



**MAPPING OF PARTICIPATION OF ROMA AND SINTI  
CHILDREN IN EARLY EDUCATION PROCESSES WITHIN  
THE OSCE REGION**

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## PREFACE

The 2003 Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area declares that “education is a prerequisite to the participation of Roma and Sinti people in the political, social and economic life of their respective countries on a footing of equality with others.” At the same time, the ODIHR Status Report on the implementation of the Action Plan issued in 2008 points to the challenges of discrimination, marginalization and segregation which still prevail for Roma children in school systems. Throughout the OSCE area the Roma and Sinti population shows much lower education levels and a higher rate of illiteracy compared to the majority population and, as the Report notes, the gap between the education levels of majority and Roma children is widening. While the past decade has seen limited improvements in this regard, most of the negative features of the education situation continue unchanged.

Recognizing the importance of early education as an instrument for preventing social exclusion and marginalization and, in particular, for overcoming the practice of channeling Roma children into special education, in 2008 the OSCE Ministerial Council in Helsinki adopted a decision on Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area.<sup>1</sup> The Decision highlights the need to increase focus on one strategic area, such as early education, as an instrument for preventing social exclusion and marginalization, thus improving the situation of Roma and Sinti in the long term.

The Decision urges the participating States to provide equal access to education and to promote early education for Roma and Sinti children. This commitment was reiterated in December 2009 in Ministerial Council Decision no. 8/09 which calls upon the participating States to “address education for Roma and Sinti in a comprehensive manner, with special attention to ensuring equal access to education and integrating Roma and Sinti into mainstream education”. Making education systems more inclusive and accommodating still seems to pose a challenge, as many Roma and Sinti children end up in special education or segregated schooling.

To counter negative trends affecting Roma and Sinti children's education, a number of reports<sup>2</sup> call on governments to implement pre-school education programs. Reaching Roma and Sinti children before they enter primary school increases the likelihood that they will continue their schooling. Studies<sup>3</sup> demonstrate that investment in early childhood education

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<sup>1</sup> See OSCE Ministerial Council Decision no. 6/08: [http://osce.org/documents/mcs/2008/12/35585\\_en.pdf](http://osce.org/documents/mcs/2008/12/35585_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO and Council of Europe Expert Meeting: Towards Quality Education for Roma Children: Transition from Early Childhood to Primary Education, available on <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001611/161164e.pdf>, UNESCO (August 2010): Early Childhood Care and Education Regional Report Europe and North America, available on: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001892/189211E.pdf>; Breaking the Cycle of Exclusion, Roma Children in South East Europe, UNICEF, Serbia, 2007 (p.46 ff), available on [http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/070305-Subregional\\_Study\\_Roma\\_Children.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/070305-Subregional_Study_Roma_Children.pdf); For general information on access to early childhood services for vulnerable children see UNESCO's Early Childhood Care and Education website <http://www.unesco.org/en/early-childhood/>; UNESCO Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (1990), [http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/JOMTIE\\_E.PDF](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/JOMTIE_E.PDF)

<sup>3</sup> See for example: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (2009): Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities (p.17), available on [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/098EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/098EN.pdf)

can have sustainable effects for children raised in poverty. Well-funded policies in the area of Roma education should render similar outcomes.

Usually parents and early education services work together to ensure children a good start in education. Roma and Sinti children, however, often lack such preparation from the start, as very few of them benefit from early education services or have parents with the ability or willingness to provide them on their own. As a result, these children face a major disadvantage when entering compulsory schooling. If a larger proportion of Roma and Sinti children were to benefit from early childhood education and pre-school, it would bridge this initial gap in their basic knowledge and skills and help them overcome the numerous, sometimes pervasive barriers and biases prevalent not only among majority-society teachers, but also among their own communities.

This is obviously a policy which could prove an effective tool, as the negative consequences of the lack of such provision are very clear. However, implementation requires investment. Inaction, or neglecting to build the foundations for a good start in schooling for Roma and Sinti children will, in the long run, cost States much more, both financially and socially, than taking the requisite steps to ensure their access to early childhood education.

This report is a follow-up response to the Helsinki Ministerial Council Decision. Its objective is to map Roma and Sinti children's access to early education services and to identify the barriers that impede their access through analysis of answers provided by OSCE participating States and NGOs to a questionnaire developed by ODIHR. It should be noted that ODIHR faced a challenge in realizing this objective due to significant information gaps in the data provided.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2008, the OSCE Ministerial Council adopted a decision on Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, which tasks the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues (CPRSI) to assist participating States with “promoting access of Roma and Sinti children to early education”. In line with this mandate, in May 2009 ODIHR sent a questionnaire to all 56 OSCE participating States in order to map the access of Roma and Sinti children to early education.

ODIHR received only 26 replies from OSCE participating States. In addition, ODIHR also circulated the questionnaire to civil society actors and organizations active in the field of Roma, and as a result 15 NGOs as well as UNICEF Belgrade responded to the questionnaire.

Most of the replies provided fragmentary or insufficient data, with some parts of the questionnaire going completely unanswered. Most participating States record the ages of children availing of early education services, and some also record their gender, but very few record ethnicity. Among the reasons given by participating States for not collecting such data are the absence of an established data-collection practice and the fact that Roma do not self-identify. There are also legal obstacles for collecting data disaggregated by ethnicity in some countries. There were, however, three exceptions: Estonia, Romania, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which provided data on Roma.

The data provided by participating States do not therefore allow for accurate mapping of the situation. Some additional data have been found in other reports by participating States and NGOs. Often they arise from ad hoc research designed to serve policy purposes, or occasioned by the implementation of policies and programs targeting Roma children.

In general, early education services can be differentiated between childcare services provided from birth to three years of age and services for children between the ages of three and compulsory school age. It is important to note that early education services provided for children from three or four years of age until mandatory school age are particularly relevant with regard to Roma, as their participation in childcare services from birth to age three is low.

For those countries where disaggregated data do exist, the information obtained indicates a **much lower participation of Roma children** in early education compared to the mainstream, with Roma children enrolled in pre-school education spending, on average, only half as long in it as do non-Roma children. Only a small percentage of Roma can be said to actually benefit from early education.

Both participating States and NGO respondents identify **adverse economic conditions prevailing at the family level as the main obstacle** to participation of Roma and Sinti children in early education. A number of NGOs identified additional obstacles, namely the discrimination and hostility encountered in the educational environment and restrictive administrative procedures coupled with a shortage of places in early education services. Few participating States indicated a hostile educational environment as a factor hampering Roma and Sinti children's access to and participation in early education. Compared to NGO views, however, State responses placed a stronger emphasis on Roma and Sinti community and family attitudes as the reason for low participation in early education.

In the responding countries, **criteria for enrolment** in early education vary, from only one (e.g. age) and no selection procedures, to a number of criteria (e.g., a mother who is employed, or the number of children in the family) and/or selection procedures. In some countries, enrolment and selection procedures can have a disproportionately negative effect on Roma and Sinti children, in particular on those affected by parental unemployment and poverty. For example, some participating States require children to have medical certificates and/or birth certificates, or to have one or even both parents employed. Only a few countries apply affirmative measures for disadvantaged children. Moreover, many countries cannot accommodate all of the eligible children due to a shortage of places in early education institutions.

Early education services are financed either by the State, the local authorities, or the family. Some free early education services are provided by the majority of the responding States, mostly addressing the year before enrolment into compulsory primary education and/or the compulsory period of pre-primary schooling (where this has been introduced by law). However, financial exemption usually applies to tuition only, not to additional costs such as meals, transportation, or extracurricular activities. Due to their social and economic situation, the majority of Roma and Sinti parents cannot afford these additional costs.

Only a few respondents offered **examples of best practice** for promoting inclusion of Roma and Sinti in early education services. These include quota places for Roma children (or children from low-income families) in pre-schools; introducing a compulsory free pre-school year for all children; progressive fees for early education services which allow low-income parents to be exempted; engaging Roma mediators/teaching assistants as an effective link between communities and pre-schools; and simplifying administrative procedures in order to facilitate enrolment for all children, including Roma.

Most of the States and NGOs which responded recognize the **importance of awareness-raising campaigns and outreach to Roma and Sinti parents** and communities. Despite the lack of data, current trends clearly call for a more pro-active approach from the participating States, the responsible authorities and the schools to reach out to Roma and Sinti communities. A broader information campaign targeting Roma and Sinti is particularly necessary in those countries where pre-school education/training is not compulsory.

No data - no progress<sup>4</sup>: While data collection is not a magic formula for solutions, it is an essential tool for mapping the problem and developing effective, tailor-made policies for

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<sup>4</sup> The general lack of disaggregated data with regard to Roma has also been identified in the recent report *No Data - No Progress. Data Collection in Countries Participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 -2015*. Published by the Open Society Institute, New York, June 2010. This report finds that, in the area of education, only a few countries collect data on Roma in a “systematic and representative way. Romania and Serbia were the only two countries that reported on official data for this indicator, which was available due to MICS (Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, [http://www.unicef.org?statistics?index\\_24302.html](http://www.unicef.org?statistics?index_24302.html)) and in the case of Romania, to a government sponsored survey.” (ibid. p. 29). The need for data with regard to Roma and their access to education had already been underlined in the 2006 European Monitoring Center of Racism and Xenophobia report: “While acknowledging and respecting concerns regarding data collection on ethnic identity and descent, the EUMC considers such data collection important for the development of appropriate and effective strategies at national and EU level. Such data can be collected anonymously and with adequate safeguards protecting any private and sensitive information” (European Monitoring Center for Racism and Xenophobia (ed.). May, 2006: Roma and Travellers in Public Education. An overview of the situation in the EU Member States). See: [http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/roma\\_report.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/roma_report.pdf)

enhancing Roma and Sinti children's access to early education processes. The current lack of data, developed methodologies or ways to collect them in the country and the information gap negatively impact on analysis of the situation in the individual country or region and mapping the scope of the problem. This is an obstacle participating States must overcome if they are to design, adopt, and implement effective, sustainable policy measures.



## I. INTRODUCTION

Many studies assert that lack of education traps Roma communities in a vicious circle of illiteracy and exclusion which is extremely difficult for them to overcome by their own efforts, and which virtually robs young Roma people of hope for a better future.<sup>5</sup> From a policy perspective, education for Roma has – compared to other areas – received much attention from international organizations and national governments. Recommendations specifically mentioning the need to address Roma education have been issued<sup>6</sup> and a number of reports call upon governments to implement pre-school education programs.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, education features prominently in international initiatives for Roma.<sup>8</sup>

The need to close the gap between the educational achievement of Roma and Sinti and that of the majority population has been widely recognized as one of the most impact-generating ways of dealing with the so-called “human development trap” and avoiding further marginalization and exclusion of this minority. Most governments and many NGOs prioritize education. In most governmental strategies to address Roma issues in recent years, education has been a prime concern.<sup>9</sup> Numerous NGO projects have also focused predominantly on the education of Roma children.

