

UNPREPARED: ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL EDUCATION FOR ROMA CHILDREN IN SLOVENIA

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ABSTRACT

Early childhood education is very important for all children, especially for disadvantaged. This argument has been built on many studies and on three broad rationales: foundational-scientific argument, human rights argument and socioeconomic argument. Some experts and non-governmental organizations argue for a free, integrated and compulsory preschool education as the most important way for improving the educational level of Roma population. Slovenia implements a variety of programs and policies aiming at education of Roma and specifically on overcoming barriers to access to preschool education. However, the government efforts might be going to the wrong direction: there are normatives and financing laws that encourage establishing only-Roma preschool classes; and the 2010 public tender of 4 million € will potentially result in even more segregation of Roma children since it foresees establishing preschool education inside Roma settlements. While there are some practical arguments for segregated preschool education inside Roma settlements, Slovenian government should rethink what we really want in terms of integration and relationships between Roma and majority population. Government should enable Roma children to go to integrated preschool classes, continue to inform parents on importance of preschool, and ensure that in every preschool class with Roma children there is one Roma assistant that helps with the language, emotional and cultural barrier.

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INTRODUCTION

*“Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. As an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities.”*¹

The Roma are the “quintessential pan-European ethnic minority, present in almost all Council of Europe Member States but lacking a territory or government of their own”². The number of Roma in Europe is between 10 and 12 million – they constitute the largest minority in Europe. Roma communities live in virtually all member states of Council of Europe and EU, as well as in the EU candidate countries (Croatia, Macedonia, Turkey) and (except Iceland) in the potential candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro Serbia).³ No matter where they are, Roma are discriminated in many aspects of their lives, extremely marginalized, socially excluded, segregated and suffer extremely bad socio-economic conditions. The findings of the EU-MIDIS Data in Focus report⁴ on Roma, published by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency in 2009, confirmed that Roma are the group that is most vulnerable to discrimination⁵ and (racist) crime⁶.

Problems of Roma inclusion are especially evident in the lower access of Roma to goods and services falling into four areas that are very much interdependent and interconnected: education, employment, health and housing.⁷ It has been noted that “several European and international players are currently pursuing parallel policy processes aimed at

1 United Nations Economic and Social Council. 1999. Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: General Comment No. 13. E/C. 12/1999/10.

2 Goldston, James A. 2010. The Struggle for Roma Rights: Arguments that Have Worked. Human Rights Quarterly - Volume 32, Number 2, May 2010, pp. 311-325. Page 2.

3 Ibid. page 3.

4 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. 2009. EU-MIDIS - Data in Focus Report: The Roma.

5 “On average – every second Roma respondent was discriminated against at least once in the previous 12 months”. Report page 3.

6 “On average – 1 in 5 Roma respondents were victims of racially motivated personal crime – including assaults, threats and serious harassment – at least once in the previous 12 months”. Report page 3.

7 European Commission. 7 April 2010. Commission Staff Working Document. 2010. Roma in Europe: The Implementation of the EU Instruments and Policies for Roma Inclusion – Progress Report 2008-2010, SEC(2010)400. Page 7.

including Roma”⁸, for example the Decade of Roma Inclusion.⁹ The most important problems of Roma inclusion in terms of education are “absence of Roma in early childhood education, the low educational attainment, high drop-out rates at young age (particularly of Roma girls) as well as irregular participation in education with the consequence of illiteracy and lacking skills and qualifications for the labour market” as well as unemployment and poverty.¹⁰

Early childhood education is very important for all children, especially for disadvantaged, since it can overcome the disadvantages caused by poverty or marginalization.¹¹ There are many studies on importance of early childhood education, mostly based on three broad arguments/rationales: foundational-scientific argument, human rights argument and socioeconomic argument. However, throughout Europe, including in Slovenia, most Roma children do not attend preschool and are therefore unprepared for primary school. Roma families are often socially and economically deprived so that Roma children can not get all the cognitive, emotional and social skills and knowledge necessary.¹² Therefore some experts and non-governmental organizations argue for a free, integrated and compulsory preschool education as the most important way for improving the educational level of Roma population.

The **aim of the thesis** is to analyze the barriers of Roma children to preschool education generally and in Slovenia and to identify good national and international practices that can be strengthened/scaled up in order to overcome those barriers. I am arguing that Slovenia, despite many laws, policies and programmes aiming at education of Roma and specifically on overcoming barriers to access to preschool education, might be going to a wrong direction –

8 European Commission. 7 April 2010. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. The social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe. COM/2010/0133 final. Page 5.

9 Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 – About.

10 European Commission. 7 April 2010. Commission Staff Working Document. 2010. Roma in Europe: The Implementation of the EU Instruments and Policies for Roma Inclusion – Progress Report 2008-2010, SEC(2010)400.

11 UNESCO and Council of Europe. 2007. Towards quality education for Roma children: transition from early childhood to primary education. Audit of Pre-school provision. Briefing paper for the Experts' UNESCO / Council of Europe Meeting. Page 3.

12 Roma Education Initiative. 2003. Combating Educational Deprivation of Roma Children: a Policy Discussion Paper. Page 5.

maintaining or even supporting segregation of Roma children. There are normatives and financing laws that encourage establishing only-Roma preschool classes. The most recent development in this field is the 2010 public tender “*Raising the social and cultural capital in areas inhabited by members of the Roma community*”¹³ where 4 million € will be spent mostly on establishing preschool education inside Roma settlements. While this project can certainly bring some positive development inside the Roma settlements (and has been anything but criticized from Slovenian politicians, Roma community, educational experts etc.), and while there are some practical arguments for segregated preschool education inside Roma settlements, Slovenian government should rethink what we really want in terms of integration and relationships between Roma and majority population. My final recommendations, based on research and interviews with Roma university students, are that government should enable Roma children to go to integrated preschool classes, continue to inform Roma parents on importance of preschool, and ensure that in every preschool class with Roma children there is one Roma assistant that helps with the language, emotional and cultural barrier.

Methods used in this thesis are the analysis of primary sources (legislation, strategies, official statistical data, and data from municipalities), secondary sources (reports of Slovenian and international NGOs dealing with the topic, articles and books) and interviews with five out of fifteen Roma university students in Slovenia.

Chapter 1 of the thesis contains the literature review on importance of early childhood education, barriers to access preschool for Roma children, arguments for compulsory preschool education as well as arguments for and against segregated preschool education.

13 Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Education and Sport. 2010. Public Tender on Co-financing the project “Raising the social and cultural capital in areas inhabited by members of the Roma community” (Javni razpis za sofinanciranje projekta »Dvig socialnega in kulturnega kapitala v okoljih, kjer živijo predstavniki romske skupnosti«). Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia no. 47/2010. Page 1468.

Chapter 2 describes the general situation of Roma in Slovenia; laws, policies and programs aimed at better inclusion of Roma in education; preschool education in general and preschool education of Roma children in Slovenia.

Chapter 3 includes the major findings of the interviews with five Roma university students in Slovenia about their educational path.

Chapter 4 outlines good national and international practices that can be strengthened and/or scaled up in Slovenia, with a special emphasis on Roma assistant.

Chapter 5 lists recommendations of the thesis.

CHAPTER 1 – LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 IMPORTANCE OF PRESCHOOL

*“When these children enter school, they will be better able to navigate the school process. They are more likely to complete schooling and have greater self-esteem. These children are more likely to become productive members of society”.*¹⁴

1.1.1 Definition and terminology

Before emphasizing the importance of preschool, the definition of preschool has to be established. Preschool education is defined as “any organized provision outside of the children’s home in the age range of zero to seven years old. Other frequently used terms are early childhood education, kindergarten, playgroup, nursery, and pre-grade one”.¹⁵ UNESCO’s definition of Early Childhood Care and Education is more comprehensive, since it is not limiting preschool only to educational matters, but is “placed within a broader context of social development, gender equity and poverty reduction”¹⁶. In other words, early childhood education is about children’s holistic development (including health, nutrition, security and learning).¹⁷ Similarly, Browning uses the term Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) since this terminology emphasizes a *holistic* approach that includes “attending to a child’s physical, emotional, social and cognitive development”.¹⁸ It is not dividing “care, development and education because it is impossible to treat them independently.”¹⁹ Proper care is important for child’s survival and growth, so that the child can learn.²⁰

14 UNICEF (2004) in Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 4.

15 European Roma Information Office (ERIO). Preschool education of Roma children in Europe. Fact sheet. Page 1.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 4.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

1.1.2 Arguments and rationales for early childhood intervention

An increasing volume of research exists about the early childhood development and education. In her unpublished paper Kimberly Browning analyzed 11 studies in early childhood education, for example “intervention studies, short-term studies and cost-benefit analyses”²¹, which can provide a base for establishing and examining public policy.

Based on her research, Browning establishes three rationales or arguments for intervention in early childhood years: (1) a foundational scientific argument “looking at both the short-term and longitudinal impacts of ECCD on children’s development”²²; 2) a human rights argument “exploring how ECCD enhances the basic human rights of children and families”²³; 3) a socioeconomic argument “creating an international economic argument for early intervention”²⁴.

1.1.2.1 Foundational scientific argument

1.1.2.1.1 Development

A foundational scientific argument is based on findings that the early years are extraordinarily important for intellectual, emotional, social, physical and moral development of a child.²⁵ It has been found that “half of all intellectual abilities are developed by age four”²⁶ and that in preschool years “brain can nearly double in size in one year”²⁷. Social and

21 Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

22 Ibid. Page 5.

23 Ibid. Page 5.

24 Ibid. Page 5.

25 Ibid.

26 Young (1999) in Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 6.

27 UNICEF (2004) in Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 6.

economic circumstances can influence the development of linguistic and cognitive skills and emotional, social, and moral capabilities.²⁸

Browning found both short term and long term studies that show how preschool effects development. There is strong evidence that preschool “interventions can have **short term** effects on cognitive abilities, school achievements, and social-emotional adjustment.”²⁹ Early childhood programs can therefore reduce educational inequalities.³⁰ There is also increasing evidence of **long term** effects of preschool education on “educational performance (such as school achievement, retention and placement, attitudes and behaviours, and graduation rates), as well as on adult experiences (decreased crime, higher education completion, and job retention etc).”³¹ Some of the consistent long-term and short-term outcomes are “IQ and cognitive/achievement score increases, increased task completion, greater cooperation with peers, as well as reduced remedial placements, retentions and special education referrals”.³²

Johnson and Kossykh cite a study that found that “regardless of all other factors, children who did not experience any pre-school provision demonstrate lower cognitive abilities and poor social / behavioural development at school entry (especially ‘peer sociability’ and ‘independence and concentration’).”³³ They found that cognitive development of the 5-year-old children who attend preschool for two years is “four to six months more advanced than those who had not attended at all”.³⁴

A strong evidence of importance of preschool education has been found in the study of children in **Nepal** that showed that “more than 95 per cent of children who had attended a non-formal preschool facility enrolled in primary school, where they also performed better

28 Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 6.

29 Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 13.

30 Ibid. Page 3.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Sammons et al (2002) in Johnson, Paul and Kossykh Yulia. 2008. Early years, life chances and equality: a literature review. Equality and Human Rights Commission. Page 15.

34 Ibid.

than those who had not attended”³⁵ and that “around 80 per cent of the first group passed grade one, compared to around 60 per cent of the group without preschool experience”.³⁶

1.1.2.1.2 As early as possible

It is also established that the “length of intervention or age at entry affects outcomes – earlier and longer is better”³⁷. For example, one study Browning reviewed showed that “children who started early childhood programs before age 2 had higher scores in curiosity, mathematics, and reading comprehension”.³⁸ One of the most important findings by Browning is that early entry to preschool results in “better intellectual development, independence, concentration, and sociability”.³⁹ Sylva et al. found that the length and high quality of preschool education are especially important for the most disadvantaged groups “in reducing the social class attainment gap”.⁴⁰

1.1.2.1.3 Disadvantaged children

*“Pre-school can be particularly helpful for children from families and communities that have traditionally been excluded from education, and for those who only speak a minority language or whose home circumstances make it hard for them to benefit from early stimulation.”*⁴¹

Studies from India⁴², Argentina⁴³, Cambodia⁴⁴ and United States^{45 46} prove that early childhood education has the most effect on disadvantaged children and is therefore intrinsically a pro-poor investment.⁴⁷

35 Davies, Lynn. 2009. A Human Rights Based Approach to Roma Education. Briefing Paper for the Decade of Roma Education. UNICEF. Page 3.

36 Ibid.

37 Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 30.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid. Page 17.

40 Sylva et al. 2006. Social class differences in the effects of pre-school on children’s academic performance at age 7. Institute of Education, London. Page 5.

41 UNICEF. 2007. Breaking the Cycle of Exclusion – Roma Children in South East Europe. Page 46.

42 Participation in preschool resulted in a 46 per cent decrease of the in the drop-out level of lower castes’ students, while there was no significant shift in the drop-out rate of students from higher castes.

43 Effects of preschool attendance on poor students were two times as large as preschool attendance on non-poor students, measured by third grade language and mathematics tests.

44 Preschool attendance raised graduation rates from 43 to 54 per cent, with the most impact on students from the poorest rural communities, the increase of the rates of graduation from the poorest communities were double that of comparable students from the wealthiest communities.

45 Head Start preschool initiative for students from low-income families was created with the specific intention of breaking the cycle of poverty by compensating for the initial inequalities of children from disadvantaged backgrounds through primary-school preparatory measures.

Some of the studies that Browning analyzed⁴⁸ included low-income and low-education families and showed that children that got early childhood education maintained many advantages for quite some time in comparison those that did not get any early childhood education, especially if they were included in classes with children from mixed backgrounds.^{49 50}

Study for the *Effective Pre-school and Primary Education 3-11 Project* found that the “experience of preschool is particularly important in raising attainment levels in the early primary years and that ‘home’ children from unskilled manual backgrounds are likely to fall further behind other children”⁵¹

Johnson and Kossykh cite a study that found that benefits of preschool education “appear to be particularly significant for children from ethnic minorities”.⁵²

1.1.2.1.4 Importance of preschool education for Roma specifically

Access to preschool for Roma children is one of the most important goals for improving access to education for Roma⁵³. Preschool helps Roma children to learn the language of instruction in primary school and it helps them to prepare for the habits they have to acquire in order to be successful in the school. This is usually the critical point at which limitations on access to education begin – if Roma children are not included in the educational system from

46 High/Scope Perry Project study showed that the preschool participants (black children from urban low-income families) were more likely to graduate high school, obtain employment, support themselves by the age of 19 and require less welfare payments.

47 UNICEF. Out of School Children in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Page 101.

48 Turkish Early Enrichment Project (TEEP), The North Carolina Abecedarian Project, The Chicago Longitudinal Study, The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study, The Avancé Strategy, Early Head Start (EHS)

49 Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 17.

50 Ibid. Page 29.

51 Sylva et al. 2006. Social class differences in the effects of pre-school on children's academic performance at age 7. Institute of Education, London. Page 4.

52 Sammons et al (2002) in Johnson, Paul and Kossykh Yulia. 2008. Early years, life chances and equality: a literature review. Equality and Human Rights Commission. Page 20.

53 Open Society Institute. 2009. 10 Goals for Improving Access to Education for Roma. Page 10.

the very beginning, they most probably will be doomed to fall into the spiral of poverty, unemployment and marginalization.⁵⁴

Research proves that early childhood education has positive effects on Roma children's lives, strong as in case of any other disadvantaged children, or even stronger. One example is on Roma children in Serbia. Research in 2000 found that almost all (97%) of Roma children who had attended NGO-run preschool programmes in Serbia were proficient in Serbian and almost all subsequently completed the first year of primary school. Only a third of other non-participating Roma children had Serbian language skills and only 40% of them passed the first year in primary school.⁵⁵

Another set of good examples comes from Bulgaria, where in the middle of the 1990s the first summer pre-school courses for bilingual children were organized in a Roma neighbourhood by a Roma NGO, with a professional teacher and Roma assistant in every group. In four months the children learned Bulgarian language, so that they could integrate well in the primary school. Roma children had the same drop-out rate as non-Roma children. This practice was implemented in other cities with Roma population with the same results. During summer 2002, 19 local NGOs organized pre-school trainings for 1335 children in Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Sliven, Russe, Varna and Shumen. All the children who participated in these trainings subsequently enrolled in first grade.”⁵⁶

1.1.2.1.5 Dependency trap

Since unemployment and of Roma is rising in the 21st century, mostly because of the low educational level of Roma, there is a growing trend of social welfare dependency and/or reliance on the informal and occasional employment. Especially Roma women are suffering

⁵⁴ United Nations Development Programme. 2002. The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency Trap. A Regional Human Development Report. Page 60.

⁵⁵ UNICEF. 2007. Breaking the Cycle of Exclusion – Roma Children in South East Europe. Page 47.

⁵⁶ United Nations Development Programme. 2002. The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency Trap. Page 61.

from unemployment.⁵⁷ Growing dependency on social welfare payments can present a trap for Roma and non-Roma, since “it contributes to and maintains poverty but also feeds prejudice and stereotypes”⁵⁸ and can consequently cause ethnic conflicts.

It has been recognized that the only way to avoid the dependency trap is to “close the gap between the education level of Roma and that of the majority population”.⁵⁹ Magnuson and Waldfogel established three conditions that should be met by pre-primary education and care systems in order to significantly narrow the education gap for children from low income and immigrant or ethnic minority families. The three conditions are⁶⁰:

- (1) the bigger the impact of pre-primary education and care on school readiness skills, the more the education gap will be reduced;
- (2) preschool programmes should have a differential, or compensatory, impact, meaning that the most disadvantaged will benefit most;
- (3) there has to be an actual use of pre-primary education by educationally disadvantaged groups.

Closing of the education gap as the only possible way to avoid the dependency trap between Roma and majority population is naturally also part of the socioeconomic argument, which is analyzed later in the chapter.

1.1.2.2 Human rights argument

1.1.2.2.1 *Right to early childhood education*

There is an international consensus about the importance of early childhood education.⁶¹ The international community has recognized the importance of early childhood years and has declared access to early childhood education a human right for children. A

⁵⁷ Corsi, Marcella, Chiara Crepaldi et al. 2008. Ethnic minority and Roma women in Europe: A case for gender equality? Page 15.

⁵⁸ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. 2008. Implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area. Status Report 2008. Page 37.

⁵⁹ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. 2008. Implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area. Status Report 2008. Page 40.

⁶⁰ Magnuson and Waldfogel in EACEA Eurydice. 2009. Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities. Page 36.

⁶¹ UNICEF. Out of School Children in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Page 99.

human rights argument is based on the right to live and develop one's fullest potential, as provided in Articles 25⁶² and 26⁶³ of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (**UDHR**) from 1948. UDHR in this way promotes early childhood interventions through supporting adequate health and well-being as well as the right to free education directed at the full development of the human person.⁶⁴ United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child from 1959 (**DRC**)⁶⁵ and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child from 1989 (**CRC**)⁶⁶ provide that state parties are responsible to make early childhood interventions through provision of a quality and equal early childhood education for all children. Principle 2 of the **DRC** provides that "The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to *develop* physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity." Article 6(2) of the **CRC** provides that "States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and *development* of the child". In Article 18(2) the **CRC** provides that "States Parties shall render appropriate *assistance* to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of *institutions, facilities and services for the care of children*." In 1990, **Education for All** (EFA) movement was initiated which "renewed a world community commitment to ensuring the rights of education and knowledge for all people"⁶⁷. The *World*

62 Article 25: "(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection."

63 Article 26: "(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."

64 Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 8.

65 United Nations General Assembly. 1959. Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Resolution 1386 (XIV) of 10 December 1959.

66 United Nations General Assembly. 1989. Convention on the Rights of the Child. Resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989.

67 Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 2.

*Declaration on Education for All*⁶⁸ in its Article 5⁶⁹ includes a focus on early childhood care and initial education. In 2000, The World Education Forum met in Senegal and adopted six major goals for education, the first being “Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children”. In September 2010 at the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Moscow the *Moscow Framework for Action and Cooperation Harnessing the Wealth of Nations* was adopted, which acknowledged that EFA Goal 1 of expanding ECCE is at great risk of not being achieved by 2015 unless urgent and resolute action is taken. It recognizes the challenges to ECCE expansion and sets the action agenda calling upon governments to mobilize stronger commitment to ECCE, reinforce effective ECCE programme delivery and harness resources for ECCE.⁷⁰

Within the European Union, the European Parliament has been urging the European Commission to examine opportunities to “strengthen anti-discrimination legislation in the area of education, focusing on desegregation”; and to “re-double its efforts to fund and support actions in the Member States which aim to integrate Romani children into mainstream education from an early age”.⁷¹

1.1.2.2.2 Human Rights Based Approach to Education

Lynn Davies writes about the **rights-based approach (RBA)** to education, with particular regard to minorities and especially to Roma children⁷². First characteristic of RBA is that it looks both at the “process of education and the outcomes of education”⁷³. Within

⁶⁸ UNESCO. 1990. World Declaration on Education for All.

⁶⁹ World Declaration on Education for All, Article 5 (Broadening the means and scope of basic education): “The diversity, complexity, and changing nature of basic learning needs of children, youth and adults necessitates broadening and constantly redefining the scope of basic education to include the following components: (1) Learning begins at birth. This calls for early childhood care and initial education. These can be provided through arrangements involving families, communities, or institutional programmes, as appropriate.”

⁷⁰ World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). 2010. Moscow Framework for Action and Cooperation Harnessing the Wealth of Nations.

⁷¹ European Parliament. 2008. European Parliament resolution of 31 January 2008 on a European strategy on the Roma (2009/C 68 E/06). Official Journal of the European Union. Paragraph 14.

⁷² Davies, Lynn. 2009. A Human Rights Based Approach to Roma Education. Briefing Paper for the Decade of Roma Education. UNICEF.

⁷³ Ibid. Page 1.

RBA there are three strands: (1) the right *to* education (access to learning at all stages), (2) rights *within* education (the quality of education), (3) learning about *rights* (learning respect and skills for human rights). Rights based approach is argued to be “more useful than a **needs-based approach**”⁷⁴, which defines what is “*lacking*” and therefore represents more of a “‘deficit’ model which labels children or casts them as victims”⁷⁵. RBA is on the other hand focused on rights that “all children have, simply by virtue of being a child”⁷⁶. It sets a duty on states to ensure those rights are provided. RBA is not a charity, but gives power to children in terms of being aware of their rights and rights of others.⁷⁷

Davies argues that according to RBA schools should be *child-seeking* (encourage and enable children to come to school), *child-friendly* (making schools humane and non-violent) and *child-enabling* (skills and orientations for employment and survival, empowering individuals and communities to claim rights).⁷⁸ RBA approach can be a very powerful one: it can provide governments with legal frameworks and standards (legal/structural power); it can change school cultures by providing a moral and behavioural dimension to benefit the school community (normative power) and it is fostering social cohesion and economic and political participation (economic/political power).⁷⁹

One can argue that the justification for investment in the early childhood interventions should be clear enough looking at the *foundational scientific* and *human rights* argument. However, we live in a world with scarce resources. Therefore often the third rationale has to be established: finding the *socioeconomic* benefits of providing preschool education.

74 Ibid. Page 1.

75 Ibid. Page 1.

76 Ibid. Page 1.

77 Ibid. Page 1.

78 Ibid. Page 3.

79 Ibid.

1.1.2.3 Socioeconomic argument

“It is a rare public policy initiative that promotes fairness and social justice and at the same time promotes productivity in the economy and in society at large. Investing in disadvantaged young children is such a policy.”⁸⁰

By stressing inclusion the rights based approach provides *social* capital with establishing social cohesion and challenging the violence and racial hatred. But it also provides *economical* capital, which helps national growth and sustainable development. Arguments of rights as an entitlement and right as economic sense can be combined.⁸¹

The socioeconomic argument is essentially about the fact that “the economic return of an investment should justify the expense”⁸². It sees education as “both a consumptive good that gives immediate benefits and an investment good that gives personal and social benefits well into the future”.⁸³

It is based on a **cost-benefit analysis** that compares the expenses of the investment in early childhood programs with economic returns and benefits. For example, three studies that Browning analyzed (the Abecedarian Project, the CPC and the Perry Preschool Study) are based on a cost-benefit analysis. They showed that there was an economic return between \$4 and \$7,14 “in education, social welfare, and socioeconomic benefits by reducing public expenditures for remedial education, criminal justice treatment, and crime victims”.⁸⁴ This is what Table 1 shows: high returns of early childhood interventions. It was established that “early interventions targeted toward disadvantaged children have much higher returns than

80 Heckman, J. James. 2006. The Economics of Investing in Children. Policy Briefing No. 1. UCD Geary Institute Page 2.

81 Davies, Lynn. 2009. A Human Rights Based Approach to Roma Education. Briefing Paper for the Decade of Roma Education. UNICEF. Page 5.

