

The integration of the Roma in Croatia (cultural ⇒ structural ⇒ citizen) has a range of specific difficulties. Particular parts of the culture have different influences in the integration process. Extrinsic culture (dress code, patterns of expressing emotion, fixed habits, spoken dialects...) is more often a barrier to integration among the Roma than intrinsic culture (language, beliefs, traditional values, musical taste...).

Reversed acculturation occurred among the Roma; they adapted the customs, religion, tradition and sometimes the language of the majority, but maintained their specific way of life (tribal organisation) and external symbols of difference.

Consequently, the Roma did not even have a chance to selectively integrate (cultural pluralism) or to assimilate. On the one hand, (until today) they have been under pres-

sure to reject their culture, while on the other their structural integration has been simultaneously prevented or restricted (because of social distance, isolation, prejudice, stereotypes...).

Even though the social distance towards different national and ethnic groups in Croatia has been longitudinally traced in the past 15 years, this is one of the first to investigate the social distance of the Roma towards the non-Roma. The obtained results show a minimal social distance - when we take into account the categories - *marriage and close friend*, as many as 78.9% of the Roma would accept a person that is not of Romani nationality (table 5).

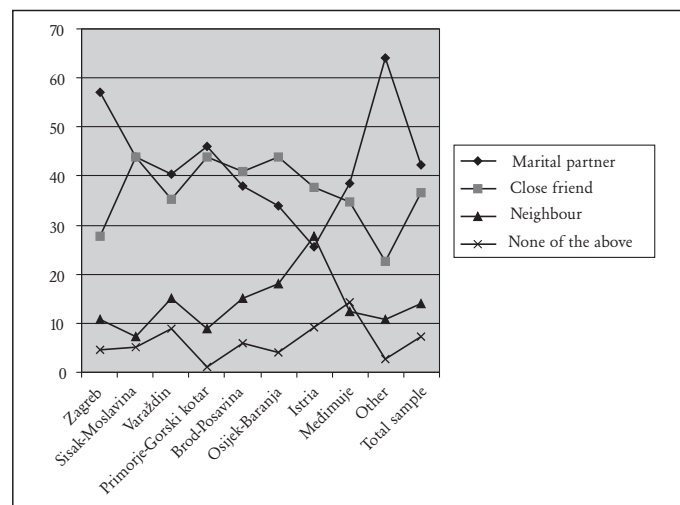
Table 5
I would accept a person that is not of Romani nationality as: (%) (social distance)

Social distance	Zagreb	Sisak-Moslavina	Varaždin	Primorje-Gorski kotar	Brod-Posavina	Osijek-Baranja	Istria	Medimurje	Other	Total sample
Marital partner	57.1	43.8	40.5	46.1	38.0	34.0	25.5	38.4	64.0	42.2
Close friend	27.7	43.8	35.4	43.8	41.0	44.0	37.8	34.7	22.7	36.7
Neighbour	10.7	7.3	15.2	9.0	15.0	18.0	27.6	12.5	10.7	13.9
None of the above	4.5	5.2	8.9	1.1	6.0	4.0	9.2	14.4	2.7	7.3

Source: Field study 2004

These results can be a significant indicator of intercultural orientation since the participants with reference to social distance express attitudes based on specific life situations that they personally experienced, consistent with the norms of the group in which they belong and a general understanding of some national and ethnic groups' reputation (stereotypes, prejudice...).

Graph 2
I would accept a person that is not of Romani nationality as: (%) (social distance)



Secondary school pupils' social distance towards the Roma, in earlier studies,⁸ was considerably large in comparison to other national and ethnic groups (table 6), which could have been the result of a number factors: reduced contact between the Romani and non-Romani populations, prejudices towards the Roma (encounters most often with Romani beggars and resellers), and lack of familiarity with Romani culture (insignificant representation in the media and syllabus).

NATIONAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS	PUPILS - in 1998			N=3970			
	As a marriage partner	As a friend	As a neighbour	As a classmate	As a citizen of Croatia	As a visitor to Croatia	As someone banned from Croatia
1 Albanians	10.2	54.8	47.9	52.1	50.2	36.1	11.2
2 Americans	62.8	80.7	68.1	65.2	61.5	27.3	2.7
3 Bosnians (Muslims)	10.8	47.7	42.0	4.7	41.6	35.8	20.3
4 Montenegrins	10.3	39.2	35.3	37.5	34.9	36.9	24.1
5 Croatians	87.7	83.9	79.1	78.4	78.7	17.0	2.7
6 Hungarians	21.3	63.5	55.3	52.0	48.4	33.6	5.7
7 Germans	48.6	76.1	65.8	61.2	56.1	30.2	3.9
8 Roma	9.1	40.1	33.4	37.3	38.0	36.2	22.0
9 Russians	16.2	50.0	42.9	43.2	39.3	38.1	15.0
10 Slovenians	32.4	66.2	58.0	54.3	50.0	31.5	8.3
11 Serbians	11.3	33.0	28.1	30.5	27.9	26.9	45.4
12 Italians	52.7	73.7	62.8	69.6	54.2	30.3	4.6
13 Jews	15.7	56.1	48.2	47.7	46.0	33.6	14.1

Source: Research study 1991–2001

Table 6
The social distance towards national and ethnic groups

Social distance was less noticeable in areas where the Roma have lived for longer periods and are more represented in the total population (Međimurje) as well as areas where they are more integrated (Podravina, Istria). Nevertheless, our research results showed the opposite. Social closeness towards the non-Roma was the least in the Counties of Istria, Međimurje and Osijek-Baranja which suggests the complexity of social relations between the Roma and non-Roma.

Besides the possible interventions in media space (impact on parents) and the shaping of social zones in which interethnic (and interconfessional) dialogue, cooperation, intercultural relations will be specially valued, schools will

undoubtedly also have important tasks concerning the full acknowledgement of human, national and religious rights as well as the culture of peace.

The complete research results within the framework of the research project "The locations of settled Roma – the state and improvement of settlement development as well as aspirations for types of housing", especially those related to education provide a real base for the conceptualisation of a specific school/class form and model for Romani children.

The education of the Roma in Croatia: Prerequisites for a better quality of life?

The multicultural features of European society are characteristic for Croatia as well. The intercultural approach is especially significant in relations towards the Roma, since contact until now has been burdened by stereotypes, inadequate knowledge of the Romani culture and rare encounters.

The place of the Roma in Europe (and Croatia) can be observed in two ways: like a minority meaning a lifestyle or the culture of a socially marginalised group, which as a result of their specific lifestyle and position are not able to equally participate in the distribution of awards in society (Ogbu, 1978) or like a "ethnic minority" whose members do not belong by birth to the dominant group, in which the Constitution and Laws guarantees all civil rights (and a right to cultural independence) (Spajić, 1996: 288). The position of the minority (ethnic community) for the Roma in Croatia means: dispersion throughout the whole state area; periodical, seasonal migration for work reasons; and life in small isolated communities in settlements or undeveloped sites on the outskirts of the city. The migration of the Roma had different consequences compared to the migration of other peoples; it has not brought them to significant changes in the cultural milieu of immigrant societies. One of the consequences of this position (cultural and ethnic identity) and attitudes towards the Roma in Europe is a relatively low level of tolerance for group plurality and culture (Castles, 1995: 294–301) as well as the existence of different models.

- a) complete exclusion (prevention of migrant entry into country);
- b) differential exclusion (the participation of ethnic groups and migrants in the totality of social life is most often reduced to the labour market through for-

mal and informal mechanisms) or finding ways of transferring the Roma to other countries (return), with financial support to open up the labour market there for the Roma;

- c) assimilation model: inclusion in society through the loss of cultural, language and social qualities, where most activities related to cultural autonomy and education of the Roma is oriented towards their quicker inclusion into the regular educational system without interventions oriented towards their adaptation or supplementary contents and forms specific for Romani identity;
- d) pluralistic model: along with acceptance of the local environment's fundamental values, ethnic communities maintain all specific aspects of their identity and work towards the preservation of Romani culture and ethnic qualities through the intercultural approach.

Many studies have shown that an increase in the number of Romani school pupils does not improve a quality adaptation to the environment. One of the basic problems related to access of Romani children to schooling is the impossibility of establishing contact.