In recent years, much attention has been paid to early childhood education, especially as research has demonstrated the long-term educational, social, economic and employment returns for investment in early childhood.<sup>10</sup> Children attending good quality pre-school programs have better school records, improved entry to the labour market and higher incomes than control groups of similar children who do not attend pre-school. Studies also show that

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<sup>5</sup> See the United Nations Development Program [UNDP] report, *Roma in Central and Eastern Europe: Avoiding the Dependency Trap* <http://roma.undp.sk>; Council of Europe's Framework Convention on National Minorities [http://www.coe.int/t/e/human\\_rights/minorities](http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/minorities); and the Fundamental Rights Agency (formerly the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia – EUMC) report *Roma and Travellers in Public Education*, [www.eumc.eu.int/eumc/material/pub/ROMA/roma\\_report.pdf](http://www.eumc.eu.int/eumc/material/pub/ROMA/roma_report.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, the Council of Europe Recommendation adopted in 2000 by the Council of Ministers (Recommendation (2000)4 on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe), which stresses 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.” For further details visit: <http://www.coe.int>; See also the proceedings of the UNESCO and Council of Europe Expert Meeting, *Towards Quality Education for Roma Children: Transition from Early Childhood to Primary Education*, available on <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001611/161164e.pdf>, UNESCO (August 2010): *Early Childhood Care and Education Regional Report Europe and North America*, available on: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001892/189211E.pdf>; and *Breaking the Cycle of Exclusion, Roma Children in South East Europe*, UNICEF, Serbia, 2007 (p.46 ff), available on [http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/070305-Subregional\\_Study\\_Roma\\_Children.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/070305-Subregional_Study_Roma_Children.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> See for instance the recommendation made by the EU FRA at: <http://fra.europa.eu/fra>.

<sup>8</sup> Education is one of the four pillars of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The countries involved in this initiative have done significant work to establish measures that specifically address education-related issues for Roma communities.

<sup>9</sup> See for example the *Decade Action Plans*, Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 website, <http://www.romadecade.org/index.php?content=70>.

<sup>10</sup> A summary of key international analyses can be found in the OECD report entitled *Starting Strong II. Early Childhood Education and Care* pp. 249-258. See also the J. Heckman study, *Invest in the Very Young*, [http://www.ounceofprevention.org/includes/tiny\\_mce/plugins/filemanager/files/Heckman%20Invest%20in%20the%20Very%20Young%20Final%20PDF.pdf](http://www.ounceofprevention.org/includes/tiny_mce/plugins/filemanager/files/Heckman%20Invest%20in%20the%20Very%20Young%20Final%20PDF.pdf)

the earlier a child enters pre-primary education, the stronger the positive effect on later academic achievement.<sup>11</sup>

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as a right is implicitly recognized in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, among other international documents. Early childhood is a time of remarkable brain development that lays the foundation for later learning. ECCE contributes to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, especially the overarching goal of reducing poverty, as well as education and health goals. “Investment in ECCE yields very high economic returns, offsetting disadvantage and inequality, especially for children from poor families.”<sup>12</sup>

Research carried out globally, such as the OECD report *Starting Strong*<sup>13</sup> and UNESCO’s *Education For All Global Monitoring Report*<sup>14</sup> point to the importance of intensive early childhood educational intervention as the most effective vehicle for securing sustainable educational success and for reducing the disadvantages of poverty, marginalization and the impact of parents with poor educational backgrounds.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the case for investing in the early education of Roma and Sinti children is very strong, especially since governments’ international obligations with respect to education require that special attention be paid to the needs of the most vulnerable children and those at risk of discrimination.<sup>16</sup>

Since the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal on 26-28 April 2000, the international community is committed to taking urgent action towards achieving six goals aimed to ensure education for “every citizen in every society”. The first goal is the expansion and improvement of comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. The second goal is ensuring access to free, compulsory primary education of quality for all children (particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities) by 2015.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The Abecedarian and the Perry Preschool Study demonstrated that investment in early childhood education can have sustainable effects for children raised in poverty. These include higher achievement scores for children who participate in early education and a stronger likelihood that they will attend higher education, find employment, become homeowners and command higher salaries than their contemporaries who did not participate in early education. For a snapshot of these two studies see the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, “Poverty and Early Childhood Intervention” <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~snapshots/snap42.pdf> and <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/51/20/34425201.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> UNESCO, Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007, Strong foundations. Early childhood care and education, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001477/147794e.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> OECD, 2001: *Starting Strong Early Childhood Education and Care*, available on <http://browse.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/pdfs/browseit/9101011E.PDF> and the follow-up report OECD, 2006: *Starting Strong II. Early Childhood Education and Care*, available on [http://www.oecd.org/document/63/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_39263231\\_37416703\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/63/0,3343,en_2649_39263231_37416703_1_1_1_1,00.html)

<sup>14</sup> In 2007 UNESCO launched its Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report, *Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)*.

<sup>15</sup> From Mr. John Benett’s presentation to the UNESCO/Council of Europe Expert Meeting entitled “Towards Quality Education for Roma Children: Transition from Early Childhood to Primary Education”, 10-11 September 2007

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. This is a reference to the Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No.7 (V.23.p.11 CRC/C7GC/7/Rev)

<sup>17</sup> For further information, see World Education Forum, Senegal, 2000: The Dakar Framework for Action. Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments, available on <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001211/121147e.pdf>.

The Council of Europe has been proactive in addressing the early education needs of Roma children and has described the main purpose of nursery school as “the theoretical and practical educational foundation on which the learning that will become systematic at primary school is built and developed.”<sup>18</sup> A project entitled “The Education of Roma Children in Europe” was launched in 2003 in line with Recommendation R(2000)4 On the Education of Roma Children, with the aim of providing Council of Europe Member States with coherent, sustainable guiding principles and responses which could be developed to improve the educational situation of Roma. Currently the Council of Europe and UNESCO are jointly developing guidelines for policymakers on how to include Roma and Traveller children in early education services.

The EU is also increasingly attentive to the issue of early education in general. In 2002, at the EU Summit in Barcelona, the European Council adopted, as an integral part of the European Strategy for Growth and Employment, the so-called “Barcelona targets” which require governments to provide childcare to at least 90 per cent of children between three years and mandatory school age, and to at least 33 per cent of children under the age of three, by 2010. The European Council's goal with these targets is to raise women’s participation in the labour force with a view towards attaining full employment. Data have been collected from the EU Member States (including Bulgaria and Romania since their accession in 2007) and a progress report was published in 2008. According to this data only five Member States (Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium and Spain) had surpassed the 33 per cent coverage rate for children under three years of age, while five others (Portugal, the United Kingdom, France, Luxembourg, and Slovenia) were approaching the target; meanwhile enrolment levels for the under-threes are under 10 per cent in a further ten.<sup>19</sup> “Regarding children between three years old and mandatory school age, eight Member States (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Spain and Italy) have surpassed the 90 per cent coverage rate, while three others (the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Cyprus) are approaching this target”.<sup>20</sup> These data do not, however, elaborate on the particular situations of children from minorities or other social groups (and therefore also not on Roma). Due to the significant funding devoted to achieving its objectives, the Barcelona initiative has great potential to improve access to early education services for Roma and Sinti children in the EU.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See “Teaching Kit for Roma, Sinti and Traveller Children at Preschool Level”, [http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural\\_co-operation/education/roma\\_children/Mallete\\_EN.PDF](http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/education/roma_children/Mallete_EN.PDF)

<sup>19</sup> Seven EU member states have a coverage level of 16-26 per cent. See Europa Press Release MEMO/08/592: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/592&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

<sup>20</sup> The coverage rate for children aged zero to three years includes all children who receive childcare services, irrespective of how many hours per week they do so. The coverage rate for children from three years to compulsory school age includes all children who attended at least one hour per week. See Europa Press Release MEMO/08/592: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/592&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

<sup>21</sup> The Commission continues regular monitoring of the Barcelona objectives as part of the Strategy for Growth and Employment, providing support through the timely provision of comparable statistics and specific recommendations to certain Member States where necessary. It promotes the exchange of national experiences relating to childcare facilities through its Programme for the Exchange of Good Practice on Equal Opportunities Between Women and Men launched in 2008, the exchange platform connected with the European Alliance for Families, and the High-Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming in the Structural Funds. It encourages research into working conditions in the pre-school childcare sector and into ensuring that jobs in this field are more highly valued, and encourages Member States to make full use of the co-financing opportunities offered by the Cohesion Fund, in particular the European Social Fund, to promote measures to facilitate the work-life balance,

In 2009 the European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy put forward a call for a “Pilot Project on the ‘Pan-European coordination of Roma integration methods’ - Roma inclusion” encouraging applicants from EU Member States to submit projects in the specific areas of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC); self-employment and microcredit; and information and awareness raising.<sup>22</sup>

A wide range of governmental and NGO efforts focus on the education of Roma children. In Serbia, for example, a set of projects called “Kindergartens as Family Centres”, supported by the Open Society Institute and using “Step by Step” methodology<sup>23</sup>, has been highly successful in helping Roma children adapt to school and learn the Serbian language.<sup>24</sup> Education is one of the four main pillars of the Decade of Roma Inclusion initiative; participating countries have therefore addressed it in their governmental strategies, and some have even selected education as their priority area and committed extra resources to it when taking their turn in the rotating presidency. Commendable efforts in this area are likewise being made by several international NGOs such as the Open Society Foundation and the Roma Education Fund, which have supported dozens of projects<sup>25</sup> aimed at promoting enrolment in and equal access of Roma children to early education.

The Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area<sup>26</sup> adopted in 2003 declares that “education is a prerequisite to the participation of Roma and Sinti people in the political, social and economic life of their respective countries on a footing of equality with others.” Similarly, the ODIHR Status Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area issued in 2008 points to the challenges of discrimination, marginalization and segregation which still prevail for Roma children when they enrol in local school systems.<sup>27</sup> It notes a widening gap between the educational achievements of majority and Roma children. High illiteracy among Roma parents coupled with low levels of school achievement among Roma children, including a high drop-out rate and a low percentage continuing their education at higher levels, all contribute to Roma social and economic exclusion, especially regarding access to the labour market.

In 2008, recognizing the importance of early education as an instrument for preventing social exclusion and marginalization and for effecting long-term improvement in the situation of

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and in particular to create better childcare facilities. Half a billion euro of EU funding is available to develop childcare facilities over the period 2007-2013.

