

Recommendation No R (2000) 4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe

(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 3 February 2000 at the 696th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity between its members and that this aim may be pursued, in particular, through common action in the field of education;

Recognising that there is an urgent need to build new foundations for future educational strategies toward the Roma/Gypsy people in Europe, particularly in view of the high rates of illiteracy or semi-literacy among them, their high drop-out rate, the low percentage of students completing primary education and the persistence of features such as low school attendance;

Noting that the problems faced by Roma/Gypsies in the field of schooling are largely the result of long-standing educational policies of the past, which led either to assimilation or to segregation of Roma/Gypsy children at school on the grounds that they were "socially and culturally handicapped";

Considering that the disadvantaged position of Roma/Gypsies in European societies cannot be overcome unless equality of opportunity in the field of education is guaranteed for Roma/Gypsy children;

Considering that the education of Roma/Gypsy children should be a priority in national policies in favour of Roma/Gypsies;

Bearing in mind that policies aimed at addressing the problems faced by Roma/Gypsies in the field of education should be comprehensive, based on an acknowledgement that the issue of schooling for Roma/Gypsy children is linked with a wide range of other factors and pre-conditions, namely the economic, social and cultural aspects, and the fight against racism and discrimination;

Bearing in mind that educational policies in favour of Roma/Gypsy children should be backed up by an active adult education and vocational education policy;

Considering that, as there is a text concerning the education of Roma/Gypsy children for member states of the European Union (Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of Education meeting with the Council on School Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Children, of 22 May 1989; 89/C 153/02), it is urgently necessary to have a text covering all of the member states of the Council of Europe;

Bearing in mind the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages;

Bearing in mind Recommendations 563 (1969) and 1203 (1993) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in which mention is made of the

educational needs of Roma/Gypsies in Europe;

Bearing in mind Resolutions 125 (1981), 16 (1995) and 249 (1993) and Recommendation 11 (1995) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe on the situation of Roma/Gypsies in Europe;

Bearing in mind General Policy Recommendation No. 3 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance on "Combating racism and discrimination against Roma/Gypsies in Europe";

Bearing in mind the work carried out by the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC) to respond to Resolution 125 (1981), and in particular, the publication of the report "Gypsies and Travellers" (1985), updated in 1994 ("Roma, Gypsies, Travellers", Council of Europe Publishing);

Having welcomed the memorandum prepared by the Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies entitled "Roma Children Education Policy Paper: Strategic Elements of Education Policy for Roma Children in Europe" (MG-S-ROM (97) 11),

Recommends that in implementing their education policies the governments of the member states:

- be guided by the principles set out in the appendix to this Recommendation;
- bring this Recommendation to the attention of the relevant public bodies in their respective countries through the appropriate national channels.

Appendix to Recommendation No. R (2000) 4

*Guiding principles of an education policy
for Roma/Gypsy children in Europe*

I. Structures

1. Educational policies for Roma/Gypsy children should be accompanied by adequate resources and the flexible structures necessary to meet the diversity of the Roma/Gypsy population in Europe and which take into account the existence of Roma/Gypsy groups which lead an itinerant or semi-itinerant lifestyle. In this respect, it might be envisaged having recourse to distance education, based on new communication technologies.

2. Emphasis should be put on the need to better co-ordinate the international, national, regional and local levels in order to avoid dispersion of efforts and to promote synergies.

3. To this end member states should make the Ministries of Education sensitive to

the question of education of Roma/Gypsy children.

4. In order to secure access to school for Roma/Gypsy children, pre-school education schemes should be widely developed and made accessible to them.

5. Particular attention should also be paid to the need to ensure better communication with parents, where necessary using mediators from the Roma/Gypsy community which could then lead to specific career possibilities. Special information and advice should be given to parents about the necessity of education and about the support mechanisms that municipalities can offer families. There has to be mutual understanding between parents and schools. The parents' exclusion and lack of knowledge and education (even illiteracy) also prevent children from benefiting from the education system.

6. Appropriate support structures should be set up in order to enable Roma/Gypsy children to benefit, in particular through positive action, from equal opportunities at school.

7. The member states are invited to provide the necessary means to implement the above-mentioned policies and arrangements in order to close the gap between Roma/Gypsy pupils and majority pupils.

II. Curriculum and teaching material

8. Educational policies in favour of Roma/Gypsy children should be implemented in the framework of broader intercultural policies, taking into account the particular features of the Romani culture and the disadvantaged position of many Roma/Gypsies in the member states.

9. The curriculum, on the whole, and the teaching material should therefore be designed so as to take into account the cultural identity of Roma/Gypsy children. Romani history and culture should be introduced in the teaching material in order to reflect the cultural identity of Roma/Gypsy children. The participation of representatives of the Roma/Gypsy community should be encouraged in the development of teaching material on the history, culture or language of the Roma/Gypsies.

10. However, the member states should ensure that this does not lead to the establishment of separate curricula, which might lead to the setting up of separate classes.

11. The member states should also encourage the development of teaching material based on good practices in order to assist teachers in their daily work with Roma/Gypsy pupils.

12. In the countries where the Romani language is spoken, opportunities to learn in the mother tongue should be offered at school to Roma/Gypsy children.

III. Recruitment and training of teachers

13. It is important that future teachers should be provided with specific knowledge and training to help them understand better their Roma/Gypsy pupils. The education of Roma/Gypsy pupils should however remain an integral part of the general educational system.

14. The Roma/Gypsy community should be involved in the designing of such curricula and should be directly involved in the delivery of information to future teachers.

15. Support should also be given to the training and recruitment of teachers from within the Roma/Gypsy community.

IV. Information research and assessment

16. The member states should encourage innovative research/small-scale action projects in order to find local responses to local needs. The results of such projects should be disseminated.

17. The results of educational policies for Roma/Gypsy pupils should be carefully monitored. All the participants involved in the education of Roma/Gypsy children (school authorities, teachers, parents, non-governmental organisations) should be invited to take part in the monitoring process.

18. The evaluation of the results of educational policies towards Roma/Gypsy children should take account of many criteria, including personal and social development, and not be limited to estimates of school attendance and drop-out rates.

V. Consultation and co-ordination

19. The involvement of all parties concerned (ministry of education, school authorities, Roma families and organisations) in the design, implementation and monitoring of education policies for Roma/Gypsies should be promoted by the state.

20. Use should also be made of mediators from within the Roma/Gypsy community, in particular to ease the contacts between Roma/Gypsies, the majority population and schools and to avoid conflicts at school; this should apply to all levels of schooling.

21. The Ministries of Education, in the framework of the awareness-raising action mentioned in point I, paragraph 3, above should facilitate the co-ordination of the efforts of the different parties involved and permit the channelling of information between the different levels of education authorities.

22. Member states should further encourage and support the exchange of experience and good practice