Success at school \Rightarrow better economic or social status

Traditional Romani trades do not require long-term schooling (trades), but early specialisation with instruction from elders (parents) in the tribal group. Moreover, separation from the environment for schooling disrupts the internal integrative dynamics of the group.

The conceptualisation of an education system for the Roma by all means needs to acknowledge the demands of the environment (within the framework of the regular school system) and the Roma. This needs to entail the construction of a new integrative school and not the mechanical reconstruction of the existing. The phenomenon of double marginalisation of Romani children in school and within the environment as well as their insignificant school results often lead to fatigue among both the teachers and children. The schooling of Romani children is immanently a social (in a socio-political context), and not a narrow pedagogical issue. The emphasis is on respecting the compulsoriness of a larger number of Romani children at school, to create a suitable social climate that decreases the possible conflicts (aggression and rejection) between the environment and the Roma.

In comparison to other ethnic minorities in Croatia, there are specific *socio-cultural factors* that hinder the conceptualisation of the education system among the Roma:

- ensuring an existence is a primary task for a part of the Roma population in Croatia, so they do not even think about the possible positive effects of an education for their children;
- the urbanisation of the settlement – Romani settlements are mainly located on the periphery of cities or outside villages (spatial segregation). Urbanisation issues include the creation of more suitable life conditions as well as acknowledging Romani desires;
- the employment of the Roma – since almost a half of the Roma population belongs to the below 20 age group, employment is a crucial step towards economic independence of young parents, which by all means has an impact on family upbringing and schooling of children. The Roma do not even have a formal possibility of finding employment since a relatively small number of Romani pupils finish primary school and only some individuals continue their schooling in a secondary school. Only a small number of Roma have succeeded to adapt to the changes (or they already did similar work in countries from which they migrated) and completely solve their existential problems. A potential possibility for a part of the Roma population (along with a larger number of pupils that finish primary and secondary school to ensure more employment opportunities) is the encouragement of old trades and cottage industries in a new sense (production of souvenirs, hand-made articles, use of products that are not industrially produced...). In this way the Roma can earn a living in ways that they are accustomed to. Perhaps in the next period so-called positive discrimination of the Roma with regard to employment will be necessary to improve integration and diminish marginalisation.
- Programme of social welfare – along with the existing measure that the Roma use, *it would be worthwhile to target schooling and the urbanisation of settlements in the programme of social welfare*;
- the self-organisation of the Roma – even though the Roma have been in Croatia for more than six centuries, they have not (in entirety) built up their national community, which hinders the realisation of some of their rights and they have not found a common activity programme. *Most Roma are still actually and formally outside of associations and organisations.*

The social integration of the Roma (that does not imply neglecting identity, culture, tradition and the past) assumes, first of all, the prevention of Romani population ghettoisation. The Roma themselves in choosing social dis-

tance as a mode of “communication” with the non-Roma population have preserved their special qualities and relatively successfully procrastinated or slowed down assimilation processes towards integration processes in Croatian society. Superficial and rare contacts of the Roma with members of the majority group often have created and maintained prejudices and stereotypes about the Roma, as well as noticeable social distance. One of the social objectives is to help the Roma break away from ghettoised marginal communities. Social integration is not a negation of Romani special qualities and erasure of their socio-cultural identity. The concept of integration should be understood as acceptance and inclusion in the ordinary processes that occur in the social environment. In this context, it is very important to improve the socio-economic status of the Roma, especially their housing conditions, which is not possible without state and societal support (urbanisation and the building of standard Romani settlements). The experience of some countries has shown the usefulness of establishing a common entity (representatives of local government and the Roma), that would analyse and monitor the state of affairs (housing, health and social welfare, employment, education...) of the Romani population in particular areas. First, the concept of social integration implies acceptance of rights and duties in existing legal documents, including those related to the education system (formal and real), employment and the realisation of specific minority rights (Štambuk, 2000: 198).

