

Bulletin on Social Exclusion at European Level
Together and Across



Education of Roma children in the Czech Republic

Education of Roma children is up-to-date and quite polarizing topic in the Czech education system. Historically it is a long-term, complicated and to the Czech education system closely related problem. This is the reason why this subject is principal in all significant strategic documents on the national and also European level. Current discussion about governmental arrangements made in Strategy of Social Inclusion proves controversy evoked by these arrangements by general but also professional public.

The Czech Republic is under great pressure also on the international level. Except judgement of European Court of Human Rights from 2007 (in case no. 57325/00 D.H. and others vs. Czech Republic which stated indirect discrimination of the Roma children through their assignment into special schools for the disabled) also United Nations Organization via its Commission on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination criticizes repeatedly state of education of Roma children in the Czech Republic.



Individual tutoring in IQRS.

Our experience gained from cooperation with other European non-governmental organizations working with Roma children proves that situation in other European countries is also bleak. In addition organizations involved in the Together and Across cooperation act mainly in those countries (Romania, Bulgaria, Spain, Sweden) which according to a reasonable estimate have higher rate of illiteracy within the Roma population and also higher number of Roma pupils who don't finish basic education than in the Czech Republic.

View of NGOs working with Roma children is essentially critical towards current state of matters. They perceive insufficiency in education and quality qualification as one of the main obstacles in full inclusion of Roma into the majority society. IQ Roma servis similarly to other members of the partnership attempts to respond proactively to the problems which occur in the education of Roma children. Apart from numerous proactivities within direct work with clients they also participate on creation of conceptions and generally contribute with their views coming from practical experience into public and professional discussion.

This bulletin also aims to distribute these view to its readers. Except for mentioned view on the inclusion of Roma children in the education system of the Czech Republic it also presents practical procedures that are applied in work of IQ Roma servis to the local and foreign readers. These views were during the project (which is about to end) often presented but also thank to the possibility to share the experience with our foreign partners critically reflected. We hope that in the text of this bulletin you obtain information that will contribute to critical but constructive discussion on the topic and will help or inspire to the next development of a good practise in this area.



Remarks, observations or feed-back to the topic and the content itself will be much appreciated. You can contact us on the email address of the project togetherandacross@iqrs.cz, eventually sarka.polova@iqrs.cz (Šárka Pólová, International Cooperation Coordinator).

Roma children in the educational process in the Czech Republic

*The education of Roma children is still actual and quite controversial topic for Czech educational system. From the historical perspective the problem is long-term, complicated and coherent with the overall setting of Czech educational system. **One of the most common and dominant signs of Roma children education is segregation and high representation of Roma pupils in special education.***

➔ **„Special“ education as a conventional manner of educating of Roma children in the Czech Republic**

**MORE THAN ONE THIRD (35 %) OF ROMA PUPILS
have been diagnosed as students with light mental retardation**



Due to a restriction of gathering ethnical data in the Czech Republic, no definite determination of number of Roma children in so called practical elementary schools is possible. Some schools defend themselves in the very manner of “not distinguishing Roma students from others” and therefore, there is no place for segregation according to ethnicity. However, long-term experience suggest otherwise. According to qualified professional estimations (e.g. Czech School Inspectorate), **more than one third (35 %) of Roma pupils**, in some regions in ratio even 50 % (e.g. Ústí n. Labem region, Karlovy Vary or Liberec region) of Roma pupils **have been diagnosed as students with light mental retardation!** These estimations came from head teachers and representatives of schools themselves during investigations.



The Czech Republic comes under strong criticism because of segregation of Roma children from mainstream education.

Practical elementary schools became the objects of investigation of Czech School Inspectorate in 2009 and 2010. This investigation came to conclusion that improperly placed children without clear diagnosis of mental retardation – which is compulsory for the inclusion into this type of school - emerged in some Practical elementary schools.

One of the other detected problems in former special schools is, due to Czech School Inspectorate, the **absence of distinguishing of specific needs of support between socially disadvantaged students and students with light mental retardation**. Therefore we suppose that the next component in reforming contemporary state of Czech educational system is the diagnostic activity of pedagogical and psychological counseling and special pedagogical centers.

