

INTEGRATION OF ROMA CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS – EXPERIENCES FROM SLOVENIA, ROMANIA AND SERBIA

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Abstract:

Compulsory education is crucial for the acquisition of the eight key competences that represent a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes which EU Member States consider necessary for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment. Despite the efforts to expand and improve education for Roma children, as much as 50% of Roma children in Europe fail to complete primary education, and thus they do not acquire the basic skills necessary for achieving full participation in society. A large amount of Roma children do not even attend compulsory education, mainly due to low economic status and limited access to schools. In certain countries of Central and Eastern Europe, between 50% and 80% of Roma children enrolled in school are systematically routed into “special schools”. Enrolment rates for Roma in early childhood education are very low: for example, in Bulgaria and Romania where three quarters of children participate in preschool education, only 16% and 17% of Roma children are enrolled in this level of education (Edutopia 2015). A key policy priority for Roma inclusion is to scale up and coordinate efforts to combat all forms of discrimination and segregation in the sphere of education. Inclusion of Roma children must be especially well developed in countries, where Roma population is more numerous-Danube region. Improving the educational situation of Roma in the Danube, and in the EU in general is also important challenge for the EU 2020 strategy, which has set ambitious targets regarding education, such as reducing the rate of early school leavers below 10 %, as well as to ensure that Roma children complete at least primary school and have access to quality education. In the article we will focus on the efforts of inclusion of Roma children in the following Danube countries: Slovenia, Romania and Serbia. Teachers and roma school mediators/assistants play important role in integration of Roma children. Roma school mediators/assistants are mostly people belonging to the Roma community who help teachers. They represent a bridge between this community and schools. Teachers, in order to be efficient, require knowledge of cultural and social conditions in which Roma children live, which requires specific methods of work. Part of the article will be analysis of surveys from around 90 respondents (teachers and roma school mediators/assistants) from Slovenia, Romania and Serbia who attended the Training Module on Inclusion of Roma children in schools in frame of the Danube Region Project Fund: Integration of Roma children into education system - countries of Danube region.

Keywords: vulnerable groups, inclusive education, Slovenia, Serbia, Romania, Roma people