<sup>22</sup> See

[http://www.euromanet.eu/newsroom/archive/dg\\_regio\\_announces\\_call\\_for\\_proposals\\_for\\_pilot\\_project\\_\\_\\_8216\\_pan\\_european\\_coordination\\_of\\_roma\\_integration\\_methods\\_8217\\_\\_\\_8212\\_roma\\_inclusion.html](http://www.euromanet.eu/newsroom/archive/dg_regio_announces_call_for_proposals_for_pilot_project___8216_pan_european_coordination_of_roma_integration_methods_8217___8212_roma_inclusion.html)

<sup>23</sup> The Step by Step program is a child-centered preschool model based on giving children choices in the classroom, individualized teaching and parent and family involvement in children's education. The Step by Step program was developed by the NGO Children's Resources International (CRI) supporting Soros Foundation projects in Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. The Step by Step Program currently operates in 19 countries: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine and Yugoslavia.

<sup>24</sup> *Save the Children, 2001: Denied a Future.* p 167 ff, available on

[http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54\\_2317.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_2317.htm)

<sup>25</sup> See <http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/home/index.php?>

<sup>26</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council Decision no. 3/03, Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area available on [http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2003/11/1751\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2003/11/1751_en.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> The ODIHR Status Report is available on: [http://www.osce.org/odihr/item\\_11\\_33130.html](http://www.osce.org/odihr/item_11_33130.html).

Roma and Sinti, the Ministerial Council adopted a Decision on Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area.<sup>28</sup> This Decision is guided by recognition of the need to prioritize, and increase investment in, one strategic area such as early education, with the potential to achieve a breakthrough in the situation of Roma and Sinti in the long run. The Decision urges participating States to provide equal access to education and to promote early education for Roma and Sinti children. This priority was reiterated in December 2009 in Ministerial Council Decision no. 8/09 in which the participating States were called on to “address education for Roma and Sinti in a comprehensive manner, with special attention to ensuring equal access to education and integrating Roma and Sinti into mainstream education”.<sup>29</sup>

In spite of all these efforts, reliable data regarding the access of Roma and Sinti children to quality early education within the OSCE area is limited, and there has been no comparative assessment of the barriers that prevent them from achieving such access. As mentioned above, this report, based on responses to a questionnaire, is an effort to address the existing “data gap” and is based on the responses of OSCE participating States and NGOs to a questionnaire developed by OSCE/ODIHR.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This document analyses answers to a questionnaire compiled as a tool for collecting and processing information relevant to Roma and Sinti children's access to early education. The purpose of the exercise is to enable ODIHR to gather the comparative data necessary for an overview of the situation in the OSCE area, including identifying the main obstacles and challenges as well as existing good practice.

The questionnaire was prepared in line with the provisions of the Action Plan, in particular paragraph 136, Chapter X, which states: “With a view to facilitating the implementation review process, OSCE participating States are encouraged to provide information on recent developments in the situation of Roma and Sinti people and/or measures inspired by this Action Plan”.

This report is primarily based on analysis of questionnaires returned by the following 23 participating States: Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey. In addition, Canada and the Holy See provided relevant references and reports and Andorra responded with a Note Verbale<sup>30</sup>. Some countries with significant Roma populations did not reply at all.

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<sup>28</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council Decision no. 6/08; see [http://www.osce.org/documents/mcs/2008/12/35585\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/mcs/2008/12/35585_en.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council Decision no. 8/09, Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Ensure Roma and Sinti Sustainable Integration, see [http://www.osce.org/documents/cio/2009/12/41862\\_en](http://www.osce.org/documents/cio/2009/12/41862_en).

<sup>30</sup> Andorra returned a nil report due to the fact that there are no Roma and Sinti children in the territory of the Principality of Andorra.

In addition, ODIHR circulated a questionnaire to civil society networks and organizations that deal with Roma issues. Replies from the 15 NGOs listed below, as well as a questionnaire completed by UNICEF Serbia, were received and analysed.

The following non-governmental organizations submitted replies:

- Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance "Amalipe" - Bulgaria
- CeIS - Centro Italiano di Solidarietà di Roma - Italy
- CIP - Center for Interactive Pedagogy - Serbia
- Central Council of German Sinti and Roma - Germany
- Community Cohesion and Traveller Education (Bolton) - United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- Cultural Center O Del Amenca - Romania
- Education Leeds Gypsy Roma Traveller Achievement Service - United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- Fundación Secretariado Gitano - Spain
- ICE - Instituto das Comunidades Educativas - Portugal
- Pedagogical Centre of Montenegro - Montenegro
- Pedagoški Inštitut - Slovenia
- Roma Yag - Ukraine
- Savez NVO Roma RS - Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Roma NGO "Rromski Krug"- Montenegro
- AVSI – Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale – Italy

In the case of countries for which information was provided by both State and NGO sources, a composite picture was formed by comparing the common sections of the questionnaires for the two types of stakeholders. The subchapter referring to the main obstacles to the enrolment and participation of Roma children in early education and the corresponding Appendices II and III provide disaggregated data for the State and NGO responses.

There was a high degree of variation in the completeness of answers to the questionnaires. Analysis was undertaken following the principle of maximum utilization of available information. This means that even if answers were not provided for all items, information that was provided was used. In consequence, the number of countries analysed in relation to a given topic varies according to the number of (non-) answers relating to that topic. Canada did not complete a questionnaire, but sent a literature review relevant to the topic, information from which was introduced into the analysis.

### **III. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR EARLY EDUCATION IN GENERAL**

#### **1. Definition of early education**

There is no common definition of early education within the OSCE, and this report does not aim to introduce one. In its broadest sense, the term refers to the combination of physical,

intelligence/cognitive, emotional and social learning of a child during the first six to eight years of life.<sup>31</sup>

The main trend in the understanding of early education as reflected in national legislation regulating it is a shift from focusing on childcare aspects (due to the needs of working parents, and especially of mothers) towards a developmental definition. The latter sees the child's development as a goal in its own right, going beyond care to aim towards the fulfillment of the child's developmental potential. One set of principles mentioned by all responding countries is the formation and strengthening of the child's cognitive and non-cognitive skills.

Most of the answers to the questionnaire reflect the understanding that early education is mainly synonymous with pre-school as the educational experience of a child before the age of compulsory primary schooling. Most of the answers provided in relation to this topic are based on the legal definition of pre-school education in the country in question.

However, the answers from Belgium, Finland and Romania reveal a more comprehensive understanding of early education, with the Belgian definition adding the specific elements of "early learning of the mother tongue and, frequently, of foreign languages". The definition provided by Finland uses the concept of early childhood education and care (ECEC): "The term 'early childhood education and care' best describes the Finnish model. Care, education and instruction are combined to form an entity in which play is a central tool of pedagogical activities." Romania also follows a holistic approach involving "nutrition, care and education".

In Greece, early education is defined as the combination of physical, cognitive, emotional, and social learning of a child during the first four to six years of life. Early education services, as stipulated in the various legislative frameworks, aim to develop non-cognitive skills such as self-awareness, sociability, creativity, and psychomotor abilities in children. The definitions provided by Croatia, Cyprus, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kazakhstan, Latvia and Slovakia also make explicit reference to children's health care.

In Finland, Luxembourg and Norway, early education follows a rights-based approach. Finland's example: "Every child in Finland below compulsory school age has the right to day care once parents' period of parental leave comes to an end. Local authorities are obliged to organise day care for all young children whose parents choose it."

In Luxembourg, the State must guarantee the provision of early education to all children in accordance with their rights. Since 2009 all children in Norway over the age of one year are legally entitled to a place in nursery, which must be provided by the local authorities.

Some of the State answers (e.g., from Estonia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Slovakia, Romania and Turkey) explicitly refer to early education as a prerequisite for a smooth transition into

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<sup>31</sup> According to the US-based National Association for the Education of Young Children, "early education" spans human life from birth to age eight. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) describes the growing consensus in OECD countries that "care" and "education" are inseparable concepts, defining Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) as "an integrated and coherent approach to policy and provision which is inclusive of all children and all parents regardless of their employment status or socioeconomic status. This approach recognizes that such arrangements may fulfill a wide range of objectives including care, learning and social support".

school life and, consequently, a successful school career. In Romania, for example, early education is defined as the first step in formal education, ensuring the child's entry into the compulsory education system.

Early education provision through formal arrangements (whether public or private) can generally be differentiated as covering either the period from birth to age three, or for children from three years to compulsory school age. Many countries lack sufficient infrastructure for early education services for all children up to the age of three.

## **2. Legal framework**

Based on the answers received from the participating States, most of them have a legislative framework regulating early education.<sup>32</sup> A distinction could be drawn between States which mention a single regulatory act in relation to early education (i.e. Canada<sup>33</sup>, France, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Latvia, Norway, Romania, Serbia and Switzerland<sup>34</sup>) and those which mention a set of regulatory acts (Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Luxembourg, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, and Turkey).

A distinct case is that of Belgium, which has national legislation regulating compulsory education while the three main linguistic communities (Dutch, French, and German speakers respectively) each have their own early education regulatory acts.

With the exception of Cyprus and partially Canada, legislation pertaining to early education in the countries which replied to the ODIHR questionnaire is issued by respective national parliaments as part of the law regulating education overall.

An important role in interpreting and implementing legislation detailing how early education will function is played by both ministries of education and by decentralized structures with responsibility for drawing up curricula and setting curricular standards, types of pre-school institutions, procedures for their organization and operation, quality standards, and monitoring and supervision. In Cyprus, the Children's Law [Cap. 352] regulating day-care centres and kindergartens places these institutions under the jurisdiction of the Social Welfare Services (SWS) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, and empowers the Social Welfare Services to inspect and monitor them in accordance with standards which include norms on safety and hygiene, child-space ratio, child-staff ratio, staff qualifications, and quality of care. On Prince Edward Island in Canada, the Department of Health and Social Services shares responsibility with the Department of Education and is responsible for licensing kindergartens, certifying staff, and funding to support the inclusion of children with special needs.

## **3. Legal requirements and eligibility criteria for enrolment**

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<sup>32</sup> Italy and the Czech Republic did not provide information for this question.

<sup>33</sup> With the amendment that under the Childcare Facilities Act "each provincial/territorial legislative body, through its Education (or School) Act and regulations, defines the powers and responsibilities of the department or ministry of education and of the school boards or divisions for which it is responsible."

<sup>34</sup> There are cantonal competences on the exact division between years of primary and secondary education but the final amount of nine years' compulsory education remains the same for all the 26 cantons.



The main legal requirement (and therefore eligibility criterion) in all of the responding countries is the age of the child. Enrolment in a specific type of early education institution is thus due, in the first instance, to considerations relating to the legal age for enrolment, distinguishing between children to be enrolled in a nursery school vs. a kindergarten. However, in two countries (Poland and Slovakia) the three-year age criterion for enrolment in kindergarten may be waived by the director, and children accepted at age two or two and a half.

There is a distinction between countries in which the age of the child is the sole legal criterion of eligibility, and those employing multiple criteria for enrolment. However, in order to judge whether a stated age-only criterion operates in practice, the question on eligibility should be cross-checked with answers to the question on whether there is a selection procedure for kindergarten candidates.