➔ ***Mono-ethnic schools***

Special education is not the only problematic spot in present situation. Another type of schools, which segregate children, happened to be schools placed in the socially excluded localities or in their neighborhood. Although, officially these are ordinary elementary schools, they often have to 90 % of Roma pupils and the representatives of schools affirm the fact.



Mono-ethnic schools separate Roma children from their non-Roma peers.

➔ ***Everything for the good of the World and for Roma children?***

We often come across arguments that these types of schools mentioned above are in fact a kind of salvation for children, who come from not supportive families and so bad social environment, that they (the children) would not managed inclusion into mainstream schools, which for example requires routine home preparation with the help of parents.



Schools though, often quite rightly, points out an increased care and attention which pedagogues on these schools give to children and also the possibility of educating less pupils in the classroom, or the *“Openness and non-discrimination.”*

On the other side, experience show that **students of such schools are less successful in studying at high school, but especially they are excluded in the group of peers from an early age**. Hence their acceptance by people in the vicinity and their involvement into further education - where they meet non-Roma schoolmates - is by that significantly influenced. The failure in an effort at higher education or generally insufficient knowledge and abilities, acquired on such types of schools, are strongly negative determinant of success in their career at the labor market or in other realms of life. This fact is illustrated by the IQRS long practice, when it is clear that children attending unsegregated schools are more successful in subsequent degrees of studies and they in general obtain a full secondary education.

➡ **Segregation as a result of family environment?**

An **argument of insufficient motivation and support of students from the side of parents and family environment often emerges in the public debate**. However, for instance, the current European comparative research EDUMIGROM indicates that settings of the Czech educational system which emphasizes children's home preparation with parents, could play a certain – and not negligible – part in the problem. In that manner children from the more complicated circumstances could be disadvantaged.

Results of an independent research – project EDUMIGROM



Edumigrom was a three year research project funded by the EU and supervised by **Central European University in Budapest** that took place between 2008 - 2011. The Edumigrom abbreviation expresses basic topic of the research - **Ethnic Differences in Education and Diverging Prospects for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe**. It was a comparative research within ethnically various urban communities in nine different European countries that focused on education process of its young members. In part of the countries researchers focused on the second generation of migrants in countries of the Central Europe and on the situation of Romani children. The Czech Republic was represented by Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University in Brno. **Two big Moravian municipalities with big Roma community were researched**. The research involved several stages with different research methods and it was based on **extensive inquiry among Roma and non-Roma pupils of 8th and 9th year of elementary school**. The questionnaire contained questions about their family situation, grades and their relation to the school and peers but also about possibilities of their further education or career choice. This inquiry was supplemented by in-depth interviews with head teachers and teachers of schools with high rate of Roma pupils, parents but also with young Roma themselves. **Over 1,000 respondents from more than twenty schools were involved in the inquiry**. During three years this **project charted complicated relations between educating Roma pupils and parents and education system in the Czech Republic**.



➔ Outputs of the research

Outputs of the inquiry show that problems of Roma children in the education system (worse grades, frequent placing of Roma children in the special schools, unfinished education) which lead to problems in further life (mainly high unemployment) **can be explained as consequence of adverse social and economical situation of Roma population.** Roma children grow up in excluded localities where worse schools are concentrated, their parents don't have necessary competencies or funds to choose suitable school and provide necessary support in their education. In these localities there are big Roma families in small flats where children don't have space needed for preparation to the school and mainly Roma girls are involved in house work and care after their siblings at the expense of preparation for classes. Cultural differences as a cause of problems of Roma children are debatable. However, the research showed that **Roma children are within their families socialized in different way which doesn't prepare them for competitive environment of Czech schools where good grades and discipline are stressed.** Roma pupils were surprisingly satisfied at school more than their non-Romani classmates. Human relationships and atmosphere at school are more important for Roma pupils and parents and therefore they don't feel the need to leave special schools or schools with low demand with friendlier atmosphere. **Roma children in the last years of basic school often express high expectations about further education and future career but they don't have a particular plan how to achieve it. They often leave further education shortly after its beginning and prefer immediate earnings.**

“As emerged from the interviews with teachers and head teachers ethnic segregation is caused by non-functioning education system more likely than from different socialisation of Roma children. This type of problem occurred mainly after 1989 when concept of education system as part of commercial capitalism prevailed in the Czech society. Catchment area schools and universal education was substituted by division of schools to the prestigious ones and bad ones. Head-teachers therefore don't support taking of Roma children as they fear outflow of other pupils.”