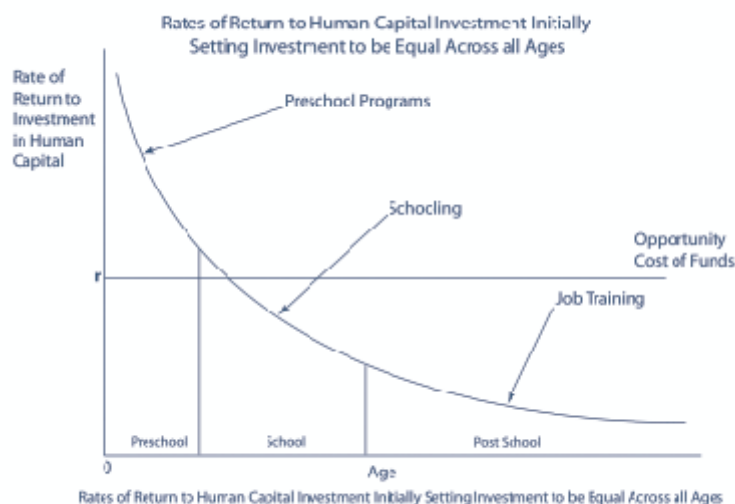
82 Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 10.

83 Becker, Haveman & Wolfe, Masse & Barnett in Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 11.

84 Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 31.

later interventions such as reduced pupil- teacher ratios, public job training, convict rehabilitation programs, tuition subsidies or expenditure on police”.⁸⁵

Table 1: Return to human capital investment⁸⁶



Therefore in early childhood programs there are two different kinds of investment: 1) gaining values and skills necessary for participation in the labour market through “enhanced intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and moral development”⁸⁷ and 2) less money spent on correcting later negative behaviour.⁸⁸ In this way cost benefit analyses show that early education is first a fundamental right of every human being, but also an investment in human capital.⁸⁹ **Human capital** is critical for a nation’s ability for economic growth. It is defined as “the practical knowledge, acquired skills, and learned abilities of an individual that make him or her potentially productive and thus equip him or her to earn income in exchange for labour”⁹⁰. Developing of human capital is possible if each child has the opportunity to develop to their full potential, starting in early childhood. In preschool years the human

⁸⁵ Heckman, J. James. 2006. The Economics of Investing in Children. Policy Briefing No. 1. UCD Geary Institute. Page 4.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 12.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid..

⁹⁰ Johnson (1994-2000) in Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 12.

capital is developed through “focusing on health, learning, and behavioural development”⁹¹. It has been proved that “underdeveloped language acquisition, social skills, lack of the ability to think critically and the capacity to learn, all of which develop during the early years along with physical disabilities, learning impairments, poor preparedness for school, and gender disadvantages among others keep prosperity and development from occurring.”⁹²

As it was already mentioned in the first rationale (foundational scientific argument), there are many benefits of the early childhood education for children. However, children are not the only beneficiaries. Parents (especially mothers) can benefit from a quality early childhood programs by being able to work and in consequence participate in higher education and training as a preparation for employment⁹³ Early childhood education has also a lot of **social benefits**, including societal equity, less dependence on welfare system and greater participation in community, higher rates of return in terms of increased human productivity, income generation, costs savings in education spending, increased school readiness and primary-school quality, and the multiplying effects of investing in women and children.⁹⁴ Fernando Reimers researched in Latin America and found that early childhood education is an essential measure in minimizing the opportunity gaps between the rich and the poor, and is a key to reducing poverty, escalating economic development, and maintaining social and political cohesion.⁹⁵ In a 2005 case study on Vietnam, Holsinger found that preschool is a necessity for equality in educational attainment, since with almost half of the children enrolled in preschool, Vietnam has the highest level of equality in educational attainment in the developing world.⁹⁶

91 Unicef (2004) in Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 12.

92 Unicef (2004) in Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 12.

93 Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 11.

94 UNICEF. Out of School Children in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Page 99.

95 Reimers in UNICEF. Out of School Children in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Page 100.

96 Holsinger in UNICEF. Out of School Children in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Page 100.

To bring the socioeconomical argument in light of investing in education of Roma children, many countries, especially those with a significant per cent of Roma population⁹⁷, already conducted studies on economic and budgetary consequences of Roma exclusion (see the Bulgarian⁹⁸ and Hungarian⁹⁹ studies), that demonstrate that the exclusion of Roma entails important consequences in terms of “direct costs for public budgets as indirect costs through losses in productivity”¹⁰⁰, since Roma represent a “large part of their potential labour force”¹⁰¹.

To conclude, there is a growing international consensus on the importance of early childhood education that comes from three different rationales: foundational-scientific argument (child development in early years); human rights arguments (human rights of children); and societal-economic argument (human capital and the economic return when investing in early childhood).

1.2 BARRIERS TO ACCESS PRESCHOOL FOR ROMA CHILDREN

In the literature there is a wide recognition of certain barriers or obstacles to access preschool education for Roma children. That has a consequence of a wide education level gap between the Roma and majority populations and their situation in the labour market. Barriers come partly from Roma culture, partly from educational policies and approaches and partly from stereotypes and prejudices. Diana Kirilova and Virginie Repaire¹⁰² listed barriers to access to education for Roma generally; and furthermore UNESCO and Council of Europe in its *Audit of Pre-school provision* identified different barriers for Roma in “securing

97 According to a study by the Open Society Foundation Bratislava, by 2030, 16% of Slovakia's under-18s will be Roma. The European Commission estimates that by 2040, 40% of the new entrants onto Hungary's labour market will be Roma. In: Berger, Nicolas and Heather Grabbe. 2010. Ending Europe's Exclusion of Roma. European Voice, April 1 2010.

98 Institute for Market Economics. 2007. Expected Long-term Budgetary Benefits to Roma Education in Bulgaria.

99 Gábor Kertesi and Gábor Kézdi. 2006. Expected Long-term Budgetary Benefits to Roma Education in Hungary. Roma Education Fund.

100 European Commission. 7 April 2010. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. The social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe. COM/2010/0133 final. Page 2.

101 Ibid.

102 Kirilova, Diana and Virginie Repaire. 2003. The innovatory practices in the field of education of Roma children. Council of Europe. Pages 11-14.

satisfactory levels of access and regular attendance”¹⁰³ in the preschool education. The most important barriers that those two sources mention are:

- **Roma parents’ non-involvement in their children’s education**

General education: Roma parents are not always aware of the importance of education and are consequently not sufficiently involved in their children’s education. That adds to the isolation and exclusion of Roma communities. In the situations of poverty, parents sometimes keep their children at home to start working or look after siblings.

Preschool: Roma parents are not always informed systematically and uniformly about the improvements in early childhood education opportunities, about the benefits of preschool or on the process of enrolment of their children into preschools. Poor education of Roma women is connected to the fact that they are not always very motivated to enrol their children to preschool. There are many factors that cause the low involvement of Roma parents in educational affairs of their children¹⁰⁴:

1. Most Roma parents are uneducated themselves and thus some do not see the link between education and leading a successful life.
2. Parents may be perceived as uninterested or even incapable.
3. Some parents consider that education distances their children from their traditions and culture in an attempt of assimilation.
4. Some of those parents that try to get involved in the education of their children are not listened to and are subject to discriminatory behaviour from other non-Roma parents, teachers and headmasters.
5. Poverty decreases the possibility and chance of general parent participation.

103 UNESCO and Council of Europe. 2007. Towards quality education for Roma children: transition from early childhood to primary education. Audit of Pre-school provision. Briefing paper for the Experts' UNESCO / Council of Europe Meeting. Pages 5 and 12.

104 Marc and Bercus 2007 in Razvan Sandru. 2009. Roma and education in Romania: An analysis of educational problems and the actions taken to overcome them. Page 7.

It has been proved that parents' participation has a "direct and rapid impact on the success of Roma children in school".¹⁰⁵ Parents' involvement and community involvement is central to increasing enrollment rates, and also to improving the performance of children.¹⁰⁶ Real engagement of parents into the school life can have an impact on students' interest in education, and consequently on their learning outcomes.¹⁰⁷ It was found that low parental involvement can "change very rapidly: if parents get the minimum support and explanation required"¹⁰⁸, for example from Roma assistants.

- **Poverty:**

General education: Roma families often cannot afford to buy the educational materials. Poor living conditions of Roma children make it impossible for them to do homework. Often illiterate parents cannot help them with their homework. Because of the transport fees, Roma children often have to attend local segregated schools, instead of being transported to mainstream schools.

Preschool: Even though in many countries preschool is free, some Roma families can not afford other costs such as transportation, materials, food, afternoon activities. Some families can not deal with complex bureaucracy in registering for preschool.

- **Cultural and linguistic barriers**

General education: Many Roma parents do not send their children to school because they live far from school and therefore prefer their children to stay home; or because they are afraid their children will lose their Roma cultural identity. In some countries early marriages and births prevent young girls from attending schools. There is also a major language barrier, since most Roma children have a very low level of official language when they start the

¹⁰⁵ Marc and Bercus 2007. The Roma Education Fund. A new tool for Roma inclusion. Page 17.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Page 20.

¹⁰⁷ Wilkens, Andre and Katy Negrin. 2007. EC Consultation on Education. Open Society Institute EU Monitoring and Advocacy Programme. Page 2.

¹⁰⁸ Symeou, Loizos et al. 2007. Reflections on Teacher Training for Equity and Social Justice: the INSETRom Cypriot Experience. Page 17.

primary school. That means many of them cannot progress and they keep failing classes or leave the school.

Preschool: Some Roma parents do not want to send their children to preschool because they are afraid they do not have the high enough language level at this age.

- **The standard of education**

Often standard of education offered to Roma is very low in terms of teacher training: many teachers have prejudices against Roma, lack motivation and have lower expectations for Roma children.

- **Teaching materials**

Often there is no teaching material such as textbooks in the Romani language, which would preserve the cultural heritage of Roma, encourage Roma children to go to school and study, and Roma parents to send their children to school. It would also give the majority population a more positive image of Roma and with that counter the effects of prejudices and stereotypes, and serve as a link between Roma and non-Roma.

- **Special schools for Roma children**

General education: Roma children are often sent to schools for children with mental disabilities even if they are not disabled themselves.

Preschool: The fact that many Roma children are put to special schools is sometimes the reason why Roma parents do not send their children in preschool education – they do not see the point, since children will be sent to special schools anyway.

- **Segregation of Roma children in the school system**

General education: In some of the countries Roma children attend schools or classes in the Roma settlements, so they are in the majority. Usually the standard of education provided there is lower than in mainstream schools.

Preschools: Discrimination in admission to preschool by the municipalities' discretion in the contexts of national reform policies of administrative and fiscal decentralization. There is also a geographical and social segregation, since many Roma families lack transport means to drive their children to preschools outside Roma settlements.¹⁰⁹

Some **other barriers** include the fear of Roma parents that their children will be discriminated or become victims of racism¹¹⁰; not enough places in preschools (especially in rural areas); public attitude against the integration of Roma children in mainstream education system¹¹¹; and the fact that many Roma families are reluctant to entrust their children to national early childhood services. Some argue that they have good reasons for that: Roma community has suffered genocide attempts and still suffer greatly from discrimination; national and municipal services often refuse Roma children; in national services, only weak efforts have been made to acknowledge the culture or language of Roma children or to enhance the self-esteem of Roma children; and like most excluded (from the mainstream economy) groups, Roma women wish to rear their children at home.¹¹² Last but not least barrier is the fact that preschool is **not part of a compulsory education**.¹¹³

1.3. COMPULSORY PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

Distinction has to be made between “the structural possibility of access to early childhood education and actual Roma enrolment”.¹¹⁴ One of the three conditions that Manguson and Waldfogel¹¹⁵ posed for the significantly narrowing of the education gap for ethnic minority families is the actual and massively increased use of preschool education by educationally disadvantaged groups.

109 European Roma Information Office (ERIO). Preschool education of Roma children in Europe. Fact sheet. Page 3.

110 Ibid.

111 UNESCO and Council of Europe. 2007. Towards quality education for Roma children: transition from early childhood to primary education. Audit of Pre-school provision. Briefing paper for the Experts' UNESCO / Council of Europe Meeting. Page 12.

112 Bennett, John. 2009. Early childhood development programming for excluded children. Slide 10.

113 Open Society Institute. 2009. 10 Goals for Improving Access to Education for Roma. Page 8.

114 UNESCO and Council of Europe. 2007. Towards quality education for Roma children: transition from early childhood to primary education. Audit of Pre-school provision. Briefing paper for the Experts' UNESCO / Council of Europe Meeting. Page 10.

115 Magnuson and Waldfogel in EACEA Eurydice. 2009. Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities. Page 36.

It has been proved that access to early childhood education for Roma can be “secured by the legislative actions to introduce compulsory pre-school preparatory years”.¹¹⁶ That is why it has been suggested by many experts that one solution for avoiding the dependency trap is achieving inclusion through enrolment in so-called preparatory or zero classes for preschool children, which should be made obligatory for all families.¹¹⁷ The experts believe that compulsory preparatory classes for Roma children should be a part of a fully-fledged government policy¹¹⁸ and governmental priority that should receive the necessary financial support.¹¹⁹ Experts relate importance of these classes to the fact that they include lessons in the official language.¹²⁰

Dimitrina Petrova advocates for the “introduction, in countries where this has not yet been done, of a free, mandatory, and integrated pre-school programs for all children, which would obviously have a positive impact on the desegregation process by ensuring an equal start for disadvantaged children”.¹²¹

Lynn Davies in her article on the Human Rights Based Approach to Roma Education proposes a strategy to make pre-school as compulsory for entry to main school, citing the benefits of preschool for later benefits and economies.¹²²

European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) recommends that the national policy on Roma education should be based on the principle of, among others, an equal start – free and mandatory preschool education that meets the exit criteria for school preparedness.¹²³ ERRC recommends governments to “introduce universal, free and obligatory pre-school programmes with duration of at least 10 months that will prepare children, including Romani, for the

116 UNESCO and Council of Europe. 2007. Towards quality education for Roma children: transition from early childhood to primary education. Audit of Pre-school provision. Briefing paper for the Experts' UNESCO / Council of Europe Meeting. Page 10.

117 UNDP. The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency Trap. A Regional Human Development Report. Page 60.

118 Council of Europe. 2003. The innovative practices in the field of education of Roma Children. DGIV/EDU/ROM (2003) 9 rev1. Page 19.

119 UNDP. The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency Trap. A Regional Human Development Report. Page 60.

120 Council of Europe. 2003. The innovative practices in the field of education of Roma Children. DGIV/EDU/ROM (2003) 9 rev1. Page 19.

121 Petrova, Dimitrina. 2004. From Segregated to Integrated Education of the Roma in Europe. In *Separate and Unequal. Combating Discrimination against Roma in Education*, Edwin Rekosh and Maxine Sleeper (ed.). Public Interest Law Initiative. Budapest, Hungary.

122 Davies, Lynn. 2009. A Human Rights Based Approach to Roma Education. Briefing Paper for the Decade of Roma Education. UNICEF. Page 7.

123 European Roma Rights Center. 2003. European Roma Rights Center Country Reports Series (No. 13/2003). European Roma Rights Center. Page 90.

mainstream school.”¹²⁴ ERRC recommends that preschool education should “eliminate linguistic barriers as well as barriers arising from the social deprivation of impoverished or otherwise excluded Romani children and guarantee that Romani children are as prepared for school as their non-Romani peers”.¹²⁵ One ERRC study cites findings from evaluation of the preschool education needs of Roma children from socially disadvantaged background in Slovakia that “emphasized the overwhelming importance of extended kindergarten education for Roma children and also recommended that ‘compulsory pre-school preparation (for all five year-old children)’ should be legally required”.¹²⁶

In most of the EU countries preschool education is voluntary. The compulsory element usually represents the last year of preschool education, just before entering primary school.¹²⁷ For example, preschool education in the last year before school is mandatory in Luxembourg and the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland) for four-year-old children¹²⁸, as well as in Bulgaria¹²⁹ and Hungary.^{130 131}

There are also variations in terms of costs – in some countries preschool (especially one-year-preparatory class) it is free, but in some countries it imposes a financial burden on families. However, mostly there is a special arrangement for the most vulnerable families. Some other elements of provision may improve access to early childhood education, such as “provision of a free meal, books and learning materials and support with school transport”.¹³²

124 Ibid. Page 97.

125 Ibid. Page 97.

126 European Roma Rights Center (ERRC). 2007. The Impact of Legislation and Policies on School Segregation of Romani Children. A Study of Anti-Discrimination Law and Government Measures to Eliminate Segregation in Education in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. Pages 51 – 53.

127 UNESCO and Council of Europe. 2007. Towards quality education for Roma children: transition from early childhood to primary education. Audit of Pre-school provision. Briefing paper for the Experts' UNESCO / Council of Europe Meeting. Page 16.

128 European Roma Information Office (ERIO). 2009. Preschool education of Roma children in Europe. Fact sheet. Page 2.

129 In Bulgaria, an amendment to the Public Education Act introduced in the school year 2003/2004 one-year obligatory and free pre-school education.

130 A positive measure to ensure participation in primary education of disadvantaged children was introduced in Hungary by an amendment to the Public Education Act (2003) which obliges nurseries to enroll three-year old children of “severely disadvantaged families” in the catchment zone of the respective nursery, if the parents so requested. The measure benefits in particular Roma families, who comprise a substantive part of the category of “severely disadvantaged”. It is aimed at remedying the problem with rejection of Roma children from pre-school facilities on grounds of lack of space.

131 ERRC. The Impact of Legislation and Policies on School Segregation of Romani Children. A Study of Anti-Discrimination Law and Government Measures to Eliminate Segregation in Education in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. Access: <http://www.errc.org/db/02/36/m00000236.pdf>, pages 51 – 53.

132 UNESCO and Council of Europe. 2007. Towards quality education for Roma children: transition from early childhood to primary education. Audit of Pre-school provision. Briefing paper for the Experts' UNESCO / Council of Europe Meeting. Page 10.

Problems of compulsory preschool

Despite the fact that compulsory preschool is potentially very important for Roma inclusion, it can also pose problems that make the situation of Roma community even worse. Even when preschool is compulsory, the implementation of policy can be exclusive for Roma community. For example in Bulgaria government does nothing to promote access of Roma to the preparatory preschool year despite it being compulsory.¹³³ Another example can be found in Serbia where one year of preschool education became compulsory in September 2006. Because there is a deficit of pre-school facilities in areas of recent migration where significant Roma communities live; and because there is a very complex registration procedure for enrolling a child in preschool, the introduction of compulsory preschool might actually foster exclusionary practices for Roma children and make them de-facto illegal.^{134 135} Another problem came up in Latvia. Even though preschool is compulsory for children aged 5 and 6 since 2003, there are still many Roma parents not informed about preschool being compulsory.¹³⁶

If the implementation of policy is inclusive for Roma children, the difference between the possibility of access and actual attendance can be dealt with establishing compulsory preschool from as early an age as possible. Furthermore, some kind of monitoring should be established to “ensure that children are in fact attending preschool”.¹³⁷

1.4 SEGREGATED v. INTEGRATED PRESCHOOL

1.4.1 Ways of inclusion of Roma children in preschool

There are three different ways of inclusion of Roma children in preschool education: (1) Roma children are included in the mainstream, integrated, **heterogeneous** preschool classes

¹³³ Ibid. Page 11.

¹³⁴ Marc, Alexandre and Costel Bercus. 2006. The Roma Education Fund. A new tool for Roma inclusion. Page 12.

¹³⁵ Davies, Lynn. 2009. A Human Rights Based Approach to Roma Education. Briefing Paper for the Decade of Roma Education. UNICEF. Page 7.

¹³⁶ Hammarberg, Thomas. 2008. The key to the promotion of Roma rights: early and inclusive education. Council of Europe.

¹³⁷ Open Society Institute. 2007. Equal access to quality education for Roma, Vol. 1: Monitoring reports on Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Serbia. Page 191

with non-Roma children; (2) Roma children attend **homogeneous** preschool class or (2) Roma children attend **only-Roma preschool** institution inside the Roma settlement.

There are examples of segregated preschool education for Roma in various Central and Eastern European countries. For example in Slovakia there are around 31 kindergartens attended only by Roma children and in 82 kindergartens there is between 50-100% Roma children. In Bulgaria and Romania segregated preschool facilities are established in areas predominantly populated by Roma; furthermore in Bulgaria, where one year of preschool education is mandatory, Roma-only schools also establish pre-school classes. Preparatory classes in the Czech Republic are found primarily in schools with higher percentage of Romani children.¹³⁸

Experts and international NGOs have established an international consensus on the importance of integrated preschool education of Roma children. I will now describe some of the arguments against segregation.

1.4.2 Arguments against segregation

“When well designed, early childhood programmes can provide Roma and non-Roma children with an opportunity to learn about and appreciate different cultures and benefit from inclusive and intercultural learning. Revamped efforts are needed at the policy and practice levels to render mainstream schools and early education programmes inclusive so that Roma children can enjoy participating in learning with non-Roma children from preschool age.”¹³⁹

In the previous chapters the importance of preschool education was introduced. It is widely recognized that preschool attendance can help to overcome the major barriers to Roma children’s school attendance such as poor knowledge of majority languages, as well as social

138 European Roma Rights Center (ERRC). 2007. The Impact of Legislation and Policies on School Segregation of Romani Children. A Study of Anti-Discrimination Law and Government Measures to Eliminate Segregation in Education in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. Page 53.

139 UNESCO and Council of Europe. 2007. Expert Meeting “Towards quality education for Roma children: transition from early childhood to primary education”. Background note. Page 5.

differences between school and their local communities.¹⁴⁰ An important question is: can preschool bridge those social differences, if it is segregated?

In the final report of the UNESCO and Council of Europe expert meeting on transition from early childhood to primary education, it was recognized that the integration of marginalized and “excluded children, including Roma children, in the mainstream education system is a general objective of both UNESCO and the Council of Europe as well as for various governments”¹⁴¹. Experts established that “stronger efforts are needed at the policy and practice levels to render mainstream schools and early education programmes inclusive so that Roma children can enjoy participating in learning with non-Roma children from preschool age”¹⁴² They said:

“Efforts to make school systems more responsive to the Roma should actually benefit all children and society as a whole. Roma children do not need different, separate education initiatives. On the contrary, they need a more child-centred approach, whereby all children, despite their differences, can improve and develop as part of a broader society. This can only be achieved if governments collaborate on improving policies and institutions and if Roma become fuller members and participants in the system.”¹⁴³

The importance of intercultural environment is emphasized. Preschool can enable Roma and non-Roma children and parents to get to know, understand and appreciate each others’ cultures.¹⁴⁴

Davies also argues that rights based approach (RBA) to education stresses inclusion and with that helps social cohesion and provides a challenge to extremism, racial hatred and violence. She points out that research on segregated schooling indicates that *at best* it does not

140 United Nations Development Programme. 2002. The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency Trap. Page 61.

141 UNESCO and Council of Europe. 2007. Expert Meeting “Towards quality education for Roma children: transition from early childhood to primary education” Final report. Page 8.

142 Ibid.

143 Ibid. Page 17.

144 UNICEF. 2007. Breaking the Cycle of Exclusion – Roma Children in South East Europe. Page 46.

help social cohesion and *at worst* it fosters mistrust and suspicion, as well as intensifies and ethnic identities. Desegregation efforts thus help to achieve greater social inclusion.¹⁴⁵

European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) argues that the establishment of preschool facilities in segregated settings “is not conducive to the elimination of the physical separation of Romani from non-Romani children”.¹⁴⁶ Also, it is argued that segregated education in preschool stages limits chances of Romani children to improve their linguistic skills in the majority language through interaction with children from the majority. ERRC also warns that where preschool facilities are part of segregated primary schools, Roma children are likely to continue their education in the same segregated environment.¹⁴⁷ That is why ERRC recommends that the “national policy on Romani education should be a rights-based policy of desegregation”¹⁴⁸, based on principles as non-discrimination, positive action and equal start: “free and mandatory pre-school education should be available to all children and pre-school institutions should meet exit criteria for school preparedness”.¹⁴⁹ ERRC also recommends the educational policy reform based on the desegregation action with the outcomes such as “elimination of all-Romani schools, pre-school facilities and classes”.¹⁵⁰ ERRC therefore recommends desegregation of schools, preschools and substandard all-Roma classes. As already mentioned, ERRC recommends governments “to introduce universal, free and obligatory pre-school programmes” in order to eliminate linguistic and social barriers. ERRC has a very clear stand on segregation. They recommend: “all preschool programmes for Roma should be implemented in integrated school institutions” and “preschool or other preparatory

145 Davies, Lynn. 2009. A Human Rights Based Approach to Roma Education. Briefing Paper for the Decade of Roma Education. UNICEF. Page 5.

146 European Roma Rights Center (ERRC). 2007. The Impact of Legislation and Policies on School Segregation of Romani Children. A Study of Anti-Discrimination Law and Government Measures to Eliminate Segregation in Education in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. Page 53.

147 European Roma Rights Center (ERRC). 2007. The Impact of Legislation and Policies on School Segregation of Romani Children. A Study of Anti-Discrimination Law and Government Measures to Eliminate Segregation in Education in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. Page 53.