In order to achieve the most accurate analysis, the report employs the following typology:

1. Countries in which the age criterion is the only eligibility requirement, and having no selection procedures for enrolment in pre-school institutions;
2. Countries with the age criterion as the only eligibility requirement but which also employ selection procedures for enrolment in pre-school institutions;
3. Countries having multiple criteria for enrolment in pre-school institutions, as well as selection procedures.

The first group comprises Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Italy,<sup>35</sup> Luxembourg, Norway<sup>36</sup> and Sweden. These countries state that there are enough pre-school places available, and if shortages arise they are quickly dealt with by the local authorities.

The second group is comprised of those countries which have the age criterion as the only eligibility requirement and also have selection procedures for enrolment in pre-school institutions, namely Cyprus, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Romania, Poland and Turkey.

In the third group (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Latvia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovakia and Switzerland), there are multiple criteria for enrolment in pre-school institutions and also selection procedures.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the requirement for entry into early education services includes payment of a monthly fee and possession of medical and birth certificates. In Latvia and Switzerland, early education is linked to residential status: in the former, every citizen, every individual with the right to a non-citizen passport, every permanent resident and every EU national in temporary residence has an equal right to education. In Switzerland, by contrast, a residence permit is required for kindergarten enrolment. In Montenegro, a birth certificate<sup>37</sup> is required, while in Serbia a medical

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<sup>35</sup> Italy did not respond to the question on whether there are priority criteria for selection in kindergarten. This non answer was interpreted as if there are no priorities at enrolment.

<sup>36</sup> Norway did not respond to the question on whether there are priority criteria for selection in kindergarten. This non answer was interpreted as if there are no priorities at enrolment.

<sup>37</sup> In addition, if one or both parents work, certificates of earnings are required; social welfare recipients must provide a certificate from the Centre for Social Work. Medical documentation must be provided for children with special needs.

certificate is needed for enrolment. In Slovakia, a diagnostic test is a prerequisite for enrolment into kindergarten.

The existence of a selection procedure indicates a shortage of available places in pre-school institutions. In Latvia<sup>38</sup> and Switzerland<sup>39</sup>, for example, this shortage is indicated by the existence of waiting lists (or pre-enrolment lists). For most of the countries in the second and third groups selection may be carried out by staff of the kindergarten or nursery school, but is more often performed by the director. Parents must apply for enrolment and, depending on the country, this may entail complicated requirements with regard to documents such as residence permit, medical check-ups, identification, and proof of employment or welfare recipient status.

Croatia and Serbia explicitly prioritize the children of parents who are employed for kindergarten enrolment. Serbia mentions that priority is given to children whose parents are both employed.

The following priority criteria are either explicitly or implicitly mentioned in the various State responses:

- distance between the child's domicile and the kindergarten (catchment area),
- number of children in the family,
- employment status of parents,
- children with special needs,
- orphans/children in foster care,
- children from single parent families,
- children whose parents are welfare recipients,
- children in the year before compulsory schooling,
- children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds,
- children having brothers or sisters in compulsory schooling attending the same school,
- child's age (priority given to older children),
- the children of families granted political asylum status/non-native language speakers.

Among respondents, Croatia and Cyprus have the most detailed sets of criteria for prioritizing kindergarten enrolment. A specific priority criterion for enrolment in pre-school institutions in Croatia is whether a child's parents are invalids as a result of having been the victims of the Croatian war of independence. Moreover, in Croatia every kindergarten has its own rules regulating selection priorities. Turkey is also a specific case with regard to admission procedures, as it has a 10 per cent quota in every pre-school institution for children with special needs and economically disadvantaged children.

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<sup>38</sup> Quote from the Latvian response to the questionnaire: "Most pre-school education institutions create a list of candidates who are accepted according to the time their applications were received. Children must be re-registered on an annual basis to stay on the list."

<sup>39</sup> Quote from the Swiss response to the questionnaire: "In nursery and preschool there can be waiting lists due to lack of places."

In Hungary there is a set of affirmative action measures regarding disadvantaged children.<sup>40</sup> Since 2003, pre-schools cannot refuse to admit disadvantaged children, and since 2005 multiply disadvantaged children cannot be refused admittance to kindergarten from the age of three. Children who are eligible for day care based on Article 41 of the Act on Child Protection and Guardianship Administration or whose application was initiated by a guardianship authority cannot be rejected from kindergarten. Municipal governments must ensure enough kindergarten places for multiply disadvantaged children from September 2008.

Of the 21 countries providing answers, 13 mention that there is no requirement of prior enrolment in any form of early education for enrolment in compulsory primary school. Eight States reported having a compulsory early education program lasting between nine months and two years. In Cyprus, attendance in a one-year pre-school program is compulsory for children between the age of four years and eight months and five years and eight months. In Greece, pre-school is compulsory for those who reach the age of five by 31 December of the year of enrolment. In Hungary, children are obliged to participate in kindergarten for four hours per day from the first day of the school year in which they turn five, and it is against the law to reject any child who is obliged to attend pre-school. In Latvia, attendance in a preparatory basic education acquisition program for five- and six-year old children is compulsory, while in Luxembourg, early education is compulsory between the ages of four and six. In Poland, children are obliged to attend one year of pre-school preparation (a "0" grade from the age of six), either at a kindergarten or a kindergarten section organized on the premises of a primary school. In Serbia, there is a nine-month compulsory pre-school program for children between five and a half and six and a half years of age. In Switzerland, it is compulsory to attend at least one year of kindergarten between the ages of four and six.

#### **4. Responsibilities for the design and implementation of early education policies**

In most of the countries analyzed, the main role in designing the general framework of early education policies is assumed by the ministries of education and this framework is codified in legislative acts adopted by the relevant legislative bodies. In four countries (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Finland and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) other ministries, namely social affairs, labour, and health, collaborate with the ministries of education (and their specialized structures empowered to develop curricular standards, teacher training, inspections, etc.) in designing early education policies.

In Switzerland the primary role in designing early education policies is played by the local authorities (cantonal governments). Local authorities also contribute to the design of early education policies in Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Norway, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Sweden. In Belgium, the various language

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<sup>40</sup> From submitted Questionnaire: Act No. LXXIX of 1993 on Public Education Article 121 (1) n says: disadvantaged child /student: a child /student whose entitlement to a regular child protection allowance on the basis of their social background is established by the public administration officer: children /students whose parents exercising the statutory control over them in accordance with their voluntary statement made in the course of the procedure regulated by the Act on Child Protection and Guardianship Administration have successfully completed a year that is not higher than year eight of the primary school by the time the child attains the age of three in case of children attending kindergarten and by the date of the commencement of compulsory education in case of students are regarded as multi-disadvantaged children /students within the group of disadvantaged children /students: a child /student taken into long-term foster care is also multi-disadvantaged.

communities (Dutch-, French-, and German-speaking) are responsible for designing and implementing early education policy within their respective domains.

With regard to responsibilities for the implementation of early education policies, the analysis of the answers provided resulted in the following typology:

- Countries in which the primary responsibility for implementation lies with the ministries of education and their territorial bodies: the Czech Republic, Cyprus, France, Greece, Latvia, Montenegro, Slovenia and Turkey;
- Countries in which the primary responsibility for implementation lies with local authorities: Estonia, Finland, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg and Poland;
- Countries in which responsibility for implementation is shared between ministries of education and local authorities: Hungary, Norway, Romania and Sweden;
- Countries in which responsibility for implementation is shared by the ministry of education, the local authorities, and the providers of early education services: the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Slovakia.

In Switzerland, responsibility for the implementation of early education policies lies with both public and private providers.

## 5. Financing

In all the countries analysed early education services are financed by a mix of State, local authority and family sources. The table below presents the financing share (%) of each of the stakeholders in supporting early education services (for the countries providing answers):

	State	Municipality	Family	Other
<b>France</b>	50	44	6	
<b>the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</b>	75	25		
<b>Finland</b>	33	52	15	
<b>Estonia</b>	2	82	16	
<b>Romania</b>	1,33	95,96		2,71
<b>Croatia</b>		60-70	30-40	
<b>Luxembourg</b>	52,64	47,36		
<b>Cyprus*</b>	95	5		

\* Calculations based on the sums reported in replies.

Local authorities are the main financers of early education services in Croatia, Estonia, Finland and Romania, while in Cyprus, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France and Luxembourg, the State is the main contributor. The share which should be paid by the family normally ranges from 15 per cent to about 40 per cent of costs. Some free early education services are provided by the following countries: Belgium, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden and Switzerland.

In Norway, through a project financed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, children living in areas of Oslo with high percentages of immigrants are offered a free kindergarten for four hours a day. In Finland the system of progressive fees for early education services allows parents from low-income families to receive them without paying. In Croatia, low-income parents are exempted from fees, while in Serbia parents who receive social welfare benefits are exempted from fees.

The most common type of free early education service addresses the year before enrolment in compulsory primary education or the compulsory period of pre-primary schooling where such is required by law. Financial exemption usually applies to tuition only and not to meals, transportation, extracurricular activities and other additional costs. In Montenegro, the average cost of meals served in early education programs amounts to the equivalent of 30 EUR per month; in Latvia to 40 EUR; in Romania to 60 EUR. In France, meals are free of charge for low-income families. In Hungary, the costs of travelling to kindergarten can be reimbursed. In Serbia, parents are expected to pay the equivalent of between 5-75 EUR per month to cover meals and teaching materials.

There are no free early educational services in Turkey, Estonia or the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The average monthly fee paid by parents in Turkey is 70 EUR and in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 25 EUR. In Estonia the amount paid by parents per child (on average approximately 27.60 EUR per month) shall not exceed 20 per cent of the minimum wage rate established by the government.

The fees for private early education services are generally estimated to be higher than those for services delivered by public institutions, and vary with the types of services offered.

#### **IV. EARLY EDUCATION SERVICES**

##### **1. The typology of early education services**

The duration of nursery school services – the first stage of early education – provided varies between twenty-four and thirty-six months. The countries providing nursery school services from birth are the following: Belgium, Canada, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Italy, Luxembourg and Turkey.

In Romania, nursery school is provided from the fourth month of the child's life, while in Hungary it is provided from the fifth month (twentieth week) and Croatia, Serbia and Switzerland provide nursery school services from the sixth month. Estonia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Montenegro and Norway provide early education from the age of one, while provision in Poland and Slovakia begins at age three.

The second stage of early education provision begins at age three in all of the countries that distinguish between the kinds of early education services offered, with the exception of Belgium where the second stage of early education starts at two and a half years. The distinction between pre-school and kindergarten institutions is blurred in many cases, except where there is compulsory pre-school. In these cases, the “second stage” in the child’s early education is realized in a pre-school or kindergarten institution and is voluntary.

The third stage of early education consists of pre-school preparatory classes whose main role is to prepare the child for the transition to school, and which are usually part of compulsory education. Alternative forms of early education are provided in Croatia. These are short programs organized by associations, sports or medical institutions, or by primary schools, for children three to seven years old. In Montenegro, morning care is provided for first-graders between the ages of six and seven.