EDUMIGROM project finished in 2011. Its results were presented to organs of the EU together with recommendations how to solve legislation around the youth from the disadvantaged ethnic groups. You can find final reports and detail information on: www.edumigrom.eu

National Action Plan of Inclusive Education – up-to-date situation



In response to the European Court of Human Rights judgement in case D. H. and others vs. Czech Republic (see above) from 2007 Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports started to develop strategy how to set up education system in a way that doesn't segregate any group of children (Roma children included). Inclusion became a key topic. Members of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports together with external consultants and collaborators gradually created National Action Plan of Inclusive Education (NAPIE). This was authorized in 2010 and remained one of the main documents after change of the government in the very same year. This plan set goals in many areas reaching into basic and high school education but also into pre-school and tertiary education, consultancy, legislation or PR.



Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports was entrusted with the creation of National Action Plan of Inclusive Education (NAPIE). (zdroj: Romea)

Basic vision was to approve the plan, gradually (in groups made of experts in education, law or non-profit sector) elaborate it into individual steps and subsequently evaluate its implementation and eventual impact. Changes in the legislation were also part of the plan. NAPIE became one of the instruments that Czech Republic used to demonstrate to the EU that arrangements that are supposed to prevent discrimination in the Czech education system (condition defined by the judgement from 2007) were made.

In 2011 the group of the NAPIE coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports fell apart after that original direction of the document started to shatter into many groups according to system that experts considered as obsolete (e.g. division of the groups according to the type of handicap). These groups gradually stopped to be summoned and the Ministry of Education didn't show any intention to cooperate and to elaborate the document into implementable steps. Therefore great deal of members publicly left the platform around the NAPIE to make sure that their "unintended" passive presence wasn't used as proof of multidisciplinary cooperation.





National Action Plan of Inclusive Education (NAPIE) aims to change czech education system.

Nevertheless NAPIE still is the only present document that aims to change education system completely. Due to problematic processes within the Ministry of Education new alternative groups are being formed. These groups watch implementation of commitments of the Czech Republic towards EU. Already in 2008 a coalition of pro-Roma NGOs - **Together to School** was established. It oversees rights and possibilities of Roma children for equal education within the Czech Republic. Also **Czech Expert Association for Inclusive Education** (Česká odborná společnost pro inkluzivní vzdělávání) was created in 2011. It contains former employees of the Ministry of Education who were at birth of the document. They are mainly educationalists, NGOs experts and teachers. The association aims to oversee implementation of the original visions of the NAPIE and when necessary to return concentration to the original goals. As IQ Roma servis believes that inclusive education is one of the means that can improve situation in the education of Roma children, **it is part of these platforms.** However, it is crucial to bear in mind that not only special needs of Roma children or adverse social conditions are obstacle but also present concern about taking of Roma children to schools. Even the best inclusive means do not suffice, if society accepts attitude that it is right to educate Romani children separately.

Activities of IQ Roma servis

For promoting success of Roma children in the education

➔ Dža andre lahči škola campaign (Go to good school!)

In 2010 IQ Roma servis, with support of Open Society Fund Prague, realized project which focused on supporting parents whose children are going to register to the first grades of elementary schools.

This campaign was developed on base of experience from our pedagogical and field work, when we found out, that parents often do not know exact differences between elementary schools and practical schools, they don't know exactly what is expected from them at the registration or they don't have sufficient access to information about dates of registrations. The aim was also to focus on advancing motivation of parents to start to consider their children's education and the choice of the appropriate school as important.



During the campaign, „Go to Good School!“, new poster design was made - „There is no place for dreams in an empty head!“ The poster is mainly targeted at young people, who finish the primary school and aims to motivate them to continue on in secondary education.

