

**Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the education of Roma and Travellers in Europe**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 17 June 2009 at the 1061st 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;

Bearing in mind that special attention needs to be given to ensuring that Roma and Travellers fully enjoy equal rights, as specified in the 1950 Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ETS No. 5), in particular in Article 14 (Prohibition of discrimination), in the 1952 Protocol thereto (ETS No. 9), in particular in its Article 2 (Right to education), and in the 2000 Protocol No. 12 thereto (ETS No. 177), in the 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No. 157), in the 1992 European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148), in the 1961 European Social Charter (ETS No. 35), as well as in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;

Recalling its Recommendation No. R (2000) 4 on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe and its implementation through the Steering Committee for Education (CDED) project "Education of Roma children in Europe" (2002-2009);

Having regard to its Recommendation Rec(2001)15 on history teaching in 21st century Europe;

Recalling its Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)5 on policies for Roma and/or Travellers in Europe;

Considering the statements included in the Action Plan adopted by the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Warsaw, 16-17 May 2005) and in the Final Declaration of the 22nd session of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education, on "Building a more humane and inclusive Europe: role of education policies" (Istanbul, 4-5 May 2007);

Recalling the General Policy Recommendation No. 3 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies (6 March 1998), as well as the General Policy Recommendations No. 7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination (13 December 2002) and No. 10 on combating racism and racial discrimination in and through school education (15 December 2006);

Considering the recommendations and policy orientations included in the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living together as equals in dignity", launched at the 118th Session of the Committee of Ministers (Strasbourg, 7 May 2008);

Taking into consideration the weight of centuries-old discrimination and rejection of Roma and Travellers and the persistence of widespread inequalities and difficulties in the field of education that affect Roma and Traveller children across Europe;

Noting that the problems faced by Roma and Travellers in the field of schooling are also the result of long-standing educational policies of the past, which can lead either to assimilation or to segregation of Roma and Traveller children at school on the grounds that they were “socially and culturally handicapped”;

Condemning the existence of situations of de facto segregation in schooling, as recalled by recent judgments of the European Court of Human Rights concerning the education of Roma children;

Considering that the disadvantaged position of Roma and Travellers in European societies cannot be overcome unless access to quality education is guaranteed for Roma and Traveller children;

Taking into consideration the new challenges raised by the recent intra-European migration phenomenon, that engages numerous Roma children in temporary or permanent residence in other member states, with negative consequences for access to education and recognition of acquired competencies;

Emphasising the need for a holistic approach, in particular in the fields of health care and housing, focused on providing full access to human rights, while compensating the effects of social inequalities, combating racism and discrimination and promoting respect for cultural specificities;

Recognising the progress made in this field at national, regional and European levels, including the mentioning of education as a key area of action in the countries that have elaborated national strategies for the improvement of the situation of Roma, and the commitments expressed by a dozen member states in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015);

Appreciating the important contribution of the Steering Committee for Education (CDED) project “Education for Roma children in Europe” (2002-2009), in terms of facilitating European-level exchanges among key stakeholders and of delivering concrete instruments for policy development and educational practice,

1. Recommends that the governments of member states, with due regard for their constitutional structures, national or local situations and educational systems:

*a.* draw on the principles set out in the appendix to this recommendation in their current or future educational reforms;

*b.* elaborate, disseminate and implement education policies focusing on ensuring non-discriminatory access to quality education for Roma and Traveller children, based on the orientations set out in the appendix to this recommendation;

*c.* bring this recommendation to the attention of the relevant public bodies in their respective countries through the appropriate national and linguistic channels;

d. ensure, through local and regional authorities, that Roma and Traveller children are effectively accepted in school;

e. monitor and evaluate the implementation of the provisions of this recommendation into their policies, and inform the Steering Committee for Education of the measures undertaken and progress achieved.

2. Calls on the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to bring this recommendation to the attention of the States Parties to the 1954 European Cultural Convention (ETS No. 18) that are not members of the Council of Europe.

*Appendix to Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)4*

**I. Principles of policies**

1. Educational policies aiming at ensuring non-discriminatory access to quality education for Roma and Traveller children should be devised at national level. These policies should be formulated with a view to guaranteeing access to quality education with dignity and respect, based on the principles of human rights and on the rights of the child. Existing educational policies need to be reviewed to identify actual and potential hindrances preventing Roma and Traveller children from enjoying full rights in the field of education.

2. In consultation with the national/international Roma and Travellers stakeholders, educational policies should include references to Roma and Travellers as part of wider recognition of cultural and/or linguistic diversity and should, where appropriate, provide opportunities for Roma and Traveller children to benefit from instruction in/of their mother tongue, based on the principles set out in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

3. The whole cycle of policy making should be taken into account when designing or adapting educational policies for Roma and Travellers. Balanced attention should be placed on needs assessment as well as policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, while effective Roma and Traveller participation should be enhanced at all levels and in all phases of the policy cycle.

4. Educational policies for Roma and Traveller children should be accompanied by adequate resources and the flexible structures necessary to accommodate the diversity of the Roma and Traveller communities in Europe and which take into account, where appropriate, the existence of groups leading a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle.