148 European Roma Rights Center. 2003. European Roma Rights Center Country Reports Series (No. 13/2003). European Roma Rights Center. Page 90.

149 Ibid.

150 Ibid. Page 92.

classes in remedial special schools or other segregated facilities should be eliminated and prohibited.”¹⁵¹

There is some evidence on importance of integration in the preschool settings for disadvantaged children. In 11 studies that Browning analyzed it was found that the “disadvantaged children were significantly more likely to benefit from quality preschool experiences if they attended centers that included a mixture of children from differing backgrounds”.^{152 153}

To conclude, there is a wide international consensus established on the importance and in favour of integrated preschool education of Roma children over preschool education in segregated settings.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. Page 97.

¹⁵² Browning, Kimberly. 2006. Early Childhood Care and Development Programs: An International Perspective. Unpublished paper. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Page 17.

¹⁵³ Ibid. Page 29.

CHAPTER 2 – PRESCHOOL EDUCATION OF ROMA CHILDREN IN SLOVENIA

2.1 GENERAL SITUATION OF ROMA IN SLOVENIA

2.1.1 Education

The general situation of education of Roma in Slovenia is the following: according to the 2002 census, more than 65% of Roma never finished primary school (60% men and 70% women) and only 3% finished secondary school.¹⁵⁴ Primary school enrolment increased from 897 in 1986/87 to 1,469 in 2004/05¹⁵⁵. However, it has been found that still only around 100 continue to secondary education, and only a handful of them advance to the university studies¹⁵⁶. As to the school attendance, in the region of Prekmurje 70 per cent of Roma pupils attended primary school regularly, while in Dolenjska only 39 per cent attended regularly. In Dolenjska the majority of Romani pupils do not advance beyond the fifth or sixth grade of primary school.¹⁵⁷

2.1.2 Employment

Low educational level perpetuates vulnerability of Roma since they have no possibilities for later employment and have to stay dependent on the social support packages. Despite many employment programmes focused on Roma, in Roma ethnic group there is above-average unemployment comparing to the rest of the population. In September 2009 there were 2.193 Roma registered in the Employment Service of Slovenia – that represents 2,5% of all registered unemployed persons in Slovenia. However, there is no accurate number of unemployed Roma, since Roma are not specifically included as a category in the

154 Republic of Slovenia. Office for Nationalities. 2004. Splošne informacije o romski etnični skupnosti v Republiki Sloveniji. Page 4.

155 Data by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. In: European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. 2006. Roma and Travelers in Public Education: An overview of the situation in the EU Member States. Page 39.

156 Republic of Slovenia. Office for Nationalities. 2004. Poročilo o položaju Romov v Republiki Slovenij. Page 26.

157 RAXEN – National Focal Point for Slovenia. 2004. Roma in Public Education. Peace Institute Ljubljana. Page 20.

unemployment record – they can specify their ethnicity themselves if they want. Other data can be obtained for example from typical Roma surnames. Some sources say that 72,3% of Roma is unemployed, other say 90% or even 98% unemployment.¹⁵⁸ Ministry of Labour, Family and Social affairs estimates that the unemployment rate is 98% for Roma in Bela Krajina and 90% in Prekmurje¹⁵⁹. Consequently more than three-quarters of Roma population in Slovenia depend on the state social support.

Since Roma are concentrated especially in Dolenjska and Prekmurje, the unemployment represents also a regional problem. The educational level of Roma is very low: a 2003 survey by the Employment Service of Slovenia showed that 98.2% of the 1,650 registered unemployed Roma in Dolenjska and 90% in Prekmurje¹⁶⁰ “had not completed primary education in contrast to the national 4 per cent average, while only 1.5 per cent of the unemployed Roma had vocational school qualifications”¹⁶¹.

The number of registered unemployed Roma is increasing in relative and absolute numbers. There are prejudices on the side of the employers, however, the most important reason for such a high unemployment is said to be the low educational level of Roma.¹⁶²

2.1.3 Housing

Housing is one of the most acute issues of Roma minority due to the bad living conditions and often illegal settlements. Roma live in around 130 settlements (105 bigger Roma settlements and 20 smaller)¹⁶³, with only ¼ of them standing a chance of relatively quick integration, improving the infrastructure and legalization. Almost all of settlements are on the outskirts of the cities, causing even more isolation. Some of them lack running water,

¹⁵⁸ Republic of Slovenia. Office for Nationalities. 2004. Splošne informacije o romski etnični skupnosti v Republiki Sloveniji, page 3.

¹⁵⁹ Council of Europe. Commissioner for Human Rights. 2006. Follow-up report on Slovenia (2003 – 2005)

¹⁶⁰ Republic of Slovenia. Office for Nationalities. 2010. Report of the Republic of Slovenia on the situation of Roma Community in Slovenia – the report on the implementation of Roma Community Act. Official Gazette of RS, no. 33/200. Page 10.

¹⁶¹ RAXEN – National Focal Point for Slovenia. 2004. Roma in Public Education. Peace Institute Ljubljana, page 20.

¹⁶² Republic of Slovenia. Office for Nationalities. 2010. Report of the Republic of Slovenia on the situation of Roma Community in Slovenia – the report on the implementation of Roma Community Act (Official Gazette of RS, no. 33/2007). Page 10.

¹⁶³ Republic of Slovenia. 2010. National Programme of Measures for Roma People for the 2010–2015 period (Nacionalni program ukrepov za Rome vlade Republike Slovenije za obdobje 2010-2015). Page 7.

electricity, sanitation, waste removal services. Particularly in Dolenjska the settlements are not formally legalized, therefore there is no security of tenure. Around half of the Roma population lives in houses (39 %) and apartment blocks (12 %), and other half lives in caravans, cabins or makeshift shelters.¹⁶⁴

Inadequate housing is the source of many other issues and problems faced by Roma community, especially acquiring the sufficient level of education, employment qualifications, information, access to health and social services, success on the employment market and participation in different areas of public life.¹⁶⁵

2.1.4 Differences between Prekmurje and Dolenjska regions

2.1.4.1 Socio-economic differences

Socio-economic circumstances are in Dolenjska region a lot worse than in Prekmurje region.¹⁶⁶ Roma in Prekmurje have a higher level of employment (90%) in comparison with, for example Bela Krajina (98%).¹⁶⁷ In Prekmurje region, the relationship of the majority population towards Roma is more tolerant and accepting differences. Roma in Dolenjska are more often charged with criminal offences, which can be blamed on the low education levels and unemployment, as well as on their settlements being illegal – that makes any change on their housing illegal. When settlements are legalized, Roma can get legal employment and pay taxes.¹⁶⁸

2.1.4.2 Organization of Roma community

Roma in Prekmurje are much better organized: president of the Roma Union of Slovenia comes from Prekmurje; Roma in Prekmurje have their own radio, intellectual leadership, team that takes care of the whole community. Maybe this is because in Prekmurje

¹⁶⁴ Amnesty International. 2006. False starts: The exclusion of Romani children from primary education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. Page 56.

¹⁶⁵ Republic of Slovenia. Office for Nationalities. 2010. Report of the Republic of Slovenia on the situation of Roma Community in Slovenia – the report on the implementation of Roma Community Act (Official Gazette of RS, no. 33/2007). Page 10.

¹⁶⁶ Petrovčič, Peter. 2010. Interview with Darko Rudaš, President of the Forum of Roma councilors. Mladina, 2. September 2010

¹⁶⁷ Council of Europe. Commissioner for Human Rights. 2006. Follow-up report on Slovenia (2003 – 2005)

¹⁶⁸ Petrovčič, Peter. 2010. Interview with Darko Rudaš, President of the Forum of Roma councilors. Mladina, 2. September 2010.

the protestant religion is widespread; there is some kind of culture of taking care of oneself; a level of tolerance has been established. Also there has been 60 years of work on the integration of Roma community.¹⁶⁹

2.1.4.3 Education

Apart from the differences between Roma and non-Roma children there are also great differences with regard to the success of Roma children in the educational system in different Slovene regions. Research in the past 30 years indicated better inclusion and success of Roma children in the school system in Prekmurje than in the Dolenjska and Bela krajina regions. School attendance for Roma in Prekmurje is 70 per cent, in contrast to 39 per cent in Dolenjska. In Dolenjska the majority of Romani pupils do not advance beyond the fifth or sixth grade of primary school.¹⁷⁰ The better school success of Roma children in Prekmurje is also attributed to **better organizing** and more numerous attendances of **preschool** education, where they become acquainted with the Slovene language and daily kindergarten rituals, which makes work at school easier.¹⁷¹ In Prekmurje, it is already obvious for Roma parents to send their children in preschool, to enrol them in primary school and for them to continue education to get a vocation.¹⁷² In Dolenjska, Bela Krajina and Posavje there is not a lot of Roma children enrolled in preschool education. In some parts of Prekmurje the possibilities for enrolment are much greater. Also, the percent of Roma children in integrated classrooms is higher in Prekmurje than in Dolenjska.¹⁷³

169 Zonta, Sabina. 2010. Interview with Prime Minister Igor Lukšič. RTV Slovenija, 17. January 2010.

170 RAXEN – National Focal Point for Slovenia. 2004. Roma in Public Education. Peace Institute Ljubljana. Page 20.

171 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 62.

172 Petrovčič, Peter. 2010. Interview with Darko Rudaš, President of the Forum of Roma councilors. Mladina, 2. September 2010.

173 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 83.

2.2 NATIONAL LEGISLATION

Legislative frame of protection of Roma in Slovenia includes the Constitution, Roma Community Act and legislation in the field of education; furthermore Roma are included or targeted by various policies and programmes.

2.2.1 Slovenian Constitution

Roma community falls under protection of the Slovenian Constitution, the document with the highest legal authority in Slovenia. The 1991 Constitution¹⁷⁴, provides for equality in the enjoyment of human rights without discrimination (*Article 14*); for special rights of the Italian and Hungarian minorities (but not Roma) in Slovenia (*Article 64*); and for the protection of Roma community living in Slovenia (*Article 65*).

Article 14 of the Constitution provides equality before the law and “equal human rights and fundamental freedoms irrespective of national origin, race, sex, language, religion, political or other conviction, material standing, birth, education, social status, disability or any other personal circumstance”¹⁷⁵. That means that any discrimination of Roma in areas of education, employment, housing etc. is unconstitutional.

Article 64 provides special rights of the Italian and Hungarian communities in Slovenia, such as the right to education and schooling in their own languages. There is no rights of Roma communities specified here in this article. In Slovenian law and practice there is a difference between “‘autochthonous’ Italian and Hungarian minorities, who enjoy the highest degree of minority rights protection, ‘autochthonous’ Romani communities¹⁷⁶, who receive lower protection, and ‘non-autochthonous’¹⁷⁷ Roma”¹⁷⁸, that Slovenia excludes from social inclusion programs or measures and therefore they represent the most vulnerable group in

174 Republic of Slovenia. Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia. Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No. 33/91-I, 69/04.

175 Ibid.

176 „Those Roma whose families have lived in Slovenia for more than a century.” In Perić, Tatjana. 2004. Insufficient: Governmental programmes for Roma in Slovenia.

177 “Those who arrived in Slovenia from the other Yugoslav republics”, mainly for economic reasons, in the 1970s and later. In Perić, Tatjana. 2004. Insufficient: Governmental programmes for Roma in Slovenia.

178 Amnesty International. 2006. False starts: The exclusion of Romani children from primary education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. Page 41.

virtually all areas of social inclusion, especially the education.¹⁷⁹ Research has shown that almost half of the non-autochthonous Roma do not have their legal status settled and that many of them do not have any personal documents.¹⁸⁰ A lot of them found themselves arbitrarily excluded from Slovene citizenship after the formation of the independent Slovene state in 1991. Although primary schools usually do not exclude status-less children, probably some ‘non-autochthonous’ Roma do not attend school, “including because the authorities ignore their existence”.¹⁸¹

Legal basis for policy instruments dealing with situation of Roma Community in Slovenia is **Article 65** of the Slovenian Constitution, which provides: “The status and special rights of Roma community living in Slovenia will be regulated by law”.

2.2.2 Roma Community Act

Implementing this constitutional provision (*Article 65*), in 2007 the *Roma Community Act*¹⁸² was adopted. The law supposedly “represents an important step in implementing the provisions of the international conventions related to human rights that have been ratified by Slovenia”.¹⁸³ For example, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in its 2010 Concluding observations regarding Slovenian report¹⁸⁴ welcomed the adoption of the Roma Community Act. However, some consider it a “very abstract legal act with little specific provisions and without practical value”.¹⁸⁵

179 RAXEN – National Focal Point for Slovenia. 2004. Roma in Public Education. Peace Institute Ljubljana. Page 7.

180 Ibid, page 8.

181 Amnesty International. 2006. False starts: The exclusion of Romani children from primary education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. Page 64.

182 Republic of Slovenia. 2007. Roma Community Act (Zakon o romski skupnosti v Republiki Sloveniji (ZRomS-1)). Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No. 33/2007.

183 Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. 2007. Amended National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008. Page 11.

184 Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. 2010. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 9 of the convention. Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Slovenia. Page 2.

185 Human Rights Press Point. 2008. Roma. Information source on human rights in Slovenia during Slovenian EU Presidency 2008.

The law “deals comprehensively with the status of the Roma community in Slovenia”¹⁸⁶. It establishes the state responsibilities in implementing the special rights of the Roma community in areas of education and training, employment, housing and the conservation of the Roma language and culture. It also deals with organization of the Roma community at local and national levels and financing of the Roma community.¹⁸⁷

As regards the **organization** of the Roma community, the law envisages important organizational changes, which have influence on the improving of the situation of Roma community in Slovenia¹⁸⁸:

- (a) **Local working bodies** are established for monitoring the situation of the Roma community within those municipalities subjected to the law mandating Roma representation in municipal councils¹⁸⁹.
- (b) The **Council of the Roma Community in the Republic of Slovenia** is established that represents the interests of the Roma community in Slovenia in its relations with public institutions.
- (c) A **special working group** is appointed by the government including members of the Council (i.e. the Roma community) and the local communities.
- (d) The **government programme** as the basis for the adoption of specialised programmes, measures and financial plans by the competent ministries, other state institutions and the local communities. A governmental working group will monitor the implementation of the programme, and the government has to send annual report to the Parliament.

As regards **education**, Roma Community Act in its **Article 4(1)** provides that “Republic of Slovenia creates environment for the integration of members of Roma community into the

186 Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. 2007. Amended National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008. Page 11.

187 Ibid. Page 10.

188 Ibid. Page 10.

189 Article 39(5) of the Local Self-Government Act provides the right of the Roma communities to the Roma representative in municipality council, and Article 101.a of this act lists which municipalities have the obligation to ensure the place in municipality council for the Roma representative. The municipalities Beltinci, Cankova, Črenšovci, Črnomelj, Dobrovnik, Kočevje, Krško, Kuzma, Lendava, Metlika, Murska Sobota, Novo Mesto, Puconci, Rogašovci, Semič, Šentjernej, Tišina, Trebnje, and Turnišče each have one representative of the Roma community in their respective municipal councils.

system of education; it creates the environment for the improvement of educational level of members of Roma community and appropriate scholarship policy”.

Additionally the protection of Roma community in Slovenia is built into **other** laws¹⁹⁰.

2.2.3 Legislation on education

2.2.3.1 Organisation and Financing of Education Act

*Organisation and Financing of Education Act*¹⁹¹ foresees in its *Article 25* the implementation of additional education programs for Roma children. Furthermore, *Article 84* provides that specific standards and criteria are set for education of different vulnerable groups, including Roma children.

2.2.3.2 Kindergarten Act

Preschool education in Slovenia is regulated by the *Kindergarten Act*¹⁹². In *Article 2* it defines the main **tasks** of preschools in Slovenia as helping parents in holistic child care, improving the quality of family and children’s life and creating environment for physical and mental skills of the child. In *Article 3* it emphasizes the core **principles** of preschool education, such as democracy, pluralism, autonomy, professionalism, responsibility of the staff, equal opportunity for all children and parents while respecting the differences among children, freedom of choice and right to be different, and balancing different aspects of child’s physical and mental development. In *Article 4* it lists different **goals** of preschool, such as developing the ability to understand and accept ourselves and others; to make agreements, to

190 Zakon o lokalni samoupravi (Local Self-Government Act, Official Gazette of RS no. 72/1993), Zakon o lokalnih volitvah (Local Elections Act, Official Gazette of RS no. 72/1993), Zakon o evidenci volilne pravice (Voting Rights Register Act, Official Gazette of RS no. 52/2002), Zakon o organizaciji in financiranju vzgoje in izobraževanja (Organization and Financing of Education Act, Official Gazette of RS no. 12/1996), Zakon o osnovni šoli (Elementary School Act, Official Gazette of RS no. 12/1996), Zakon o vrtcih (Kindergarten Act, Official Gazette of RS no. 12/1996), Zakon o medijih (Media Act, Official Gazette of RS no. 35/2001), Zakon o uresničevanju javnega interesa za kulturo (Enforcing Public Interest in the Field of Culture Act, Official Gazette of RS no. 96/2002), Zakon o knjižničarstvu (Act on Librarianship, Official Gazette of RS no. 87/2001), Zakon o spodbujanju skladnega regionalnega razvoja (Promotion of Balanced Regional Development Act, Official Gazette of RS no. 60/1999), Zakon o Radioteleviziji Slovenija (Radiotelevizija Slovenija Act, Official Gazette of RS no. 96/2005), Zakon o financiranju občin (Financing of Municipalities Act, Official Gazette of RS no. 80/1994), Zakon o varstvu kulturne dediščine (Cultural Heritage Protection Act, Official Gazette of RS no. 7/1999), Kazenski zakonik Republike Slovenije (Penal Code of the Republic of Slovenia, Official Gazette of RS no. 63/1994), Zakon o javnem interesu v mladinskem sektorju (Act on the Public Interest in Youth Sector, Official Gazette of RS no. 42/2010)

191 Republic of Slovenia. 1996. Organisation and Financing of Education Act (Zakon o organizaciji in financiranju vzgoje in izobraževanja (ZOFVI)), Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia no. 12/1996.

192 Republic of Slovenia. Kindergarten Act (Zakon o vrtcih (ZVrt)), Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia no. 12/1996.

respect the differences and to be able to work in teams; furthermore, encouraging the development of language abilities; and developing the independence in hygienic skills and care for one's health.

Specifically regarding to **Roma community**, the act provides in its *Article 7* that “preschool education of Roma children is implemented in accordance with this Act and other regulations”. However, in its *Article 14*, the act provides that “Special standards and criteria shall apply to regions with specific development problems, ethnically mixed areas and to the education of Roma children”. In *Article 29* it also provides for **state funding** in connection with the higher costs of pre-schooling for Roma children. *Article 54* establishes that preschool education of Roma children is financed by both the local municipality and the state.

2.2.3.3 Preschool Curriculum

In 1999 the Slovenian Council of Experts for General Education established the *Preschool Curriculum*¹⁹³ as a professional basis for the practical implementation of preschool education by preschool teachers. The overall document's goal is to achieve more open, flexible, comprehensive and wide preschool curriculum. The importance of parents' participation is emphasized. As regarding the Roma children, the Preschool Curriculum recognizes that Roma children are, just like children from Hungarian and Italian minorities, a special group that requires special approach. The principle of coexistence of the two cultures is of special importance. Preschool teachers have to recognize and choose mostly those methods and approaches that fall into the area of socialization.¹⁹⁴

2.2.3.4 Supplement to the Kindergarten Curriculum for working with Roma children

In 2002, the *Supplement to the Kindergarten Curriculum for working with Roma children*¹⁹⁵ (hereinafter: the *Supplement*) was adopted to help kindergarten staff in the creation

¹⁹³ Republic of Slovenia. Slovenian Council of Experts for General Education. 1999. The Preschool Curriculum.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, page 4.

¹⁹⁵ Republic of Slovenia. Council of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education. 2002. Supplement to the Kindergarten Curriculum for working with Roma children.

of conditions for the implementation of rights of Roma children to equal opportunities in education. It is **based** on:

- *White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia*¹⁹⁶, especially in its principles such as equal opportunities, right to be different etc.;
- Goals of *Organisation and Financing of Education Act*¹⁹⁷, especially the goal from its *Article 2*: “guaranteeing optimum development to individuals regardless of their sex, social and cultural background, religion, national origin and physical and mental handicaps”;
- Principles of *Kindergarten Act*¹⁹⁸, especially in the principle of “equal opportunity for all children and parents while respecting the differences among children” from its *Article 3* and on *Article 7* on the special rights of the Roma community.

The *Supplement* includes the following **principles** for the preschool curricula for Roma children:

- the principle of **openness of curriculum, autonomy and professional responsibility** of the kindergarten staff

This means that kindergarten staff has to research different Roma cultures and search for common elements of Slovene and Roma culture. It also means that different circumstances lead to different models of inclusion of Roma children into preschools.

- the principles of **equal opportunities, respect for diversity, principle of multiculturalism**

This means that in kindergarten with Roma and non-Roma children there has to be special coexistence and cooperation between both cultures and intercultural education included in the curriculum. The right of Roma children to be different, to communicate in their language and to preserve their identity has to be respected. Roma children have to be

196 Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Education and Sport. 1995. *White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia* (Bela knjiga o vzgoji in izobraževanju v Republiki Sloveniji). Ljubljana: Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport.

197 Republic of Slovenia. 1996. *Organisation and Financing of Education Act* (Zakon o organizaciji in financiranju vzgoje in izobraževanja (ZOFVI)), Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia no. 12/1996.

198 Republic of Slovenia. *Kindergarten Act* (Zakon o vrtcih (ZVrt)), Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia no. 12/1996.

taught about both Slovenian culture and their own, Roma culture. Relatives of Roma children have to be included in this process. One important solution in this area is employing a Roma Assistant that knows both cultures and can represent a bridge between them; furthermore Roma Assistant can be positive identification role model for Roma children and can successfully communicate with Roma parents.

- Experiencing kindergarten as an environment, offering **equal opportunities for integration into activities and daily life**, regardless of gender, physical and mental constitution, national adherence, cultural origin, religion, etc.

Kindergarten staff should build on the fact that diversity means enrichment. They should organize activities like social games, dancing, drama, drawing, painting and other “universal activities” that are present in both cultures. Staff should also learn at least few phrases in Roma language to make the contact with Roma children easier.

- the principle of **cooperation with parents**;

It is important to gain trust of Roma families, to present the importance of education for their children’s lives, the importance of bilingualism and of preserving their own cultural identity while integrating in the overall society. To achieve this it is sensible to build contacts with Roma families even before their children enter the preschool. The programme of preschool has to be explained verbally and in writing to Roma families.

- the principle of **active learning** and ensuring the possibility of verbalizing and other manners of **expression**.

Roma children are capable of learning, progress, achieving high goals just like other children. They have to be provided with opportunities of integration into all of the activities from the Curriculum. They have to be supported in learning about the areas where they have problems because of their cultural and linguistic differences; and in expressing themselves in

areas that they are strong in. They have to be encouraged to verbalize in Roma or Slovenian language or the mix of both.

2.2.3.5 Fees for preschool programmes

*Article 2 of the Rules on Fees for Pre-School Institutions Paid by Parents*¹⁹⁹ establishes that preschool fees are paid by parents and the municipality. In accordance with the table in *Article 3* parents pay different percentages of the fee (from 10% to 80%) depending on monthly income per family member in comparison with the average salary of employed person in Slovenia. *Article 22* provides that parents that receive social support based on the social protection laws are not required to pay any fees for the preschool programme. As in Prekmurje region around 90% and in Dolenjska region around 98,2% of Roma are unemployed²⁰⁰ and consequently they depend on social support, for most of Roma children (especially for those from most vulnerable families) the preschool education is free.

2.3 POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS

In addition to laws, the concern for the enforcement of special rights of the Roma community is built into number of programs, strategies and resolutions regarding different social areas.

2.3.1 Programme of Measures for Assisting Roma 1995

In 1995, the Slovenian Government adopted a “*Programme of Measures for Assisting Roma*”²⁰¹, first document specifically addressing the problems of Roma in Slovenia. The programme starts with acknowledging that “Roma, who live autochthonously in our state, are a vulnerable population group, and a great number of them cannot rise from their general backwardness, poverty and discrimination without organized help.” The government

199 Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Education and Sport. 2008. Rules on Fees for Pre-School Institutions Paid by Parents (Pravilnik o plačilih staršev za programe v vrtcih), Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia no. 129/2006.

200 Republic of Slovenia. Office for Nationalities. 2010. Report of the Republic of Slovenia on the situation of Roma Community in Slovenia – the report on the implementation of Roma Community Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, no. 33/2007). Page 10.

201 Republic of Slovenia. 1995. Programme of Measures for Assisting Roma (Program ukrepov za pomoč Romom v Republiki Sloveniji).

recognizes that assistance to Roma should be duty of both the municipalities and national government. The programme addresses living conditions, education, employment, family care, social care, health care, prevention of crime, the cultural development of the Romani community, information provided to Roma and assistance to Roma to organize themselves for inclusion in local self-government.²⁰² As regarding preschool education, already in this document the Slovenian Government provides inclusion of Roma children into preschool at least 2 years before entering compulsory education.