## **2. Public and private providers of early education**

Most of the countries asked to identify similarities and differences between public and private providers of early education pointed out that both share missions and curricular standards as established by public educational authorities (usually the ministries).

The most notable difference between public and private providers (based on the answers provided) is their sources of financing. While public providers are supported from public funds only (central or local budgets), private providers are only partially financed by public funds, with part of their funding coming from parental fees. However, public providers may also charge fees for some types of early education, most usually for nursery school, but not for compulsory kindergarten. In Cyprus, for example, the fees charged by public providers are considered lower than those charged by private providers. In Finland, local authority services are in some cases outsourced to the private sector, which offers the same services and charges the same fees as local authority providers.

In Belgium a partial subsidy goes from the federal budget to private providers, while in Finland the subsidy goes to parents as a childcare allowance should they choose a fully private provider (these account for about 8 per cent of the total).

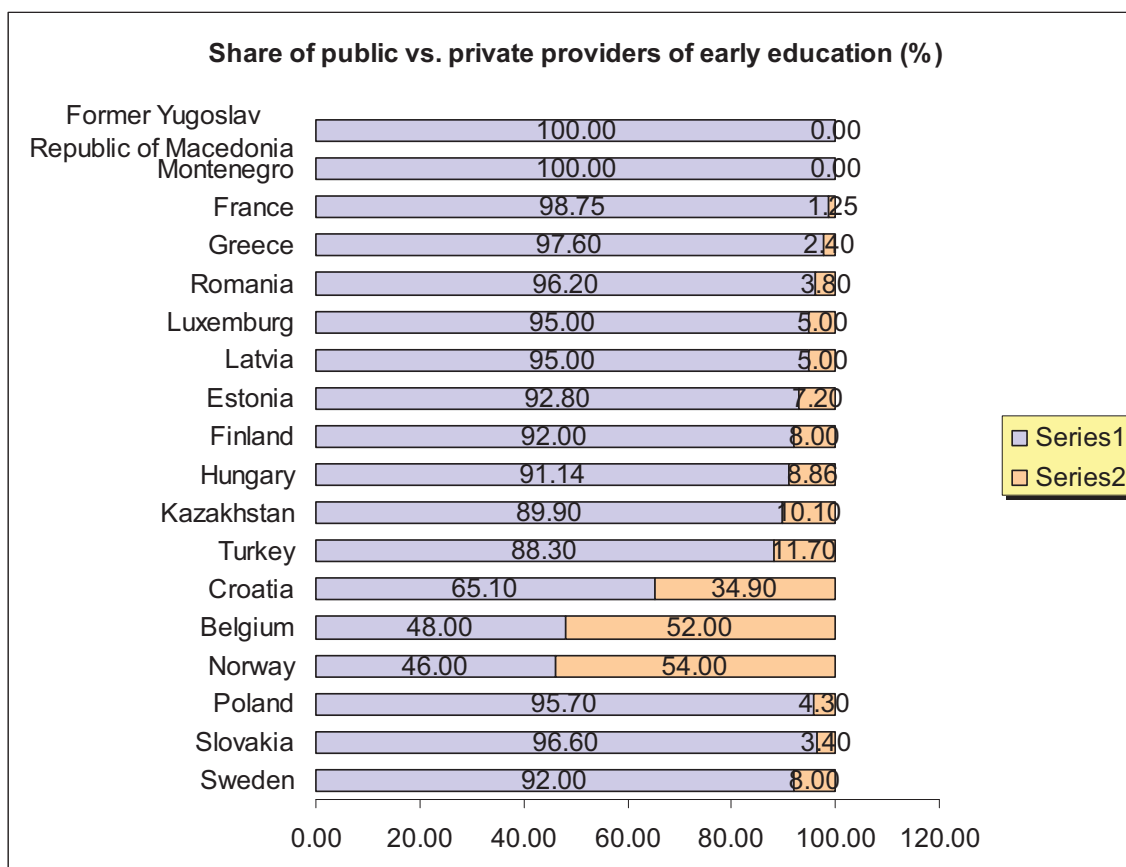
Other differences mentioned are: public vs. private status of the provider (in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, and Norway), management structure (Estonia), and capacity/size of the institution (Croatia).

Most of the countries have a mix of public and private sector provision of early education.<sup>41</sup> Overall, the main public provider of early education is the local authority. As presented in the graph below, public providers have a larger share of the institutions providing early education services compared to private providers.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The countries mentioning schools as public providers of early education are: Canada, the Czech Republic, Poland and Serbia.

<sup>42</sup> In Belgium, the national figure for public and private providers of early education is calculated as a combined average of the number of institutions in the French- and Dutch-speaking communities respectively. Separate analysis reveals a prevalence of public providers in the French community (61 per cent public and 39 per cent private) and of private providers in the Dutch (38 per cent public and 62 per cent private).



Regarding the 18 countries that provided answers to this item, the average ratio of public to private providers is 93:7. There is some variation, ranging from a minimum of 46 per cent public (in Norway) to 100 per cent in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro.

The capacity of public providers expressed as the number of places available is typically higher than the capacity of private institutions. In Norway, for example, the ratio between public and private providers is 46 per cent public to 54 per cent private, but this ratio is reversed when the indicator is the number of places available.

## V. ENROLMENT AND PARTICIPATION

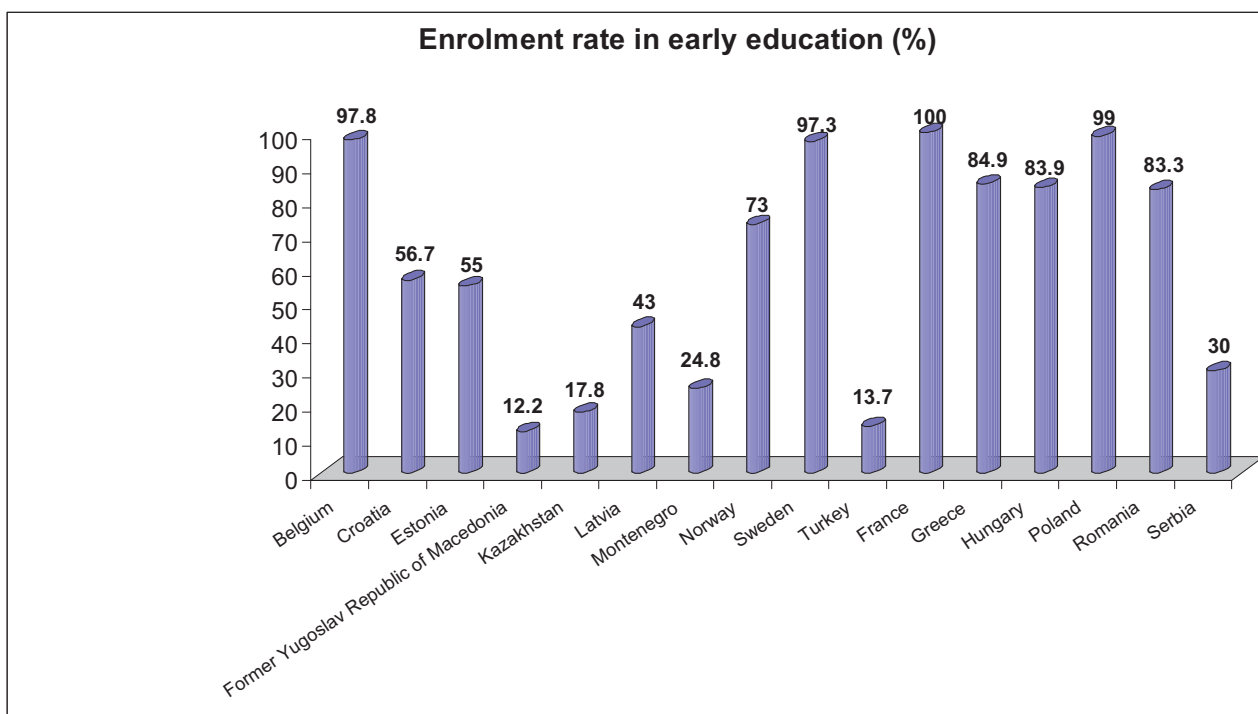
### 1. General enrolment rate<sup>43</sup>

The enrolment rate in early education was calculated based on State responses regarding the total number of eligible children, and the total number of children enrolled in early education, including compulsory “zero” class.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> For a more detailed analysis on childcare services provided in 30 European countries see: European Commission DG Employment and Social Affairs (March, 2009): The provision of childcare services. A comparative review of 30 European countries:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=545&furtherNews=yes>

<sup>44</sup> In France 100 per cent of the eligible children in the three to six age group attend early education, with 23.3 per cent from the two to three age group in attendance. The figures for Belgium relate to the Dutch-speaking community.



There is a high variation in the reported enrolment rates of eligible children in early education, from a low of 12.2 per cent in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to 100 per cent in France.<sup>45</sup> The average time spent by a child in early education is three years.

With respect to enrolment rates, there are four groups of countries:

- Countries with a quasi-totally of eligible children enrolled in early education: Belgium, France, Poland, Sweden;
- Countries with a high enrolment rate in early education: Norway, Greece, Hungary, Romania;
- Countries with a moderate enrolment rate in early education: Croatia, Estonia;
- Countries with a low enrolment rate in early education: Montenegro, Kazakhstan, Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia.

## 2. Data collection and availability on the enrolment and participation of Roma and Sinti children in early education

Some participating States collect data on the enrolment and participation of Roma children in early education through ad hoc research. In this category are: Croatia, Estonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, Serbia and Sweden. Of these, Estonia, Italy and Romania use self-identification as a means for collecting data about pre-school age Roma children.

Data may be collected by ministries of education in partnership with international organizations, by international organizations in connection with projects and policies on early education targeting Roma, or through research geared towards specific policy purposes. The international governmental and non-governmental organizations mentioned as carrying out research and collecting data on the enrolment and participation of Roma children are: Open

<sup>45</sup> Information provided for the three to six age group.



Society Institute through the EUMAP and Roma Participation Programs, UNICEF, and the Roma Education Fund. Some of the research mentioned explicitly involves Roma in collection of data.

In Italy, the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research collects data on the enrolment and participation of Roma children in early education. In Montenegro, data were collected by the national statistical agency (MONSTAT) in 2008.<sup>46</sup> In Croatia, data about the enrolment and participation of pre-school age Roma are collected through the EU's pre-accession PHARE educational programs targeting Roma and through monitoring the National Program for Roma and the Action Plan of the Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia collects data on the enrolment and participation of Roma in early education through its child protection department in September each year. In Hungary, the government has not collected ethnically disaggregated data since 1993, but ad hoc research, often commissioned by the government, does. Estonia reported a web-based educational data system; however, State responses to the questionnaire indicate only a small number (22 children) of pre-school age Roma in the country during the reporting period. Switzerland reports some data about Travellers of Swiss origin<sup>47</sup> but gives no specific data on pre-school age children. Croatia, Estonia and Kazakhstan reported that they collect data disaggregated by age and gender. Italy reported collecting data disaggregated by age. Data collected through research are available to the general public.