With regard to outlining the elements or the structure of specific forms of education for the Roma the authorities and the Romani ethnic minority community have to acknowledge the following:

1. The special quality of the Romani ethnic and cultural identity (language, tribal and economic structure, culture and art, religious affiliation, lifestyle...);
2. The theoretical framework of particular aspects of education of the Roma in the world and Croatia;
3. Actual number, dispersion and way of life/housing of the Romani population in Croatia;
4. Guidelines and models of European associations (like the national programmes of education of the Roma throughout the world), the possibilities within legislation in Croatia as well as the experience of other ethnic minorities in Croatia with developed specific elements of the school system;
5. Realistic possibilities within existing school system and organisation of classes in the language of the ethnic minority;

6. An intercultural approach, on the basis of research results and implementation of specific schools and classes for the Roma;
7. Evaluation of future progress in the area of housing for the Roma and/or aspirations towards particular forms of housing.

One of the possible indicators is perception/opinion about housing for future generations within present-day settlements. If we exclude the factor of unrealistic expectations or nice wishes for our children, brought about by general dissatisfaction with the present way of housing (57.1% of respondents consider that their housing issue is not solved or solved very poorly and poorly) and it can be assumed that this situation will continue for some time. At least 38.7% of parents think that their children will stay on in their present-day places of living, and 31.3% do not know (cannot foresee whether their children will stay or move away). 18.9% of Romani parents envisage that their children will leave the settlement, while one or more children have already moved away in only 3.8% of families (table 7).

Table 7
Do you think that your children will stay on in the settlement or move away? (%)

	Zagreb	Sisak-Moslavina	Varaždin	Primorje-Gorski kotar	Brod-Posavina	Osijek-Baranja	Istria	Međimurje	Other	Total sample
I believe that they will stay	42.0	42.7	31.6	47.2	43.0	24.0	51.0	28.7	53.3	38.7
I believe that they will move away	14.3	10.4	29.1	27.0	6.0	23.0	14.6	27.3	9.3	18.9
One or more children have already moved away	3.6	3.1	1.3	1.1	.0	8.0	4.2	6.5	2.7	3.8
I don't know, can't say	33.0	41.7	29.1	18.0	32.0	36.0	19.8	34.3	32.0	31.3
I don't have children	7.1	2.1	8.9	6.7	19.0	9.0	10.4	3.2	2.7	7.3

Source: Field study 2004

The existing education system in the Republic of Croatia, even though it offers equal opportunities to all children, is not flexible enough to suit the specific needs of Romani pupils and does not respect the Romani way of life and forms of housing. We can conclude that innovations, like the *gradual establishment of the complete and a specific education system for the Roma* are indispensable given the following: a small number of Romani children are included in preschool education; that schools are not based on the Romani language and writing system (bilingual classes, content on the special quality of the Roma); that there are no Romani teachers or someone who knows

Romani in the regular school system; that the success rate in primary school is very low (and that only a small number of students pass in secondary school); that there are no textbooks and handbooks for classes in the Romani language (except a beginner's book on *Romani chib*). The experience of other countries in Europe⁹ can in any case be significant in the area of housing as well as schooling of the Roma.