2.3.2 Strategy for the Education of Roma in the Republic of Slovenia

In 2004 the most important strategic national document in the area of inclusion of Roma children into mainstream educational system was adopted – the *Strategy for the Education of Roma in the Republic of Slovenia*²⁰³ (hereinafter: the *Strategy*). The document is the basis for further measures in the area of education of Roma. It was prepared three governmental bodies dealing with education²⁰⁴, with cooperation from the Roma community through the Roma Union of Slovenia²⁰⁵. The *Strategy* consists of the analysis of the current situation, analysis of ministry's measures up to the adoption of the *Strategy*, overview of the key non-resolved issues and proposals of measures.

Two of the **most important measures regarding preschool education** in the *Strategy* are:

- The **early inclusion of Roma children in preschool institutions** at least 2 years prior to their enrolment in elementary school, i.e. when they are four years of age at the latest, in order to help them learn the Slovene language as well as their mother tongue, and to start the process of socialization in educational institution that provides children with experiences and

202 Perić, Tatjana. 2004. Insufficient: Governmental programmes for Roma in Slovenia.

203 Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Education. 2004. Strategy for the Education of Roma in the Republic of Slovenia (Strategija vzgoje in izobraževanja Romov v Republiki Sloveniji).

204 Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education, Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for Adult Education, Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational and Technical Education

205 Roma Union of Slovenia (Zveza Romov Slovenije).

patterns necessary for the easier integration into compulsory education. In cases where the integration of Roma children in preschools outside Roma settlements is for the moment not possible, the creation of pre-schooling programmes in the settlements is proposed (with the aim of the transition to the preschool).²⁰⁶

- The appointment of a **Roma assistant** to the classes and preschools with Roma children would help to mediate the low proficiency in Slovene language and unsuccessful integration of children. Roma assistant can help solve emotional and language barriers and can act as a bridge between preschool and Roma Community.²⁰⁷

Some other measures, praised also from the international bodies such as Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the protection of National Minorities, include the “introduction of the Roma language as an optional subject in primary schools; the inclusion of information about Roma culture, history and identity in the curriculum; specific measures with a view to raising the level of education and qualifications among Roma adults and better preparing them for the labour market”²⁰⁸.

Special working group was established in 2005 for the monitoring of the measures from the *Strategy* and for preparation of annual action plans. Ministry of Education and Sports adopts action plan every year. On the basis of the action plan in 2007 some of the activities were implemented, such as: preparation and adoption of the elective subject Roma culture; preparation and adoption of the professional standard of Roma assistant and preparation and adoption of the programs of intercultural symbiosis (Roma Union of Slovenia).

2.3.3 National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2004-2006

²⁰⁶ Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of Education. 2004. Strategy for the Education of Roma in the Republic of Slovenia (Strategija vzgoje in izobraževanja Romov v Republiki Sloveniji). Page 30.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the protection of National Minorities. 2005. Second Opinion on Slovenia adopted on 26 May 2005, ACFC/INF/OP/II(2005)005.

The *2004-2006 National Action Plan on Social Inclusion*²⁰⁹ that recognized Roma as “one of the most vulnerable groups in Slovenia”, listed special measures in accordance with the *Strategy*²¹⁰ in the area of successful integration of Roma children in education, such as: integration of Roma children in preschool at least 2 years before they start with the compulsory education, employment of Roma Assistants, possibility to choose Roma language as an elective subject etc.

2.3.4 National Programme of Measures for Roma People for the 2010–2015 period

On the basis of *Article 6* of the *Roma Community Act 2010*, the governmental programme of planned measures in the areas of special rights of the Roma community was adopted by the Slovenian government in March 2010 – “*National Programme of Measures for Roma People for the 2010–2015 period*.”²¹¹ This programme is the new and integrated update of the 1995 programme²¹². It consists of measures to fight discrimination against Roma in access to services such as education, housing, health care, employment as well as to improve their living conditions.

One of the main strategic **goals**²¹³ of the *2010-2015 Programme* follows the proposed strategic measures from the *Strategy*²¹⁴: “(2) improving the educational structure of Roma community members and increasing the attendance of Roma children in both pre-school, as

209 Republic of Slovenia. 2004. National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2004-2006 (Nacionalni akcijski načrt o socialnem vključevanju 2004-2006). Page 33.

210 Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Education. 2004. Strategy for the Education of Roma in the Republic of Slovenia (Strategija vzgoje in izobraževanja Romov v Republiki Sloveniji).

211 Republic of Slovenia. 2010. National Programme of Measures for Roma People for the 2010–2015 period (Nacionalni program ukrepov za Rome vlade Republike Slovenije za obdobje 2010-2015).

212 Republic of Slovenia. 1995. Programme of Measures for Assisting Roma (Program ukrepov za pomoč Romom v Republiki Sloveniji).

213 Others are: “(1) improving the living conditions of the Roma community and arranging Roma settlements in an orderly manner”; “(3) increasing the employment rate of members of the Roma community; (4) improving healthcare for members of the Roma community – women and children, in particular; (5) preserving and developing the cultural, informational and publishing activities of the Roma community, and endeavouring to preserve and develop different variations of the Romani language; (6) raising the awareness of the majority population of the existence, culture, customs and traditions of the Roma community, and raising the awareness of the minority population regarding their rights and obligations as citizens of the Republic of Slovenia”.

214 Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Education. 2004. Strategy for the Education of Roma in the Republic of Slovenia (Strategija vzgoje in izobraževanja Romov v Republiki Sloveniji).

well as increasing the inclusion of both young and adult Roma in further educational processes, in compliance with the principle of life-long learning”.

One of the **measures** in the area of above mentioned strategic goal on education is “Early integration of Roma children in mainstream educational system – providing the necessary conditions for integration into preschool education”.²¹⁵ The necessary funds for this measure amount to 4 million EUR. The funds will come from the European Social Fund until the year 2014, and after 2014 annually 1 million EUR will come from the national budget.

To choose the holder of activities for achieving this goal, the Ministry of Sport and Education established in 2010 the **public tender** called “*Raising the social and cultural capital in areas inhabited by members of the Roma community*”²¹⁶. The recipient of the funds for the project, the Institute for Ethnic Studies in Ljubljana²¹⁷, has been announced in late August 2010. This public tender includes all of the measures from the *Strategy* that have not been realized in the 2004-2010 period. I am going to analyze aims, purpose, subject and activities of the public tender in the next thesis chapter.

2.4 PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN SLOVENIA

2.4.1 General information on preschool education in Slovenia

Goal of the preschool education in Slovenia is to provide day care and holistic development as well as quality learning and socialization experiences that preschool children could not have got in the family alone. Ministry of Education and Sport provides general information on preschool education in Slovenia²¹⁸:

215 Measure 4.2.2.2. in: Republic of Slovenia. 2010. National Programme of Measures for Roma People for the 2010–2015 period (Nacionalni program ukrepov za Rome vlade Republike Slovenije za obdobje 2010-2015). Page 15.

216 Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Education and Sport. 2010. Public Tender on Co-financing the project “Raising the social and cultural capital in areas inhabited by members of the Roma community” (Javni razpis za sofinanciranje projekta »Dvig socialnega in kulturnega kapitala v okoljih, kjer živijo predstavniki romske skupnosti«). Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia no. 47/2010. Page 1468.

217 The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

218 Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Education and Sport. 2007. Pre-school Education in Slovenia.

- Slovenia has an integrated and comprehensive approach to preschool education, combining education, play and care in preschool institutions.
- Preschool education in Slovenia is not compulsory, but it admits children from 1 to 6 years of age.
- Parents have the right to choose public or a private preschool for their children. Municipality is obliged to find a place for a child in the preschool in some other way if there are no places in the preschool in the place of residence.
- The aim of preschool is to “support parents in bringing up the child, to improve the quality of family life and to create conditions for the development of child's physical and intellectual abilities”²¹⁹.
- Public preschools are founded and financed by municipality, parents (0 - 80%, depending on the income of the parents), and the state in some cases and for specific purposes like “transport of preschool children, pre-school institution departments in hospitals and in institutes for education and schooling for children with special needs, as well as for the higher costs and investments in Italian, bilingual and Roma departments”²²⁰.
- Priority in admission to preschools is given to disadvantaged children (socially vulnerable children or children with special needs). The size of the class is smaller if it includes Roma children or children with special needs.
- There are day-programme, half-day programme and short programme offered in preschools.

The system of preschool education in Slovenia has changed a lot in the last decades. As the result of the general **educational reform** in 1996²²¹:

219 Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Education and Sport. 2007. Pre-school Education in Slovenia.

220 Ibid.

221 Ibid.

- Ministry of Education and Sport took over the authority over preschool education from the then Ministry of Health, Family and Social Security, and therefore the preschool education was recognized not only as care but also as education.
- In previous system the preschool education period concluded with a one-year programme of compulsory school-preparation ("little school"), and was continued by the eight years of compulsory schooling. In the new system there are nine years of compulsory schooling, children enrol in primary school when they are 6 years old, instead of 7, and as a result, the compulsory "little school" has been cancelled. This development has a great influence on the preschool access and attendance of Roma children.
- Recently there is a focus on the equal progress opportunities for all - children with special needs, Roma children and children from socially deprived families. This is evident, for example, from the Supplement to the Kindergarten Curriculum for working with Roma.

As for the statistics²²², in the school year 2009/2010 there was 863 preschool institutions in Slovenia, of which 30 were private. The number of children enrolled in kindergartens increased by 7.8% over the previous school year - slightly more than 71,000 children are enrolled in kindergartens and in childminders' families, which is 73.9% of all children of the proper age.

Slovenia, like Nordic countries and Spain, has a unified system of preschool education, and recognizes pre-school education as a first step on the educational path.²²³ Unified model is enabling the continuity between the preschool education and compulsory primary education; and is an indicator that states acknowledge the right to early childhood education for all children.²²⁴ In Slovenia, the provision of early childhood education and care is

²²² Republic of Slovenia. Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia. 2010. Kindergartens, Slovenia, school year 2009/10 – final data.

²²³ EACEA Eurydice. 2009. Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities, page 91.

²²⁴ Ibid. Page 127.

characterised by high accessibility for children from the age of 1: only 3 % of children whose parents applied for a place in a pre-school centre were not granted one in 2006/07.²²⁵

2.4.2 Disadvantaged children

In Slovenia there is no general national definition of disadvantaged/vulnerable/minority groups. On the basis of legislation and other documents that deal with the system of preschool education it is possible to suggest that Slovenia regards the following groups of children as disadvantaged: children with special needs, children from Italian or Hungarian minority and Roma children.²²⁶ In *Program for children and youth 2006-2016*²²⁷ there are measures for socially disadvantaged children, for children victims of abuse and violence, children with special needs, Roma children, unaccompanied minors and children with behavioral problems.

For Roma children there is an important objective of “achieving an improvement of their social position and ensure their social inclusion”. Some of the strategies for this objective are: facilitating inclusion of Roma children into the education system; acquiring a larger number of Roma assistants; ensuring the possibility to retain the Roma language and culture.²²⁸

As for measures in favour of disadvantaged children, specific measures for successful transition to primary school education are adopted only for Roma children. In kindergarten this means there are: adapted ways of cooperating with Roma parents or families; individualization of implemented curriculum in accordance with recommendations from the Supplement; and implementation of projects on multicultural education. It also means there

²²⁵ Ibid. Page 83.

²²⁶ Turnšek, Nada and Marcela Zorec Batistič. 2009. Odpravljanje socialne in kulturne neenakosti v predšolski vzgoji in varstvu v Sloveniji. In: EACEA Eurydice. 2009. Predšolska vzgoja in varstvo v Evropi: odpravljanje socialne in kulturne neenakosti.. Page 168.

²²⁷ Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. 2006. Programme for Children and Youth 2006-2016 (Program za otroke in mladino 2006-2016).

²²⁸ Ibid. Page 17.

are Roma assistants employed that helps Roma children with Slovene language and “represent a bridge between kindergarten or school and Roma community”.²²⁹

2.5 PRESCHOOL EDUCATION OF ROMA CHILDREN IN SLOVENIA

It has been widely recognized that “low attendance of Roma children in preschools is one of the biggest problems of quality integration” in Slovenia.²³⁰ Similarly to the international organizations and experts, Slovenian researchers emphasize that early inclusion of Roma children into preschool education contributes to their better inclusion into the educational system since they are gradually becoming used to the way of work and life at school; it contributes to their efficiency in primary school, as well as to their competences in the Slovenian language.²³¹ Research in Slovenia also showed that “engaging children in preschool program influences more regular attendance later in primary school and accelerates their development”.²³²

Researchers in Slovenia that want to find out the number of Roma children attending preschool in Slovenia encounter a problem. In accordance with *Article 4 of the Personal Data Protection Act*²³³, it is not allowed for any governmental body including the state kindergartens and Ministry of Education and Sport to gather personal data on the basis of ethnicity. That is why we do not really know how many Roma children attend preschool.²³⁴ According to some sources in Slovenia there are 272 preschools and in 10 classes of

229 Turnšek, Nada and Marcela Zorec Batistič. 2009. Odpravljanje socialne in kulturne neenakosti v predšolski vzgoji in varstvu v Sloveniji. In: EACEA Eurydice. 2009. Predšolska vzgoja in varstvo v Evropi: odpravljanje socialne in kulturne neenakosti. Page 180.

230 Necak-Lük, Albina et al. 2005. Integration of Roma Children into Mainstream Education in Slovenia: Final Research and Evaluation Report, Roma Education Initiative. Page 12.

231 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 82.

232 Necak-Lük, Albina et al. 2005. Integration of Roma Children into Mainstream Education in Slovenia: Final Research and Evaluation Report, Roma Education Initiative. Page 4.

233 Republic of Slovenia. 2004. Personal Data Protection Act (Zakon o varstvu osebnih podatkov (ZVOP-1)). Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No. 86/2004.

234 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 82.

preschools there are 157 Roma children.²³⁵ Some other sources say that Roma children are included in 40 preschools in Slovenia^{236 237}, mostly in Dolenjska, Posavje, Bela Krajina, Štajerska and Prekmurje.²³⁸ It is, however, known that the majority of Roma children in Slovenia “do not have access to preschool education”.^{239 240} The fact is that “only a few Roma children are attending preschool”.²⁴¹ Some of the barriers are described below.

2.5.1 Barriers for equal access to early childhood education for Roma in Slovenia

As it was established in the Literature review, Kirilova and Repaire²⁴², as well as UNESCO and Council of Europe²⁴³ identified different barriers for Roma in access to preschool education. Many of listed barriers apply to Slovenia, for example Roma parents’ non-willingness to send their children to preschool, their non-involvement and non-awareness about the importance of (preschool) education, language barrier and socio-economic barriers.

2.5.1.1 Roma parents

One very important barrier is Roma parents’ non-involvement in their children’s education, them not being informed about the importance of preschool education and their non-willingness to send their children to preschool. According to some mentors, preschool and primary school teachers and head teachers in Slovenia “the parents are to blame for not sending their children to school, even if some of those children love coming to school”.²⁴⁴

235 Brezovšek, Marjan. 2008. Reševanje romske problematike v Sloveniji s poudarkom na socialni inkluzivnosti Romov v šolski sistem. Končno poročilo. Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 5.

236 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 61.

237 Office of the high commissioner for human rights (OHCHR). 2005. Reply of the Republic of Slovenia on the list of issues to be taken up in connection with the consideration of the second periodic report of Slovenia (CCPR/C/SVN/2004/2). Page 67.

238 Ibid.

239 Amnesty International. 2006. False starts: The exclusion of Romani children from primary education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. Page 62.

240 Republic of Slovenia. 2005. First Annual Report on the Implementation of the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion (NAP/Inclusion) 2004-2006, page 19.

241 Necak-Lük, Albina, Mateja Brejc and Tatjana Vonta. 2005. Integration of Roma Children into Mainstream Education in Slovenia: Final Research and Evaluation Report, Roma Education Initiative. Page 22.

242 Kirilova, Diana and Virginie Repaire. 2003. The innovatory practices in the field of education of Roma children. Council of Europe. Pages 11-14.

243 UNESCO and Council of Europe. 2007. Towards quality education for Roma children: transition from early childhood to primary education. Audit of Pre-school provision. Briefing paper for the Experts’ UNESCO / Council of Europe Meeting. Pages 5 and 12.

244 Necak-Lük, Albina et al. 2005. Integration of Roma Children into Mainstream Education in Slovenia: Final Research and Evaluation Report, Roma Education Initiative. Page 12.

They complained about non-cooperation: *"Parents cooperate only when we force them. Until we will have to force them, the results will be minimal"*.²⁴⁵ This is especially the case in the Dolenjska region, where the parents are not yet aware, that education is the only way out of uncertain situation.²⁴⁶

Another study found that considerable share of the Roma parents, especially if they live in the Roma settlements as opposed to those integrated in urban centres; prefer to keep their children at home instead of including them into preschool education.²⁴⁷ Even though in most cases the preschool education is free for Roma children, their parents rarely include them in preschool. There can be many reasons for that. According to one of the preschool head teachers Roma parents are *"afraid that it would completely change their culture."*²⁴⁸ Furthermore, Roma parents feel that by sending children to kindergarten they in a way 'renounce' them. Roma parents and their children have a strong emotional connection and children staying home with their mothers is for them a way of expressing affection.²⁴⁹ "Sometimes I think Roma parents imagine all the bad things that might happen to their children," said Roma assistant Sandra Rudaš.²⁵⁰

However, one of the most important causes of a very low preschool enrolment and preschool attendance by Roma children is believed to be the **change in the school system**. In 1996, the system of preschool education in Slovenia has changed as the result of the general educational reform²⁵¹. In previous system there was a "little school", a one year compulsory preparatory class before entering the primary school that was continued by the eight years of compulsory primary school. In the new system there are nine years of compulsory primary

245 Ibid. Page 16.

246 Petrovčič, Peter. 2010. Interview with Darko Rudaš, President of the Forum of Roma councilors. Mladina, 2. September 2010

247 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 83.

248 Necak-Lük, Albina et al. 2005. Integration of Roma Children into Mainstream Education in Slovenia: Final Research and Evaluation Report, Roma Education Initiative. Page 22.

249 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 85.

250 Marinovič, Glorija. 2009. Zaupanje si je treba prislužiti. 7dni, 9. September 2009.

251 Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Education and Sport. 2007. Pre-school Education in Slovenia.

school and the children are enrolment in primary school when they are 6 years old, instead of 7. As a result, the compulsory preschool has been cancelled. Now there is a problem of Roma children dropping out of the preschools, because “Roma parents seem to believe their children are too young to be separated from them”.²⁵² They are convinced that five-year-olds are too small to be sent to kindergarten.²⁵³ For example in a kindergarten in the Lower Posavje there was a big decrease of the number of Roma children included in kindergarten despite various presentations of programs by preschool employees, organizing children’s workshops, discussions with parents about the importance of preschool etc.²⁵⁴ Another example is kindergarten in Kočevje, where they had a big Roma preschool class before the 1996 education reform, but in 2009 there were very few Roma children left, despite promotion of kindergarten. The reason is that Roma mothers see preschool as a daycare, not as education. They feel self-confident enough to take care of their children at home. “Why would I send my children to kindergarten, if I am at home?” says Sonja, a Roma mother from Kočevje. Other Roma mothers from the Roma settlement agree²⁵⁵, as well as fathers. Some say that their children are too young to attend preschool.

There was one period when the enrolment of Roma children was suddenly high again, and that was when **Roma women literacy course** was running. When the course was finished, the enrolment level dropped again. Some women that enroll their children in preschool after some time can not stand the **pressure from the Roma settlement** and take the children out again.²⁵⁶

252 Necak-Lük, Albina et al. 2005. Integration of Roma Children into Mainstream Education in Slovenia: Final Research and Evaluation Report, Roma Education Initiative. Page 12.

253 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 85.

254 Ibid. Page 84.

255 In the interview that I implemented with one of the Roma university students from Dolenjska region, he responded in similar way to the question on the role of parents regarding preschool. He said, that Roma parents often say: “Why would I send my children to kindergarten, if I am at home and I can take care of him”

256 Grabovac, Morse Bori. 2009. Kočevski Romi v šolo da, v vrtec pa ne. Dnevnik, 28. October 2010.

Some researchers have suggested that other ways of encouraging preschool children in an environment that is more familiar to Roma children should be implemented, including programs for children inside the Roma settlements.²⁵⁷

2.5.1.2 Language barrier

Language barrier is not only the barrier to inclusion in preschool education, but even more serious barrier to general education for Roma children and in the same time one of the most important rationales for improving the access of Roma children to early childhood programmes. The lack of access of Roma children to preschool education means that when entering the primary school, they have greater difficulties because of their low level of knowledge of the Slovene language. The “children’s lack of knowledge of Slovene” is one of the obstacles most often cited by Roma.²⁵⁸ It has been found that around 30 % of Roma children at the beginning of the primary school have a very limited command of Slovene²⁵⁹. Especially in Dolenjska region, children often do not have command of the Slovene language – that was one of the most important problems in the Pikapolonica kindergarten in Brezje Roma settlement in Dolenjska region.²⁶⁰ The importance of inclusion in preschool education is therefore evident.

One of the possible solutions for the language barriers is believed to be the inclusion of the **Romani language** in preschools with a lot of Roma children.²⁶¹ Another important solution has been the establishment of the **Roma assistant** post, which will be analyzed in next thesis chapter.

257 Necak-Lük, Albina et al. 2005. Integration of Roma Children into Mainstream Education in Slovenia: Final Research and Evaluation Report, Roma Education Initiative. Page 31.

258 Amnesty International. 2006. False starts: The exclusion of Romani children from primary education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. Page 48.

259 Ibid. Page 71.

260 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 84.

261 Amnesty International. 2006. False starts: The exclusion of Romani children from primary education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. Page 72.

2.5.1.3 Socio-economic barriers

"Hinjum čhavoro Klavdijo. Živinu praha družina ha nu tikini baraka. Žalostno hinjum, ka men naj phani i luči."^{262 263}

Economic barriers, such as the "lack of basic infrastructure, distances between settlements and schools, overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions, lack of adequate clothing and insufficient financial resources to meet costs associated with education are often cited by Roma as denying their children the full advantages of education".²⁶⁴

As mentioned before, the level of unemployment among Roma is between 90-98%, which means that poverty is widespread. A lot of them receive social support and consequently do not have to pay for their children's preschool education. That is why in most cases the preschool fee is not a barrier to access to preschool for Roma children in Slovenia. However, there are **additional costs** beyond preschool fees that might present a barrier to Roma families, such as adequate clothing, fees for extra-curricular activities etc. In Roma families with better social status, the school success of Roma children is better.²⁶⁵

Roma in Slovenia live in very poor **housing** conditions. Sometimes Roma settlements do not have any water or electricity supply, especially in Dolenjska region. For example in Pikapolonica kindergarten in Roma settlement Brezje teachers had a lot of problems with children's hygiene, since there was no water supply in the settlement.²⁶⁶

There is still a lot of **racism and discrimination** in the overall society. Non-Roma parents often protest against the full integration of Roma in educational institutions.²⁶⁷

2.5.1.4 Legal barriers

As already mentioned in thesis chapter on legislation, Slovenian law and practice differentiate between "**autochthonous**" Roma communities, who receive lower protection

²⁶² "I am a boy Klavdijo. I live with my family in a little cabin. I am sad because we do not have water and light."

²⁶³ Marinovič, Glorija. 2009. Zaupanje si je treba prislužiti. 7dni, 9. September 2009.

²⁶⁴ Amnesty International. 2006. False starts: The exclusion of Romani children from primary education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. Page 65.

²⁶⁵ Petrovčič, Peter. 2010. Interview with Darko Rudaš, President of the Forum of Roma councilors. Mladina, 2. September 2010.

²⁶⁶ Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 84.

²⁶⁷ Amnesty International. 2006. False starts: The exclusion of Romani children from primary education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. Page 69.

than Hungarian and Italian minorities, and “**non-autochthonous**” Roma which are actually excluded from social inclusion programmes or measures and therefore they represent the most vulnerable group in virtually all areas of social inclusion, especially the education.²⁶⁸ Research has shown that almost half of the non-autochthonous Roma do not have their legal status settled and that many of them do not have any personal documents.²⁶⁹ It can be assumed that Roma parents are afraid to send children without documents to preschool.

To conclude, according to Milena Novak, teacher in the Novo mesto kindergarten, and on the basis of some of the researchers’ findings, increasing the number of Roma children included in kindergarten depends on the following measures²⁷⁰:

- “Active contacts with parents” even before child’s enrolment to preschool, meaning teachers visiting children’s homes and parents visiting kindergarten.²⁷¹
- Teachers being “attentive to the acceptance of Roma children by other children”²⁷²; they should emphasize importance and benefits of diversity and not emphasize differences.
- **Roma assistant** can bring smoother inclusion of Roma children into preschool, for example by establishing “a contact between teachers and Roma children, between Roma and non-Roma children, and between kindergarten and Roma parents”²⁷³.
- **Preschool teachers** should be trained to work with Roma children, there has to be elimination of prejudice and stereotypes about Roma.