Other participating States do not collect data on the enrolment and participation of Roma children in public and private early education, for the following stated reasons:

- Lack of an established practice for gathering ethnic data (Belgium, Finland, Norway, Poland<sup>48</sup>),
- Data protection rules do not allow it (Hungary),
- There are no Roma who self-identify as such (Cyprus, Switzerland),
- There are no Roma children of early education age in the country (Luxembourg).

Only two countries – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Estonia – provided figures allowing for the calculation of the enrolment rate of Roma children in early education. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the enrolment rate of Roma is 4.9 per cent compared to 12.2 per cent for the population as a whole. In Estonia, 8 of a total of 22 pre-school age Roma children are enrolled in early education programs.

Six countries provided the percentage of Roma children out of the total number of children enrolled in early education:

- Croatia: 0.54 per cent
- Estonia: 0.01 per cent
- The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: 2.1 per cent
- Italy: 0.19 per cent
- Kazakhstan: 0.3 per cent
- Romania: 3.69 per cent<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> According to these statistics, 14 per cent of Roma children were included in early education.

<sup>47</sup> The Yenish, numbering approximately 3,000, are recognized as a national minority under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe

<sup>48</sup> In Poland, data disaggregated by ethnicity are collected only for Roma children participating in minority language programs or benefiting from additional programs. These data are used to prepare the annual report of the implementation of the government programme for the Roma community in Poland.

Based on data provided, the average time spent by Roma children enrolled in any form of early education in the following countries is from a third to half of that spent by non-Roma children: in Croatia, a non-Roma child spends on average 3 years and a Roma child 1,5 years in any formal early education institution; in Latvia, the ratio is 4 years for non-Roma to 2 years for Roma children; in Hungary, 3 years for non-Roma to 1 year or less for Roma children<sup>50</sup>; in Romania, 3 years for non-Roma to 1 year for Roma children.

### **3. Main obstacles to the enrolment and participation of Roma children in early education**

Obstacles to the enrolment and participation of Roma children in early education were analyzed on the basis of the frequencies of State and NGO responses; these are given in both absolute and cumulative terms in Appendix 2. Appendix 3 presents how these obstacles are ranked by State<sup>51</sup> and NGO representatives<sup>52</sup>, as well as ranks calculated on the basis of relative frequencies.

There are similarities and differences between the profiles given by State and NGO representatives with regard to the top five rankings of obstacles to the enrolment and participation of Roma children in early education.

The following obstacles were identified by both State and NGO representatives:

- A low level of awareness among Roma parents regarding the importance of early education;
- Lack of interest among Roma parents in enrolling their children and ensuring they attend early education institutions regularly;
- Parental unemployment and the poor economic condition of Roma families, making it difficult to enrol and ensure regular attendance of their children in early education;
- Distrust of Roma families towards the authorities and public services;
- Deprived Roma community environments (marginalized/illegal settlements without adequate infrastructure);
- Roma children's poor skills in using the majority language.

State and NGO representatives concur that the main obstacles to the enrolment and participation of Roma children in early education are encountered at the family level, namely Roma parents' perceptions, attitudes and lack of trust. Other important obstacles frequently identified by both State and NGO representatives include structural constraints such as

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<sup>49</sup> Based on the figures provided regarding the total number of children and the number of Roma children enrolled, the percentage would be 6.1 per cent.

<sup>50</sup> Information based on research study in 2006 cited by Hungary.

<sup>51</sup> Eighteen states provided answers to this item: Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Montenegro, Norway, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Poland, Slovakia, Serbia, Switzerland, and Sweden.

<sup>52</sup> Thirteen questionnaires were analyzed under the “non governmental” heading. Responses were provided by UNICEF Serbia and by the following twelve NGOs: Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance “Amalipe” - Bulgaria; CeIS - Centro Italiano di Solidarietà di Roma - Italy; CIP- Center for Interactive Pedagogy - Serbia; Community Cohesion and Traveller Education (Bolton) - UK; Cultural Centre “O Del Amenca” - Romania; Institudos das Comunidades Educativas - Portugal; Pedagogical Center of Montenegro; Roma Yag - Ukraine; Savez NVO Roma RS - BIH; Centre for Pedagogical Initiatives “Step by Step” - Slovenia; Education Leeds Gypsy Roma Traveller Achievement Service – UK –, and Fundación Secretariado Gitano - Spain.

adverse socioeconomic conditions affecting disadvantaged Roma children, poor skills in the official language of instruction, and living in a deprived community environment without adequate infrastructure.

The top five obstacles as ranked by NGOs:

- Roma parental illiteracy (inability to access written information about enrolment criteria, etc.);
- Lack of birth certificates for Roma children;
- Education environments hostile to Roma children (i.e., the anti-Roma prejudice of majority-society parents, teachers, educators, and others);
- Low levels of awareness among education administrators and staff regarding the difficulties encountered by Roma families and children in accessing early education services;
- Lack of premises and space for providing early education services.

What is specific to the viewpoints of NGO representatives is that discrimination and hostility encountered in the educational environment, low levels of awareness on the part of school administrators of the difficulties encountered by Roma in accessing early education services, and a restrictive administrative process for early education enrolment are all among the obstacles they mention most frequently. There is a major difference between the NGO and State responses with regard to the difficulties posed by lack of birth certificates and/or hostile educational environments, ranked in fourth place by NGOs but far lower (eighth place) by State representatives.

Only France mentioned additional obstacles: “Roma parents are often likely to refuse anything compulsory for very young children. They understand neither the reasons why young children should be obliged to go to school when they do not want to, nor why attendance has to be regular.”

## **VI. STATE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS PROMOTING THE ACCESS OF ROMA AND SINTI CHILDREN TO EARLY EDUCATION**

Twenty countries reported on policies and programs implemented with a view to stimulating Roma children's access to and participation in early education.

The main types of policies and programs implemented in these countries are:

- Awareness-raising and enrolment campaigns (mentioned in 15 responses);
- Facilitating health care services for mothers and children and timely vaccinations (15);
- Facilitating the transition from home to pre-school and/or from pre-school to primary school (14);
- Providing social support and capacity building to Roma families to enable them to support their children in the education process (16).

Ten countries (Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Latvia, Norway, Serbia, Slovakia, Poland and Romania) mention the existence of assessments regarding the effectiveness of these programs.

Summarizing the key findings of the assessments, these programs achieve the following results:

- Higher levels of Roma enrolment and decreased levels of pre-school absenteeism;
- Increased motivation among educational staff working with Roma children;
- Improved pedagogical skills of educators working with Roma children;
- Increased levels of activism among Roma NGOs;
- Improved communication between Roma communities and the public authorities;
- Teaching assistants' positive influence on Roma children's success in education;
- Roma children who attend pre-school education are more successful in their future school career than those who do not;
- The amount of time spent in pre-school education is crucial. The longer the duration, the smoother the transition to school and the better future educational achievement.

Finland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Latvia, Italy, France, Poland, Montenegro, Hungary, Romania, and the Czech Republic provided some examples of programs implemented with the aim of increasing Roma children's enrolment and participation in early education. These are presented in Appendix I.

## **VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In general, there is little data available on the participation of Roma and Sinti children to early education services in the OSCE area. Given the scarce data in place it is difficult to map the current situation and subsequently to assess progress or impact of targeted policies aiming to promote early education for Roma and Sinti children. In the few countries that collect segregated data on ethnicity, the data provided illustrate a lower participation of Roma and Sinti children compared to the mainstream as well as a lower attendance rate.

Administrative requirements such as enrolment fees or additional costs (e.g. for extracurricula activities, transportation), enrolment criteria (e.g. both parents in employment, requirement of birth and/or birth certificates) and selection procedures can have a disproportionate negative effect on the access of Roma and Sinti children to early education. In the case of Roma and Sinti a number of additional factors might contribute to the effect that in particular childcare services for children from birth to three years of age are not likely to be used. These include the importance of raising very young children within the family (even if both parents are working, an infant will be minded by a family member or a relative); non-affordability of child care services due to higher degree of parental unemployment; and non-adaptation of such services to Roma language and culture.

Ensuring access to early and pre-school education is believed to bridge the gap in basic knowledge and skills commonly occurring when Roma and Sinti children without pre-school education enrol in first grade. Early education can, therefore, be an effective tool to combat the most pervasive aspect of Roma children's educational situation, namely, their being disproportionately channeled into special schools or classes meant for children with special educational needs. Ensuring access to pre-school can also reduce drop-out rates and contribute towards successfully mainstreaming Roma and Sinti into all stages of education, thereby overcoming the "dependency trap".

Few positive examples can be identified that have the potential for bringing a change in the locality. The current situation clearly indicates the need for boosting programs to address this problem, including to collect disaggregated data on access of Roma and Sinti children to early education and data on the continuation of their school career, to conduct awareness raising campaigns on the benefit of early education programs for Roma and Sinti children and to develop policies for the effective integration of Roma and Sinti children into mainstream education.

**Based on these conclusions and good practices identified by respondents, the OSCE participating States should:**

- Further strengthen efforts to implement the 2003 OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area and the subsequent Helsinki Ministerial Council Decision No. 6/08 and Athens Ministerial Council Decision 8/09 in particular those commitments aiming to enhance equal access to quality education for Roma and Sinti.
- Step up efforts to improve Roma and Sinti children's access to early education through the long-term, systemic approaches (national policies with clear goals, regulations, quality standards and funding commitments) necessary to ensure sustainable change, as well as affirmative action measures.
- Regularly collect statistical data on the enrolment and participation of Roma and Sinti children in early education.
- Regularly monitor and assess the effectiveness of the implemented programs, with the involvement of Roma and Sinti parents and communities.
- Consider amending selection criteria that can have an indirectly discriminatory effect on Roma and Sinti. Make early education equally accessible to economically disadvantaged Roma and Sinti families. Facilitate procedures around enrolment requirements, i.e., for obtaining birth and health certificates, compulsory vaccinations, etc.
- Increase efforts to raise Roma and Sinti communities' awareness, particularly targeting parents, of the importance and benefits of early education by proactively reaching out to families.
- Sensitize the authorities responsible for providing early education services to the rights of all children to develop their full potential and, therefore, to the importance of ensuring that Roma and Sinti children have equal access to early education. Ensure the close involvement of Roma and Sinti parents in the process of their children's education. Early education institutions should strengthen their ties to Roma and Sinti parents and communities.
- Strengthen educators' abilities and skills through pre- and in-service training so that they are able to work in diverse multicultural settings and create supportive learning environments for Roma and Sinti children.