5. Member states should ensure that legal measures are in place to prohibit segregation on racial or ethnic grounds in education, with effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions, and that the law is effectively implemented. Where de facto segregation of Roma and Traveller children based on their racial or ethnic origin exists, authorities should implement desegregation measures. Policies and measures taken to fight segregation should be accompanied by appropriate training of educational staff and information for parents.

6. Educational authorities should set up assessment procedures that do not result in risks of enrolling children in special-education institutions based on linguistic, ethnic, cultural or social differences but facilitate access to schooling. Roma and Traveller representatives should be involved in defining and monitoring these procedures.

7. Member states should ensure effective co-ordination of educational policies with the policies in other sectors, including social policies, as well as with similar authorities in other countries.

8. Special attention must be given to ensuring full access to all levels of education for Roma and Traveller children whose families have a nomadic way of life, are engaged in temporary migration or have been forced to quit their location of unauthorised encampment or forced to leave their countries or areas of origin, as well as for internally displaced persons or refugees.

## **II. Structures and provision for access to education**

9. Roma and Travellers should be provided with unhindered access to mainstream education at all levels subject to the same criteria as the majority population. To accomplish this goal, imaginative and flexible initiatives should be taken as required in terms of educational policy and practice. Appropriate measures should also be taken to ensure equal access to educational, cultural, linguistic and vocational opportunities offered to all learners, with particular attention to Roma and Traveller girls and women.

10. Attendance of preschool education for Roma and Traveller children should be encouraged, under equal conditions as for other children, and enrolment in preschool education should be promoted if necessary by providing specific support measures.

11. Access of Roma and Traveller children to compulsory education should be facilitated and subject to the same criteria as the majority population, with particular emphasis on the transition from preschool to primary education, and from primary to secondary education. Special provisions for preventing school drop out and stimulating the return to school of those who did not finish compulsory education should be made available.

12. Access of Roma and Travellers to vocational training should be adapted and supported through targeted measures and culturally sensitive adult education programmes should be implemented. Furthermore, in absence of diplomas, the validation of knowledge acquired by experience should be encouraged.

13. Access to upper secondary and university education should be facilitated for Roma and Travellers.

14. Schools should make strong efforts to engage Roma and Traveller parents in school-related activities in order to enhance mutual understanding. When involving parents, the school must respect their values and culture and acknowledge their contribution to the education of their children.

15. School mediators and/or assistants recruited from Roma and Traveller communities should be employed to facilitate the relations between teachers and Roma or Traveller families, as well as between schools and the Roma or Traveller community. They should be provided with adequate training and support and be accepted as far as possible as full members of the school's professional team.

### **III. Curriculum, teaching material and teacher training**

16. Intercultural learning and combating racism and discrimination should be explicitly recognised as priorities of the education process and should be a key element of school ethos. Curriculum, textbooks and other support materials should promote intercultural dialogue and raise awareness on stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination in general including against Roma and Travellers.

17. Roma history and culture should be appropriately reflected in the general curriculum, including teaching about the Roma extermination as part of the Holocaust/genocide of Roma.

18. In accordance with the provisions of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995) (ETS No. 157) and of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) (ETS No. 148), curriculum and teaching materials should be made available, where appropriate, for Roma and Traveller children (and other children by choice) to learn their language, history and culture.

19. Educational authorities should ensure that all teachers, and particularly those working in ethnically mixed classes, receive specialised training on intercultural education, with a special regard to Roma and Travellers. Such training should be included in officially recognised programmes and should be made available in various forms, including distance and online learning, summer schools, etc.

20. Teachers working directly with Roma and Traveller children should be adequately supported by Roma or Traveller mediators or assistants and should be made aware that they need to engage Roma and Traveller children more in all educational activities and not de-motivate them by placing lower demands upon them and encourage them to develop their full potential.

21. Good practices based on an integrated whole-school approach, including training for school managers, teachers, mediators or assistants, activities targeting parents, measures to stimulate school participation at all levels, to prevent and combat segregation and discrimination in general, and to promote effective intercultural dialogue in the local community, should be taken as references and expanded.

### **IV. European exchanges, sharing experiences and good practices**

22. All stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of educational policies aiming at providing non-discriminatory access to quality education for Roma and Traveller children, including policy makers, curriculum and textbook authors, inspectors, teachers, mediators and assistants, should be given opportunities to participate in national and European exchanges.

23. Scholarships should be provided for Roma students, as well as teachers and teacher assistants who would be able to teach the Romani language.

24. Opportunities for the exchange of good practices and materials in the field of education for Roma and Traveller children should be given to educational professionals and to representatives of Roma and Traveller organisations concerned.

25. The materials elaborated in the Council of Europe project “Education for Roma Children in Europe” (2002-2009), such as the collection of pedagogical fact sheets on Roma history, the teaching kit, the guide for Roma school mediators or assistants, and the reference framework for educational policies in favour of Roma, Sinti and Travellers, as well as other tools developed by other Council of Europe sectors, such as the framework curriculum for the Romani language or the kit for combating prejudices and stereotypes that was produced in the framework of the Dosta! awareness-raising campaign, should be widely disseminated and used in implementing the above-mentioned provisions.

26. Education authorities in member states should support the development of co-ordinated and integrated approaches at European level in this field, as well as increased synergy among different international and European organisations.