268 RAXEN – National Focal Point for Slovenia. 2004. Roma in Public Education. Peace Institute Ljubljana. Page 7.

269 Ibid. Page 8.

270 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 85.

271 Ibid.

272 Ibid.

273 Ibid.

2.5.2 Segregation v Integration of Roma preschool children in Slovenia

Those Roma children who *do* have access to preschool education are included in the preschool in three ways: (1) most Roma children are integrated in common, **heterogeneous** groups; (2) less are attending **homogeneous** groups and (3) **only-Roma** kindergartens.²⁷⁴ This integration is affected by circumstances like the “status of Roma community within the local community, and education plus awareness degree of parents”.²⁷⁵

In practice, there are many different forms of inclusion of Roma children in preschools:

a) inclusion in the heterogeneous preschool group outside Roma settlement without any preparation (kindergarten in the municipality Tišina); inclusion in homogeneous kindergarten with half-day programme (kindergarten Pikapolonica in Brezje in Novo mesto municipality); inclusion in the homogeneous kindergarten with short programme (kindergarten Romano in Hudeje in Trebje municipality), and occasional teaching aid (Roma settlement Smrekec 1 in the Grosuplje municipality).²⁷⁶

Preschool Roma children are integrated in heterogeneous preschool groups in 20 municipalities^{277 278}. There seems to be no data on the number of Roma children attending integrated preschool groups. Around 100 Roma children every year attend homogeneous preschool groups of Roma kindergartens (see Table 2).

Table 2: The number of Roma children attending homogenous kindergarten groups or Roma kindergartens:²⁷⁹

Year	Number of children	Number of kindergarten groups
2002	124	7
2003	116	8
2004	97	6
2005	96	7

²⁷⁴ Ibid. Page 61.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Republic of Slovenia. Office for Nationalities. 2010. Report of the Republic of Slovenia on the situation of Roma Community in Slovenia – the report on the implementation of Roma Community Act (Official Gazette of RS, no. 33/2007). Page 6.

²⁷⁷ Beltinci, Brežice, Cankova, Dobrovnik, Jesenice, Kočevje, Križevci, Krško, Kuzma, Maribor, Puconci, Radovljica, Ribnica, Rogašovci, Semič, Šentjernej, Škocjan, Tišina, Turnišče, Velenje.

²⁷⁸ Republic of Slovenia. Office for Nationalities. 2010. Report of the Republic of Slovenia on the situation of Roma Community in Slovenia – the report on the implementation of Roma Community Act (Official Gazette of RS, no. 33/2007). Page 6.

²⁷⁹ Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 83.

For example, according to some sources in 2003/2004 there were 91 Romani children attending preschool groups only for Roma (see Table 3):

Table 3: Segregated preschool classes²⁸⁰:

Preschool institution	Črenšovci	Lendava	B. Peče, Maribor	Novo mesto	Murska Sobota	Ribnica
No. of children	12	14	5	27	23	10

Researchers say these numbers do not really tell what share of Roma children is included in the preschool education. The only trend visible from the Table 3 is that the number of Roma children in homogenous preschool groups is decreasing. If this means that more Roma children are included in the integrated preschools, this is a positive trend. If this decrease on the other hand means the decrease of Roma children included in the preschool, the trend is negative.²⁸¹

2.5.3 Only-Roma preschools in Slovenia

Until recently there were only a few preschools in the Roma settlements: in Pušča, Brezje, and Hudeje.

2.5.3.1 Pušča

Kindergarten Romano in the Pušča settlement in Prekmurje region has been founded as early as 1962. Only Roma children attend it. Here started first experiences working with Roma children and especially with Roma parents. Parents did not want to cooperate at the beginning, but later they accepted the kindergarten as a benefit.²⁸² In 2005 there were 25

²⁸⁰ Office of the high commissioner for human rights (OHCHR). 2005. Reply of the Republic of Slovenia on the list of issues to be taken up in connection with the consideration of the second periodic report of Slovenia (CCPR/C/SVN/2004/2). Page 67.

²⁸¹ Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 83.

²⁸² Tancer (1989) in Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 84..

children in two groups.²⁸³ In 2008 the kindergarten was still quite full - there were 22 children included.²⁸⁴ However, in autumn of 2010 the kindergarten Romano in Pušča was the only unit of the kindergarten Murska Sobota that was not full, since recently many Roma parents prefer to enrol their children into integrated groups. Non-Roma parents are also not interested to enrol their children into Romano kindergarten. There is an idea to establish in these buildings a new, mixed, integrated group with the emphasis on multiculturalism. Some parents are interested in this idea, especially when they heard that there will be elements of the Montessori pedagogic.²⁸⁵

2.5.3.2 Brezje

In Dolenjska region intensive work on education of Roma children started later. In 1979 primary school Bršljin in Novo mesto opened two kindergarten groups also for Roma children, but the groups remained empty. Therefore in 1993 the kindergarten Pikapolonica in the Roma settlement Brezje was established. That was more successful, since the number of Roma children became increasing and in 2006 there were 28 children in two groups. Two of the most important problems in the preschool were the lack of knowledge of Slovene language and children's hygiene due to no water supply in the settlement.²⁸⁶ In 2009, the municipality Novo mesto decided to change the opening hours of Pikapolonica kindergarten from all-day kindergarten to half-day kindergarten. The decision was based on the advice of the leadership of kindergarten Pedenjped, because Roma children did not attend preschool regularly. The news upset employees as well as Roma parents. They sent a protest letter to the municipality with 37 signatures by Roma parents that demand all-day kindergarten for their

283 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 62.

284 Stanković, Dragana. 2008. Učna ura Trebanjcev v romskem naselju Pušča. Dnevnik, 13. November 2008.

285 Gider, Nataša. 2010. Vrtec v nekdanji trgovini. Večer, 13. August 2010.

286 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 84.

children. They, on other hand, pledged that they will send their children to preschool regularly for 6 hour or more a day.²⁸⁷

2.5.3.3 Hudeje

In 2008 in Trebnje there was a debate whether to continue to include Roma children in Trebnje integrated kindergarten or to establish a kindergarten in Roma settlement Hudeje. Argument for the kindergarten in the settlement was that Roma parents would send their children to preschool more regularly, if it was in the settlement.²⁸⁸ So in September 2009 the temporary kindergarten Romano was opened in the Roma settlement Hudeje in Trebnje, because Roma parents did not include their children in regular integrated preschool program in Kindergarten Trebnje.²⁸⁹ All 15 Roma children attended preschool regularly. However, since the kindergarten was arranged in the illegally built building of a Roma councilor, in May 2010, only half a year after the opening, it was ordered by the inspector to be destroyed.²⁹⁰

Roma children in homogeneous preschool classes are in minority for now. However, in the next years, the number of Roma children attending homogeneous preschool groups inside the Roma settlements will probably increase greatly. The reason for this is Slovenian government's legislation, programs and policies that directly or indirectly support segregation. I am going to explain some of the indicators of Slovenian government supporting segregation of Roma preschool children below.

2.5.4 Slovenian government supporting segregation?

As it is visible from one of the previous thesis chapters on legislation, policies and programmes for Roma in Slovenia, the Slovenian government has invested a lot of time and money in programs and policies aiming at education of Roma and specifically on overcoming

²⁸⁷ Miklič, Bogdan. 2009. Romski Vrtec Pikapolonica s polovičnim delovnim časom. 27. January 2009.

²⁸⁸ Stanković, Dragana. 2008. Učna ura Trebanjcev v romskem naselju Pušča. Dnevnik, 13. November 2008.

²⁸⁹ Miklič, Bogdan. 2010. Romski vrtec pod drobnogledom inšpektorjev. Dolenjski List, 4 May 2010.

²⁹⁰ Petrovčič, Peter. 2010. Rušenje romskega vrtca. Mladina, 11 May 2010.

barriers to access to preschool education. Some **measures** for greater access of Roma children to preschool education that have been taken are²⁹¹:

- **Favourable standards and normatives, and subsidies from municipalities**

Classrooms with Roma children are financed from municipalities' budget, national budget and parent's fees. Higher costs resulting from favourable normatives are covered by national budgets. Classrooms with Roma children can be formed when **at least 5 Roma children** is enrolled (in comparison with other classrooms where there has to be at least 9 children enrolled in homogene (same age) or 7 children in heterogene (different age) classrooms.²⁹²

- **Favourable ratio among the number of children and the number of staff**

In the classrooms with Roma children where program lasts at least 3 hours a day, the ratio is 4 children to 1 staff in the first age-group and 7 children to 1 staff in the second age-group.

- **More staff**

In the first age-group there is one assistant for every 6 children, in the second age-group there is one assistant for every 12 children.

- **Organized transport**

Preschool Roma children are enrolled in preschools close to their settlement. If the preschool is far away, there is a transport organized.

Some of these measures, though maybe adopted with a good intention, are supporting segregation of Roma preschool children. Researchers have already warned that the state supports segregation – and that it supports it financially, since “on the preschool level 5 Roma children is enough to establish a segregated Roma classroom”.²⁹³

291 Republic of Slovenia. Office for Nationalities. 2010. Report of the Republic of Slovenia on the situation of Roma Community in Slovenia – the report on the implementation of Roma Community Act (Official Gazette of RS, no. 33/2007). Page 6.

292 Article 30 of Order on norms and human resources conditions of service for preschool activities (Odredba o normativih in kadrovskih pogojih za opravljanje dejavnosti predšolske vzgoje). Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No. 57/1997.

293 Necak-Lük, Albina et al. 2005. Integration of Roma Children into Mainstream Education in Slovenia: Final Research and Evaluation Report, Roma Education Initiative. Page 5.

I have found two more indicators that show that the government actually supports segregation of preschool Roma children. The first indicator is the fact that only-Roma preschool classes are 100% financed by the government.²⁹⁴ That means that municipalities, which usually carry the biggest share of the cost for the preschools in their area, do not have to pay anything. Normally the municipalities have to cover the difference between the full fee of the preschool programme and fee by the parents²⁹⁵ (parents pay between 10-80% of the fee depending on their income²⁹⁶). All Slovenian citizens that receive social support from the government do not have to pay the preschool fee for their children²⁹⁷. It was mentioned before that Roma population suffers from very high percent of unemployment (between 90 and 98%²⁹⁸), consequently a lot of them get some kind of social support from the government, therefore most Roma parents do not have to pay for their children's preschool. That means that for the majority of Roma preschool children the cost of the preschool falls mainly on the municipality. Consequently, if the government fully subsidizes only-Roma preschool classes, municipalities would prefer if there are as many as possible only-Roma preschools so that they can save precious resources. In times of economic crisis this is even more important.

Looking at the second indicator I have found, one might be able to predict that in the next years, the number of Roma children being included in homogeneous, segregated preschools will rise heavily. The reason is the new public tender. It was already mentioned in the thesis chapter on legislation and policies, that Ministry of Sport and Education established in 2010 the 4 million €²⁹⁹ public tender called "*Raising the social and cultural capital in*

294 Republic of Slovenia. Office for Nationalities. 2006. Splošne informacije o romski etnični skupnosti v Republiki Sloveniji. Page 5.

295 As established by Article 28 of the Kindergarten Act (Zakon o vrtcih (ZVrt)), Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia no. 12/1996.

296 As established by Article 3 of the Rules on Fees for Pre-School Institutions Paid by Parents (Pravilnik o plačilih staršev za programnee v vrtcih), Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia no. 129/2006.

297 As established by Article 22 of Rules on Fees for Pre-School Institutions Paid by Parents (Pravilnik o plačilih staršev za programnee v vrtcih), Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia no. 129/2006.

298 Republic of Slovenia. Office for Nationalities. 2010. Report of the Republic of Slovenia on the situation of Roma Community in Slovenia – the report on the implementation of Roma Community Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, no. 33/2007). Page 10.

299 The funds for the project, which amount to 4 million €, will come from the European Social Fund until the year 2014, and after 2014 annually 1 million EUR will come from the national budget. The recipient of the funds for the project, the Institute for Ethnic Studies in Ljubljana, has been announced in late August 2010. This public tender includes.

areas inhabited by members of the Roma community”³⁰⁰. The public tender was established to implement measures towards strategic goals from the *Strategy* that have not been realized in the 2004-2010 period and are thus included in the *Programme 2010-2010*^{301 302}. One strategic goal aims towards increasing the attendance of Roma children in pre-school³⁰³, with measures such as “early integration of Roma children in mainstream educational system – providing the necessary conditions for integration into preschool education”.³⁰⁴ Subject, aims, purpose and activities of the public tender are focused on designing and implementation of **preschool education inside the Roma settlements**³⁰⁵ (see Table 4), which of course means homogeneous only-Roma preschools – even if non-Roma children have the chance to attend a preschool inside the Roma settlement, this would not happen in the reality.

Table 4: Subject, aims, purpose and activities of the public tender^{306 307}:

SUBJECT	AIMS	PURPOSE	ACTIVITIES
Development and implementation of educational programs inside the Roma settlements, with special emphasis on preschool education.	Designing models of preschool education that will help to develop innovative and creative approaches to learning.	supporting the social inclusion of Roma	providing the easier transition of Roma children to regular primary school classes and regular preschool outside the Roma settlements
Development and implementation of different preschool , school, and outside-	Educational programs inside the Roma settlements, with the emphasis on the	exploring and maintaining the Roma	active cooperation with Roma parents in those processes

300 Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Education and Sport. 2010. Public Tender on Co-financing the project “Raising the social and cultural capital in areas inhabited by members of the Roma community” (Javni razpis za sofinanciranje projekta »Dvig socialnega in kulturnega kapitala v okoljih, kjer živijo predstavniki romske skupnosti«). Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia no. 47/2010.

301 Republic of Slovenia. 2010. National Programme of Measures for Roma People for the 2010–2015 period (Nacionalni program ukrepov za Rome vlade Republike Slovenije za obdobje 2010-2015).

302 The governmental programme of planned measures in the areas of special rights of the Roma community, that was adopted on the basis of Article 6 of the Roma Community Act 2010.

303 Measure 4.2.2.2. in: Republic of Slovenia. 2010. National Programme of Measures for Roma People for the 2010–2015 period (Nacionalni program ukrepov za Rome vlade Republike Slovenije za obdobje 2010-2015). Page 15.

304 Ibid.

305 Republic of Slovenia. Office for Nationalities. 2010. Report of the Republic of Slovenia on the situation of Roma Community in Slovenia – the report on the implementation of Roma Community Act (Official Gazette of RS, no. 33/2007). Page 9.

306 Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Education and Sport. 2010. Public Tender on Co-financing the project “Raising the social and cultural capital in areas inhabited by members of the Roma community” (Javni razpis za sofinanciranje projekta »Dvig socialnega in kulturnega kapitala v okoljih, kjer živijo predstavniki romske skupnosti«). Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia no. 47/2010. Page 1468.

307 Republic of Slovenia. Office for Nationalities. 2010. Report of the Republic of Slovenia on the situation of Roma Community in Slovenia – the report on the implementation of Roma Community Act (Official Gazette of RS, no. 33/2007). Page 9.

school programs and activities for children, youth and parents inside the Roma settlements.	preschool education with the aim of rising the % of Roma children in preschool and transition to primary school with the cooperation of Roma assistants in the process of preschool education.	language and culture	
preparing the spacing and demographic analysis in the area of preschool and primary school education inside the Roma settlements			Preschool, school and outside school programs and activities for Roma children, youth and parents in the Roma settlements , in order to provide mutual understanding, meeting the wider environment and culture and holistic development of Roma children

One example of the planned activities in the project “*Raising the social and cultural capital in areas inhabited by members of the Roma community*”³⁰⁸ is the establishment of a new kindergarten in the Roma settlement Kerinov Grm in Krško municipality. The plan is that Roma children will attend this kindergarten until one year before the primary school, since for the last year before transition to primary school they will attend integrated preschool in Krško. Roma children in new kindergarten will learn Slovenian, Roma parents will be included and therefore trust will be built.³⁰⁹ This might not be such a bad practice, especially because transition to integrated preschool is planned for the last year of preschool. However,

308 Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Education and Sport. 2010. Public Tender on Co-financing the project “Raising the social and cultural capital in areas inhabited by members of the Roma community” (Javni razpis za sofinanciranje projekta »Dvig socialnega in kulturnega kapitala v okoljih, kjer živijo predstavniki romske skupnosti«). Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia no. 47/2010.

309 Božič, Kristina. 2010. Prvošolci prvič, drugič, osmič? Dnevnik, 11. September 2010.

this might just be one good example of aware municipality official. Also, as mentioned in the previous thesis chapter on importance of integrated preschool education, integration as early as possible is preferred by international experts and organizations.

Looking at the subject, aims, purpose and activities of the new public tender, we can ask an important question: how can “social inclusion of Roma” be supported through financing preschool and other educational activities *inside* Roma settlements? Another question is how preschools and other educational activities can provide “mutual understanding” and “meeting the wider environment and culture”, if the activities go on *inside* Roma settlements?

2.5.5 Arguments against segregation

*“Teacher has to make up for 6 years of missing work, from birth to enrolment into primary school. The development of those children in their segregated settlement is completely different.”*³¹⁰

In the primary schools in Slovenia there is no legal basis for homogenous classes since the school year 2003/2004, so all Roma children in all schools are integrated into heterogeneous classes. It is argued this will “have a favourable effect in the future”.³¹¹

In the preschool, however, homogenous Roma classes in only-Roma kindergartens still exist. In previous thesis chapters on segregation/integration of Roma preschool children it was established that there is an international consensus on the importance and in favour of integrated preschool education of Roma children over preschool education in segregated settings. Levičnik sets out **disadvantages** of homogeneous all-Roma preschool classes in Slovenia³¹²:

310 Necak-Lük, Albina, Mateja Brejc and Tatjana Vonta. 2005. Integration of Roma Children into Mainstream Education in Slovenia: Final Research and Evaluation Report, Roma Education Initiative. Page 22.

311 Necak Lük, Albina and Sonja Novak Lukanovic. 2009. Inclusion and education in European countries. INTMEAS Report for contract – 2007-2004/001 TRA-TRSPO, Final Report: 10. Slovenia. Page 26.

312 Levičnik, Irena. 1991. Predšolska vzgoja romskih otrok v republiki Sloveniji. Vzgoja in izobraževanje romskih otrok v predšolskem in osnovnošolskem obdobju. Ljubljana (ZRSŠ). Pages 6-9.

- Isolation of Roma children from other children can cause even worse mutual distance and non-understanding; prejudices can spread and are seen as something permanent.
- Roma as well as non-Roma children cannot get experiences on how to live and cooperate with different children.
- Roma children can not learn Slovenian language in concrete situations from non-Roma children.
- Teacher can lose criteria for evaluating his/her own work and children's activities.

The experiences from the Slovenian primary schools and preschools where three mentioned approaches have been practiced (integrated groups, homogeneous groups, only-Roma-kindergartens), as well as educational research proved that “homogenous Roma classes did not have the desired effect”³¹³. The best choice proved to be “the early integration of Roma children into heterogeneous classes at the very beginning of a kindergarten and primary school attendance”³¹⁴. Researchers say that the best option for children is inclusion in the heterogeneous groups, for in heterogeneous groups it is easier for Roma children to learn Slovene language, and furthermore, also non-Roma children benefit from the experience of co-existence with ethnic diversity.³¹⁵ President of the Roma cultural and touristic association in Pušča Sonja Horvat emphasized that Roma children that have been included in the preschool education have better school success, but also it is very important that Roma children are included in integrated preschools very early. Spokesperson for the Roma information centre ROMIC in Murska Sobota Monika Sandreli added, that children in Roma settlement are socializing only among themselves and that they do not have an opportunity to

313 Necak Lük, Albina and Sonja Novak Lukanovic. 2009. Inclusion and education in European countries. INTMEAS Report for contract – 2007-2094/001 TRA-TRSP0, Final Report: 10. Slovenia. Page 25.

314 Ibid.

315 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 83.

socialize with other children.³¹⁶ Roma children that attend preschools and schools outside the Roma settlement are forced to socialize with majority population, which consequently improves their social integration.³¹⁷ Another reason in favour of integrated classes and against segregating children on the basis of ethnic origin is the “possibility of spontaneous learning among children, developing respect for each other's culture and language”³¹⁸. As researchers have pointed out: “In such classes cultural pluralism and plurilingualism as two crucial European concepts can be practiced *in vivo*”.³¹⁹

However, there exist some arguments against integration of Roma preschool children. These arguments are analyzed below.

2.5.6 Arguments against integration of Roma preschool children

2.5.6.1 Roma parents and remoteness of the preschools from the Roma settlements

Research shows that Roma parents in Slovenia prefer to send their children to a kindergarten in their settlement³²⁰. For example, in 1979 two kindergarten groups were open also for Roma children in primary school Bršljin in Novo mesto, but the kindergarten remained empty. That is why around 1985 preschool teachers started organizing children's workshops in the Roma settlement Brezje.³²¹

Distance of the Roma settlement to the preschool is often cited reason for Roma parents not sending their children to preschools outside Roma settlements. For example in Dolenjska region in 1982 research showed that parents were more reluctant to let their children participate in educational programs because of the fact that kindergartens and schools were

316 Slovenska Tiskovna Agencija. 2009. Predstavnice romske skupnosti s Türkom o izobraževanju romski otrok. SiOL.net, 31.8.2009.

317 Tancer (1999) in Zupančič, Jernej. 2007. Romska naselja kot poseben del naselbinskega sistema v Sloveniji. Page 14.

318 Necak Lük, Albina and Sonja Novak Lukanovic. 2009. Inclusion and education in European countries. INTMEAS Report for contract – 2007-2094/001 TRA-TRSP0, Final Report: 10. Slovenia. Page 25.

319 Ibid.

320 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 84.

321 Ibid.

more remote from Roma settlements.³²² And after the change of the education system in 1996 that abolished compulsory preschool, parents are even more hesitant to send their children to kindergartens, especially in places where kindergartens are far from Roma settlements and children need to be taken by car.³²³

However, among the government measures to improve access to preschool education for Roma children, there is also a measure of transportation: if the preschool is far away, there is a transport organized for Roma children³²⁴, with the supervision by professional staff or children from more advanced classes.³²⁵ For example, after the kindergarten Pikapolonica in the Roma settlement Brezje in Dolenjska region was closed down in 2006 due to the bad condition of the building, children, whose parents gave consent, are now driven to other close-by kindergartens.³²⁶ Still the problem remains because some parents are not willing to use the organized transport. Magdalena Jazbec, the leader of the kindergarten Pikapolonica said that the parents that gave consent for transportation of their children to another kindergarten, did this only for the period of three months, and just because they were promised that the same preschool teachers will take care of their children as before. The question is how many new Roma children will be enrolled from now on.³²⁷

However, even if Roma parents prefer sending their children in the preschool inside the Roma settlements, professional workers warn that segregated preschool education does not

322 Novak Lukanovič (1982) in Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 62.

323 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 84.

324 Republic of Slovenia. Office for Nationalities. 2010. Report of the Republic of Slovenia on the situation of Roma Community in Slovenia – the report on the implementation of Roma Community Act (Official Gazette of RS, no. 33/2007). Page 6.

325 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 84.

326 Ibid.

327 Pirc, Vanja. 2006. Zaprtje centra za socializacijo. Mladina, 9. April 2006

lead to satisfactory results in the knowledge of Slovene, nor can it contribute to later easier inclusion of children in the educational system.³²⁸

There is a sign that Roma parents are becoming aware of importance of integrated preschool education. In autumn of 2010 the kindergarten Romano in the Roma settlement Pušča was the only unit of the kindergarten Murska Sobota that was not full, since recently many Roma parents prefer to enrol their children into integrated groups. There is an idea to establish in these buildings a new, mixed, integrated group with the emphasis on multiculturalism, and some parents have already showed interest especially when they heard that there will be elements of the Montessori pedagogic.³²⁹

2.5.6.2 More successful education of Roma children

Levičnik sets out disadvantages of including Roma in integrated preschool classes³³⁰:

- In homogeneous all-Roma preschool classes Roma children and preschool teachers can overcome beginning stressful situations in the preschool much easier, since they feel equal, safer and accepted.
- In homogeneous all-Roma preschool classes preschool teachers have easier job adapting preschool activities to development level of children and making individualized plan for each child.
- In integrated preschool classes Roma children can be very early faced with misunderstandings and prejudices that other children get from environment.