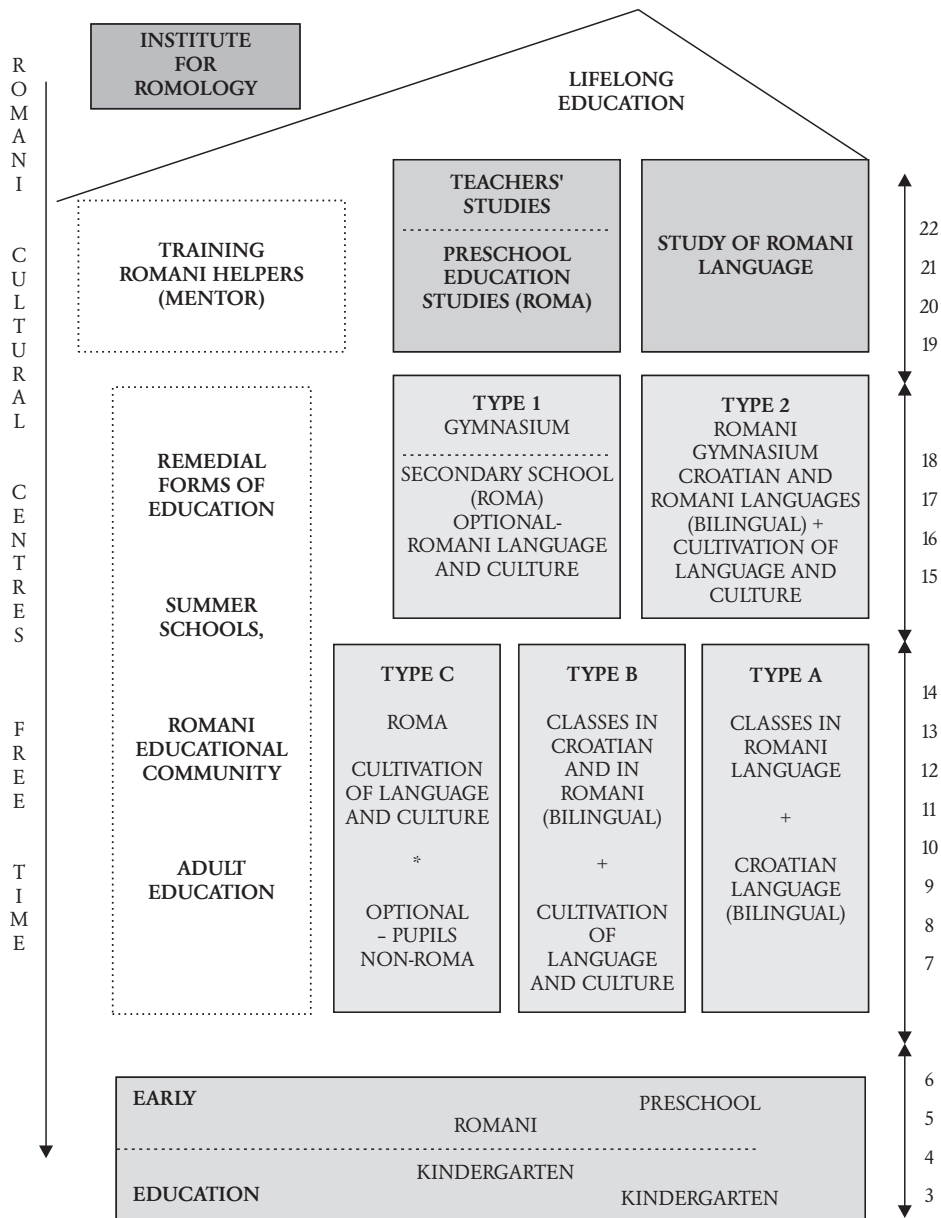
Acknowledging the differences in approaches, education of the Roma in Europe has some common characteristics. Along with becoming familiar with the mutual relations between Romani and European culture, an important element in the conception of education of the Roma is the relation and preparations for communication in a multicultural environment, which implies the realisation of cooperative connections between: pupils, parents, school, (local) authorities, scientific institutions, non-governmental organisations, and the Romani community. Teaching and activities towards preserving human rights and democratic values is the basis for an intercultural approach at school.

By all means, the entire proposal needs to fully acknowledge the original assumption to expect future development (scheme 2). In this wider context, early and primary school education will be described only, while the complete system includes all segments: secondary school, the schooling of Romani kindergarten teachers and school teachers, the training of Romani helpers (mentors), and different remedial forms of education.

Preschool education - *The Romani kindergarten*¹⁰ (within the framework of the Romani settlement or outside of it) in which Romani along with Croatian would be the spoken languages could be the basic type of institution for the education of Romani children of preschool age. Considering the current impossibility of including more Romani children in kindergartens (3-7 years), solutions are possible in two directions: *to intensify the building of kindergartens in Romani settlements*, or in places near the settlement (bilingual groups) or to consistently *carry out a preschool education programme* (as compulsory for all children who are not part of a basic kindergarten programme).

Primary school is the most important segment (in present-day conditions) for the Roma, since a large number of pupils do not finish school and do not have possibilities to continue their schooling. Subsequently, they can only find employment in simple, seasonal and poorly valued jobs. For Romani pupils, the anticipated forms of classes in the language and writing system of the ethnic

Scheme 2
Proposal of the Croatian model of education for the Roma



minority have not been realised. Acknowledging the actual language status of Romani pupils, it would be necessary to organise three basic type-models (forms) of classes in the Romani language.

Type A - primary school: anticipated for areas where there are a considerable number of Romani pupils and where *Romani language* is predominantly used by Romani

children. A lack of knowledge (or inadequate knowledge) of the Croatian language presents a clear difficulty in the realisation of a syllabus. All classes would be held in the Romani language and writing system. Supplementary class material on the special qualities of the Romani ethnic minority (Romani language and literature, history, geography...) would be realised throughout the primary school years.