Dža andre lahči škola campaign includes:

- ➔ posters in trams, in centres of the organization, bureaus, schools and in the community,
- ➔ projection of motivation video spot on web pages of the organization, on TV in the counselling centre or on cooperating web pages and facebook profile,
- ➔ consultancy and assistance with choice of school and administration, motivation of parents to consider criteria used for choice of the school,
- ➔ accompaniment to registration to school or when discrimination or unequal approach is dealt with.

The campaign „Go to Good School!“ motives were more ready to reach all target groups that could potentially use IQRS advisory services, and motivate them for (other) studies (children preparing for entrance to kindergarten, children preparing for entrance the first class, graduates of primary schools).



In 2012 we also decided to focus on **support of preschool education** and by the following campaign we try to motivate parents not to wait for registration to the elementary school but to develop their child in early age. Therefore, in January and February the **“Put your child into kindergarten”** campaign was on. It encourages parents to prepare their children for education in time.

In 2011, IQ Roma servis workers addressed more than 100 parents and children within the campaign. 13 of them were provided with we provided the accompaniment to the registration. Registrations ran well and all the kids entered chosen schools.

In 2012 we again approached more than 100 parents within information about dates and conditions of registrations and over 20 parents were accompanied to the registration.

During conversations with parents we tried not only to provide them with necessary information but also to perceive criteria and reasons according to which they make the choice of the school for their children. Unfortunately, one of the reasons why they sometimes didn't want to go to the registration to school with less Roma children was the fear of discrimination or refusal. They stated their own experience or experience of their peers when parents felt unduly turned down just for the reason that their child is Roma. We perpetually meet the fact that parents don't want to deal even with clear cases of discrimination because they are afraid that accusation of discrimination would solve anything and a conflict with the school could mean difficult conditions in advance for their child.

➡ **Extension of the Center for Families with Children offer**

An important impact of the Dža andre lači škola campaign was also gradual setting of activities for preschool children and their parents, with emphasis on preparation of entry to the elementary school. It also brought capacity and personal extension of newly developed Center for Families with Children.



Center for Families with Children offers counselling services for parents with small children.

Four times a week we offer daylong activities for parents with children of less than 8 years of age, in connection with professional social counseling or family assistance.

➡ **Unintended impacts of the campaign**

Unfortunately, the reaction of the elementary schools in Brno to the campaign was generally negative. Schools representatives probably perceived described activities as an effort to defame “poor-quality schools” and damage their reputation.

We reflected this reaction and in 2012 we repeated the campaign in order to illuminate our aims and address more clients and schools. Although the campaign is primarily focused on clients and their awareness about rights and duties related to the entering the first grade, we paid very much attention also to the communication with schools and we sent a letter with description of our activities to the schools head teachers.

Despite misunderstandings mentioned before, we consider the campaign Dža andre lači škola as a meaningful tool. It opens a topic addressing the whole society. What we find as the biggest effort is that parents themselves address us about helping them to choose the school. Dur-

ing the work with parents we find out that Roma themselves perceive the need of quality education. They identify schools which they consider quality and integrating on their own. We are aware that there is still many families which need great support. As an association we are willing to offer parents cooperation with schools and with other institutions, to work as a mediator of communication or to offer more necessary services.



Center for Families with Children prepares children for smooth entry to kindergarten and primary school.

Clients' story

Family H.

Mother started to visit our organization last year because she was in a very complicated life situation – she has 2 little children, her partner abandoned her, she lived temporarily at her father's place, she didn't have any financial means. We started to work on several things – living in a reception centre, health care (as she was about to have the third child), social support and other options how to get an income. The mother started to visit our Centre for families with children as her son was in pre-school age. We began to work on registration for the school, an educator helped the boy with personal development, the mother was taught how to work with him at the same time. She spent part of the time in the Centre with children, then she could meet field social workers or attend counselling centre. After half a year of cooperation we managed to find a reception centre for her, ensure at least basic financial resources and organize healthcare for free. Her son applied for a quality non-segregated school where he is one of the most talented pupils and was accepted.