Some researchers say that Roma preschools in their settlements show better result –that Roma children from these kindergartens progress better later on in the ethnically mixed

328 Novak (2006) in Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 84.

329 Gider, Nataša. 2010. Vrtec v nekdanji trgovini. Večer, 13. August 2010.

330 Levičnik, Irena. 1991. Predšolska vzgoja romskih otrok v republiki Sloveniji. Vzgoja in izobraževanje romskih otrok v predšolskem in osnovnošolskem obdobju. Ljubljana (ZRSŠ). Pages 6-9.

schools, than Roma children included in mixed kindergartens.³³¹ One example is kindergarten Hudeje, from where children transitioned very smoothly to the first grade of primary school – the attendance was 100%.³³²

Similarly, some preschools and primary schools claim, that education of Roma children is “most successful if it occurs in segregated classrooms”³³³. They claim that “Roma children cannot succeed in regular classrooms”³³⁴, because they lack the knowledge and skills such as language, academic and social skills. These preschools and primary schools are convinced that children will overcome the gap of knowledge and skills in segregated classrooms and that this will help them later to integrate successfully in primary schools.

However, that does not happen. The studies show that majority of Roma children leave primary schools before they enter 5th or 6th grade. In one of the schools, in 25 years only one Roma child finished the primary school. In another school, in 25 years of the school’s existence only 3 Roma students continued their education after primary school.³³⁵

2.5.6.3 Conflicts with majority population

Contact with majority population can cause conflicts.³³⁶ However, this should not be an excuse used against the integration of Roma community.

2.5.6.4 Activation of Roma community

Some positive results of preschools inside Roma settlements (for example in Pušča and Brezje settlements) have been found in terms of Roma community becoming more interested in improving their environment.³³⁷ In Brezje settlement the kindergarten Pikapolonica in time became part of the settlement and developed into a kind of cultural and educational centre:

331 Devčič, Božena and Sonja Lokar. 2008. National report on the Slovenian experience of childcare provision. Organization of exchange of good practices on gender equality (VT/200/054). Page 22.

332 Petrovčič, Peter. 2010. Interview with Darko Rudaš, President of the Forum of Roma councilors. Mladina, 2. September 2010

333 Necak-Lük, Albina et al. 2005. Integration of Roma Children into Mainstream Education in Slovenia: Final Research and Evaluation Report, Roma Education Initiative. Page 5.

334 Ibid.

335 Ibid.

336 Zupančič, Jernej. 2007. Romska naselja kot poseben del naselbinskega sistema v Sloveniji. Page 14.

337 Ibid.

teachers helped adults with reading their mail, filling in of forms, helped older children with their homework, and a folklore group was organized.³³⁸

After analyzing all the **practical** arguments for and against integration of Roma children in integrated preschool classes, another important **values-based** argument should be considered. Including Roma children in homogeneous all-Roma preschool classes is deemed not acceptable from the point of view of **interculturalism** which is required to improve the relationship between Roma and non-Roma communities.³³⁹ In case of maintaining segregation in homogeneous preschool classes inside Roma settlements we can ask an important question: does the Slovenian government really want Roma to be integrated with the majority population?

338 Žagar, Mitja, Miran Komac et al. 2006. Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union: Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States. Final report: Slovenia. The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Page 84.

339 Devčič, Božena and Sonja Lokar. 2008. National report on the Slovenian experience of childcare provision. Organization of exchange of good practices on gender equality (VT/200/054). Page 22.

CHAPTER 3 – INTERVIEWS OF ROMA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN SLOVENIA

In order to base my thesis arguments not only on sources such as books, articles, reports, legislation, policies and programmes, but also on relevant primary sources from the field, I turned to five **Roma university students** as someone who has, in spite of negative outside factors, succeeded to reach the tertiary level of education. There are only about 15-20 Roma university students in Slovenia³⁴⁰ – that means my analysis includes roughly one third of all Roma university students in Slovenia. Their opinions and experiences can be very important if forwarded to political decision makers, to education staff, to Roma pupils and students over Slovenia, and to Roma and non-Roma communities and parents, since they have a potential of awareness rising about the barriers, discrimination, and also about good practices and good experiences they have had in their educational path.

The major findings from the interviews³⁴¹ (See Table 5) with five Roma university students are:

- The most important factor of their educational success is the support and encouragement of their **parents**. Other people with important positive or negative influence were **teachers** and **social workers**.
- They all attended **kindergarten from the early age (2 or 3)**, and all of them attended **integrated** kindergarten
- They all spoke **Slovenian** at home, some spoke also Romani.
- Their parents were **employed** when they were in school.
- Roma students from **Prekmurje** did not face a lot of serious forms of **discrimination** or insults on the basis of **stereotypes**, while the Roma student from **Dolenjska** did.

340 Zorko, Mojca. 2009. Predstavnice romske skupnosti opozarjajo na pomen predšolske vzgoje. Dnevnik, 1 September 2010.

341 Interviews with Roma university students were implemented in April and May 2010 and they are translated from Slovenian to English in the APPENDICES.

- All of the interviewed students were strongly supporting the introduction of a **free** preschool education, and 3 out of 5 supported **compulsory preschool education**.

Table 5: Interviews with 5 Roma university students in Slovenia

	Samanta ³⁴²	Vinko ³⁴³	Aljoša ³⁴⁴	Tina ³⁴⁵	B. ³⁴⁶
Region	Prekmurje	Prekmurje	Prekmurje	Prekmurje	Dolenjska
Study line	German language	Tourism	Preschool education	Russian and German	Preschool education
Language at home	Roma and Slovenian dialect (Prekmursko)	Slovenian dialect (Prekmursko)	Slovenian language and Slovenian dialect (Prekmursko)	Slovenian.	Slovenian. Later spoke Romani with friends.
Parents employed	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Parent's attitude to education	Financial, moral support; parents finished high school – good example.	Awareness of the importance of preschool and education in general	Supportive, guiding me, rising my awareness on the importance of education	The education was always top priority for my parents.	Motivated me, not like other Roma parents that say: “Don’t go to school, this will never help you”.
PRESCHOOL					
Preschool age	3	3	2	2	3
Preschool experience	No problems; equal treatment; teachers liked me.	No problems; equal treatment; teachers liked me, no prejudices.	Beautiful memories, liked to go, feeling good, lots of friends.	Good memories, visited 2 preschools, lots of friends, nice teacher.	Prejudices, others not used to us, afraid of us, bad vibes, bad energy.
Preschool – role of parents	Support.	Support.	Support.	Support.	Some say: “Why would I send my children to kindergarten, if I am at home and I can take care of him”.
Preschool – siblings, friends	Almost all of them	Almost all of them	Yes.	(Only child). All of my friends.	No. I was the only one. Today me and my brother are the only Roma from my hometown that finished primary school.
Slovenian language	Spoke bilingual at	Spoke Slovenian	Spoke Slovenian at	Spoke Slovenian at	Spoke Slovenian at

342 Interview (in person) with Samanta Baranja, Roma university student from Prekmurje and the president of Roma Academic Club of Slovenia (Slovenia 3 April 2010).

343 Interview (in person) with Vinko Cener, Roma university student from Prekmurje (Slovenia 3 April 2010).

344 Interview (online) with Aljoša Rudaš, Roma university student from Prekmurje. (Slovenia 2 May 2010).

345 Interview (online) with Tina Freidreich, Roma university student from Prekmurje. (Slovenia 2 May 2010).

346 Interview (telephonically) with B., Roma university student from Dolenjska (Slovenia 2 May 2010).

	Samanta ³⁴²	Vinko ³⁴³	Aljoša ³⁴⁴	Tina ³⁴⁵	B. ³⁴⁶
learned	home ; in preschool learned Slovenian well	dialect at home .	home .	home . Left Roma settlement when I was 2, but I spoke Romani too.	home .
Free and compulsory preschool?	There should be the free and compulsory pre-school education for at least one to two years. The most important is the motivation of the parents .	There should be the free and compulsory pre-school education for at least two years.	Absolutely agree – children would benefit from it because early socialization and integration .	Definitely . It could positively affect the educational success of Roma children. But it also depends on the parents and on every individual.	Free preschool is good . Socialization , easy integration in educational system, better predispositions , great foundation for the child (working habits, basics about the relationships). Compulsory preschool – not sure .
PRIMARY SCHOOL					
Primary school experiences	Nice memories; no problems; quite a few Roma in the class; Roma and non-Roma pupils hanging out together.	Nice , no problems, Roma and non-Roma hanging out together. One teacher had some racist statements .	Nice , but also for the first time met prejudices , stereotypes. No problems with teachers or schoolmates. I was popular.	Mostly ok . First 2 grades felt discriminated by other children (parents' fault). Later ok, made good friends. Good relationship with the teacher.	Serious problems with kids and some teachers. I had to prove myself 10 times more. 2 teachers gave lower grades only because I'm Roma. Some supported me.
Role of parents – primary school	Helped a lot ; encouraged, supported, told to be persistent and work hard; helped with homework. Some Roma parents not enough educated to help with homework after the 3 rd grade.	Parents are the most important : talked to me in Slovenian to learn the language, put me in preschool (because they were employed), helped with homework, and encouraged me.	Important role-caring for the educational process. My parents were supportive and also had sanctions if I didn't behave or do the school work.	One of the most important players in educational path. Sometimes this role is lacking. My parents' motivation and support were extremely important for my success.	My parents: supported me, pushed me. Other Roma parents: different values (only money, not education). Only 45% children in region attend primary school, some in special schools, some drop out in 4 th or 5 th grade.
Role of teachers – primary school	It depends on the school and teachers how many students	Teachers treated us well and equally , except one	Should create the environment of equality of all	They didn't fight the prejudices . I was better off	Teachers should not discriminate . Two teachers in

	Samanta ³⁴²	Vinko ³⁴³	Aljoša ³⁴⁴	Tina ³⁴⁵	B. ³⁴⁶
	finish school.	teacher had some racist statements.	children; have impact on schoolmates' reactions to different children. Experienced prejudices from the teachers and other edu staff (career orientation).	(non-typical surname). Bad comments in classrooms by teachers about Roma children. Research (40% of teachers in Slovenia think that success or failure of Roma children is genetically conditioned!	my primary school really supported , motivated and integrated me in different activities.
Most important - primary school	Everyone.	Parents, myself, friends.	Everyone, especially parents.	Parents. Always supported, encouraged, guided, helped me.	First and the most important are the parents. Teachers play a big role too.
HIGH SCHOOL					
Career decision	Myself.	Lost one year because the social worker persuaded me to enrol in 3-year instead of 4-year high school.	Myself. Had career advisor – very bad , advised easier 3-year-school instead of 4-year (“Roma can not do it”) but I didn’t listen.	Myself. Decided for gymnasium because of good grades. Parents agreed. I did not debate this with my teacher.	No career orientation; decided myself , moral support from the social worker.
High school experiences	Personal identity problems - not admitting being Roma; felt some prejudices and stereotypes.	Great , no problems.	Liked it, different environment, didn’t feel prejudices and stereotypes. Average relationships with schoolmates.	One of the most beautiful periods of my life. Good relations with professors, I didn’t feel discriminated. Some prejudices by schoolmates.	No problems. Everyone respected me, wanted to include me. Had straight five’s. The teachers were supportive
Role of parents – high school	Moral and financial support	Stood by me , and I wanted to prove myself that I can do it.	Parents have a great role - supported and sanctioned me.	Important through all of the educational process.	I knew what I want to become in my life. I motivated myself.
Role of teachers – high school	Nothing special; equal treatment; no additional support; formal relationship.	Very encouraging environment-teacher included me in every possible project. ect, they were really proud of me.	No prejudices felt, maybe because they didn’t now I am Roma.	Important to not increase discrimination by comments and behaviour. There were some comments , but I don’t recall any discrimination.	They really tried to include me in different activities, especially on the field of arts. I could be creative.

	Samanta ³⁴²	Vinko ³⁴³	Aljoša ³⁴⁴	Tina ³⁴⁵	B. ³⁴⁶
Most important – high school	Parents (more than teachers – they are more formal than in primary school) and myself.	Own motivation, teachers .	Parents , partly teachers , most important - myself .	Parents and schoolmates/friends because of encouragement and help.	At the beginning parents , later myself .
UNIVERSITY					
Studying decision	Myself .	Myself , with support by teacher, schoolmates parents, school librarian.	Myself .	Myself . Logical decision after gymnasium.	Myself . I have already attended high school program on pre-school education.
Help from the government	No .	No .	Regular scholarship based on the income of my parents.	Only the Golden Scholarship from the municipality.	State scholarship based on the income of my parents.
DOLENJSKA and PREKMURJE					
Comparing Prekmurje v Dolenjska	Big differences between and also within - one cannot generalize In Prekmurje: better living conditions; higher support, interest and motivation of Roma parents in their children's education; better integration in the society; more work opportunities ; more accepting society.	In Dolenjska: worse living conditions (no water, electricity, illegal settlements, tents); Roma there are less integrated in society – that means lower access to education .	Only similarity: possibility and access to primary school education. The level of development and integration in wider society is lower in Dolenjska than in Prekmurje.	Big differences. In Dolenjska – underlying problem is the socialization of Roma children, as I heard.	Roma in Prekmurje are 20 years ahead of us: less developed , organized , integrated , not maintaining their own culture . State should show Roma parents the benefits from education. State should be rougher – taking away social support if they don't put kids in school.
Can Prekmurje and Dolenjska learn from each other	Dolenjska can learn in the areas of: higher inclusion in pre-school ; Roma parents awareness of the importance of preschool; how employment brings preschool inclusion and consequently Roma children	In Prekmurje awareness of parents of education importance is bigger; more sustainable Roma projects; Roma parents know Slovenian culture and are not afraid to send kids to school; RAK project (Roma	Everyone can learn something from each other.	Both regions could learn from each other	Dolenjska has to follow Prekmurje example. Local Roma councillors here in Dolenjska are half-literate people. Our Roma councillor in my home town needs constantly someone to

	Samanta ³⁴²	Vinko ³⁴³	Aljoša ³⁴⁴	Tina ³⁴⁵	B. ³⁴⁶
	know the language and socialize.	parents to Roma parents)			explain him things he should understand on his own.
Your advice to Roma students / pupils	Education is something that no one can take away from them. You get many good experiences; you will find your way around easier.	School is fun and it brings you a lot advantages. You should be proud of your origin and identity.	Don't be ashamed of who you are. Educate yourselves as much as possible – education is the only capital you can invest in yourself that is permanent.	Don't be afraid of education . Persist long enough to achieve your goals. Be aware that you are even more precious for knowing and living another culture and another language.	Stick to education don't leave primary school to collect iron, look to the future, long-term, not only money. Sooner or later Slovenian government will stop giving us social support.
Your advice to Roma parents		Tell your children your personal life stories ; teach their children also Romani language.	Transfer to your children the value of the importance of education despite your own lower educational level.	Let your children know how important education is for achieving better quality of life.	Their children can live better lives than they did, if they educate themselves – send children to high school.
Other	2 problems in the education of Roma: non-inclusion in pre-school ; trust lost with transition from class-based to subject-based level of primary school. Roma assistant - very good practice.	Teachers have mention the Roma holocaust in the World War 2. There is a lot of discrimination in Prekmurje too.	Slovenian society is still not ready to embrace diversity – we are treated unequally. This has a big impact on Roma parents and Roma youngsters.		Many researchers just write their books in their offices, that's not reality. It is difficult to explain Roma the importance of education , especially if you are Slovenian .

It can be concluded that from the point of view of some of the most educated Roma in Slovenia, support by **parents** and inclusion in integrated, free and in certain level compulsory **preschool** education are the most important foundations for a successful educational path.

CHAPTER 4 – GOOD SLOVENIAN AND INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES

Sharing good practices on education of Roma children among countries with Roma population is very important, since the successful project in one country can be the basis for the reform or initiatives in other countries. Some of the good practices on education of Roma children that could be strengthened/scaled up in Slovenia as well as other countries are described below, the first being one of the most successful practices in the education of Roma all over Europe in recent years – the establishment of a **Roma assistant**.

4.1 Roma assistant internationally

One of the most successful practices in the field of education of Roma children in last years has been the introduction of Roma school mediators/assistants in various ways in various countries (see Table 6). People from Roma communities are trained and employed as additional educational help in the preschool or primary school classroom, in order help Roma children integrate in the mainstream education, to help improve Roma children access to education and their success; to represent a link between preschool or school and Roma community; and on the other hand, it encourages members of Roma community to play an active role in solving their issues.³⁴⁷

Council of Europe recommendations on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe (2000 and 2009) promote the use of Roma assistants at all levels of schooling in order to “ease the contacts between Roma and majority population and avoid conflicts at school”.³⁴⁸ They should facilitate the relations between teachers, Roma families, Roma

³⁴⁷ Council of Europe. 2006. Education of Roma children: School Mediators.

³⁴⁸ Council of Europe. Committee of Ministers. 2000. Recommendation No R (2000) 4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe. Adopted on 3 February 2009. Paragraph 20.

communities and schools, and for that they should be adequately trained, supported and accepted from the school staff.³⁴⁹

Table 6: The existence of Roma Assistants/Mediators in Europe³⁵⁰

Situation	Countries	No
Countries with established and functioning Roma mediators/assistants or with pilot experiences in this area	Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, UK	16
Countries with current/envisaged projects/plans/strategies regarding Roma mediators/assistants	FYROM, Greece, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia	7
Countries without Roma mediators/assistants	Albania, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Portugal, Ukraine	12

Roma assistants are employed either by NGOs, local/regional authority or the education system.³⁵¹ In some countries (for example Spain, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Finland, France and Romania), the role of the Roma assistant was first established in 1980s and 1990s, in many cases by local Roma NGOs, and then later taken up/supported by a local or school authorities.³⁵² Most of those countries that have established Roma assistants as pilot initiatives before the year 2000, are now expanding the employment of assistant, establishing national vocational certifications, trainings etc. Furthermore, more and more countries are introducing Roma assistant, mainly on the initiative by public (educational) authorities.³⁵³

The **tasks** of Roma assistants can be divided in three categories³⁵⁴:

- **In the classroom** they help to facilitate communication between teachers and Roma children, they helping Roma children to understand the instructions and support them in any way in their school activities;

349 Council of Europe. Committee of Ministers. 2009. Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the education of Roma and Travellers in Europe. Adopted on 17 June 2009. Paragraph 15.

350 Council of Europe. 2006. The situation of Roma School Mediators and Assistants in Europe. DGIV/EDU/ROM(2006)3. Page 6.

351 Ibid. Page 8.

352 Council of Europe. 2006. Education of Roma children: School Mediators.

353 Council of Europe. 2006. The situation of Roma School Mediators and Assistants in Europe. DGIV/EDU/ROM(2006)3. Page 16.

354 Ibid. Page 9.

- **Outside the classroom** they help Roma children in preparations for school, in doing homework and they organize leisure and cultural activities;
- **In general** they facilitate the relations between school and Roma families and the Roma community.

4.2 Roma assistant in Slovenia

The 2004 *Strategy of Education of Roma in the Republic of Slovenia* includes a measure on employing a “Roma assistant in the work of educational institutions as a bridge between the pre-school institution or school on the one hand and the Roma community on the other”, that would help to mediate the low proficiency in Slovene language and unsuccessful integration of children as well as solve emotional and language barriers.³⁵⁵ European Social Fund is financing the training of Roma assistants and the Roma community itself (Roma Union of Slovenia) is exclusively in charge of the implementation of the three-year training of Roma assistants.³⁵⁶

The post of Roma assistant has not been systematized as a vocational standard yet, but the *Catalogue of standards of knowledge and skills for the vocation Roma assistant* has been adopted in 2007 by the Ministry of Education and Sport.³⁵⁷ On the basis of this Catalogue, the first group of Roma assistants has been trained.³⁵⁸ Therefore in a school year 2009/2010 there was 31 Roma assistants in preschools and schools in Prekmurje, Maribor, Dolenjska and Kočevje.³⁵⁹

355 Republic of Slovenia. Ministry of Education. 2004. *Strategy for the Education of Roma in the Republic of Slovenia* (Strategija vzgoje in izobraževanja Romov v Republiki Sloveniji). Page 30.

356 Council of Europe. Secretary General of the Council of Europe. 2010. “Strasbourg Initiatives”, 20 October 2010.

357 Brezovšek, Marjan. 2008. Reševanje romske problematike v Sloveniji s poudarkom na socialni inkluzivnosti Romov v šolski sistem. Končno poročilo. Ljubljana. Page 67.

358 Bačlija, Irena. 2008. “Positive Discrimination” Policies for Inclusion of Europe’s Largest Minority: Examples of Educational Policies for the Roma Minority in Europe. *Politička misao*, Vol. XLV, (2008.), No. 5. Page 182.

359 Sandreli, Monika. 2009. Na Slovenskih osnovnih šolah 31. Romskih pomočnikov. *Romske novice*, 28 January 2009.

Some sources report on “good cooperation and respect between Roma assistants and Roma parents/community”³⁶⁰. Experts suggest that Roma assistant should be given more active role due to their experiences with cooperation with parents³⁶¹. It has been found that almost all Roma teaching assistants (94.1%) encourage Roma children to speak in Slovenian and that 70% of Roma parents prefer Roma assistant speaking to their children in Slovenian.³⁶²

4.3 Other good Slovenian practices

4.3.1 Municipality Tišina: high attendance

One good practice on Roma children’s high attendance in preschool is in municipality Tišina. Roma children from this municipality attend integrated preschool classes with non-Roma children. Many of the Roma university students, including some of those I have interviewed, were attending this kindergarten in Tišina. They have beautiful memories of preschool times; they had a lot of friends and felt equally treated by teachers. Samanta Baranja, the president of the Roma Academic Club in Slovenia, who also attended kindergarten in Tišina, learned to speak Slovenian very well in the kindergarten. The reason for high attendance in preschool by Roma children here is in her opinion the high level of employment of Roma parents from Tišina municipality – mainly they work in Austria.³⁶³ She said in another interview that in Tišina Roma children attend school regularly and teachers are well trained to work with them.³⁶⁴

4.3.2 Hudeje, Kočevje, Kuzma and Novo mesto: afternoon workshops

360 Necak-Lük, Albina, Mateja Brejc et al. 2005. Integration of Roma Children into Mainstream Education in Slovenia: Final Research and Evaluation Report, Roma Education Initiative. Page 34.

361 Ibid.

362 Bačlija, Irena. 2008. “Positive Discrimination” Policies for Inclusion of Europe’s Largest Minority: Examples of Educational Policies for the Roma Minority in Europe. *Politička misao*, Vol. XLV, (2008.), No. 5. Page 184.

363 Interview (in person) with Samanta Baranja, Roma university student from Prekmurje and the president of Roma Academic Club of Slovenia (Slovenia 3 April 2010).

364 Slovenska Tiskovna Agencija. 2009. Predstavnice romske skupnosti s Türkom o izobraževanju romski otrok. SiOL.net, 31 August 2009.

Centre for social work Trebnje organizes afternoon workshops for children and for adults in the kindergarten Romano in Hudeje Roma settlement. Roma families in this settlement support this project since they see the possibility for Roma community to develop.³⁶⁵ The People's University Kočevje organizes for preschool Roma children educational-playful hours³⁶⁶ In Kuzma primary school with kindergarten they organize after-school care for all children. They have time to do their homework, to play, read, colour etc. They receive help from teachers, which is very useful for Roma children whose parents are illiterate or uneducated and cannot help them with school activities. At the same time they practice Slovenian language, which is very useful for Roma children that speak only Romani at home.³⁶⁷ In Novo mesto afternoon workshops for Roma children on basic skills such as cutting with scissors. The trust has to be built with Roma parents so that they allow children to participate.³⁶⁸

4.4 Other good international practices

A short overview of some of the other international practices on preschool education of Roma children that proved to have good results is presented below, focusing especially on Central and Eastern European countries. Most of the programmes target Roma children alone, therefore not focusing on integrating Roma and non-Roma children. However, there is one programme in Serbia (Naša Radost) that is attended by Roma and non-Roma children.

4.4.1 Romania: food coupons for perfect attendance

A successful strategy is implemented in 20 Romanian communities where the local authorities register each child between 4-6 years old (next year it will be 3-6) in preschool and provide them with clothes other things they need to attend preschool. Also parents under the

³⁶⁵ Miklič, Bogdan. 2010. Romski vrtec pod drobnogledom inšpektorjev. Dolenjski List, 4 May 2010

³⁶⁶ Grabovac, Morse Bori. 2009. Kočevski Romi v šolo da, v vrtec pa ne. Dnevnik, 28. October 2010.

³⁶⁷ Marinovič, Glorija. 2009. Zaupanje si je treba prisluziti. 7dni, 9. September 2009.

³⁶⁸ Slovenska Tiskovna Agencija. 2009. Predstavnice romske skupnosti s Türkom o izobraževanju romski otrok. SiOL.net, 31.8.2009.

poverty line receive 12 Euros a month in food coupons, provided that their children have perfect attendance. The result is dramatic increase of registrations and attendance.³⁶⁹

4.4.2 Bulgaria and Croatia: summer preschool courses organized by NGOs

In the middle of the 1990s the first summer preschool courses for bilingual children implemented by teams of professional teachers and Roma assistants were organized by the Roma NGO in one of the largest Roma neighbourhoods Stoplinovo in Bulgaria. In four months the children learned Bulgarian language, so they could integrate well in the primary school. Roma children had the same drop-out rate as non-Roma children. This practice was implemented in other cities with large Roma population with similar results.³⁷⁰ Furthermore, during summer 2002, 19 local NGOs organized preschool trainings for 1335 children in Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Sliven, Russe, Varna and Shumen. All the children who participated in these trainings subsequently enrolled in first grade.³⁷¹

Similarly, in **Croatia**, a Roma NGO organized a series of summer schools for Roma children with a focus on Roma language, history and culture.³⁷²

4.4.3 Hungary: free meals

In Hungary, disadvantaged children in their early years are given free meals in schools.³⁷³

4.4.4 Czech Republic: preparatory classes for disadvantaged children

In Czech Republic, preparatory classes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds are organized, with a special curriculum and individual programme for each child including

369 Hawke, Leslie. 2001. An Open Letter to the Citizens of the European Union, including Romanians. *The Economist*, 13 September 2010.