Romani pupils would also compulsorily learn the Croatian language in this programme of Romani language and writing system.

Type-A primary school is more suitable for the lower grades, within the framework of Romani settlements, where pupils upon completion could continue their schooling in a type-A school or in higher grades or transfer to a type-B primary school. The importance of organising schools with classes in the Romani language (four or eight grades) or in large Romani settlements (which would also go together with the process of urbanisation) is exceptional – as a place of education as well as the cultivation of the Romani language and culture. A “Romani” primary school supplements the activities of a Romani cultural centre, as a meeting place and a place where pupils can spend their free time: library, reading room, clubs, associations...

Type - B primary school: would be realised in areas where there are a significant number of Romani pupils (like in type-A and in parts of Romani settlements or in larger cities), where they know Romani and Croatian well enough to follow classes in both languages—bilingual, multilingual areas.

Both the Roma and non-Roma can attend bilingual classes, which would be especially significant in mixed areas for mutual understanding and better integration of the Roma.

Type - C primary school: realisation of a type-C primary school and associated organisational forms make its wider application possible in different areas: majority Romani population (Romani language-spoken), mixed, Romani population (Romani language is not in daily use), particular schools in larger cities that would be attended by Romani pupils (and non-Roma) from schools in the wider area. The syllabus is identical to classes in Croatian, but Romani pupils choose optional classes related to the special quality of the Romani ethnic minority (Romani language and literature, history, geography...) to preserve ethnic and cultural identity.

Conclusion

Without diminishing the importance of a complete, systematic study of numerous phenomena connected to the Roma: language, ethnic culture and art, social and economic structure, marginalisation, social integration... in fact, housing like education are a special synthesis of different starting points and uniqueness in approach.

Integration in all segments of society and the indisputable need to preserve culture, tradition and lifestyle for the Romani ethnic community is crucial, along with improvement of their socio-economic position.

A qualitative advancement in the social integration and cultural autonomy of the Roma in Croatia is only possible to achieve by acknowledging all the specific qualities and through prompt but systematic activity according to consistent implementation of the achieved standards of other ethnic minorities. The initial results commit state institutions and the Romani ethnic community to cooperate and to be realistic so that Croatian Roma can preserve their ethnic identity, realise their minority rights, stop living in ghettoised, non-urban settlements as unemployed persons on social welfare. In this context, urbanisation, the improvement of living spaces and settlements (locations of settled Roma) presents a priority task especially since Romani settlements/localities are often outside of building zone areas that as a rule have unsuitable/poor public utilities and facilities and where the Roma do not have ownership.

Every further improvisation and lack of initiative further marginalises the Roma, who in Croatia, on the basis of historical experiences and events, can be valuable and recognisable parts of a multicultural environment.

Although the structural conceptualisation of specific school and class types in Romani language at the very beginning is on the basis of a research theoretical framework, research project results, experimental programmes, etc. it can be assumed that the structural process of specific forms of education for members of the Romani ethnic minority will be realised on a scientific basis and pedagogically in a competent way.

FOOTNOTES

¹ The beginning of migration of the Roma dates back to the period of the Persian Shah, I. Ardashira (224-241). The reasons for migration include lack of security in the northern areas of India where the Roma lived as well as internal social differences (caste), which can be established by comparing religious symbols and beliefs of the period,

which the Roma brought into Europe from India and Persia (Kerrick, 1994: 17).