## **APPENDIX I**

Examples of policies/programs for increasing the enrolment and participation of Roma children in early education

### **Finland**

In 2004-2007, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health awarded development funding to three projects focusing on Roma children. These took place in the cities of Turku, Vantaa, and Varkaus, all of which have relatively large Roma populations, with the aim of increasing the participation of Roma children in both early childhood education and care services, and in pre-school education. Results have been promising. In Turku, more family visits and increased information provision led to a majority of Roma children in the region starting pre-school education in autumn 2004. Moreover, some Roma children between two and four years of age have taken part in day care.

These pilot towns have also had good experiences in recruiting employees with Roma backgrounds to support the day care and pre-school education of Roma children. For example, in Varkaus it was considered important that a Roma employee, whom the child knows well, help the child especially in the transition phase between pre-school and primary school. The tasks of the support person were expanded to include support to families, family work, guidance during day-care and the tasks of a school assistant. An employee with a Roma background facilitated regular attendance by Roma children in early childhood education and care services, improved cooperation between school and family, and increased day care personnel's understanding of Roma culture. The pilot towns have since incorporated closer attention to the early childhood education and care of Roma children into their regular activities.

### **The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

Beginning in 2006/2007, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has implemented a project entitled "Inclusion of Roma children in public pre-school", the goal of which is to improve and support the integration of Roma children through increasing the number attending public pre-school a year before entering primary education. Before the project started, the participation of Roma children in pre-school institutions in Macedonia was less than 1.3 per cent. After three years of intervention, the current participation of Roma children is 2.1 per cent. Funding for the first two years was provided by the Roma Education Fund, whereas during the third (2008/2009) a total of fifteen local authorities provided financial support and monitored progress in relation to project goals and objectives. During 2008/2009 the project was carried out by the Unit for Implementation of the Strategy of Roma in the Republic of Macedonia in conjunction with the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015.

### **Latvia**

The National Action Plan "Roma in Latvia" 2007-2009 was approved by the government on 17 October 2006. Its main goal is promoting the inclusion of the Roma community into Latvian society and ensuring that Roma are not discriminated against but given equal opportunities in education, employment, and human rights. It also includes two goals in the sphere of education: to create special opportunities for members of the Roma community to raise their educational levels, and to enhance the inclusiveness of the general education system.

Public hearings on the National Action Plan were held between May 16 and July 21, 2006; seminars were held in Preiļi, Tukums, Ventspils, Riga, and Madona, while information was made available online at the homepage of the Secretariat of the Special Assignments Minister for Social Integration.

The Latvian authorities aim:

- 1). To implement the Action Plan<sup>53</sup> of the Program in collaboration with active, representative persons;
- 2). To create and develop interagency networks for the realization of the basic activities of the National Action Plan “Roma in Latvia” 2007-2009:
  - a). Twenty Roma assistants were trained using the “Assistant of the teacher for Roma” program, and in 2009 eight Roma assistants were employed in preparatory multiethnic classes, where Roma and non-Roma children were taught side by side;
  - b). Public discussions on “Roma Children in the School” were organized in cities inhabited by Roma, with the aim of explaining to Roma parents how obligatory pre-school education for children ages five and six forms the basis of elementary education (182 participants);
  - c). An award presentation for the best teacher of Roma children.

The total budget for the National Action Plan “Roma in Latvia” 2007-2009 was EUR 170,140, the overwhelming majority of which – EUR 94,459 – was earmarked for improving Roma education.

Over the period 2007-2009 the Latvian government (through the Ministry of Justice) provided grants for Roma and non-Roma NGOs focused on Roma integration and social inclusion issues (EUR 60,579) as well as for projects to support Roma families and capacity-building of Roma parents so they can support and motivate their children in the education process.

Impact:

- The level of education in the Roma community has risen;
- The level of unemployment among Roma has decreased;
- Intolerance (in terms of stereotypes and prejudice) towards the Roma community in Latvia has diminished;
- The number of Roma non-governmental organizations has increased;
- The number of multiethnic non-governmental organizations participating in the implementation of the Action Plan of the Program increased.

## **Montenegro**

The main Roma-focused project in Montenegro is part of the Roma Education Initiative (REI), which has been implemented in two phases by the Ministry of Education and Science and an NGO, Pedagogical Centre of Montenegro, acting in partnership.

The first phase, funded by Open Society Institute (OSI) and Foundation Open Society Institute - Representative Office Montenegro (FOSI – ROM), was implemented from 2004 to

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<sup>53</sup> The Report on the Implementation of the National Action Plan “Roma in Latvia” 2007-2009 Is available at: [http://www.bm.gov.lv/lat/sabiedribas\\_integracija/informativie\\_zinojumi/?doc=11797](http://www.bm.gov.lv/lat/sabiedribas_integracija/informativie_zinojumi/?doc=11797)

2005 at three sites: Podgorica, Nikšić and Berane. The second phase, from 2006 to 2008, supported by the Roma Education Fund, was also implemented at three sites, continuing in Podgorica, Nikšić and Berane until September 2006, after which the latter two sites were switched to Bar and Ulcinj respectively. There is a substantial connection between the phases of the project, as the second is a logical follow-up to the first, especially in terms of goal achievement.

The main goal of the project was the integration of Roma children into formal elementary schools with a view to achieving a percentage of intake identical to that of non-Roma children in the locations where the project was implemented. The project's most significant objectives were: Adapting the school system (with special emphasis on pre-schools and elementary schools) to the integration of Roma children, providing mechanisms for the active participation of the Roma community in the educational system of Montenegro, and obtaining the support and engagement of State authorities towards the improvement of the education of Roma children and young people.

Within the framework of the project, Roma assistants/facilitators were, for the first time, introduced into the formal education system. They greatly contributed to the following:

- Establishing contact with Roma families,
- Monitoring the school attendance rate of Roma pupils,
- Assistance in communication between teachers and Roma pupils (language barrier),
- Collection of qualitative and quantitative data on problems regarding the education of the Roma population in Montenegro.

The inclusion of Roma community representatives in the implementation of the project was of enormous importance to its overall achievements as well as to increasing school and pre-school staff members' comprehension of the necessity of hiring Roma assistants/facilitators. Moreover, all of the Roma who participated in the project as assistants and facilitators were convinced that education is a true necessity, and that the positions of Roma assistants in elementary schools in Montenegro should be permanent. This illustrates the continuing need for increased professional work by Roma assistants/facilitators in elementary schools/pre-schools.

Thanks to the Roma Education Initiative, the project's education policy toward marginalized groups was promoted and examples of good practice which should be built into the regulations were identified. The Ministry of Education and Science is currently drawing up guidelines towards the establishment of the permanent position of "Roma assistant" in pre-schools.

## **Hungary**

In Hungary, pre-school is compulsory for a minimum of four hours a day from the age of five. It is against the law to reject any child who is obliged to attend pre-school.

Since 2003, pre-schools cannot refuse to admit disadvantaged children. Since 2005, multiply disadvantaged children cannot be refused admittance to kindergarten from the age of three. Children eligible for day care based on Article 41 of the Act on Child Protection and Guardianship Administration or whose application was initiated by the guardianship authority also cannot be rejected from kindergarten. Local authorities have been obliged to



ensure enough kindergarten places for multiply disadvantaged children from September 2008. By 31 August 2011 there should be enough kindergarten places for every child.

Pre-school education is free of charge, but parents must pay for the meals provided. As of September 2003, parents in receipt of allowances on the basis of child protection regulations have their children's meal expenses covered.

Parents of multiply disadvantaged children have the right to receive financial subsidies for schooling the children at kindergarten provided they enrol the child at the age of four at the latest. In 2009, the Hungarian government allocated HUF 760,000,000 to support the parents of multiply disadvantaged children.

Since 2007 the government has made separate financial resources for integrative kindergartens available in the form of a pre-school development program subsidy. This is granted to kindergartens teaching disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children together by maintaining certain pupil ratios. The number of institutions participating in the program is growing each year. In the 2008/2009 school year, HUF 983 591 500 was spent on the program.

A disadvantaged child is defined as one whose entitlement to a regular child protection allowance on the basis of his or her social background has been established by the notary public. Within this group, multiply disadvantaged children are those whose parents or guardians have successfully completed not more than eight years of primary school by the time the child attains the age of three, as well as children in long-term foster care.

## **Romania**

Over the 2002-2006 period the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation (MERI) implemented five PHARE programs on "Access to education for disadvantaged groups". One of their specific objectives was to improve conditions for and access to pre-school education in disadvantaged communities. The early education programs included, for example, summer kindergartens and mediator training. The programs have been carried out in all forty-two counties. A total of 3,278 teachers from pilot schools have participated in training courses on inclusive education and early childhood education.

## **The Czech Republic**

An "Action Plan for the Implementation of the Concept of Early Childhood Care for Children from Socially Disadvantaged Environments" has been developed. Its implementation is financed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and involves pre-schools and schools in early childhood care pilot programs, collection of examples of best practice, research, and training in the area of early childhood education.

## APPENDIX II

Obstacles to Roma children's access to and participation in early education - absolute and cumulative frequencies of States and NGO responses

Obstacles	Frequency of answers (states)	Frequency of answers (NGOs)	Cumulative frequencies (states and NGOs)
1) Low level of awareness among Roma parents regarding the importance of early education	15	9	24
2) Disinterest of Roma parents in enrolling their children and ensuring they attend early education institutions regularly	14	10	24
3) Unemployment and poor economic condition of Roma families, making it difficult to enrol and ensure regular attendance of their children in early education	11	9	20
4) Distrust of Roma families towards authorities and public services	10	8	18
5) Deprived Roma community environments (marginalized / illegal or unregulated settlements without adequate infrastructure)	8	8	16
6) Roma children's poor skills in using the majority language	8	7	15
7) Illiteracy of Roma parents (unable to access written information about enrolment criteria, etc.)	7	7	14
8) Lack of nearby premises for early education services and no transportation	8	5	13
9) Roma children are involved in forced into income-generating activities	8	5	13
10) Low levels of awareness among education administrators and staffs of the difficulties encountered by Roma families and children in accessing early education services	6	6	12
11) Lack of birth certificates for Roma children	5	7	12
12) Lack of premises and spaces for providing early education services	6	6	12
13) An educational environment hostile to Roma children (i.e., anti-Roma prejudice of majority-society parents, teachers, educators, others)	5	7	12
14) Lack of healthcare registration for Roma children	7	3	10
15) Lack of personal identification papers for Roma parents	3	5	8
16) Children not accepted into early education institutions due to their parents' unemployment	3	5	8
17) Failure to fulfill mandatory vaccinations	4	3	7
18) Legislative and /or administrative provisions and requirements which have a disproportionately negative effect on Roma children's participation in early education	3	3	6
19) Roma children from informal settlements are refused registration in early education institutions	2	1	3
20) Children of migrant families are refused registration in early education institutions	0	2	2
21) Early education services are provided in Roma-only settings against the will of the parents	0	2	2