370 United Nations Development Programme. 2002. *The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency Trap*. Page 61.

371 Ibid.

372 UNESCO and Council of Europe. 2007. *Towards quality education for Roma children: transition from early childhood to primary education. Audit of Pre-school provision. Briefing paper for the Experts' UNESCO / Council of Europe Meeting*. Page 7.

373 European Roma Information Office (ERIO). *Preschool education of Roma children in Europe. Fact sheet*. Page 5.

“intellectual development (language and communication skills, numeracy and knowledge development), music, art, practical and physical education, as well as the development of cultural-social and hygienic habits”.³⁷⁴

4.4.5 Denmark: “morning ladies”

In Helsingør where the biggest Roma community in Denmark lives, the “morning ladies”, consultants from the city council, pick up at home the children who do not appear at school in order to improve school attendance of Roma children.³⁷⁵

4.4.6 Macedonia: Roma Education Centres

Positive results on preschool and primary school children have been shown with Roma Education Centres as part of the Roma Education Program that focuses on the successful transition from preschool to primary school. Children develop “academic and psychosocial skills (language skills, basic knowledge in mathematics, social skills, motivation to learn and personal hygiene)”³⁷⁶, with the help of child-centred methodology and promotion of parental involvement.

4.4.7 Serbia: Equal Chances project

One of the two *Equal Chances* projects “*Integration of Roma Children and Youth in the Educational System*” that ran in 14 schools and preschools in two cities (Niš, Kragujevac) from 2002-2005 put an emphasis on the Roma teaching assistants.³⁷⁷ Children that attended preschool programme were more successful in a first year of primary school

4.4.8 Slovakia: Roma Education Initiative (REI)

³⁷⁴ UNESCO and Council of Europe. 2007. Expert Meeting “Towards quality education for Roma children: transition from early childhood to primary education”. Audit of Pre-school provision. Page 13.

³⁷⁵ Council of Europe Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. 2010. The situation of Roma in Europe and relevant activities of the Council of Europe. Page 11.

³⁷⁶ UNICEF. 2009. Toward Roma Inclusion: A Review of Roma Education Initiatives in Central and South-Eastern Europe. Page 52.

³⁷⁷ Ibid. Page 27.

Preschool component of the REI in Slovakia that ran in Jarovnice from 2003-2005, successfully helped with the transition from preschool to primary school, especially with the home-based preschool programme run by the mothers, and it also improved Roma parents' attitudes toward education within the Roma community. Roma children went to regular Roma-only primary school instead to the "special" school.³⁷⁸

4.4.9 Serbia: Development and Education Centres (DEC)

In some of the most socially disadvantaged municipalities in Serbia DEC's help in transition of Roma children to primary school (emphasis on health and nutrition, language, social and hygiene skills and routine skills) and organize compensatory educational activities for children up to age 16 through a "child-centred, multi-grade and culturally-sensitive methodologies"³⁷⁹. They also provide "basic health care, social services, and employment assistance as part of a holistic approach to improving education".³⁸⁰ By 2009 approximately 6000 children attended the centres, and 600 professionals have been trained.³⁸¹

4.4.10 Hungary: Biztos Kezdet (BK)

BK or *Sure Start* programme started in 2008 in the economically disadvantaged eastern and southern border areas of Hungary. It is focused on children aged zero to three years, since it provides a quality environment for development and learning of disadvantaged children. It also supports their families by preparing parents for employment opportunities training. It is planned to extend the service from the present 35 centres to over 100 by 2012.³⁸²

4.4.11 Serbia: integrated non-formal early education center "Naša Radost"

³⁷⁸ Ibid. Page 40.

³⁷⁹ Ibid. Page 62.

³⁸⁰ Ibid. Page 62.

³⁸¹ Ibid.. Page 66.

³⁸² European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. 2010. Developing support to parents through early childhood services. Page 5.

In the Red Cross camp for displaced people in Smederevo in Serbia the Church World Service established a non-formal early education center “*Naša Radost*”. Young Roma children are now benefiting a nurturing environment that includes Roma and non-Roma children. Their approach is holistic, fostering education, physical and personal growth, and empowering family self-sufficiency. For 3-6 year old children, early education also includes providing good nutrition for healthy development, with breakfast and lunch each day.³⁸³ Aleksandar, formerly shy Roma boy, is now motivated to learn, plays with other children and participates eagerly in class. “We send Aleksandar to school in the morning; we know that he spends part of his day in a nurturing and loving environment, and that he is well taken care of since he receives two nutritional meals; we know that his teacher is a wonderful, caring young woman; and we know that he is in a mixed group of children, Roma and non-Roma, even different ages,” writes his father.³⁸⁴

383 Crosson, Lesley and Jan Dragin. 2010. Roma children, families opening new doors to education and the future. Church World Service, 19 November 2010

384 Nedeljkovic, Svetislav. 2010. Aleksandar finds the right keys. Church World Service, 19 November 2010

CHAPTER 5 – RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of research on the importance of and barriers to access to early childhood education, especially for disadvantaged children such as Roma children throughout Europe; on the basis of the analyses of Slovenian law, policies and practice, as well as national and international good practices in including Roma children in preschool education; and on the basis of the interviews from Roma university students in Slovenia, I have formed three recommendations for Slovenian government that I think are the most important in the given situation.

5.1 Compulsory and integrated preschool

Slovenian government should:

- Enable Roma children to go to **integrated** preschool classes outside the Roma settlements, where they can learn efficiently the Slovenian language and where Roma and non-Roma children can get used to coexist.
- Make preschool education **compulsory** again, as it was until the educational reform in 1996, for all children from as early age as possible.

5.2 Inform and employ Roma parents

Slovenian government should:

- Continue to **inform** parents on importance of preschool, through meeting with parents, presenting advantages of preschool education, having open days in kindergartens, establishing individual contacts etc.
- Create **employment opportunities** of Roma parents, in order to improve the standard of living and the children's attendance in pre-school.

5.3 Roma Assistant

Slovenian government should:

- Systemize the post of Roma Assistant as a vocational standard on a national level as soon as possible.
- Ensure that in every integrated preschool class with Roma children there is a Roma Assistant that helps to overcome the language, emotional and cultural barrier; and establishes contacts between Roma children, non-Roma children, Roma parents, non-Roma parents, teachers and Roma community in general.

CONCLUSION

Roma are the most disadvantaged group in Europe today. They are discriminated, excluded and marginalized in their everyday lives, especially in the fields of education, employment, housing and health. Slovenia is no exception to that. The only way Roma can overcome poverty and social exclusion is to improve their education level and consequently avoid the dependency trap of welfare system by having an opportunity to participate in a labour market.

I have argued in the thesis that early childhood education is very important, especially for Roma children, since it can overcome the disadvantages caused by poverty and marginalization. I have analyzed the most important rationales for early childhood education: foundational-scientific argument that looks at the development in early years; human rights argument that includes the existence of a right to access to early childhood education and human rights based approach to right to education; as well as socioeconomic argument showing that investments in early childhood education have great returns and benefit children as well as society at large.

Most Roma children do not have access to preschool education. I have analyzed various barriers to access to preschool education for Roma children and compared the arguments for and against segregated homogeneous only-Roma preschools. I have argued for integrated and compulsory preschool education as the way to achieve a higher level of preschool attendance for Roma children, so that they can enter the primary school prepared.

I have analyzed the general situation of Roma in Slovenia, as well as legislation, programmes, strategies and policies that affect or target Roma population. In Slovenia there is a variety of programs and policies aiming at education of Roma and specifically on overcoming barriers to access to preschool education. However, I have argued that the

government efforts might be going to the wrong direction, since Slovenian government supports the segregation financially as well as with normatives that encourage establishing only-Roma preschool classes. The most recent development in this direction is the 2010 public tender “*Raising the social and cultural capital in areas inhabited by members of the Roma community*” that foresees establishing preschool education inside Roma settlements. I have analyzed arguments for segregated preschool education inside Roma settlements, as well as arguments for integration.

On the basis on research and my interviews with five Roma university students in Slovenia I have formed three recommendations for Slovenian government that I think are the most important: (1) Government should enable Roma children to go to integrated preschool, (2) continue to inform Roma parents on importance of preschool, and (3) ensure that in every preschool class with Roma children there is one Roma assistant that helps with the language, emotional and cultural barrier.

I would like to share a message of Leslie Hawke, Roma rights campaigner, for further reflection:

*“Imagine there were a virus spreading across Europe that severely impeded young children’s intellectual and physical development. The disease was so debilitating that children afflicted by it could never hold responsible jobs or be productive members of society. They would have to be cared for by the state for life. And what if the children who were most susceptible were the fastest growing segment of society? There was no cure for this disease, once contracted, but there was a vaccine to prevent it. How would such a crisis be dealt with by the European Union and its member states? This is the current situation of children of Roma descent throughout the EU. The disease is Lack of Education. The **antidote is high-quality early education.**”³⁸⁵*

³⁸⁵ Hawke, Leslie. 2001. An Open Letter to the Citizens of the European Union, including Romanians. *The Economist*, 13 September 2010.

APPENDICES

A: The introduction of the interview for the Roma university students in Slovenia

INTERVIEW WITH ROMA STUDENTS IN SLOVENIA

I am Maja Skalar. I am a student of human rights at the Central European University in Budapest. In my papers, study projects, volunteering, study internships and my final master thesis I am dealing with the right to equal access to education for all. In Slovenia, as in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Roma children still have unequal access to all levels of education in comparison with their non-Roma peers. There are still many prejudices, discrimination, stereotypes, poverty and ignorance of the overall community. A lot of Roma children do not attend preschool education, there are many drop-outs from primary and secondary schools; and the data of Roma Academic Club of Slovenia shows that there are only around 15 Roma students in Slovenia.

I turn to you as someone who has, in spite of negative outside factors, succeeded to reach the tertiary level of education. Your experiences and your opinion are very precious. If they are forwarded to political decision makers, to education staff, to Roma pupils and students over Slovenia, and to Roma and non-Roma communities and parents, they have a potential of awareness rising about the barriers, discrimination, and also about good practices and good experiences you have had in your educational path.

Thank you very much for your answers. The answers can be as long as you want.

If you want I can keep the answers anonymous.

Thank you!

Maja

B: Interview response from Samanta Baranja, a Roma university student from Prekmurje and a president of Roma Academic Club of Slovenia

Name: Samanta Baranja
Place of birth: Vanča Vas
Place of studying: Ljubljana
Study program: German language

HOME

1. Which language did you use at home?

Roma and Slovenian dialect (Prekmursko).

2. Are your parents employed?

Yes.

3. What was your parents' attitude to kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and university education?

The support from the side of the parents is really important, not only financial, but especially moral support. The example the parents set for their children is also important. My parents already attended high school, so that was quite a good example for me.

KINDERGARTEN

4. Did you go to kindergarten?

Yes.

5. If NOT, why not? The children stay at home because parents are unemployed; is the kindergarten too far from home, etc?

6. If YES, how old were you when you started to go to kindergarten?

I was 3.

7. What kind of memories you have of the kindergarten? What was the nicest/hardest? Did you like to go attend the kindergarten? Why? How was the relationship with the kindergarten teachers, other children, other parents?

There were no problems in the kindergarten. They treated Roma and non-Roma children equally. The teachers liked me very much.

8. Did also your brothers, sisters and friends from your hometown attend the kindergarten?

Yes, almost all of them.

9. How did you learn to speak Slovenian language? In the family, in kindergarten?

We spoke bilingual at home: Romani language and Slovenian dialect (Prekmursko). In the kindergarten I learned to speak Slovenian very well. It is very important that parents speak bilingual to their children, so that they can be prepared for integration in the school system.

10. What do you think about the free and compulsory pre-school education for all children? Do you think this would have a beneficial impact on the school success in primary school?

I believe there should be the free and compulsory pre-school education for at least one to 2 years. The most important is the motivation of the parents.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

11. What kind of memories you have of the primary school? What was the nicest/hardest? Did you like to go attend the primary school? Why? How was the relationship with the teachers, schoolmates, other parents? Were there any prejudices, stereotypes?

I have nice memories of primary school. Roma students didn't have any problem; we were quite a few in the class. We were hanging out together, Roma and non-Roma pupils.

12. What is your opinion on the role of the parents (yours and others) in the process of primary education? How did your parents support you in primary school?

My parents helped me a lot. They encouraged me, supported me, told me I should be persistent, should work hard. They helped me with my homework.

Some Roma parents cannot help their children when they reach 3rd grade or so, because they are not educated and the homework is hard.

13. What is your opinion on the role of the teachers in primary school? How did they help you (or not)? Did they have any prejudice, stereotypes, maybe through some statements or behavior, or did they actively fight them?

It really depends on the school and on the teachers how many students finish primary school. I heard the opinion of the head principal of one school in Prekmurje: she said that failure of Roma students in primary school is genetically based! When you have such a principal, it is not so surprising Roma children are failing...

14. Who had, in your opinion, the most important role (except yourself) in your success in the primary school? Parents, teachers, others? Why?

Everyone.

HIGH SCHOOL

15. Did you have any career orientation at the end of the primary school? What high school did they advice you? Who played an important role in the decision for the high school – yourself, parents, teachers...?

I decided myself.

16. Which high school did you go to? What kind of memories you have of the high school? What was the nicest/hardest? Did you like to attend the high school? Why? What was the relationship with the teachers, schoolmates, other parents like? Were there any prejudices, stereotypes?

In the high school I had some personal identity problems, I was thinking about myself being Roma and sometimes I would not admit it (from my looks it is impossible to say if I am Roma or not). But these were my problems. Otherwise, in the high school environment, I have felt some prejudices and stereotypes. For example, in the Centre for the Social Work, they checked on my documents like 100 times because they could not believe I was really Roma (my surname is typical Romani surname), since I was a successful high school student.

17. What is your opinion on the role of the parents (yours and others) in the process of secondary education? How did your parents support you in high school?

They supported me morally and financially.

18. What is your opinion on the role of the teachers in high school? How did they help you (or not)? Did they have any prejudice, stereotypes, maybe through some statements or behavior, or did they actively fight them?

Nothing special. They treated me the same as everyone else. They did not support me additionally because I was Roma. Our relationship was formal. They are going easy on you because you are Roma.

19. Who had, in your opinion, the most important role (except yourself) in your success in the high school? Parents, teachers, others? Why?

Parents and myself. In general, parents have the biggest role also in high school, since the teachers are not supporting you so much as in primary school, the relationship between the student and the teacher is way more formal than in primary school.

UNIVERSITY

20. How did you decide to go to study? What do you study?

I decided to study German language. I decided myself.

21. Did you get any help in your educational process (scholarship, study tutor, etc.)?

No.

DOLENJSKA v. PREKMURJE

22. What is your opinion on the similarities and differences of access to education in Dolenjska and Prekmurje?

There are big differences between the two regions, but also within the regions, so one cannot generalize! For example in my village, Vanča Vas, almost all the parents work in Austria, and they are educated, the educational level is much higher than in other villages in Prekmurje.

Living conditions in Prekmurje are a lot better than in Dolenjska, but again, one should not generalize this. Also in Prekmurje in some villages people live in containers...

One of the biggest differences in the educational terms is that in Prekmurje, Roma parents are much more interested and motivated for their children's education than in Dolenjska. They support their children and also they are much more integrated in the society.

In Prekmurje I think there are more opportunities for employment than in Dolenjska: Roma parents from my village go to work in Austria, they have worked in Mura etc.

Also, the society in Prekmurje is much more accepting of Roma than the society in Dolenjska. However, also in Prekmurje there is more and more discrimination every day! Roma youngsters were just a year ago not able to enter a popular bar in Murska Sobota. I had a lot of problems when finding a flat to rent. When potential tenants learned what my surname is, they never called me back, and then did not pick up the phone. Even when I did find a flat, I had to prove myself all the time that I will be causing no trouble.

23. Do you think Dolenjska can learn something from Prekmurje, and vice-versa?

I think there is not such a big difference between the two regions; one cannot generalize in these terms. However, I believe Dolenjska could learn a lot from Prekmurje. For example, inclusion in pre-school education is a lot higher in Prekmurje than in Dolenjska. Pre-school is good for socialization and for learning Slovenian language. Roma parents in Prekmurje are lot more aware of that.

In Dolenjska, most Roma parents are unemployed, so they can take care of their children at home and don't need to send them in kindergarten. In Vanča Vas, around 80% of Roma parents are employed in Austria. They have to send children in the kindergarten. This means children get used to non-Roma children, to Slovenian language; they get some new habits and meet new friends. Of course also in Prekmurje there are a lot of unemployed Roma parents too. I think one cannot generalize.

Both in Prekmurje and in Dolenjska things are moving slow. That's how it is. Parents don't come for the meetings with the teachers, even if the teachers come into their village to talk. Also, they are going to adult educational programs only because they don't lose their social support packages. This is changing very slowly.

24. What advice would you give, as a student, to other Roma youngsters in Prekmurje and in Dolenjska?

I would tell them that education is something that no one can take away from them. You get many good experiences; you will find your way around easier.

OTHER:

25. Would you like to add anything, any comment, opinion, question, additional information? Any information is very welcome.

There are 2 big problems in the education of Roma, as I see it: first is non-inclusion in the pre-school education; the second is the transition from class-based level (first to fifth grade of primary school) to subject-based level (fifth to ninth grade of primary school) – the pupils get used to their teachers and start to trust him or her, and then they get many new teachers all of the sudden. The problem of trust is really present. And if Roma student fails the class, he/she will get new schoolmates and new teacher, and the trust will be very difficult to achieve.

I believe that the introduction of Roma teaching assistant is the very good practice. Roma teaching assistant has a positive influence on parent and on students. He/she is a bridge between the primary school and the Roma community. He/she helps students with their homework and encourages them.

THANK YOU!

C: Interview response from Vinko Cener, a Roma university student from Prekmurje

Name: Vinko Cener
Place of birth: Vanča Vas
Place of studying: Maribor
Study program: Tourism

HOME

1. Which language did you use at home?

Slovenian dialect (Prekmursko).

2. Are your parents employed?

Yes.

3. What was your parents' attitude to kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and university education?

They were aware of the importance of including us in the kindergarten, and of course they thought the education is really important.

KINDERGARTEN

4. Did you go to kindergarten?

Yes.

5. If NOT, why not? The children stay at home because parents are unemployed; is the kindergarten too far from home, etc?

6. If YES, how old were you when you started to go to kindergarten?

I was 3.

7. What kind of memories you have of the kindergarten? What was the nicest/hardest? Did you like to go attend the kindergarten? Why? How was the relationship with the kindergarten teachers, other children, other parents?

There were no problems in the kindergarten. They treated me equally. The kindergarten teachers liked me. I did not feel any prejudices.

8. Did also your brothers, sisters and friends from your hometown attend the kindergarten?

Yes, almost all of them.

9. How did you learn to speak Slovenian language? In the family, in kindergarten?

We used Slovenian dialect at home, from when I was born, so I had no problems later. I spoke Romani language later with my friends. I think the most important the parents; awareness of the importance of teaching their kids Slovenian language.

10. What do you think about the free and compulsory pre-school education for all children? Do you think this would have a beneficial impact on the school success in primary school?

I believe there should be the free and compulsory pre-school education for at least 2 years.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

11. What kind of memories you have of the primary school? What was the nicest/hardest? Did you like to go attend the primary school? Why? How was the relationship with the teachers, schoolmates, other parents? Were there any prejudices, stereotypes?

It was nice. No problems. We were hanging out together, Roma and non-Roma pupils. Except one teacher that had occasionally some racist statements.

12. What is your opinion on the role of the parents (yours and others) in the process of primary education? How did your parents support you in primary school?

I think parents have the most important role at the beginning of educational path. My parents talked to me in Slovenian to learn the language, they included me in kindergarten, later they helped me with homework and encouraged me. Most Roma parents here in our village support their children to go to school. They are saying them that the school is the first important thing. But here in our village the Roma parents are all employed. 80 per cent of Roma parents here work in Austria and that is why their kids had to go to kindergarten. Some children follow their parents in Austria and go to school there (computer sciences, pharmacy...).

13. What is your opinion on the role of the teachers in primary school? How did they help you (or not)? Did they have any prejudice, stereotypes, maybe through some statements or behavior, or did they actively fight them?

Teachers treated us well. Except one teacher that had occasionally some racist statements. But otherwise I really felt good. For them we were all the same.

14. Who had, in your opinion, the most important role (except yourself) in your success in the primary school? Parents, teachers, others? Why?

I don't know... parents and myself, I wanted to prove myself that I am able to do it. Then when I tried hard, it automatically went well for me. All the people around you are important. You have to find nice friends, like I found the people from Roma Academic Club.

HIGH SCHOOL

15. Did you have any career orientation at the end of the primary school? What high school did they advice you? Who played an important role in the decision for the high school – yourself, parents, teachers...?

Yes, we had career orientation. The social worker tried to persuade me to enrol in 3-year tourism high school program only, because she said she doubted I will pass more than that. I passed 3 years, and then I took additional 2 years to be on the same level as if I would go to the 4-year program at the beginning. She stole one year from me. I finished it without any problems and now I am already finishing the tourism faculty.

16. Which high school did you go to? What kind of memories you have of the high school? What was the nicest/hardest? Did you like to attend the high school? Why? What was the relationship with the teachers, schoolmates, other parents like? Were there any prejudices, stereotypes?

I went to tourism high school. It was great. No problems.

17. What is your opinion on the role of the parents (yours and others) in the process of secondary education? How did your parents support you in high school?

They did stand by me, but still, I was by then a grown up actually, and I wanted to prove myself that I can finish it.

18. What is your opinion on the role of the teachers in high school? How did they help you (or not)? Did they have any prejudice, stereotypes, maybe through some statements or behavior, or did they actively fight them?

The teachers were ok, there were no problems. Also, for me, the high school was very very encouraging environment! I was on a tourism high school, so I had a lot of internships, I was all the time in the contact with people. Teacher included me everywhere, in every possible project, they were really proud of me.

19. Who had, in your opinion, the most important role (except yourself) in your success in the high school? Parents, teachers, others? Why?

Except my own motivation, I think the teachers who supported me and integrated me in every possible activity. Encouragement is the most important. The child needs it!

UNIVERSITY

20. How did you decide to go to study? What do you study?

I decided to go to study tourism because I already finished high school of tourism. I decided by myself, and I got a lot of support from my teacher, all schoolmates, parents and even school librarian.

21. Did you get any help in your educational process (scholarship, study tutor, etc.)?

No, I did not get any extra help.

DOLENJSKA v. PREKMURJE

22. What is your opinion on the similarities and differences of access to education in Dolenjska and Prekmurje?

I know that in Dolenjska, Roma live in a really bad living conditions, not like in Prekmurje. They don't have water, electricity, they live in illegal settlements and sometimes even in tents! Roma in Dolenjska are not integrated in the wider society so much as Roma in Prekmurje. Of course that amounts to lower access to education!

23. Do you think Dolenjska can learn something from Prekmurje, and vice-versa?

Yes, I think Dolenjska can learn from Prekmurje a lot. First of all, awareness of parents about the importance of education has to be higher in Dolenjska. In my village and in other villages in Prekmurje Roma parents are much more aware of it.

Also, time-bound Roma projects are much worse than sustainable Roma projects. Short projects are not sustainable. If you have workshops only 2 years and then you stop it, the effect will be much smaller than if you continue with workshops for a decade or more. In Prekmurje this exists on a little bit higher level than in Dolenjska.

In Prekmurje, Roma parents know Slovenian culture. In Dolenjska, they don't know the mainstream culture so well. That is why they are afraid to send their children in the school. I think there should be some teaching aid for Roma parents in Dolenjska, to help them integrate in the society, to help them realize how education is important... The parent's motivation is the most important when it comes to (sustainable) attendance in kindergarten, primary and secondary schools.

We, the Roma Academic Club in Prekmurje, work a lot with the Roma parents. We use a practical approach to raise their awareness about education. We go there to the settlement, explain them the advantages of education, we connect them with other Roma parents whose children attend kindergarten (or school regularly), so parents can tell other parents themselves how good it is for their children to attend the kindergarten (or school). We also have some workshops where Roma parents from reputable Roma families come to speak to other Roma parents about the importance of education. This is the model in which Roma parents motivate other Roma parents and I think it is working.