- ² Throughout history, the migration of the Roma has been regularly accompanied by distrust, repulsion, and different forms of discrimination and injury, largely due to the indisputable attitude of the community and not as a reflection of Roma's undesirable, traditional lifestyle in closed Romani settlements or continuous (temporary) migrations.
- ³ "Gypsy settlements" are not permitted in forests (partibus sylvosis) - in gypsy tents, but rather Gypsies should settle in areas where there are no forests, in sections of arable land, so that they can get used to farming. Gypsies do not need any other head except for the local leader, which means that they lose the right to have their own leader (cassatis jam alioquin Vajvodis). Gypsy children from the age of four onwards need to disperse to nearby places every two years (per gremialia loca). Parish priests will take care of their educational welfare. Gypsy wandering is forbidden and "regular" sedentary gypsies can exceptionally, in cases of need, be given passports to go to the fairs, but these needs have to be monitored (Matasović, 1928: 3).
- ⁴ The last major migration of the Roma to Croatia was about twenty years ago: from Kosovo (894), Bosnia-Herzegovina (421), Serbia (202) and Macedonia (178). At this time, the *Arlije*, *Gurbeti* and *Čergari* groups arrived, which today are mainly concentrated in urban populations (Zagreb, Rijeka, Pula...). In total, 1,888 Roma migrated, while 1,180 migrated to the interiors of Croatia. During the Homeland War, some Romani groups came from Bosnia-Herzegovina to Croatia, stayed for a short period and then left for another European country.
- ⁵ Until recently in Croatia, it was possible to find homes that were dug half underground, while upper parts were made out of clay and wood (e.g., in the Romani settlement, *Stiska* - Đurđevački pijesci Đurđevac and some settlements in Međimurje). The huts were covered with materials such as cardboard or sheet metal and were 3 x 3.5m in size. Mattresses for sleeping, meagre "furniture" and a fireplace or stove could be found inside these huts. Family life often including many generations and lots of children took place in these huts. The level and hygienic standards of these living conditions are very low, as in bands where people sleep in tents or in caravans. Begging, collection of herbs and scrap metal are often the compatible "occupations" of people that live in this way.
- ⁶ Bilingualism - in a narrow sense: a person who has more or less command over two languages; - in a wider sense: a social phenomenon when an individual, a part or the entire ethnic minority systematically use their native language and the language of another people (Rosandić, 1983: 15).
- ⁷ Social distance is a concept that measures our personal attitude towards members of other groups: national, religious, sexual... (a group that behaves differently from the group that we belong to). Social distance "social gap" tells us to what degree some groups are close or further from other (Mijatović and Previšić, 1999: 18).
- ⁸ A part of the research within the framework of the scientific research projects "Genealogy and the transfer model of interculturalism" and "School syllabus and features of Croatian national culture" in the period 1991-2001. Participants included: Vlatko Previšić, project coordinator, Vlatka Domović, Zlata Godler, Stjepan Jagić, Đurđa Jureša-Per-

Neven Hrvatić

**The Education of the Roma
in Croatia: Prerequisites for
a Better Quality of Life?**

soglio, Vjeran Katunarić, Antun Mijatović, Elvi Piršl, Koraljka Posavec, Gordana Uzelac, Dijana Vican, Vinko Zidarić, Amzi Zimberi, Ante Žužul and Neven Hrvatić.

⁹ An interesting example can be found in *Italy* where education of the Roma is approached from different perspectives between traditional and new pedagogical projects. According to data from the Centre for nomads, some of the first schools for the Roma opened up in the surroundings of Torin in 1973/74. Romani children had to be picked up from camps in the area and taken to school. The basic precondition of success was the establishment of trust and continual contact with parents (teachers started to learn Romani chib). At the beginning, little Romani children adopted hygienic practices, participated in the preparation of food (traditional Romani food), and the classes were individualised with no grades. Achievement, activity as well as acknowledgement of capability and previous knowledge were valued. Romani pupils learned to read and write, read Romani newspapers and they often visited other schools and institutions to intensify the process of socialisation. Classes were held periodically (*Roma-Sinta* families travel in autumn), and in spring the teachers held classes in the Romani camps, out in the open in the context of life of Romani group. Research on the possibilities of organising a primary school in Piacenzi in which Romani children from six surrounding settlements would attend confirmed the need for an intercultural approach in class. Marginality, a specific life style and socio-cultural specificity shape the programme, form of education and class methods. Namely, the percentage of Romani children in the first two grades was more than 30%, but by the fifth grade this (often) falls to 7.5%. Moreover, out of the enrolled Romani pupils, only 55% regularly attend class, while just 25% successfully master the syllabus (Novara, 1990, 10-11).

¹⁰ In the last five years, since the implementation of the Law, the inclusion of Romani children in preschool and different programmes has been growing. In 2002, 512 children in 21 groups were included in programmes of preschool education.