Comprehensive Professional Guidance Counselling for Roma Youth

A comprehensive range of professional consultancy of IQ Roma service includes:

- **Individual consultations** that are held in an advisory centre, in a family of the client, or at schools by appointment. The professional staff can be also in a regular contact with parents thanks to a **field work**, which is an essential part of individual consultancy.
- **Group career consultancy** in elementary and secondary schools that lies in the realization of group experiential lessons for schools, which are thematically focused on the choice of school and on the future career of involved children.

Individual consultancy is yet in connection with or completely independent of group lessons



Tutoring in IQRS

The target group of professional consultancy are mainly:

- children of a higher level at elementary schools and students of secondary schools;
- clients who have completed their education and have not entered the follow-up studies;
- parents of pupils, which are addressed in terms of the future careers of their children.

→ **Methods of work**

1

Individual work takes the form of an interview, evaluation of common visions and life plans, defining the basic steps leading to a **successful transfer to follow-up studies after leaving a primary school**. It also reflects the expectations of parents with visions of the client, the social status of particular jobs together with opportunities in the field of labour market. In case that the client has no idea about a profession they would like to do or which would fit them, they are offered variants of tests that focus on their professional orientation.

Clients are passed detailed and practical information on study areas (including the date of enrolment, the content of entrance exams, etc.). All possible options for a possible future scholarship are then individually consulted. An important part plays a targeted **monitoring activity of the pupils' transfer to secondary schools and early support to overcome barriers that arise.**



EEG Biofeedback

Clients are also offered an option of **tutoring for entrance exams** in the course of study at school. The individual consultancy and training requirements for managing the follow-up studies, the clients are encouraged to attend **EEG Biofeedback**, which can contribute to their better learning results.



EEG Biofeedback

It is a method of self-learning through a so called biofeedback. The aim of the training is to reduce the anxiety of an individual, to improve their ability of self-control, to manage irritability and impatience. It leads to improved attention and memory as a result. The improvement of learning has a positive effect on reducing fatigue and increasing self-confidence.

Tutoring in IQRS

Tutoring in IQRS is designed for clients aged 6 years who need help in preparing for the classroom learning or during stressful situations at school (e.g., preparation for oral and written testing, quarterly and half-term assessment, semester assessment, coursework, thematic projects). Clients are not only becoming familiar with the subject they consider problematic, but there is also a big emphasis on enriching their general knowledge, learning in context, linking of previously acquired and currently learnt knowledge and these are presented to customers by using interesting and attractive form.



Tutoring takes place within IQRS:

- ➔ on-site in an education centre, which is covered by teachers,
- ➔ in the client's family, where operate our volunteers.

Tutoring takes place four days a week in the afternoon. Clients can apply for **regular tutoring**, or use the **acute preparation for school**.

Great emphasis is placed on preparing clients for entrance exams of secondary schools. This preparation has paid off in most cases, because it help clients take in high school of their choice. Clients who take advantage of tutoring are provided with further support for the study. Our long-term effort is to develop and establish cooperation with elementary and secondary schools in Brno and to directly cooperate with teachers of tutored students. This cooperation seems to be effective, especially if there is to establish a model of cooperation between all four sides: a client – a tutor – the class or another teacher who works with clients at school - a parent.

Tutoring in the family is provided primarily by volunteers. They mostly consist of young people, mainly university students who feel the need to actively participate and help a good thing. Currently IQRS has about 25 volunteers who work on a long-term basis (even when organizing leisure activities, club activities, etc.). About other 10 volunteers are involved in educational activities through a crash work and events of a community character, or in the preparation and implementation of International Roma Day.

Concept of lessons at primary school

It consists of 15 topics - including preparation for the labour market and issues connected to it. They also reflect the current needs of pupils and schools in support of individual personalities, their attitudes and development in professional growth. Individual topics are for example: "The attitude to school and education, in other words school for beginners", "Family and school - influence of the family on schooling (and personality of the student)", "Values of a secondary school student", "Planning", "Development of a strong will", "Partner relations", "Getting to know yourself", "Me and my emotions", "Prejudice", "Critical Thinking", "Me in two and then ten years", "Options for further studies and employment", "Self-presentation", "Feedback and self-reflection", "Who am I", "Me and ethnicity", "Me, a citizen", "How to find a job", "Prevention of soc. pathology", "Relationships in the classroom."



Concept lessons at primary school.

Lessons for group career guidance for secondary schools

They are always tailored for each year separately. Both criteria are always taken into account: developing the specifics of school lessons and classes themselves.

1st year

Working with a class, its formation and effective functioning, attention focuses on the basic orientation of students to their follow-up study (school running, school rules, the relationship to school).

2nd year

Support students' motivation to finish the school, providing information on financial aid options and part-time jobs, an effort to minimize or eliminate potential obstacles to the study of pupils.

3rd and 4th year

Moderation of students' fears from final exams and practical preparation for entry into the labour market (training in job interviews, writing CVs).

Client H.

A female client began to attend IQRS classes for tutoring that were arranged by her mother at the time when the client was a student of 9th class. By tutoring lessons she wanted to improve her results in subjects that were difficult for her. Gradually, the client was offered the possibility of follow-up study at high school. Her wish was to get to a good school, but she was not so sure whether it was real for her or not. She got all the support in the family and the selection of the secondary schools was also consulted with her mother, who was very involved and wanted the best for her daughter as she knew that it will mean a good job in the future. The client eventually chose to study at a grammar school and prepare for a university. She intensified her attendance at tutoring session and a few months later she actually joined the selected school. However her collaboration with IQRS continued. The client has taught, with the support of the staff, to better work with her personal goals and formulate her wishes for the future. She has participated in a 10-day workshop in Berlin, which was focused on expressive therapy and expression using theatre. Based on this experience, she decided to continue in the theatrical activities offered by IQRS.

She is currently a member of the youth group Bengore, that works in educational programs for the youth. She is also involved in the internet radio broadcasts called R where she has a program with her girlfriend on regular basis. She became the face of the campaign 'Dža andre lači school' and she regularly contributes to other civic activities (e.g. consultations at the Government Office for Roma Affairs). Her dream is to get into journalism and become a journalist. Throughout the cooperation are workers of IQRS in contact with client's family and her mother is not only addresses in issues related to the learning of her daughter, but her participation in these leisure activities, too.

The Together and Across partnership

The Together and Across partnership focus on the support of experience and good practice exchange among the project partners in order to promote social inclusion of the socially excluded people, especially the Roma. The project has been implemented within the ESF Operational Programme Human Resources and Employment since 1st June 2009. The transnational partnership involves organisations from five EU Member States.

The members of the transnational partnership:

IQ Roma service - Czech Republic, project realizator
Asociación Valenciana de Ayuda al Refugiado (AVAR)- Spain
Asociația "Organizația Caritas Satu Mare" - Romania
European Anti Poverty Network – Czech Republic
Indi Roma 97 Social Foundation - Bulgaria
Fundación Secretariado Gitano - Spain
The City of Brno - Czech Republic
The County Administrative Board of Stockholm - Sweden
The South Moravian Regional Authority - Czech Republic

***For further information
 please see the project web-
 site <http://iqrs.cz/verze/en/>.***





Cejl 49, Brno, 602 00
Czech Republic
Tel./fax: 549 241 250
e-mail: iqrs@iqrs.cz
www.iqrs.cz
facebook.com/iq.roma.servis

BRANCHES



Brno:

Headquarters:
Hybešova 41, Brno, 602 00, Czech Republic

Tel. 1: +420 543 213 310 (reception)
Tel. 2: +420 543 214 805 (director's office)
Tel. 3: +420 543 210 725 (counselling centre)
Fax: +420 543 214 809

Counselling centre:
Cejl 49, Brno, 602 00

Břeclav:

Tr. 1. máje 39, Poštorná, 691 41, Břeclav
Czech Republic

Tel.: 519 324 849

Vyškov:

Palánek 74, 682 01, Vyškov,
Czech Republic

Tel. 1: 774 898 817
Tel. 2: 774 224 509

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