24. What advice would you give, as a student, to other Roma youngsters in Prekmurje and in Dolenjska?

I would tell them that school is fun and it brings you a lot advantages later in life. You will find lots of friends. Also, I would tell them that they should be proud of their origin, not to hide it. It is your identity.

25. What advice would you give, as a student, to Roma parents in Prekmurje and in Dolenjska?

I think Roma parents should tell their children their personal life stories. If they were not educated and are now poor, dependent on the social support packages, the good thing will be if they tell their children that they can do better, that they can lead more fulfilling life, they can have more money etc. If the parents were educated and have been working all their lives, then they can use their life stories to inspire their children to follow their example. Parents' personal stories engage children the most.

Also I would tell Roma parents to teach their children Romani language. I know they don't learn them because they are ashamed of their origin, and they think Romani language will not help their children in the future. Romani language represents your roots, origin and identity.

OTHER:

26. Would you like to add anything, any comment, opinion, question, additional information? Any information is very welcome.

I would also remind the teachers to mention the Roma holocaust in the World War 2.

Also I would add that there is a lot of discrimination in Prekmurje too. I was refused when I wanted to go to the popular bar in Murska Sobota – they even had the sign on the door saying: “We don’t serve Roma”! In some other pub, the waiter came to me and my Roma friends, and told us to go, because his boss insisted that there should be no Roma in his pub. In another disco, we could only enter the party if we would bring the confirmation that we have never been punished for some criminal acts. This is outrageous.

THANK YOU!

D: Interview response by Aljoša Rudaš, a Roma university student from Prekmurje

Name: Aljoša Rudaš

Place of birth: Murska Sobota

Place of studying: University of Maribor, Faculty of Education

Study program: pre-school education

HOME

1. Which language did you use at home?

Slovenian language / Slovenian dialect.

2. Are your parents employed?

Yes.

3. What was your parents' attitude to kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and university education?

Both parents were really supportive, they were guiding me on my educational path, rising my awareness on how the education is important in my life.

KINDERGARTEN

4. Did you go to kindergarten?

Yes.

5. If NOT, why not? The children stay at home because parents are unemployed; is the kindergarten too far from home, etc?

6. If YES, how old were you when you started to go to kindergarten?

I was two years old.

7. What kind of memories you have of the kindergarten? What was the nicest/hardest? Did you like to go attend the kindergarten? Why? How was the relationship with the kindergarten teachers, other children, other parents?

I have very beautiful memories of the kindergarten. I liked to go to the kindergarten, because as I remember, I was feeling good and had a lot of friends.

8. Did also your brothers, sisters and friends from your hometown attend the kindergarten?

Yes.

9. How did you learn to speak Slovenian language? In the family, in kindergarten?

I learned Slovenian language in my family, from when I was born. I spoke Slovenian well, the only problem I had with Slovenian language is that I didn't like it as a subject in the school.

10. What do you think about the free and compulsory pre-school education for all children? Do you think this would have a beneficial impact on the school success in primary school?

I agree absolutely with this kind of measure. I am also a pre-school teacher and I am working in this field. A lot of children would benefit from the mandatory inclusion in pre-school education, because it offers early socialization and integration in overall society and wider environment. Roma children from certain parts of Slovenia would have a lot less problems as they have now, when they are not included in the educational process at the earliest level, the pre-school education.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

11. What kind of memories you have of the primary school? What was the nicest/hardest? Did you like to attend the primary school? Why? How was the relationship with the teachers, schoolmates, other parents? Were there any prejudice, stereotypes?

My memories of the primary school are nice too. I erased all the bad ones.. it was the primary school when I first met the prejudice and stereotypes on Roma. But I was one of the most successful students, so I did not have any problems with teachers or schoolmates. I was actually popular because I was open minded and temperament.

12. What is your opinion on the role of the parents (yours and others) in the process of primary education? How did your parents support you in primary school?

I think parents have an important role on how their children deal with tasks and responsibilities of primary school education. If the parents don't care what is happening to their children in the educational process, and if the children don't get enough support and motivation for education, we cannot expect miracles from this child. There are exceptions, for

sure, but they are usually individuals with high self-esteem and are strong enough to succeed despite their parents' lack of interest and non-encouraging environment.

My parents were very supportive in the primary school, furthermore the sanctions in case of inappropriate behavior towards my school assignments and tasks.

13. What is your opinion on the role of the teachers in primary school? How did they help you (or not)? Did they have any prejudice, stereotypes, maybe through some statements or behavior, or did they actively fight them?

The teacher as an educational professional should create the environment of equality of all children in the classroom. The reactions of schoolmates to the children with a different ethnicity as theirs often depend on the teacher.

Even from the side of the pedagogical staff there was sometimes prejudice, especially when I was applying for the secondary school – they wanted me to go to the 3-year-vocational programs, saying I will never succeed in 4-year high school program. (“You are Roma, you are not able to do it”).

14. Who had, in your opinion, the most important role (except yourself) in your success in the primary school? Parents, teachers, others? Why?

Everyone brought a little piece to the mosaic, everyone is responsible for my primary school successes. Especially parents, I would say.

HIGH SCHOOL

15. Did you have any career orientation at the end of the primary school? What high school did they advice you? Who played an important role in the decision for the high school – yourself, parents, teachers,...?

Yes, we had a career orientation by the pedagogical staff at the end of the primary school. It was really bad. They offered me 3-year programs and by that they labeled me as unable to finish the more advanced high school. I did not listen to them, I followed my goals and wishes.

16. Which high school did you go to? What kind of memories you have of the high school? What was the nicest/hardest? Did you like to attend the high school? Why? What was the relationship with the teachers, schoolmates, other parents like? Were there any prejudices, stereotypes?

I attended the III. Gymnasium in Maribor, the program was pre-school education. I liked to attend high school, because I was in a different environment. The relationships with

schoolmates were average, as with any other student in Slovenia. Prejudices and stereotypes did not come up; at least I did not feel them.

17. What is your opinion on the role of the parents (yours and others) in the process of secondary education? How did your parents support you in high school?

Parents of course have a great role here. My parents were supporting me, when I needed them, and also sometimes sanctioning me with some measures.

18. What is your opinion on the role of the teachers in high school? How did they help you (or not)? Did they have any prejudice, stereotypes, maybe through some statements or behavior, or did they actively fight them?

In high school there were no prejudices and stereotypes from the teachers. Maybe because they did not know I am Roma, and I did not especially emphasize it – not because I would be ashamed of my origin, but because I did not feel any need to explain everyone who and what I am.

19. Who had, in your opinion, the most important role (except yourself) in your success in the high school? Parents, teachers, others? Why?

Parents, partly the teachers too, but the most important was myself.

UNIVERSITY

20. How did you decide to go to study? What do you study?

I decided to go to study, by myself. I study pre-school education.

21. Did you get any help in your educational process (scholarship, study tutor, etc.)?

I got the state scholarship based on the income of my parents. Nothing else.

DOLENJSKA v. PREKMURJE

22. What is your opinion on the similarities and differences of access to education in Dolenjska and Prekmurje?

The only similarity I see is that in both regions Roma have the possibility and access to primary school education. The two regions are very different otherwise; and the level of development and integration in wider society is lower in Dolenjska than in Prekmurje.

23. Do you think Dolenjska can learn something from Prekmurje, and vice-versa?

Sure. Everyone can learn something from each other.

24. What advice would you give, as a student, to other Roma youngsters in Prekmurje and in Dolenjska?

I would advice them especially not to be ashamed of who they are, because they are only human beings from flesh and blood like any other. And that they should educate themselves as much as possible, because the education is the only capital that you can invest in yourself that is permanent.

25. What advice would you give, as a student, to Roma parents in Prekmurje and in Dolenjska?

I would emphasize the importance of education, and how to transfer this to their children, despite of the parent's own lower educational level. I would advice them to rise their children's awareness about the importance of education.

OTHER:

26. Would you like to add anything, any comment, opinion, question, additional information? Any information is very welcome.

Big impact on Roma parents and Roma youngsters comes from the environment. Slovenian society is still not mature enough; it is not ready to embrace differences. We, the Roma, are first on the list to be treated unequally in Slovenian rule of law. You don't need to be ashamed of the differences, or despise them, but to accept them. Diversity is the factor which enriches the society and makes it even nobler. Without diversity the world would be just black and white.

THANK YOU!

E: Interview response by Tina Freidreich, a Roma university student from Prekmurje

Name: Tina Freidreich

Place of birth: Vanča Vas

Place of studying: Ljubljana

Study program: University of Ljubljana, Russian and German language and literature, pedagogical program.

HOME

1. Which language did you use at home?

Slovenian.

2. Are your parents employed?

Yes.

3. What was your parents' attitude to kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and university education?

The education was always top priority for my parents.

KINDERGARTEN

4. Did you go to kindergarten?

Yes.

5. If NOT, why not? The children stay at home because parents are unemployed; is the kindergarten too far from home, etc?

6. If YES, how old were you when you started to go to kindergarten?

I was 2.

7. What kind of memories you have of the kindergarten? What was the nicest/hardest? Did you like to go attend the kindergarten? Why? How was the relationship with the kindergarten teachers, other children, other parents?

As I remember, I have only good memories of my kindergarten. I visited 2 kindergartens, first in Tisina, and then in Murska Sobota. My parents say when I came to the second kindergarten I was a little bit shy and quiet. Then it all changed. I started to love going to kindergarten. The

best experience was having a lot of friends, and my kindergarten teacher was really nice too. I don't remember the other parents, but I know there was nothing negative.

8. Did also your brothers, sisters and friends from your hometown attend the kindergarten?

I am the only child. But yes, my friends were all attending kindergarten.

9. How did you learn to speak Slovenian language? In the family, in kindergarten?

We spoke Slovenian language at home, so I never had any problem. We left the Roma settlement when I was 2 years old, but still I was in contact with Roma language almost every week, and sometimes also German language.

10. What do you think about the free and compulsory pre-school education for all children? Do you think this would have a beneficial impact on the school success in primary school?

I definitely support this. The situation in some Roma settlements is still rather complex and I think the free and compulsory pre-school education would affect positively the educational success of Roma children. However, this depends also on the parents and on every individual.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

11. What kind of memories you have of the primary school? What was the nicest/hardest? Did you like to go attend the primary school? Why? How was the relationship with the teachers, schoolmates, other parents? Were there any prejudices, stereotypes?

I have mostly good memories of primary school. In first couple of grades it was a little bit more difficult, because I felt discriminated from the side of some children in my class. But I never thought it is their fault, I know this is parents' fault. Then later in primary school this was gone (except maybe the silent discrimination) and I made some very good friendships that still last. The relations with the teacher were good. There was practically no discrimination (or I just did not feel it).

12. What is your opinion on the role of the parents (yours and others) in the process of primary education? How did your parents support you in primary school?

Parents are one of the most important players in educational path. But unfortunately, exactly this parents' role is sometimes lacking when it comes to Roma parents. Motivation from my parents' side and their help were extremely important for my success.

13. What is your opinion on the role of the teachers in primary school? How did they help you (or not)? Did they have any prejudice, stereotypes, maybe through some statements or behavior, or did they actively fight them?

They did not fight against stereotypes and prejudice very well, as I know from other people's experiences, not mine. I was probably better off because I don't have typical Romani surname. I believe if I had the typical Romani surname, I would be treated totally differently. We heard in the classroom many comments and bad statements by the teachers about Roma children. There was never any active fight against prejudices and stereotypes. I found one research that showed that more than 40% of the teachers in Slovenia think that success or failure of Roma children is genetically conditioned!!!

14. Who had, in your opinion, the most important role (except yourself) in your success in the primary school? Parents, teachers, others? Why?

My parents. Because they have always supported and encouraged me, guided me, helped me.

HIGH SCHOOL

15. Did you have any career orientation at the end of the primary school? What high school did they advice you? Who played an important role in the decision for the high school – yourself, parents, teachers...?

I decided myself – I decided for gymnasium because I had good grades. My parents agreed with me because they also wanted me to go to gymnasium. I did not debate this with my teacher.

16. Which high school did you go to? What kind of memories you have of the high school? What was the nicest/hardest? Did you like to attend the high school? Why? What was the relationship with the teachers, schoolmates, other parents like? Were there any prejudices, stereotypes?

High school is one of the most beautiful periods of my life. I don't remember anything special, to emphasize some good or bad things. But I do remember I loved going to high school. The relations with professors were good. I didn't feel discriminated. But I felt some prejudices from the side of my schoolmates. I think I accepted this quite maturely, since I was already more grown up person.

17. What is your opinion on the role of the parents (yours and others) in the process of secondary education? How did your parents support you in high school?

The role of the parents is important through the whole educational process. They always told me that education is the most important thing. And I was also aware of it myself.

18. What is your opinion on the role of the teachers in high school? How did they help you (or not)? Did they have any prejudice, stereotypes, maybe through some statements or behavior, or did they actively fight them?

Teachers are important in the way that they don't even increase the discrimination with their comments and behaviour. I remember some comments, but I don't recall any discrimination.

19. Who had, in your opinion, the most important role (except yourself) in your success in the high school? Parents, teachers, others? Why?

Parents and schoolmates/friends. Because of the encouragement and help.

UNIVERSITY

20. How did you decide to go to study? What do you study?

Going to study was a logical for me, since I visited gymnasium. I study German and Russian language.

21. Did you get any help in your educational process (scholarship, study tutor, etc.)?

No. When I enrolled in the university, I got the Golden Scholarship from the Murska Sobota municipality.

DOLENJSKA v. PREKMURJE

22. What is your opinion on the similarities and differences of access to education in Dolenjska and Prekmurje?

In Dolenjska there is underlying problem, as I heard, in the socialisation of the children. I think there are quite big differences.

23. Do you think Dolenjska can learn something from Prekmurje, and vice-versa?

Yes, I think both regions could learn from each other.

24. What advice would you give, as a student, to other Roma youngsters in Prekmurje and in Dolenjska?

I would tell them not to be afraid of education. They have to persist long enough to achieve their goals. They should be aware that they are even more precious for knowing and living another culture and another language. With education against the prejudices!

25. What advice would you give, as a student, to Roma parents in Prekmurje and in Dolenjska?

They should let their children know how important education. They should tell their children that only with education they can achieve better quality of life.

OTHER:

26. Would you like to add anything, any comment, opinion, question, additional information? Any information is very welcome.

THANK YOU!

F: Interview response by B., a Roma university student from Dolenjska

Name: B.

Place of birth: Črnomelj (Dolenjska)

Place of studying: University of Ljubljana

Study program: Pre-school education

HOME

1. Which language did you use at home?

We used Slovenian language. We never used Romani, but I know how to speak Romani because when I was older I spoke to my Roma friends in Romani. They were making fun of me because actually it was my second language and I made lots of mistakes.

2. Are your parents employed?

I live only with my mother. She is unemployed now, but when me and my brother were little, she had a job.

3. What was your parents' attitude to kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and university education?

My mother motivated me and my brother to go to school, because this will help me in my future. She was there for us, when we needed her. Not like some other Roma parents, that say to their children: "Don't go to school, this will never help you".

KINDERGARTEN

4. Did you go to kindergarten?

Yes, to the kindergarten and pre-school (*mala šola*).

5. If NOT, why not? The children stay at home because parents are unemployed; is the kindergarten too far from home, etc?

6. If YES, how old were you when you started to go to kindergarten?

I was 3.

7. What kind of memories you have of the kindergarten? What was the nicest/hardest? Did you like to go attend the kindergarten? Why? How was the relationship with the kindergarten teachers, other children, other parents?

There were always some prejudices, “gypsy this, gypsy that...”, others were not used to us at all. I felt that they are afraid of us. They are always afraid of something they don’t understand. I felt bad vibes, bad energy. When years pass, this is not so much present anymore, but still sometimes other kids joke about you being Roma.

8. Did also your brothers, sisters and friends from your hometown attend the kindergarten?

No, my brother and my friends didn’t go to kindergarten. I was the only one. And, now I and my brother are the only Roma from my hometown that finished primary school.

9. How did you learn to speak Slovenian language? In the family, in kindergarten?

As we always used Slovenian language in my family, there was no problem with it.

10. What do you think about the free and compulsory pre-school education for all children? Do you think this would have a beneficial impact on the school success in primary school?

Free pre-school education is a very good thing. In general, some parents don't have money for the kindergarten. You have to take your kids to kindergarten. It is so important because of socialization, there is a bigger group of kids, and children that attend kindergarten way easily integrate in educational system. They have better predispositions. I worked in the kindergarten for one year. I saw the kindergarten is the great foundation for the child. They get some working habits; they learn the basics about the relationships.

About the compulsory pre-school education, I am not sure whether this is good or bad.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

11. What kind of memories you have of the primary school? What was the nicest/hardest? Did you like to attend the primary school? Why? How was the relationship with the teachers, schoolmates, other parents? Were there any prejudices, stereotypes?

Serious problems started in the primary school. Kids were really messing with me (“you crazy Gypsy”), and also the teachers were treating me really bad. I always had to prove myself ten times more than any other schoolmate. Even if I did something ten times better than my school mates, I had to prove myself even more.

My English teacher said I will never get the grade higher than 3 (out of 5). But I speak English fluent, in the secondary school I always had the best grades in English, I have cousins in Ireland and I travel a lot. That was clearly because I am Roma.

The same was in Slovenian class. The teacher lowered my grade only because I am Roma. Some teachers were good to me. For example, the History teacher always supported me and I always had the best grade.

12. What is your opinion on the role of the parents (yours and others) in the process of primary education? How did your parents support you in primary school?

My parents really supported me; they were pushing me to work. And I also pushed myself. About the other parents: other Roma parents in my region are not like that. They do not emphasize the value of education. Their values are totally different. They value money only. In my region only 45 per cent of children attends primary school, and others don't go to school for many reasons. Some teachers are afraid of Roma pupils; they just let them not attend the class. Usually they don't attend classes after their 4th or 5th grade. Some are allocated to special schools. Most of the Roma youngsters only want to earn some money fast and they try to do this by selling weed, breaking in, stealing.. so they are known to the police really fast..

Parents often say: "Why would I send my children to the kindergarten, if I am at home and I can take care of him". It is parents' fault, not children's. Children are smart. But then they give them to special education. In primary school they have Roma children only because they get extra money for having a Roma student.

13. What is your opinion on the role of the teachers in primary school? How did they help you (or not)? Did they have any prejudice, stereotypes, maybe through some statements or behavior, or did they actively fight them?

Teachers should not discriminate the children because they are Roma. When I was working in the kindergarten, I did not make any differences between children...

14. Who had, in your opinion, the most important role (except yourself) in your success in the primary school? Parents, teachers, others? Why?

First and the most important are the parents. Teachers play a big role too. In my case 2 teachers supported me and motivated me and integrated me in different activities. The History teacher, she respected me very much, she supported me. Also the Slovenian teacher, she was including me in different events, reading clubs, activities. This is when I got the feeling that I want to help children in my future as a pre-school teacher.

HIGH SCHOOL

15. Did you have any career orientation at the end of the primary school? What high school did they advice you? Who played an important role in the decision for the high school – yourself, parents, teachers...?

No, we did not have any career orientation. And I did not listen to anyone. I just applied for the high school program to become a pre-school teacher in the kindergarten. The social worker was really supportive: she said I can do it, and that I will be a great pre-school teacher.

16. Which high school did you go to? What kind of memories you have of the high school? What was the nicest/hardest? Did you like to attend the high school? Why? What was the relationship with the teachers, schoolmates, other parents like? Were there any prejudices, stereotypes?

I went to the pre-school education program in Novo Mesto. First, I wanted to become a nurse, but then I changed my mind. I would like to work with the kids.

In the high school there were no problems. Everyone respected me. They knew I was Roma, but I was really successful, I had straight five's. The teachers were supportive. I was performing with a guitar and singing, they wanted to include me.

I was the only Roma there. After me, one Roma girl came to the same high school, because she heard my story, about my success and she is now working for the primary school. I think this is the only Roma girl that finished secondary school besides me.

17. What is your opinion on the role of the parents (yours and others) in the process of secondary education? How did your parents support you in high school?

By then I had already known what I want to become in my life. I motivated myself.

18. What is your opinion on the role of the teachers in high school? How did they help you (or not)? Did they have any prejudice, stereotypes, maybe through some statements or behavior, or did they actively fight them?

The teachers really tried to include me in different activities, especially on the field of arts – dancing, singing, and event organization. I could be creative.

19. Who had, in your opinion, the most important role (except yourself) in your success in the high school? Parents, teachers, others? Why?

At the beginning the most important were my parents, and later myself.

UNIVERSITY

20. How did you decide to go to study? What do you study?

I decided to go to study pre-school education because I have already attended high school program on pre-school education. I decided by myself. I wanted to work in kindergarten.

21. Did you get any help in your educational process (scholarship, study tutor, etc.)?

I got the state scholarship based on the income of my parents. Some (non-Roma) schoolmates had help with the classes, but I didn't need them.

DOLENJSKA v. PREKMURJE

22. What is your opinion on the similarities and differences of access to education in Dolenjska and Prekmurje?

Roma in Prekmurje are 20 years ahead of Roma in Dolenjska. They are developed more, organized more. Roma in Dolenjska don't want to integrate in educational system. They are all about this "ethnic minority" stuff, but in reality, they don't maintain their culture, traditions and customs. Except for the Roma day, then they dance, but they don't know why or what they dance. These are all just some political things.

Dolenjska should follow the Prekmurje as an example.

The state should change the laws, should explain the laws to Roma in the understandable way. The state should show the Roma parents, what their children can benefit from education, what they can learn,... they should explain this in the language that Roma will understand, not in the correct Slovenian language with lots of foreign words. Also, the state should motivate Roma parents to put their kids in the school not with the job they are going to get, but with telling them something like: "If your children will finish the primary school, they will be something special, you can be proud of them". Roma parents are very proud of their children. State should say to Roma parents: "If your child will finish some vocational secondary school (for example the school to work with metal), you can have your own business, and you will have a lot of money, good house, and your children won't need to become criminals; and the police will not be around your house every 2 weeks." This is the only way that Roma parents will listen to you. They don't care about their kids being smart. They care about their kids bringing home money and earning money.

Also, the State should be a little rougher with them: "If your children will not attend primary school, you will lose your social support package." This is what motivates them. If they see you can hit them in their wallets. When Roma see that there are some holes in the law, or that someone is not so strict about their obligations, they will not do it.

A lot of effort has to be used here! The State is responsible! The state should send three or four Roma people in the Roma settlement, which would tell them constantly that the education is important. They constantly need some support, maybe this can be in the form of

just visiting for a cup of coffee, and asking them, if they are supporting their child in the school.

Slovenians cannot advice to Roma people. If you are not Roma, the Roma will not listen to you. One Slovenian woman was really trying to change some things around here, she was working so hard, but at the end she realized there is no effect. They have listened to her, but they did not take her advice.

23. Do you think Dolenjska can learn something from Prekmurje, and vice-versa?

Dolenjska has to follow Prekmurje example. Local Roma councillors here in Dolenjska are half-literate people. Our Roma councillor in my home town needs constantly someone to explain him things he should understand on his own. They asked me to become the Roma councillor, but I said no. I have no time for that politics; also it is quite big task.

24. What advice would you give, as a student, to other Roma youngsters in Prekmurje and in Dolenjska?

I am constantly telling other young Roma people in Dolenjska to stick to education, because they will gain something, learn something. Don't leave primary school and go to collect iron. Don't follow your neighbour's example who stole 40.000 Euros and now he bought a car, because he will be in jail tomorrow. Don't just look for the money, look in the future, long-term. When you will work, you will also affect your children and give them the right values.

Also, I believe sooner or later Slovenian government will stop giving us so much social support. Then we will need education to get jobs!

25. What advice would you give, as a student, to Roma parents in Prekmurje and in Dolenjska?

I would tell Roma parents that their children can live better lives than they did, if they go and educate themselves. I would advice Roma parents to send their children to high school. If they send them to school, they will have more time for themselves, for work, to get a cup of coffee with their spouse etc. Their children will have more friends if they go to school. Everything will be more normal...

OTHER:

26. Would you like to add anything, any comment, opinion, question, additional information? Any information is very welcome.

My ex girlfriend was also doing this kind of research on the integration of Roma children in the kindergarten. There are few people like you and her, that you research those issues. It is a shame, in my opinion, that some researchers and writers and scholars just know everything in theory, they write their books on Roma situation in their little offices. But there are not

problems in the books. There are problems in the reality! Those researchers don't usually ask us, how is in reality. Ok, some of them come to the Roma settlements and the residents tell them such a crap that my head hurts – they are sometimes lying about how good it is (that their kids go to school, to pre-school etc.), and usually they are exaggerating when describing their situation (how poor they are).

Also, it is difficult to explain to Roma people the importance of education. It is like you were talking to a wall. Sometimes they listen to me, though, because they think I must be smart if I am in the university now. But the possibility that Slovenian people's advice is to be heard and respected by the Roma? Never.

I am now in the no-man's land. Roma think I am too smart for them, Slovenians think I am Roma ("No matter how educated, you will always stay Roma").

THANK YOU!

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