### APPENDIX III

Obstacles to Roma children's access to and participation in early education - rankings based on relative frequencies of State and NGO responses

Obstacles	Rank on relative frequency (states)	Rank on relative frequency (NGOs)
1) Low level of awareness among Roma parents regarding the importance of early education	1	2
2) Disinterest of Roma parents in enrolling their children and ensuring they attend early education institutions regularly	2	1
3) Unemployment and poor economic conditions of Roma families, making it difficult to enrol and ensure regular attendance of their children in early education	3	2
4) Distrust of Roma families towards authorities and public services	4	3
5) Deprived Roma community environment (marginalized / illegal or unregulated settlements without adequate infrastructure)	5	3
6) Poor skills of Roma children in using the majority language	5	4
7) Illiteracy of Roma parents (unable to access written information about enrolment criteria, etc.)	6	4
8) Lack of nearby premises for early education services and no transportation	5	6
9) Roma children are involved in or forced into income-generating activities	5	6
10) Low levels of awareness among education administrators and staff of the difficulties encountered by Roma families and children in accessing early education services	7	5
11) Lack of birth certificates for Roma children	8	4
12) Lack of premises and spaces for providing early education services	7	5
13) Education environments hostile to Roma children (i.e., anti-Roma prejudice of majority-society parents, teachers, educators, others)	8	4
14) Lack of healthcare registration for Roma children	6	7
15) Lack of personal identification papers for Roma parents	10	6
16) Children not accepted into early education institutions due to parental unemployment	10	6
17) Failure to fulfill mandatory vaccinations	9	7
18) Legislative and /or administrative provisions and requirements which have a disproportionately negative effect on Roma children's participation in early education	10	7
19) Roma children from informal settlements are refused registration into early education institutions	11	9
20) Children of migrant families are refused registration into early education institutions	-	8
21) Early education services are provided in Roma-only settings against the will of the parents	-	8

## APPENDIX IV

ODIHR QUESTIONNAIRE - sent to participating States

# PARTICIPATION OF ROMA AND SINTI CHILDREN IN EARLY EDUCATION PROCESSES

## QUESTIONNAIRE

The [OSCE Ministerial Council Decision no. 6/08](#) ~ Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the [Action Plan](#) on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area adopted last year is guided by the idea that ensuring equal and successful start in education for Roma and Sinti children by promoting access to quality early education is a strategic area which has the potential to lead, on the long run, to a breakthrough in the situation of Roma and Sinti.

The MC Decision tasks both the participating States and the ODIHR to increase their efforts and promote equal access of Roma and Sinti children to early education.

The Helsinki Ministerial Council,

*“Determined to enhance OSCE efforts to implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area,*

*1. Urges the participating States to provide for equal access to education and to promote early education for Roma and Sinti children, as an instrument for preventing social exclusion and marginalization and for effecting a long-term improvement in the situation of Roma and Sinti. In this context, underlines that educational policies should aim to integrate Roma and Sinti people into mainstream education;*

*2. Calls upon the ODIHR, within existing resources, to assist participating States upon their request in promoting access of Roma and Sinti children to early education. In this regard, urges participating States when appropriate to undertake awareness raising initiatives, also including Roma and Sinti communities, on the benefits of early education;”*

This questionnaire represents a tool for collecting and processing information relevant to the field of Roma and Sinti children’s access to early education. It will allow ODIHR to gather comparative data necessary for an overview of the situation in the OSCE area in this regard, including identifying obstacles, main challenges and existing good practices.

The questionnaire is prepared in line with the provisions of the Action Plan, in particular par. 136. Chapter X, which states: “With a view to facilitating the implementation review process, OSCE participating States are encouraged to provide information on recent developments in the situation of Roma and Sinti people and/or measures inspired by this Action Plan”.

**Please submit the completed questionnaire, relating to 2008/2009, by 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009.**

We encourage you to fill in the questionnaire electronically, in English.

Wherever applicable, please provide website links to, or electronic version of the referenced information.

Please use the end section “Miscellaneous” to provide any additional information /clarifications which are relevant to the issue of Roma and Sinti children’s access to and participation in early education.

The electronic version of the completed questionnaire should be sent to [Roma@odihr.pl](mailto:Roma@odihr.pl). Hard copies can be sent to: OSCE ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues; Aleje Ujazdowskie 19; 00-557 Warsaw, Poland.

### Early Education

There is no ODIHR working definition of early (childhood) education. The term commonly refers to the combination of physical, intelligence/cognitive, emotional, and social learning of a child during the first six to eight years of life.

**I. What is the legal framework for early education in your country?** Please provide a brief description of the relevant legislation, with references.

**How is early education defined in your country?**

Early education is defined as:

**What are the legal requirements and eligibility criteria for enrolment?**

Please spell out the criteria according to the types of early education services provided.

In case there are not enough places to enrol all eligible children, what are the used criteria for selection? (Who decides? Are there priority groups? etc.)

**II. What types of early education services are provided in your country and by whom?**

Nursery  → from year  to

Preschool  → from year  to

Kindergarten  → from year  to

Day-care centre  → from year  to

Other 1:  → from year  to

Other 2:  → from year  to

**III. Providers of early education services:**

**Public** (i.e. State; Local authority; School)

Please specify:

**Private** (i.e. Non-profit organization; Company /firm; Private individuals; Church)

Please specify:

other:

**How are public and private early education providers defined in your country and what is the difference between?**

Public:

Private:

**a) What is the proportion of public and private early education institutions and how many places are available in both systems?**

**Public:** , representing %

Places available:

Private: , representing %

Places available:

**b) What is the ratio between for-profit private early education institutions versus not-for-profit?**

For-profit: %

Not-for-profit: %

**c) Which public authorities are responsible for designing early education policies?**

Public authority:

**d) Which public authorities are responsible for implementing early education policies?**

Public authority:

**e) What is the starting age of children in compulsory primary school?**

Starting age is:

**f) To enrol in primary school, is there a requirement of prior enrolment in any form of early education?**

Yes ; No

If Yes, from what age?

In what form of early education?

**g) What is the source of funding for early education services? (i.e. state, municipality, families, etc.) Please provide the ratio.**

State , representing %

Municipality , representing %

Families , representing %

Other , representing %

**h) Is there a state/municipality-provided early education service free of charge?**

Yes ; No

If Yes, who provides the funding?

Type of early education service free of charge:

If No, how much parents are expected to pay (for tuition and additional costs such as meals, teaching materials, costs of extracurricular activities etc.) monthly on average?

Payment on average per month:  EUR, to cover:

**i) What is the amount spent yearly for early education by the government and local authorities?**

Government spending:  EUR

Local authorities spending:  EUR

**IV. Do you collect /posses data and information on enrolment and participation of Roma children in public and private early education? If Yes, please indicate which authority is charged with this task, what are the means used for data collection and what is the purpose that such data will serve for?**

**Is collected data disaggregated by age and gender?**

**Is this data available to public?**

Yes , data is collected by:

Please specify the data collection means used:

Purpose:

Data disaggregated by age: Yes  No

Data disaggregated by gender: Yes  No

Data available to public: Yes , reference:

No

Please specify whether the (Roma) ethnicity of children is determined by self-identification (by parents) or by hetero-identification, and what is the related proportion.

Self-identification, by parents: %

Hetero-identification: %

If there is no data and information collected on *enrolment and participation of Roma children in early education*, please indicate if there is any other data available that might be relevant to support an assessment on this matter (i.e. reports, studies focussing on access to healthcare and education of children from deprived communities, etc.).

Please specify and provide references:

**a) What is the total number of children eligible for early education and the total number of children enrolled in early education?**

Total number of children eligible for early education:

Total number of children enrolled in early education:

**b) What is the total number of Roma children eligible for early education and the total number of Roma children enrolled in early education?**

Total number of Roma children eligible for early education:

Total number of Roma children enrolled in early education:

**c) What is the percentage of Roma children from the total number of children enrolled in early education?**

Percentage of Roma children: %

**d) Based on available statistics, what is the average time spent by children in any form of early education?**

Average time spent by non-Roma children:  years

Average time spent by Roma children:  years

## CHALLENGES, OBSTACLES & RESPONSES

### V. What are the main obstacles with regard to the enrolment and continuous participation of Roma children in early education? Please mark all relevant boxes.

Deprived community environment (marginalized / illegal or unregulated settlement without adequate infrastructure)

Lack of birth registration certificates of the children

Lack of personal identification papers of the parents

Lack of healthcare registration of the children , failure to fulfill mandatory vaccination

Legislative and /or administrative provisions and requirements which have a disproportionately negative effect on Roma children's participation in early education

Children not accepted to early education institutions due to unemployment of parents

Children from informal settlements are refused registration to early education institutions

Children of migrant families are refused registration to early education institutions

Other , please specify:

Lack of premises and spaces for providing early education services

Lack of nearby premises for early education services and transportation is not provided

Early education services are provided in Roma-only settings against the will of the parents

Please provide details:

Low levels of awareness among education administrators and staff of the difficulties encountered by Roma families and children in accessing early education services

Education environment hostile to Roma children (i.e. anti-Roma prejudice of majority-parents, teachers, educators, others)

Please illustrate:

Unemployment and poor economic condition of Roma families, making it difficult to enrol and ensure regular attendance of their children to early education

Children are involved /or forced into income-generating activities

Illiteracy of the parents (unable to access written information about enrolment criteria, etc.)

Distrust of Roma families towards authorities and public services

Low level of awareness among Roma parents regarding the importance of early education

Disinterest of parents to enrolling their children and ensure they attend early education institutions regularly

Poor skills of Roma children in using the majority language

**Other obstacles (please specify):**



**VI. What policies and measures (including programmes, pilot projects) have been implemented by the responsible public authorities to overcome the identified obstacles and ensure equal and wide access of Roma children to early education?**

**Examples**

Awareness raising and enrolment campaigns

Facilitating health care services to mother and children and timely vaccination

Facilitating transition from home to preschool and /or from preschool to primary school

Providing social support to families and capacity building to Roma parents to enable them to support their children in the education process

Other:

Please provide examples with brief description (including information about implementing agency, objectives, activities, source of funding, amount spent, innovative approach and methods, models of policy, progress achieved, and impact) and references:

**Has an assessment been made regarding the effectiveness of any these policies and measures?**

Yes

Please specify: type (i.e. institutional audit; report; evaluation; study; research; opinion poll) ; institution /author ; year ; reference

Results of assessment:

No  Not aware of

**Do you know of any programmes & projects aiming to support the enrolment and participation of Roma children in early education implemented by other stakeholders than public authorities?**

Please provide examples with brief description and references:

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**Please provide any other information in the area of Roma and Sinti children's access to and participation in early education you consider relevant.**

**Submitted by** (please provide full contacts):

Institution /authority:

Contact person and position: