

A photograph showing a teacher and a Roma pupil working together at a desk. The teacher, wearing a green cardigan over a white shirt and a red lanyard with 'VISITOR' written on it, is leaning over the pupil. The pupil, wearing a dark blazer with a school crest, is looking down at a book or document they are both holding. They appear to be in a classroom setting.

# FROM SEGREGATION TO INCLUSION:

Roma Pupils in the United Kingdom  
A Pilot Research Project

November 2011



ALL THE PARENTS INTERVIEWED DURING THIS STUDY VALUED THE OVERALL ATMOSPHERE AT SCHOOL, THEIR CHILDREN'S FEELING OF BEING WELCOME THERE AND THEIR EXPERIENCE OF EQUAL TREATMENT, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, AND THE ABSENCE OF ANTI-ROMA SENTIMENTS AND RACISM EXPRESSED BY THEIR CHILDREN'S NON-ROMA PEERS AND TEACHERS, WHICH THEY ALL SAID THEIR CHILDREN HAD EXPERIENCED IN VARIOUS FORMS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA. THEY ALL SAID THE PROSPECT OF THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT WAS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL DRIVING FORCES BEHIND THEIR DECISION TO MOVE TO THE UK.

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## ABOUT EQUALITY

Equality is a registered charity that works to uphold and secure the rights of ethnic minority groups in Britain and Europe. We primarily help Roma who migrated to the UK from the new EU Member States. Equality empowers them to resolve employment, housing, education, healthcare, and social welfare issues. We help by building dialogue, understanding and cooperation between Roma communities, local authorities and service providers.

[//equality.uk.com](http://equality.uk.com)

## ABOUT THE ROMA EDUCATION FUND

The Roma Education Fund was created in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2005. Its mission and ultimate goal is to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. In order to achieve this goal, the organisation supports policies and programs that ensure quality education for Roma, including the desegregation of education systems.

[//www.romaeducationfund.hu](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu)

# FOREWORD

For generations, Roma children have been disproportionately placed in *de facto* segregated or special schools for the mentally disabled across Eastern Europe. The Czech Republic and Slovakia have been repeatedly criticised by various international bodies, organisations, the European Commission, and the US government for this practice. In November 2007, the European Court of Human Rights ruled on the case *D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic* (hereafter "D.H."),<sup>1</sup> finding that the disproportionate assignment of Roma children to special schools without an objective and reasonable justification amounted to unlawful indirect discrimination in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. In its judgement, the Court required the Czech Republic to adopt measures to end discrimination against Roma in the education system.

In response to the publication of the judgement in November 2007, a coalition of nongovernmental organisations was formed in Prague and named Together to School (*Společně do školy*). This coalition aims to monitor and help the implementation of the groundbreaking judgement by conducting research and implementing educational projects that contribute to desegregating the Czech education system and assist in applying the principle of equal opportunity for all children irrespective of their origin, skin colour, or social position. Equality is a more recent member of the coalition. However, despite the landmark European Court decision and the strenuous work done by the coalition organisations, very little has changed. Although special schools have been renamed, Roma children still receive a second-rate primary education, with a very limited chance of progressing beyond compulsory schooling, studying in secondary or tertiary education and the possibility that this brings to secure stable employment within the labour market.

In November 2010, the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner, Thomas Hammarberg, made the following observation: "At the moment, however, there appear to have been hardly any changes on the ground. (...) In certain areas, Roma children are up to 27 times more likely to attend [practical] schools, i.e., the same proportion which served as basis for the findings of the Strasbourg Court."<sup>2</sup>

During the course of 2008 and 2009, Lucie Fremlova and Heather Ureche conducted research for the report '*The movement of Roma from new EU Member States: A mapping survey of A2 and A8 Roma in England (Patterns of settlement and current situation of new Roma communities in England)*', which was commissioned and funded by the then

<sup>1</sup> Available online: <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/justice/litigation/czechrepublic>

<sup>2</sup> Council of Europe, Report by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, following his visit to the Czech Republic from 17 to 19 November 2010; CommDH (2011)3, 3 March 2011, available online: <https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1754217>, para 60.

Department for Children, Schools and Families (now Department for Education).<sup>3</sup> During the field research for this mapping survey, school and other staff working with Roma children from Slovakia and the Czech Republic—two of the most sizeable Roma communities at that time—brought to the attention of the researchers a number of cases of Roma children who had previously been placed in special schools or *de facto* segregated schools and classes in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The same children, some of whom had minor hearing or sight problems, speech impediments, physical disability, or other learning difficulties, were studying in mainstream schools in the UK. This fact was substantiated by the other findings of the mapping survey which showed that many Roma families had decided to move to the UK because they wanted equal opportunities for their children, particularly in the field of education.

It was at that time that the researchers started discussions with a number of education practitioners throughout the UK about the possibility of conducting a pilot research study that would look specifically at these and similar cases in order to see whether the majority of Roma children who moved to the UK were studying in mainstream schools, in contrast to the situation in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

The 2008–9 research also indicated that education played a central role in the social inclusion and well-being of Roma children and families. The Traveller Education Support Service and the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service have been major forces in fostering the social inclusion of Roma, and were regarded by schools and local authorities as a model of good practice.

Through Equality's ongoing cooperation with local authorities, practitioners, and statutory and non-statutory service providers working with Roma in the UK, we gradually came to learn of other cases of Czech and Slovak Roma children who had been previously streamed into special schools/classes or *de facto* segregated (Roma only) schools/classes in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and were studying successfully in mainstream schools in the UK. These contacts with local authorities, service providers, local NGOs, schools, and Roma communities have served as the basis for the present research study.

<sup>3</sup> Research by Lucie Fremlova and Heather Ureche. Report available online: <http://equality.uk.com/resources.html>



THE AVERAGE ATTAINMENT OF ROMA PUPILS (AGES 9–15) IN NUMERACY, LITERACY, AND SCIENCE REPORTED BY THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL RESPONDENTS WAS JUST BELOW AVERAGE. THE SUBJECTS IN WHICH THE PUPILS FELT THEY DID WELL INCLUDED MATHEMATICS, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, ART, SCIENCE, AND INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES. IN TERMS OF THE RESPONDENTS' SPOKEN ENGLISH, 89 PERCENT SPOKE FLUENT OR ALMOST FLUENT ENGLISH. THE YOUNGER THE RESPONDENTS WERE WHEN THEY FIRST CAME TO THE UK, THE MORE QUICKLY THEY WERE ABLE TO SPEAK ENGLISH FLUENTLY.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To our knowledge, no research has been conducted which looked at the educational attainment of Roma pupils who migrated with their parents from the Czech Republic and Slovakia to the United Kingdom or another Western European country. This pilot research study is the first of its kind to explore the experience of Czech and Slovak Roma pupils of attending special or *de facto* segregated (Roma-only) schools in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, while comparing that to their experience of attending primary or secondary mainstream education in the UK.

Literature and research reports on the situation of Roma in the education systems in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, which have been conducted and published by various organisations including the Roma Education Fund, were reviewed. This desk research was combined with field research undertaken by Equality between June and August 2011 at eight locations in England: Leicester, Chatham, Rotherham, Wolverhampton, Southend-on-Sea, Peterborough, London, and Derby. During the pilot research, 61 Czech or Slovak Roma students, 28 Roma parents, and 25 school or other education staff were interviewed.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Eighty-five percent (51 respondents) of all the Roma pupils interviewed had been previously placed in a special school/ class or so-called 'practical school', a *de facto* segregated (i.e., Roma-only) school or a predominantly Roma kindergarten in the Czech Republic (23 respondents) or Slovakia (38 respondents), with no difference between those attending primary or secondary school.
- Twelve of the seventeen respondents who had been placed in a special school in Slovakia or the Czech Republic reported having been sent there after they underwent a psychological test during Year 1 or Year 2 (ages 7 and 8).
- The average attainment of Roma pupils (ages 9-15) in numeracy, literacy, and science reported by the primary and secondary school respondents was just below average. The subjects in which the pupils felt they did well included mathematics, physical education, art, science, and Information Communications Technologies. In terms of the respondents' spoken English, 89 percent spoke fluent or almost fluent English. The younger the respondents were when they first came to the UK, the more quickly they were able to speak English fluently.
- Only a small percentage of the overall cohort of Roma pupils (2 to 4 percent) at the UK schools surveyed were regarded as requiring special education needs (SEN) because of learning difficulties or disabilities that made it more difficult for them to learn or access education than most children of the same age. For these Roma pupils, this extra or different help is given within the mainstream school.
- In the UK, none of the students interviewed have had a statutory assessment for special education needs (SEN), a more detailed analysis that is required when a mainstream school cannot provide all the help a child needs.

- A high percentage of recently arrived Roma pupils (90 percent) received English as an Additional Language (EAL) support, as did their recently arrived non-Roma peers of different national or ethnic backgrounds for whom English was not their first language.
- Most British professionals working with Roma in the field of education who were interviewed are aware of the high percentage of Roma representation in *de facto* segregated or special schools in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. They regarded this as a remarkable practice.
- A large majority of Roma students said they had experienced racist bullying or some sort of verbal abuse by their non-Roma peers at Czech and Slovak schools, as well as discriminatory or unequal treatment by their teachers, who were alleged to have punished them physically in a number of cases.
- Roma students in seven out of the eight locations reported that they were not experiencing any form of racism in UK schools and they believed that the teachers were kind and helpful and were willing to give them time on an individual basis.
- The large majority of the Roma students interviewed in the course of the research said they preferred school in the UK because of equal opportunities and the absence of racism and discrimination at UK schools.
- All the parents interviewed during this study valued the overall atmosphere at school, their children's feeling of being welcome there and their experience of equal treatment, equal opportunities, and the absence of anti-Roma sentiments and racism expressed by their children's non-Roma peers and teachers, which they all said their children had experienced in various forms in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. They all said the prospect of their children's education and employment was one of the most powerful driving forces behind their decision to move to the UK. Many of them thought it would take generations to change these practices and attitudes in Slovakia and the Czech Republic and some doubted whether they would ever change. All of them believed their children's chances to succeed later on in life were much better in Britain than in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

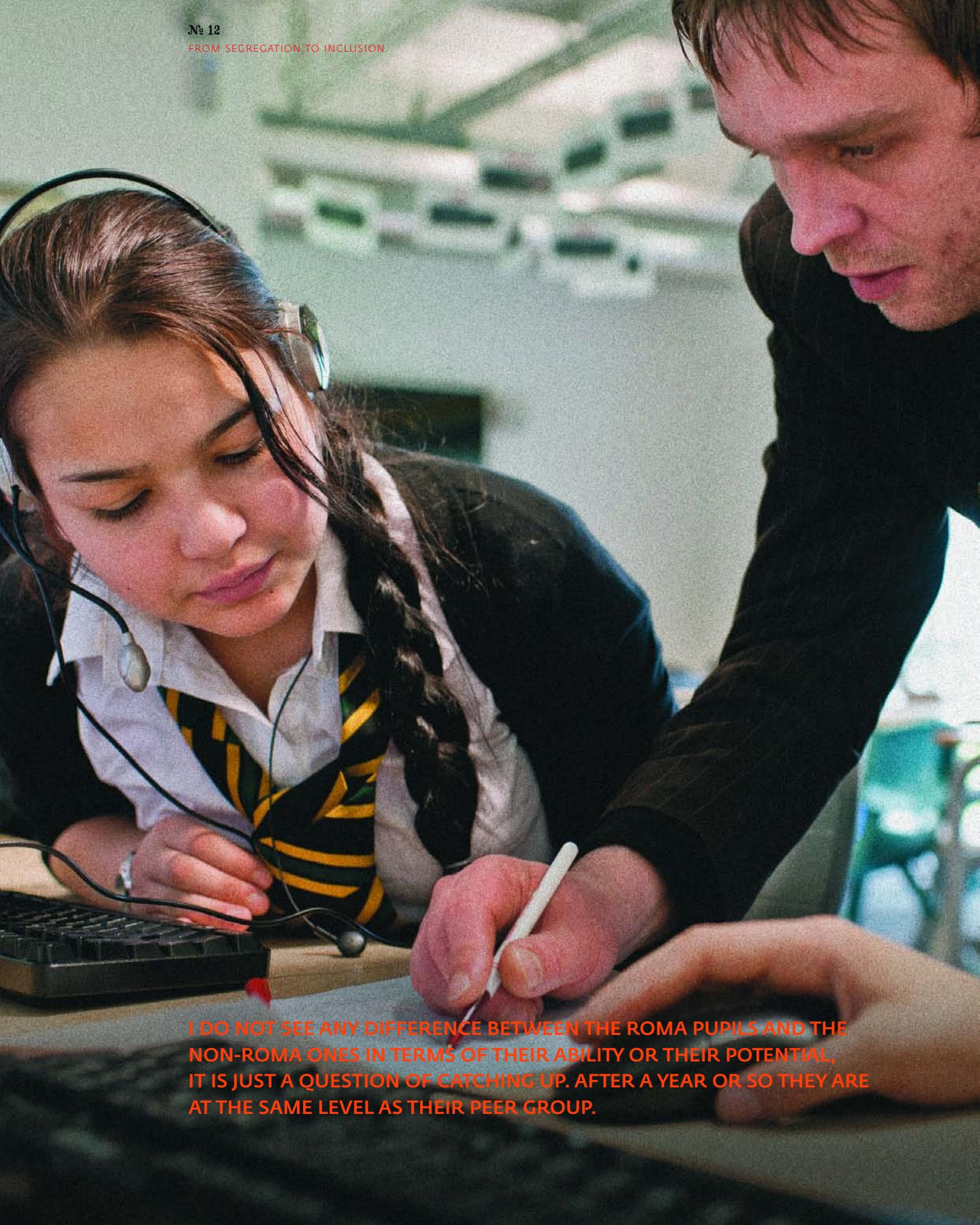
## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The findings of the study demonstrate that educating Roma children in special or *de facto* segregated schools in the Czech Republic and Slovakia is not justified by their educational, social, or cognitive abilities as all of the Roma children who participated in this research, and had been sent to special, or *de facto* segregated schools in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, were successfully studying in mainstream schools in the UK. Therefore, all levels of Czech government should act and take practical measures to implement, without further delay, the 2007 judgement by the European Court of Human Rights. The Czech government should ensure that meeting their legal obligation is a priority.

2. A planned approach needs to be formulated and implemented to use the research findings to dispel the myth that placing Roma pupils in special schools or Roma only/*de facto* segregated schools in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (and other countries that have similar policies) is in the best interests of Roma. An array of opportunities should be identified to use the research to influence the debate in these countries.
3. This planned approach should use the learning, good and less-effective practice identified in the research to engage education decision-makers, opinion-makers (including news and specialist media), and practitioners at national and local levels in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in a discussion about what policies and practices have been proven to improve the academic attainment of Roma pupils.
4. In the UK, the learning identified in the research should be promoted to, and shared with, other schools in the towns and cities that have Roma communities living there.
5. Schools that took part in the research should consider forming a network to share experience and practice using electronic and/or face-to-face channels. If formed, this network should consider inviting other schools with Roma pupils to join it.
6. The UK Department for Education should consider how it can help disseminate good practice that increases attendance levels and the academic attainment of Roma pupils.
7. The UK government should consider the long-term impact of spending reductions on services that help increase attendance and attainment of Roma pupils, in particular Roma mediators working with schools and local authorities and the TESS and EMAS services.
8. The benefits from employing Roma liaison staff or 'mediators' working with schools and Roma families should be promoted to schools and local authorities, using examples from this pilot research as well as other examples from a wider range of schools. The Council of Europe and European Commission should consider extending their Roma mediators programme to include the UK.
9. EU national governments and the European Commission should consider the introduction of a universal EU-wide educational 'record' or 'passport' for all children, containing information about the child's educational history and contact information for their previous and/or current school.<sup>45</sup> This would allow continuity and consistency in a child's education and it would also highlight a child who was absent from education.
10. This pilot research should be developed into a substantial scientific survey in the UK covering all national groups of Roma, now that the methodology has been piloted and important initial findings are now available.

<sup>4</sup>The "passport" would not contain any confidential information. The document would be handed by the parents to their child's new school when registering them for attendance.

<sup>5</sup>An example of such an approach is Europass, which brings together into a single framework several existing tools for the transparency of diplomas, certificates, and competences. Available online: <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/>



I DO NOT SEE ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ROMA PUPILS AND THE NON-ROMA ONES IN TERMS OF THEIR ABILITY OR THEIR POTENTIAL, IT IS JUST A QUESTION OF CATCHING UP. AFTER A YEAR OR SO THEY ARE AT THE SAME LEVEL AS THEIR PEER GROUP.

# INTRODUCTION

## CZECH REPUBLIC

On 19 January 2010, in response to domestic and international pressure for full implementation of the 2007 European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruling on the unlawful segregation of Roma pupils at Czech schools, the then Czech Education Minister Miroslava Kopicova sent a letter to all elementary school headteachers, including those at practical schools (the re-named former special schools<sup>6</sup>), instructing them to "thoroughly monitor whether or not only those children with a genuine light mental disability are placed in practical primary schools".

This instruction came from the Education Ministry more than two years after the 2007 landmark judgement by the ECHR. It was the first official attempt to tackle the issue of segregation in Czech education by the central government. The timing of the letter also coincided with the publication of a major report by Amnesty International on the segregated schooling of Roma pupils in Ostrava.<sup>7</sup>

Within a short period of time, this initiative encountered resentment from special education teachers and their supporters, including some politicians who had by then formed a lobby at the Education Ministry. In a letter from education representatives in the Plzen Region (western Bohemia), the undersigned (among whom was a former Health Minister Milada Emmerova), wrote:

"Dear Minister, in our open letter, we respond to the ongoing biased media campaign which has been supported by prominent Education Ministry staff and which profoundly impacts on the established, proven, longstanding and in our opinion perfectly functioning system of educating children and pupils with special educational needs. (...) In the opinion of counselling facilities, the integration of children or pupils with light mental retardation is very problematic. We believe that integration and inclusion 'at any price' is counterproductive for a child or a pupil and can create a number of psychiatric problems."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> In 2005, the Czech government amended legislation in the field of education by adopting the new Schools Act, which entered into force on 1 January 2005. One of the main amendments consisted of eliminating *special remedial schools* (*zvláští školy*). The new legislation transformed them into *practical primary schools* (*praktické školy*) and made them part of standard primary schools. Despite this formal change, Roma children continue to be educated in a separate education stream environments in the former special schools following the curriculum for children with mild mental disabilities.

<sup>7</sup> *Injustice renamed: Discrimination in education of Roma persists in the Czech Republic*. Available online: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR71/003/2009/en/8572b7e5-4435-4f43-bb2d-462fd7fdb905/eur710032009en.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> The undersigned went on to ask if the NGOs involved in this campaign were "erudite enough to assess whether or not it is appropriate and right to place a child or a pupils in the special education system", and to say that is always the person legally responsible for the child who decides about their education.

They concluded the letter by saying: "Thanks to the complicated and longstanding work of generations of teachers—special pedagogues, the Czech Republic does not have so many illiterate people as there are in those countries from which certain individuals are writing to us with unqualified advice and recommendations."

According to a 2008 European Roma Rights Centre/Roma Education Fund report on the Czech Republic,<sup>9</sup> "[s]ignificant deficiencies in law and practice with regard to the pedagogical-psychological examination of Romani children continue to encourage wrongful placement of Romani children in schools and classes with a substandard curriculum that limits their education options and employment potential. Pedagogical-Psychological Counselling Centres continue to work according to the same methodology as before 2005 and there are no legal requirements for the repeated examination of children placed in practical schools unless parents so request, and no comprehensive assessment of expert opinions issued by pedagogical-psychological centres. Most Romani children who enter practical schools remain there until they reach grade 9 and leave the school system."

In March 2010, these findings were supported by a report from the Czech School Inspection (hereafter CSI) which published a landmark document entitled '*Thematic report: Compendium of results from the thematic control activity in practical elementary schools'*.<sup>10</sup> The report indicated that 83 percent of the practical schools had not undergone any substantial change and referred to them as "hidden special schools". Romani pupils still constituted 35 percent of children diagnosed with light mental disability, while this number in some regions was as high as 50 percent. Furthermore, the report indicated that at least 5,000 children without any diagnosis of disability were placed in the former "special schools" for children categorised as having a disability. In addition, a number of key points of criticism of special education were published by this Czech state authority for the first time:

- "On the whole it is impossible to prove that the recorded agreement has been 'informed', in other words that it was given by the legal representatives on the basis of sufficient information about the differences between the education programmes."
- "We judge as dangerous the institutional and personnel connection of elementary schools and school advisory centres; in many cases the interest of a school to have enough pupils prevailed over the pupil's legitimate interest of integration into mainstream education."
- "One of the goals of the education programme Framework Education Programme for Elementary Schools for pupils with Mild Mental Retardation (FEP ES MMR) is to prepare eligible pupils for a transfer to mainstream education. The CSI found out that this transfer is very exceptional. A repeated SAC diagnostic examination led to a recommendation of transfer back to mainstream education in only 100 cases in 2009 and only 36 of these

<sup>9</sup> Persistent Segregation of Roma in the Czech Education System, European Roma Rights Centre, Roma Education Fund. Available online: [http://www.errc.org/en-research-and-advocacy-reports-intro-details.php?article\\_id=3049](http://www.errc.org/en-research-and-advocacy-reports-intro-details.php?article_id=3049)

<sup>10</sup> Czech School Inspection, *Thematic Report—Compendium of results from the thematic control activity in practical elementary schools*, March 2010  
Czech original available online: <http://www.csicr.cz/cz/85126-zprava-z-kontrolni-cinnosti-v-byvalych-zvlastnich-skolach>

transfers have been performed. In 2008 the number of pupils who transferred back amounted to 43 pupils and in 2007 to 38 pupils. For comparison we also quote the situation in 2002 when 10 pupils tried to transfer back to mainstream education and only six of them succeeded.”

- “From interviews with school management it was found out that the majority of pedagogues erroneously consider Diagnostic Stay as a period necessary for acquiring data necessary for transferring the pupil into education programme for MMR. The institution of Diagnostic Stay thus fails to fulfil its principal role.”
- “The CSI found out that from the total number of pupils registered in the inspected schools in the school year 2009/2010 110 of them have been educated according to the supplement to the FEP ES without a valid diagnosis or recommendation from the School Advisory Centres (SAC); from which 29 were Romani pupils, which means 26.4 percent.”
- “The amount of financial resources from the national budget—direct expenses on education (...) have been in average CZK 40,897 for one pupil attending an elementary school in 2009. The addition in expenses can be used by the registered disability represents at least 50 percent of the financial normative (...). From the above mentioned it is clear that 34 schools drew unjustified additional resources in the total amount of CZK 2,250,000.”<sup>11</sup>

No of schools with erroneous pupil registration	No of registered pupils without valid diagnosis	Average financial normative	Basic subvention from national budget	Additional subvention (50 percent)
34	110	CZK 40,897	CZK 4,498,670	CZK 2,249,335

In April 2010, the report published by the CSI was supported by the Czech Public Defender of Rights (Ombudsman) who made the following statement:

“There is no legitimate discriminatory reason by means of which it would be possible to justify the disproportionately high percentage of Roma children who are, in these circumstances, recommended for practical elementary schools. Besides, it is necessary to note that placing a pupil into a practical elementary school with the diagnosis of mental disability is a fundamental error made by the responsible body, whether this concerns Roma or non-Roma children. (...) The fact that Roma children represent a third of all the children who have been diagnosed as having a mental disability is discriminatory.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Available online: <http://spolecnedoskoly.cz/wp-content/uploads/stanovisko-verejneho-ochrance-prav-k-diskriminaci-romskych-zaku.pdf>

The June 2010 general election more or less put an end to the initiative as it changed the landscape of the Czech political scene, with key senior officials who had been arguing for change at the Education Ministry resigning from their posts in protest against the Ministry's new policies. In addition, more than 50 experts from a Czech Education Ministry Working Group which had responsibility to design a National Action Plan on Inclusive Education resigned. In a submission to the Council of Europe, international NGOs stated that "Furthermore, authorities have ignored the urgency of addressing the education of Romani children. This is exemplified by the National Action Plan of Inclusive Education, adopted in 2010, which has no concrete actions planned before 2014."<sup>13</sup>

### **Slovakia**

A central characteristic of the Slovak education system is the early and rigid division of children into educational streams, with the initial division between mainstream and special primary education. Of 23 countries in Central and Eastern Europe included in a 2005 study by UNICEF, Slovakia had the highest enrolment rate in special education programmes in 2001.<sup>14</sup> A Roma Education Fund study in 2009 found that approximately 60 percent of children in special education in Slovakia in 2008-2009 were Roma.<sup>15</sup>

The *de facto* segregation of Roma in the Slovak education system occurs at other levels. Some schools are attended only, or almost only, by Roma pupils. In some schools Roma are separated from non-Roma and taught in different Roma-only classes. In some other schools Roma pupils are separated from non-Roma pupils within the classroom. Research conducted by the Roma Education Fund in 2009, estimated that the proportion of Roma pupils in special primary schools was 59 percent, in special classes within mainstream schools was 86 percent, and within special secondary schools was 35 percent. However, the same research found that close to half of the pupils completing education in special primary schools did not go on to study in secondary education.<sup>16</sup>

There are considerable differences between mainstream and special school curricula. Amnesty International in 2007 reported that education profession described a four-year gap between the two curricula.<sup>17</sup> The Roma Education Fund study in 2009 found that the curriculum for pupils with mild mental disabilities only covered 60 percent of the curriculum taught in mainstream primary schools. The differences in curricula severely limit the possibilities for integrating children from special schools and classes to mainstream schools, as well as severely limiting their chances to obtain fulfilling (or sometimes, any) employment after education. Completion of special as opposed to standard primary education limits options for further education.

<sup>13</sup> ERRC, OSJI, Submission to the Committee of Ministers: The Continued Segregation of Romani Schoolchildren in the Czech Republic, 8 March 2011, available online: <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/fifth-communication-to-the-committee-of-ministers-on-judgment-implementation-o8032011.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> *Children and disability in transition in CEE/CIS and Baltic states*, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre 2005

<sup>15</sup> *School as Ghetto*, REF 2009. Available online: [http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/school\\_as\\_ghetto.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/school_as_ghetto.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>17</sup> *Still separate, still unequal: Violations of the right to education for Romani children in Slovakia*, Amnesty International 2007, available online: <http://www.right-to-education.org/sites/r2e.gn.apc.org/files/Slovakia%20Still%20Separate%20Still%20Unequal.pdf>

Within the Slovak secondary education system, there are two options available to pupils classified as mentally disabled: special technical schools (*odborné učilištia*) and practical schools. Special technical schools train mentally disabled pupils in a trade. Practical schools aim to teach simple tasks to prepare the pupil for family life, self-sufficiency, and practical work in the home.<sup>18</sup>

The Slovak government has demonstrated an awareness of problems related to special education. In 2001 the Slovak Ministry of Education issued a call to reduce the number of children in special schools (without specifying ethnicity) by better diagnosis of severe disability and introducing the concept that children with special needs could be educated within mainstream schools. Three years later, the Ministry noted the need to prevent segregated classes for Romani children within mainstream schools and to learn from projects that reintegrated Romani children into standard primary schools.

Reducing the number of Romani children attending special primary schools also figures among one of the objectives of Slovakia's National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion.<sup>19</sup> The aim is the elimination of the misdiagnosis of Romani children, with the corresponding expectation that the number of Romani children placed in special primary schools will be reduced by 15 percent by 2015. However, no plan of action has been published on how this goal will be accomplished. The Slovak coalition government's programme adopted in August 2010 included the commitment to eliminate the segregated schooling of Roma.

Despite this progress in the field of policy, Roma children are still overrepresented in special education in Slovakia. The procedures and mechanisms by which children enter and leave special education are still a barrier to actual change and educational institutions, including Special Pedagogical Advising Centres, have an interest in keeping the status quo. The negative experiences that many Roma (children and parents) have with non-Romani pupils and staff in mainstream schools, and the comforting presence of other Roma and significant efforts by school staff to create a hospitable environment in special schools and classes provides a positive incentive for enrolment in special education.

<sup>18</sup> Sbírka zákonu? Ceskoslovenské socialistické republiky 1984b, Section 31.2

<sup>19</sup> Available online: [http://www.romadecade.org/files/downloads/Decade%20Documents/Action%20Plan\\_Slovakia.pdf](http://www.romadecade.org/files/downloads/Decade%20Documents/Action%20Plan_Slovakia.pdf)

## OECD PROGRAMME FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ASSESSMENT (PISA)

According to the results of the 2009 PISA survey, there has been a downward trend across the 65 countries which took part, with two of the countries in question, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, slipping down world education rankings.

The Czech Republic is one of five OECD countries (Australia, Sweden, Austria, and Ireland) in which the quality of the overall results has dropped substantially since 2000. According to the Czech Institute for Information on Education,<sup>20</sup> in the course of the last PISA survey, the results Czech pupils attained in reading were below average.

The same applied to their Slovak counterparts.<sup>21</sup>

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### Selected countries' scores in Pisa tests—listed A–Z<sup>22</sup>

	Reading	Maths	Science
Australia	515	514	527
Czech Republic	478	493	500
England	494	493	515
Northern Ireland	499	492	511
Scotland	500	499	514
Slovakia	477	497	490
Sweden	497	494	495
Wales	476	472	496
OECD average	493	496	501

SOURCE: OECD.

For the purposes of this report on research in England, it is important to note that maths is the only field of education in which English students equalled their Czech counterparts (both scored 493) and fared slightly worse than Slovak students who scored 497.

<sup>20</sup> In the Czech Republic, the percentage of pupils with an insufficient level of reading competence has increased; these pupils could have problems later on while doing further studies or when looking for a job within the labour market. The ratio of these pupils is now above the international average and makes up for 23 percent. At the same time, it became evident that it is particularly boys who contribute to the overall deterioration of Czech pupils' results. Available online: <http://www.uiv.cz/clanek/607/1871>

<sup>21</sup> Available online: [http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/41167/3/inflation\\_predicted\\_as\\_austerity\\_bites\\_in2011.html](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/41167/3/inflation_predicted_as_austerity_bites_in2011.html)

<sup>22</sup> Available online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-11930257>

However, in reading and science, English students did much better (494 and 515 respectively) than Czech (478 and 500 respectively) or Slovak students (477 and 490). Also, English students attained better results than the OECD average in reading and science (493 and 501 respectively), whereas Czech and Slovak students' achievement was below the OECD average.

Based on the PISA 2009 report, we know that several factors contribute to a variation in student performance; such as human and financial resources available to schools, the socio-economic backgrounds of students, difference in curricula and its implementation. A significant factor is also school admission and placement policies as well. In both the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the highly selective school system is unable to provide all students with the same opportunities. In these two countries the educational system applies huge differentiation and school systems are characterized by their early selection.

Students therefore receive very different programmes and pedagogical advice. "As shown in PISA Volume II, *Overcoming Social Background*, the socio-economic context of the school in which students are enrolled tends to be much more strongly related to student learning outcomes than students' individual socioeconomic background," meaning that there are significant differences between the educational institutions and there is a strong relationship between the social-economic background of the students and the quality of the education they receive.

The strength of the relationship between performance and the socio-economic background of students and schools shows that educational systems do not yet have effective strategies to overcome the effects of disadvantaged home backgrounds and do not fully capitalise on the potentials of low socio-economic status students.

It is clear that England is by no means one of the top ranking PISA countries. However, as this research will show in the following chapters, its equality of opportunity with a near-absence of bullying and racism makes the English education system appealing to Roma students and their parents.

# METHODOLOGY

## PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The aim of the pilot research is to analyse what, if any, impact UK mainstream schooling has had on Roma pupils who were previously placed in special or *de facto* segregated schools in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In so doing, the objective of the study is threefold:

- a) to show the benefits (or disadvantages) of UK mainstream education for Roma pupils/students;
- b) to use the findings to demonstrate to all levels of government in the Czech Republic and Slovakia that Roma pupils are no different to other students and that it is economically unviable and socially detrimental to educate Roma pupils in a separate (*de facto* segregated) or special educational stream; and
- c) to identify models of good practice regarding the inclusion of Roma pupils into mainstream schooling in the UK. The study argues that these models can be disseminated and replicated elsewhere in the UK, as well as in the respective countries of origin of the Roma.

In the initial phase, desk research was conducted using existing literature on special education systems in Central and Eastern Europe, including the Roma Education Fund's 2008–11 studies, with a particular focus on the present situation in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

A set of three interview guides—one for Roma pupils, one for Roma parents and one for school and other educational staff (copies in the Annex)—were drafted by Equality with contributions and feedback from REF.

The interview guides were designed to elicit the experience and attainment of the pupils, and the contribution made by schools, agencies, and service providers to Roma pupils education needs.

Between June and August 2011, field research consisting of focus group discussions with Roma pupils and separately with Roma parents, and semi-structured interviews with education staff and other individuals were conducted in the following eight locations in England: Leicester (9–10 June), Chatham (16–17 June), Rotherham (11–13 July), Wolverhampton (4 August), Southend-on-Sea (11 August), Peterborough (12 August), London (16 August) and Derby (25–26 August). Field research was also planned for Glasgow. However this was eventually abandoned as key contacts withdrew due to the disputed planned closure of the Bilingual Support Unit at Shawlands Academy, Glasgow, which provides dedicated language support to 11–18-year-olds with little or no English, predominantly Roma.

The focus group discussions with Roma students were conducted in English: Czech and Slovak languages were resorted to very rarely and only when it was absolutely necessary.

The timing of the research presented the team with a logistical challenge in terms of gaining access to Roma pupils, Roma parents, and teachers. Since the field research coincided with the end of the school year (22 July), access to individual respondents was obtained in two principal ways: by means of contacting schools before the end of the school year (in three areas: Leicester, Chatham, and Rotherham), and by means of contacting local authorities, healthcare providers, NGOs (Wolverhampton, London and Derby) and Roma communities (Southend-on-Sea and Peterborough).

The focus group discussions at schools were organised by school staff and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. The participants were selected by the school staff on the basis that they had to be Roma and Czech or Slovak nationals. Previous experience of special or *de facto* segregated schooling was sought wherever possible. This meant that the students selected for the focus groups included those that had attended *de facto* segregated, special schools and those that attended mainstream schools. The current research is an exploratory one and the results cannot necessarily be extrapolated to the whole population of migrant Roma pupils coming from the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Nevertheless, with all the limits of the research given its exploratory character, the findings suggest tendencies that are worthy of further, more elaborated research using a scientifically-determined sample.

In the course of the field research, a total of 114 people were interviewed:<sup>23</sup>

- 61 Roma primary and secondary school students
- 28 Roma parents
- 25 school and other education staff working with Roma pupils.

The data collected was analysed and compiled in this report.

<sup>23</sup>The actual number of all the respondents was approximately 130 persons but it was not possible to include the data from one of the focus groups as the participants wanted to discuss the pressing issue of tense community relations in and the way in which it impacted on the Roma community.

Map of England showing the location of field interviews at schools



# ROMA MIGRATION TO THE UK FROM CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

The first Roma from Central and Eastern Europe came to the UK in the 1990s seeking asylum to escape widespread racial persecution and discrimination in their countries of origin.<sup>24</sup> Since the EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007, nationals coming from the new member states have been able to exercise their right to free movement. As a result, many more Roma have moved here legally to find work, equal opportunities, and a good education for their children; and to escape racism, discrimination, and the increasing number of racially motivated attacks targeting Roma.

Roma from Central and Eastern Europe have established significant communities throughout the UK, particularly in the north of England, the Midlands, Kent, and north and east London. There are also sizeable communities of Roma in Scotland (Glasgow), Wales (Cardiff), and Northern Ireland (Belfast). The largest Roma communities are Slovak, Romanian, Czech, and Polish.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the economic recession and the employment restrictions placed on the new EU member states, the number of Roma moving to the UK has steadily risen. Although it is not known how many Roma live in the UK, the best estimate is around 500,000, of which approximately 65 percent are of school age. Many Roma adults, and most Roma young people who were born or spent most of their childhood in the UK, view this country as their home and have no wish to go back to their countries of origin.<sup>26</sup>

The research findings of the 2009 study *The movement of Roma from new EU Member States: A mapping survey of A2 and A8 Roma in England (Patterns of settlement and current situation of new Roma communities in England)*<sup>27</sup> (hereafter the 2009 mapping survey) show that some of the most frequent push factors behind the recent movement of Roma to the UK are as follows:

<sup>24</sup> 2009 study *The movement of Roma from new EU Member States: A mapping survey of A2 and A8 Roma in England (Patterns of settlement and current situation of new Roma communities in England)*. Report available online: <http://equality.uk.com/resources.html>

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

- 58 percent of the respondents said that their primary motivation was work;
- 22 percent of the respondents stated they had come to the UK in search of a better life for their children (in particular, the ability to be educated in mainstream schools as opposed to a system whereby many Roma children are placed in segregated schools for children with mental and physical disabilities);
- 15 percent of the respondents listed discrimination in the country of origin as the third most important factor;
- 97 percent of all the Roma respondents claimed that their life had improved since they moved to the UK.

The so-called A8 countries are those that joined the EU in 2004 (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and the A2 are those countries that joined the EU in 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania). The research findings showed that the welcoming approach manifested in the school setting is perhaps the most significant factor appreciated by the Roma. The large majority of the Roma respondents were satisfied with the positive attitude of the school staff, equal opportunities, and the lack of segregation on the basis of their child's Roma ethnicity. The absence of racial discrimination against Roma was also noted in other areas of service provision, such as healthcare, housing, employment, and social welfare benefits. It was also noted that the Pupil Level Annual School Census presented local authorities with a unique instrument to collect data on Roma disaggregated by ethnicity. The outcomes of the research showed that where local authorities had a good idea of the size of their Roma communities, they were able to tailor services that were responsive and culturally sensitive to the Roma communities' assessed needs.<sup>28</sup>

Some important local initiatives have been undertaken in the field of education and social inclusion, whereby Roma are employed as teaching assistants and outreach/liaison staff to engage Roma families on their children's education, family health, and other service provision. The importance of these initiatives, including the Gypsy Roma Traveller History month which seems to be unique in the EU, was acknowledged by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in a report entitled '*The situation of Roma EU citizens moving to and settling in other EU Member States*'.<sup>29</sup>

The 2009 mapping study also found that many Roma in the UK worked for low wages on temporary contracts organised by gangmasters and recruitment agencies. Some agencies charged newly arrived Roma large sums for temporary work placements, completing paperwork, arranging work registration cards, bank accounts and finding accommodation. At the time that the research was undertaken, this vulnerability to labour exploitation was exacerbated by temporary employment restrictions imposed on nationals of eight of the ten countries that

<sup>28</sup> On a more critical note, the findings of the research showed that this potential was not realised fully: data on Roma was not collected efficiently even by those local authorities whose work could serve as a model of good practice. The collection of high-quality data on Roma would enable local authorities to really know the actual size of their Roma communities, and devise and implement programmes which respond to their assessed needs.

<sup>29</sup> Available online: [http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/ROMA-Movement-Comparativereport\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/ROMA-Movement-Comparativereport_en.pdf)

joined the EU in 2004 (A8 countries), as well as nationals of Romania and Bulgaria, including Roma, which acceded to the EU in January 2007 (A2 countries).

Since May 2004, A8 nationals have been able to enter and live in the UK. Nationals of A8 countries who wished to do paid work in the UK were required to register their employment under the workers registration scheme (WRS), which ended on 30 April 2011. Following 12 months of continuous employment while registered on the scheme, A8 nationals were able to gain recourse to public funds. As of 1 May 2011, nationals of the A8 countries have full access to benefits, including jobseekers allowance and income support like any other EU (or British) citizen, provided they meet the criteria of the "right to reside".<sup>30</sup> A8 nationals applying for a document certifying permanent residence in the UK must show that they have resided in accordance with the regulations for five years, including any period of time when they were required to be registered on the WRS. Since January 2007, A2 nationals (Bulgaria and Romania) have been able to enter and live in the UK, but are in effect limited to self-employment or short-term agricultural work.<sup>31</sup>

Restricted access to employment has meant that many Roma families live in poverty and substandard accommodation, often shared with other families. Some are destitute. Severe overcrowding often leads to poor health, and low school attendance and attainment by children, with substantial post-eleven drop-out rates. As the 2009 mapping study noted, "Traveller Education Support Services and Ethnic Minority Achievement Service staff members admit, however, the child's successful education goes hand in hand with their parents or carer's access to employment and other services. Since A2 and A8 Roma's access to the labour market has been restricted for a range of reasons, this has had an adverse impact on the overall situation of A2 and A8 Roma families, their children and their survival strategies."<sup>32</sup>

Although the majority of Roma children attend primary school in the UK regularly, at the secondary level the picture tends to change, particularly for Romanian and Slovak students: a high percentage drop out of secondary school to help their families earn an income or simply because the family cannot afford to pay for school meals or uniforms. However, this has been changing gradually and attendance by Roma students has been increasing, perhaps due to the fact that parents may be prosecuted for failing to make sure their children attend compulsory schooling

<sup>30</sup> "Right to residence" and "habitual residence" tests are used by the UK government to restrict access to benefits by nationals from EEA countries who live in the UK. In general, the right of residence in the UK is given to any national from another EEA country who is working in employment or as self-employed, or can prove that they can support themselves economically. The right to reside, and with it access to benefits and tax credits, is not given to an unemployed person who has yet to complete a period of 12 months of continuous registered employment. Sometimes a habitual residence test is used at an interview to check the length, continuity, and general nature of actual residence, the reasons for coming to the UK, and the claimant's future intentions.

<sup>31</sup> The current employment restrictions imposed on Romanian and Bulgarian nationals preclude recourse to public funds until the individual has worked and paid tax and national insurance for a year.

<sup>32</sup> *The movement of Roma from new EU Member States: A mapping survey of A2 and A8 Roma in England (Patterns of settlement and current situation of new Roma communities in England)*, Report available online: <http://equality.uk.com/resources.html>

on a regular basis. For a discussion on these and other related issues, please see page 42 on School and other educational staff.

Some communities have little support and are often unable to exercise their rights and entitlements as EU citizens in accessing public services because of their lack of familiarity with the British system. This is particularly worrying (to the Roma parents interviewed), as since the announcement of the Coalition Government's Spending Review in October 2010, many local authorities have expressed concern about recent reductions in funding. Already, Roma parents have seen reduced levels of outreach work provided to recently arrived Roma families. These outreach workers have often been the first and sometimes the only point of contact for the Roma. Those local authority areas where the level of service provision to Roma has hitherto been considered excellent by the Roma parents interviewed, are already seeing major consequences of the budget reductions, such as losing key staff members and funding.

Moreover, government policy measures such as stopping the Education Maintenance Allowance (a scheme in which 16–19-year-olds in education from low-income households were paid a weekly allowance) and introducing a Pupil Premium (annual payment to a school for teaching a child whose parents receive social benefits) is expected to affect all Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller students disproportionately, particularly Roma young people who already struggle to afford schooling expenses. The Pupil Premium is assessed on the pupil being in receipt of free school meals, a benefit that many Roma families have not been able to access due to employment restrictions (or the mistaken understanding among some officials and Roma parents that employment restrictions still exist for A8 nationals).

Roma students (together with other children from the Gypsy and Traveller communities) are nationally recognised by the Department for Education to be those most in need of educational support.<sup>33</sup> Many years of work around Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller educational inclusion has at last begun to bear fruit, yet these two measures, together with drastic cuts to the Traveller Education Support Service and Ethnic Minority Achievement Services, are seriously jeopardising these achievements and losing the skills and knowledge base of many dedicated workers.

<sup>33</sup> Department for Education report *Improving the outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils*. Available online: <http://www.lancsngfl.ac.uk/projects/ema/getfile.php?src=186/improving-the-outcomes-for-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-pupils.pdf&s=4e23f9bea76c67094fbd679a67fffcea>

# ROMA IN SPECIAL EDUCATION AND PRACTICAL SCHOOLS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA

The segregation of Roma in special education is well documented with empirical research data in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe such as Hungary, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Serbia, and Slovakia, but this phenomenon is likely to occur in other countries as well.

In the table below the two countries that are the focus of this chapter are compared within the regional context in regard to the classification and segregation of pupils with special education needs (SEN). As shown in the table, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary are the countries with the highest percentage of pupils enrolled or maintained in segregated special education, even after the implementation of reforms to restructure the special education needs system in the region.

In the Czech Republic and Slovakia there are about three times more pupils who are placed in separate, special education as compared with the UK system, the comparison country of this research report. As we will show below, this high percentage of pupils in special schools (or the relabelled practical schools in Czech Republic) is in part the result of the massive overrepresentation of Roma pupils among special education needs pupils.

## Classification and segregation of pupils with special educational needs

Year	Percentage of all pupils with special educational needs		Percentage of all pupils in segregated special education institutions		
	2001	2008	2001	2002–2004	2008
Czech Republic	9.8	8.6	5.0	5.0	3.5
Finland	17.8	8.0	3.7	3.6	1.3
France	3.1	2.7	2.6	2.2	0.61
Hungary	4.1	5.8	3.7	3.9	2.9
Italy	1.5	2.3	<0.5	0.5	<0.1
Slovakia	4.0	7.7	3.4	3.6	3.6
United Kingdom	3.2	2.8	1.1	1.1	1.1

SOURCE: European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education; Eurydice (Julia White, *Entry testing as a factor in overrepresentation of Romani children in special education*, Roma Education Fund, Budapest 2011)

The overrepresentation of Roma in the special school system or in special schools type is present throughout the entire region with the Czech Republic and Slovakia being prominent cases substantiated by research evidence. As has been suggested by a recent REF policy paper<sup>34</sup> in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia, and Slovakia, one of the major factors in the overrepresentation of Roma pupils in special needs education are the methodological pitfalls and biases used in testing procedures:

*"Among the roots of the broader problem of separating children into educational streams are two major methodological flaws in entry testing as practiced in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia, and Slovakia. First, only one kind of instrument is used. Second, the instruments rely on standardized measures that assume a pupil's exposure to certain cultural experiences resulting in a repertoire of knowledge and skills associated with putatively intelligent behavior, as well as a vocabulary associated with membership in the middle class. All of these countries rely heavily on at least one of two culturally and linguistically biased tests commonly used to make disability determinations (the Raven's Progressive Matrices and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children)".<sup>35</sup>*

<sup>34</sup> Julia White, *Entry testing as a factor in overrepresentation of Romani children in special education*, Roma Education Fund, Budapest 2011, document in press.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

Other important factors which contribute to the overrepresentation of Roma pupils in the special education system are related to the legacy of an over-dimensioned special education needs system, based on a medical definition of disability, as well as with a structure of incentives offered by the school system. Among the incentives offered in special education are free meals and textbooks for pupils, and the absence of fees or other financial stimulus for attending special schools. Another important factor is the fact that special schools were built in some cases inside homogenous Romani communities or near to these communities; the proximity of these institutions being one of the reasons why especially poor Romani families, when combined with other incentives, send their children there.

## CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic is a country in which the system of special needs education has traditionally played a large part. After the collapse of the communist regime there has been an increase in the ratio of pupils diagnosed with learning difficulties from 1 percent in 1975 to 2.5 percent in 1990 and up to 6.5 percent in 2005.<sup>36</sup> According to official sources, in 1999, approximately 75 percent of Roma children in the Czech Republic were transferred to or directly enrolled in special schools.<sup>37</sup>

The issue of segregation of Romani children in special remedial schools for children with mental disabilities in the Czech Republic and later on of overrepresentation in special school system started to be documented in 1996 by the European Roma Rights Center. The ERRC research in Ostrava that contributed to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) decision in the case of *D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic*, showed that Roma children were 27 times more likely to be placed in remedial special schools than non-Roma children. Although Roma represented 2.26 percent of all primary school-aged students in Ostrava, they constituted more than 50 percent of the remedial special school population.<sup>38</sup>

In 2005, as a response to the case brought before the European Court of Human Rights, changes were made to the Czech Education Act so that the former special schools become "practical primary schools", institutions supposed to be a category of mainstream primary education. Research undertaken in a sample of 20 practical primary schools by the ERRC in co-operation with the Roma Education Fund in 2008<sup>39</sup> showed that Romani children continued to be placed disproportionately in practical primary schools and that the issue of segregation

<sup>36</sup> *Advancing Education of Roma in the Czech Republic. Country Assessment and the Roma Education Fund's Strategic Directions*, Roma Education Fund, 2007, p.26. Available online: [http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/czech\\_report.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/czech_report.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Tara Bedard, *Persistent Segregation of Roma in the Czech Education System*, European Roma Rights Center, Roma Education Fund, 2008. Available online: [http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/czech\\_education\\_assessment\\_2008.rrc\\_.ref\\_new.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/czech_education_assessment_2008.rrc_.ref_new.pdf)

had not been addressed after the legislative changes. Moreover, the same research drew similar conclusions with those of ECHR: "in many cases special schools had simply been renamed 'remedial schools' or 'practical schools' without any substantial change in the composition of their teaching staff or the content of their curriculum" (*D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic* judgment 2007, paragraph 145).

ERRC and REF research in 2008 showed as well that once a child had been placed into a practical school the chances of transfer to a mainstream school were greatly reduced.<sup>40</sup>

Data from a 2008 research report commissioned by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (GAC 2009)<sup>41</sup> shows that educational disparities between Roma and non-Roma are continuing to prevail. In this regard, the GAC research found that 28 percent of Roma children are excluded from mainstream elementary schools while the percent of non-Roma attending schools outside mainstream education is by comparison 8 percent. The same research found that among Roma pupils starting the school year 2007–2008, 13 percent were enrolled in special schools in comparison with 2 percent of non-Roma pupils enrolled in special schools, hence Romani pupils are six times more likely to be enrolled in a special school than their non-Romani fellows.

## SLOVAKIA

Official data shows that in the 2007–2008 school year there were 179 special primary schools, 216 special classes in standard primary schools, and 71 special secondary schools for pupils classified with at least mild mental disability. The official data also indicates that Roma accounted for a total of 5.3 percent of pupils in special primary schools and 1.6 percent of students in special secondary schools for pupils and students (respectively) with mental disability and/or behavioural disorders in that same school year.<sup>42</sup>

In 2009 the Roma Education Fund commissioned primary field research<sup>43</sup> in order to estimate the number of Romani pupils enrolled in special education in Slovakia. The quantitative data was gathered through field research on a representative sample of 99 of Slovakia's 466 special primary schools, special classes in standard primary schools, and special secondary schools.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Results of the representative measurement of educational disparities of Roma pupils in elementary schools in Roma neighborhoods in the Czech Republic*, GAC, Prague, 2009. Available online: <http://www.gac.cz>

<sup>42</sup> Country Assessment Slovakia, Roma Education Fund, 2011, document in press.

<sup>43</sup> *School as ghetto: Systemic overrepresentation of Roma in special education in Slovakia*. Coords. Eben Friedman and Mihai Surdu. Budapest: Roma Education Fund. Available online: [http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/school\\_as\\_ghetto.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/school_as_ghetto.pdf)

The table below presents the distribution of Roma in the different types of special school education.

#### Enrollment of Roma in special education in Slovakia

	Number of pupils enrolled	Number of Romani pupils	Percent Romani pupils
Special primary schools	13,807	8,200	59.4
Special classes	5,590	4,795	85.8
Special secondary schools	5,114	1,794	35.0
Totals	24,511	14,789	60.3

SOURCE: Friedman et al. (2009, 8).

The REF study estimated that the rate of transfer from special education toward mainstream education is very low at 1.1 percent.

The school directors interviewed in the REF 2009 research mentioned that the curriculum taught in special schools or classes only covered about 60 percent of the mainstream curriculum. Some of the subjects such as biology, geography, and history are taught in special schools and classes from grade five, two years later than in mainstream schools and classes and the time allocated for these disciplines is shorter.

Moreover, the focus on special schools is on practical instruction and this fact is reflected in a six hours per week education on "industrial arts" while this type of technical education is taught for one hour per week in mainstream classes or schools.

A notable difference between the special school and mainstream curriculum is that in special classes and schools there is no teaching of foreign languages.

The study found that about half of the Romani pupils learning in special classes and schools do not complete secondary education and most of those who enter secondary education continue to be enrolled in a special class or school.





A LARGE MAJORITY OF ROMA STUDENTS SAID THEY HAD EXPERIENCED RACIST BULLYING OR SOME SORT OF VERBAL ABUSE BY THEIR NON-ROMA PEERS AT CZECH AND SLOVAK SCHOOLS, AS WELL AS DISCRIMINATORY OR UNEQUAL TREATMENT BY THEIR TEACHERS, WHO WERE ALLEGED TO HAVE PUNISHED THEM PHYSICALLY IN A NUMBER OF CASES.

# ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FROM THE PILOT STUDY

Between June and August 2011, field research was conducted at eight locations in England with Czech and Slovak Roma pupils, their parents, and school and other educational staff. An analysis of this research is divided by each of these groups.

## ROMA STUDENTS

In the course of the field research, a total of 61 Roma primary and secondary school students were interviewed, of whom 24 were males and 37 females. As for nationality, 38 of the respondents were Slovak and 23 Czech nationals.

All the respondents ascribed themselves as Roma during the interview even though in one of the eight locations, they said they preferred not to reveal their ethnicity due to local community tensions and fragile race relations with the indigenous community (for more information, see page 42 on School and other educational staff).

Most of the Slovak respondents came from Eastern Slovakia, from urban areas such as the cities of Prešov and Košice. Only 12 of the 61 respondents came from rural areas, mostly Roma settlements in Eastern Slovakia.

The regional spread of the Czech respondents was greater as they came from Northwest Bohemia, Prague, Northeast Bohemia, Northern Moravia, and Eastern Moravia. However, all of them came from urban areas.

In this pilot study there was no attempt made to select a representative sample by either social background in the Czech Republic and Slovakia or in the location of Roma children in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, there is no reason to believe that the evidence from this group of Roma children, parents, and teachers would be substantially different in other locations.

The average length of stay in the UK given by the respondents was 3.4 years, with some of the respondents having lived here for 12 years (since 1999) and some as short as under a year.

High mobility seems to be a characteristic for those living outside of London, especially among Roma families from Slovakia but also among some Roma families from the Czech Republic. For instance, while conducting interviews

in Chatham and Leicester, the researchers were able to identify in Chatham some former classmates of pupils who had been previously interviewed in Leicester.

Also, a number of respondents from Rotherham and Southend-on-Sea said they had previously lived in Peterborough, Glasgow, Tinsley (Sheffield), Bradford, Leeds, Stoke-on-Trent, and other places. The families would stay in each location for one to three years and then move on. (For a discussion regarding the influence of high mobility on school attendance, please see page 42 on School and other educational staff).

#### **Experience of schooling in the Czech Republic and Slovakia**

Of the total of 61 Roma primary and secondary school students based in the eight areas included in the survey, 17 had attended a special school, 30 a *de facto* segregated school or class, and five a predominantly Roma kindergarten in Slovakia or the Czech Republic. Only 9 of the 61 students had attended a mainstream school in the Czech Republic or Slovakia where there had been very few or no other Roma pupils.

Of the 61 student respondents, 20 attended primary school and 39 secondary school in the UK. Of the remaining two, one had left school and was unemployed and the other was on maternity leave. This means that 59 respondents were enrolled in mainstream primary and secondary schools in Key Stages 2 to 4.<sup>44</sup>

Of the 20 primary school students, three had attended a mixed mainstream school, three had been placed in a special school (two in the Czech Republic and one in Slovakia), 10 had attended a *de facto* segregated school or class in the Czech Republic or Slovakia, and four had gone to a predominantly Roma kindergarten in Slovakia.

This indicates that 17 of the 20 Roma students who were attending mainstream primary schools in the UK had been sent to a separate schooling stream in the Czech Republic or Slovakia.

Of 39 secondary school students, six had attended a mixed mainstream school in the Czech Republic or Slovakia, 12 had been sent to a special school, 20 had attended a *de facto* segregated school/class, and one had gone to a predominantly Roma kindergarten in Slovakia.

This shows that 33 of the 39 Roma students who were attending mainstream secondary schools in the UK had been sent to a separate schooling stream in the Czech Republic or Slovakia.

<sup>44</sup> From the ages of 11 to 16, [any] child [at a state school] will move through Key Stages 3 and 4. There are no national tests in Year 9. During Key Stage 4 most will work towards national qualifications—usually GCSEs.  
[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/ExamsTestsAndTheCurriculum/DG\\_10013877](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/ExamsTestsAndTheCurriculum/DG_10013877)

The two respondents who reported having left school or on maternity leave had been placed in special schools.

The most popular subjects studied by Roma students in Czech and Slovak schools included maths, science, art, and physical education; the least popular discipline was national languages, Czech or Slovak, and in particular, writing essays.

This dislike of lessons on the national language might be partially explained by the fact that all of the Slovak Roma respondents said they had always spoken Romanes at home or regarded Romanes as their main language. (By comparison, now in England they regarded English as their main language in the school setting and outside of home.)

By contrast, only 15 of the 23 Czech Roma respondents said they spoke Romanes at home or Romanes was their main language. The remaining eight respondents either claimed they only spoke some Romanes at home, mixing it with Czech, or they spoke no Romanes at home and Czech was their main language at home. (By comparison, now in England they tended to speak English only in the school setting.)

The respondents tended to miss their former classmates, friends, and relatives: relocation abroad at a young age is always problematic for any group of migrants but particularly for those who left their home country due to persecution, discrimination, or racism.

Only a small percentage of the overall cohort of Roma pupils (2 to 4 percent) at the schools surveyed were regarded as requiring special education needs (SEN).<sup>45</sup> The term "special educational needs" has a legal definition in the UK. Children with special educational needs (SENs) have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it more difficult for them to learn or access education than most children of the same age. These children may need extra or different help from that given to other children of the same age. For the majority of children, this additional support is given within a mainstream school.

If a mainstream school still cannot provide all a child's needs, the local authority may carry out a more detailed "statutory assessment" to find out what the child's special education needs are and how they can be supported. None of the group of Roma children interviewed in this pilot research have had a statutory assessment for special education needs.

### **Experience of racism and discrimination at Czech and Slovak schools**

Perhaps the most frequent reminiscence of the Czech and Slovak education systems referred to by the respondents

<sup>45</sup> See *Special education needs—A guide for parents and carers*. Available at <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/s/sen%20a%20guide%20for%20parents%20and%20carers.pdf>

was their experience of unequal, discriminatory treatment and humiliation by teachers, and racist bullying by their non-Roma peers.

The issue of corporal punishment, sometimes using a stick or a ruler and accompanied by racist insults, came up in the focus groups with Roma students in Leicester, Chatham, Rotherham, and Southend-on-Sea. Some direct accounts of these painful memories:

*"I got humiliated for being Roma. Once a teacher wrongly accused me of stealing a purse. I can still remember how I ran to my mum's work and cried and cried because I hadn't done it. Later, it was found that someone else did it but I went through hell. They thought I had done it because I was Gypsy. This is how most people still see us. I think this is one of the reasons they exclude us into separate classes and schools: they think we are inferior."*

F, 15, from the Czech Republic

*"We had racist teachers who were non-Roma and my non-Roma classmates were racist, too. There was a lot of racist bullying and abuse. As a result, I ended up fearing Gadje [non-Roma] and I didn't want to be around them. A cousin of mine who went to the same school got thrown out of the window; the non-Roma who did it threw her through a glass window from second floor and she ended up badly cut and injured. I remember that the police arrived but I don't know whether those who did it got punished."*

F, 14, from Slovakia

*"I got badly beaten by a non-Roma teacher twice and my parents went to the school to complain."*

F, 13, from the Czech Republic

*"We had a racist teacher who lied about the standard of reading of Roma children. She maintained they couldn't read when in fact they could read well. She also hit them with a stick. Roma children were held back a year or more as a result of her lying. Four of my classmates were sent to a special school."*

M, 11, from Slovakia

*"I was sent to special school because I failed to teach myself to read. I was also hit by the non-Roma teachers. I'm glad I'm now here in the UK because everyone is so helpful."*

F, 11, from Slovakia

*"They treated us, the Roma, like animals. They kept belittling us because of our complexion and our language."*

M, 13, from the Czech Republic

*"I went to a school just for Roma in Slovakia in Prešov, they were not nice, the teachers would hit us, and they didn't help us. We had not got equipment for learning there and we all knew we would not get a good education. I think I had good*

*marks but I don't really remember, I don't understand why I was sent to that school I expect it was because I was Roma. My marks are OK here not the best but OK. I like Maths and Drawing."*

F, 12, from Slovakia

#### **Attainment at UK schools**

Irrespective of the primary and secondary school students' previous education history, all of the 59 students who were enrolled in schooling in the UK at the time of the field research said they felt their attainment at UK schools ranged from average to good. A synopsis of the grading system used in the UK, and referred to in this report, is in the Annex.

The average attainment in numeracy, literacy, and science reported by the 20 primary school respondents (ages 9–11; Year 5–6) was just below average, at Level 3.<sup>46</sup> Most 11-year-olds in the UK are expected to achieve Level 4.

The average attainment in numeracy, literacy and science reported by the 39 secondary school respondents (ages 12–15; Year 7–8) was just below average, ranging from Level 3C to 4B. Most 14 year olds in the UK are expected to achieve Level 5 or 6. For a discussion about attainment by Roma students, see page 42 on School and other educational staff.

Twelve of the seventeen respondents who had been placed in a special school in Slovakia or the Czech Republic reported having been sent there after they underwent a psychological test during Year 1 or Year 2 (ages 7 and 8). They also claimed they had received very good marks at these schools, usually As and Bs, occasionally Cs, with Ds and Es awarded only very rarely. Even though they thought discipline was much stricter at Czech and Slovak schools, they said they found studying at UK schools harder. They felt the marks they received in the UK were not as good as those they had been given in the Czech Republic or Slovakia.

Fifteen of the seventeen respondents who reported having been placed in special schools said they had received English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes at UK schools. In a number of cases, there were concerns from teachers about individual student's behaviour or attention span. However, none of these cases were deemed to require special or specialist support outside mainstream schooling. (For a discussion regarding Roma children with physical disabilities, hearing/visual impairment, speech problems, and/or learning difficulties, see page 42 on School and other staff.)

<sup>46</sup> Two of six participants in a Year-6 focus group held at St Ann's Primary school in Rotherham said their attainment was at Level 1. Later, this was explained by one of the attendance officers. Both girls have been at this school just over a year and a half and initially, their had problems learning English. As a result of their not being able to understand, they found it really difficult to focus in lessons. There were issues regarding the behaviour of one of the girls who is also hyperactive. According to the officer, the girls' attainment has improved this year.

The percentage of students receiving English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes was no different for those who reported having attended a *de facto* segregated school or a mainstream school in Slovakia or the Czech Republic (90 percent). Attainment by these students was practically the same as those who had been sent to a special school. Similarly, EAL support was provided to all non-Roma students from migrant backgrounds for whom English was not their first language.

It is also interesting to note that those Roma respondents who attended a *de facto* segregated school or a mainstream school in Slovakia or the Czech Republic thought UK schools were easier than Slovak or Czech schools. They made a similar observation about discipline not being so strict in the UK. Generally, they also thought British teachers were much more helpful and willing to assist with English and other subjects.

The subjects in which the respondents felt they did well included mathematics, physical education, art, science, and Information Communications Technologies. Even though they tended to like English, too, they noted it was still causing them some problems, particularly reading, writing, and spelling.

As for the respondents future expectations, 25 did not know what they would like to do; 10 wanted to work as hairdressers, models or stewards; 7 wanted to become car mechanics, 5 wanted to go on to higher and/or university education to become social workers, police officers, doctors, or photographers; 5 wanted to become sports people; 4 wanted to work as teachers and translators/interpreters; and 3 wanted to be musicians.

In terms of the respondents' spoken English, 89 percent spoke fluent or almost fluent English. The younger the respondents were when they first came to the UK, the more quickly they were able to speak English fluently. High standards of spoken English were noted at both the primary schools surveyed in the course of the field research for this study. The focus groups were conducted in English: Czech and Slovak languages were resorted to very rarely and only when it was absolutely necessary. The respondents pointed out that they spoke English most of the time; and those who spoke Romanes at home reported gradually losing the national language of their parents (i.e., Slovak or Czech).

It was noted that all of the 61 respondents were trilingual and in some cases quadrilingual, speaking Czech or Slovak (or both), Romanes, English, and in some cases Hungarian. (For a discussion about some of the implications of multilingualism in the school setting, see page 42 on School and other educational staff.)

### **Experience of equal treatment and equal opportunities in UK schools**

Perhaps the single, most important issue that came out of the focus groups and the individual interviews conducted in the course of the field research was the respondents' impression of UK schools, the overall atmosphere at school, the feeling of being welcome there and the experience of equal treatment, equal opportunities, and the

absence of anti-Roma sentiments and racism expressed by their non-Roma peers and teachers. All the respondents said they had experienced racism at school in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. This was reiterated by the parents (see page 38 Parents).

All but two Roma students interviewed said that they preferred school in the UK and that they felt that the teachers were kind, helpful, ready, and willing to work with them on a one-to-one basis whenever necessary. They said they had been receiving help from their teachers since they started school in the UK. The respondents also appreciated their teachers' interest in their Roma ethnicity and the amount of understanding they showed.

The two Czech Roma students who indicated that they would prefer to go back because they missed school there, their friends, and old school mates, had gone to mainstream schools in the Czech Republic. In spite of missing her friends, though, one student said she had faced continuous racist comments made to her and the only other Roma girl in her school.

All of the other 59 respondents said they were accepted at UK schools by their peers and teachers really well, however difficult the first day may have been when they started a new school in a new country.

Of these 59 respondents, 21 (38 percent) said that they did not face initial hostility from the other students because of their Roma ethnicity, but rather because of their East European migrant origin. Also, a number of respondents said they had faced prejudice from their East European non-Roma peers, as well as teachers or teaching assistants. The participants of a focus group at Chatham were the only ones to mention racist bullying in and out of school. The respondents in the remaining seven locations maintained there was no racist bullying at their schools. For a discussion about local community tensions in Chatham and Rotherham, how they are reflected in the school setting, and prejudiced behaviour by some East European school staff, see page 42 on School and other educational staff.

## PARENTS

In the course of the field research, a total of 28 Roma parents were interviewed, of whom 11 were males and 17 females. As for nationality, 22 of the respondents were Slovak and six were Czech.

All but one were Roma and all of the 27 Roma respondents ascribed their Roma ethnicity. As for the parents' place of origin, 21 of them had come from urban areas in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and seven from rural areas.

It was noted that while 15 of the 22 Slovak Roma parents had come from Eastern Slovak cities of Prešov and Košice, the regional diversity of the Czech respondents was greater as they had come from more areas of the Czech Republic, including from Northwest Bohemia, Northern Moravia, and Eastern Moravia.

Only seven of the 28 Roma parents came from rural areas, usually Roma villages and settlements of Eastern Slovakia.

Fourteen of the parents had been placed in special schools in Slovakia and the Czech Republic and seven reported they had attended *de facto* segregated (predominantly Roma or Roma only) schools, while seven said they had gone to mainstream schools.

All of the respondents in this group had attended elementary schools before the collapse of Communism in Czechoslovakia in 1989, and noted (irrespective of their education history) that while they could remember that many Roma children had been automatically sent to special schools at that time, the practice seemed to have escalated in both Slovakia and the Czech Republic since the 1990s. They thought this was exacerbated by the fact that since the 1990s, the vast majority of Roma in Slovakia and the Czech Republic have lost their jobs and become socially disadvantaged: as a result, local governments were evicting them, thus creating ghettos. The creation of ghetto, *de facto* segregated schools was a logical consequence of this action, they thought.

Similar to the Roma students (see pages 32–37 of the report), the parents' impression of UK schools was a very positive one. They appreciated the overall atmosphere at school, their children's feeling of being welcome there and their experience of equal treatment, equal opportunities, and the absence of anti-Roma sentiments and racism expressed by their children's non-Roma peers and teachers, which they all said their children had experienced in various forms in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Even though all of the parents made observations about the differences between school systems (i.e., the Czech and Slovak as opposed to the British) and those who had gone to mainstream schools in Slovakia or the Czech Republic were at times somewhat critical of the level of their children's knowledge when compared to what they themselves had been taught at the same age, they appreciated the teachers' attitude to their children and said they felt that ethnic background played no role whatsoever in the way in which they were treated. They also felt that if their children were capable enough, they could achieve anything they wanted, including managerial positions from which Czech and Slovak Roma are still more or less excluded in their own countries. They all said the prospect of their children's education and employment was one of the most powerful driving forces behind their decision to move to the UK. Many of them thought it would take generations to change these practices and attitudes in Slovakia and the Czech Republic and some doubted whether they would ever change.

The parents whose children were sent to special schools or *de facto* segregated schools in the Czech Republic or Slovakia thought that their children had been sent there automatically because of their ethnicity. They felt it was a routine procedure. This feeling was particularly strong in those parents who also had been placed in special schools (see Case studies in the Annex).

*"I was sent to special school. Most of us there were Roma. I first attended an elementary school but after Year 2, the school decided to send me there. I no longer remember the details but all of my five siblings were sent there as well. We didn't complain, the teachers were quite nice to us, it was playful and we were given good marks. Looking back, I would have changed it if I could because my life has been hell. You can't do anything without qualifications. My husband was luckier: even though he was sent to the same special school, he started working with his father as soon as he finished school. Now I can see that we were not given the same chances as non-Roma children and I want better for my kids who are bright."*

F, 37, from the Czech Republic

They also believed that their children were able to study in mainstream schooling in the UK because the UK school system is multicultural and open to everyone irrespective of their race, ethnicity, and skin colour. During the interviews, many of the parents noted that the teachers and classmates in Slovakia or the Czech Republic were often hostile to their child especially if the child (or the parents) was dark-skinned.

Slovak Roma parents (and those few Czech Roma parents who spoke Romanes to their children at home) also felt that the reason why their children may have been placed into a special school was because of their insufficient knowledge of Slovak or Czech. They noted that Czech or Slovak languages were taught in kindergartens or Year 0 of elementary school where there were Roma teaching assistants, but were concerned about the over-representation of Roma in these facilities. Parallel to this observation, they nonetheless noted that the fact that their children spoke very little or no English when they started school in the UK did not prevent them from attending mainstream schooling in the UK.

The following testimonies illustrate the experiences of some of the Roma parents:..

*"My daughter's very light skinned but I'm very dark. I remember that until the moment my daughter's former classmates and teacher saw me, she was more or less OK and wasn't getting any racist abuse. One day, I came to collect her from school. I went directly from work and as I was working at a construction site at that time, my clothes were stained. Since that time, she told me her classmates started to call her a Gypsy, in fact some suggested that we were dirty. Also, at one point, there was lice in the school. Who do you think the director wrote to first? Us. And the way he put it was suggesting that the lice may have come from us. I got very offended and went to talk to him. He apologised in the end but the racist abuse didn't stop because no one explained it to my daughter's classmates."*

M, 34, from the Czech Republic

*"I used to work as a teaching assistant at an elementary school in Prešov before coming here [UK]. Although it was a mainstream elementary school, there were two predominantly Roma classes which were initially set up as an alternative to the Roma children being sent to special school. The headteacher then decided to disperse the Roma among the rest of the students and even though there were many problems associated with this, including resentment from the non-Roma students' parents,*

*it was quite successful in the end. A colleague of mine was known not to like Roma, especially if they were not clean and intelligent. I know from experience that the number of Roma children who have been placed into special schools in Slovakia is disproportionately high. A cousin of mine told me that her daughter was sent to special school just because she had to repeat a year. It is true that my niece is slower but this could be countered if the teachers paid more attention to her. And worked with her on a one-to-one basis. Psychologists can also become a problem as they tend to recommend Roma children for special schools immediately."*

F, 34, from Slovakia

All of the parents who had been sent to special school or a *de facto* segregated school said they found it difficult to monitor their children's attainment at school for two main reasons: they couldn't speak or read English well, and even when they had an interpreter, they found it difficult to understand the system. Even though they said most teaching and learning was done at school and there was less homework, they felt there was very little they could help their children with because what they had been taught at special schools was insufficient.

A similar frustration regarding a lack of English and reduced ability to help their children study at home was expressed by the remaining parents who said they had attended mainstream school. All of them said, however, that they would welcome the opportunity to study English to be able to help their children and to improve their knowledge of English in order to communicate with the school staff or with their British colleagues or neighbours. Parents attending the local complementary (extended) school for Czech and Slovak Roma parents in Leicester, recently launched by Babington College staff and attended by approximately 80 Czech and Slovak Roma parents (see page 42 on School and other educational staff of the report), were already learning English there.

All of the parents believed that in contrast to the Czech and Slovak mainstream school systems, the UK mainstream school system was open to everyone without racial discrimination. Other observations regarding the Czech and Slovak school systems were made in relation to special school teachers in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Parallel to their memories of teachers who were unkind to Roma, the parents who had attended special schools also recalled very kind teachers who had treated them well; they believed that it was the system of excluding Roma children from mainstream education which was to blame, not the teachers.

A number of parents in two locations noted that the local schools their children attended employed some East European non-Roma staff who often treated their children differently to non-Roma children and therefore seemed to be prejudiced against Roma. In one case, the family (which was of mixed ethnicity, one of the parents was non-Roma) believed that a staff member at a local school was picking on their daughter and other Roma students by treating them unjustly and unfairly. The fact that there were problems with the person's racist behaviour towards the Roma was confirmed by a local Ethnic Minority Achievement consultant.



IN THE UK, NONE OF THE STUDENTS INTERVIEWED HAVE HAD A STATUTORY ASSESSMENT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN) — A MORE DETAILED ANALYSIS THAT IS REQUIRED WHEN A MAINSTREAM SCHOOL CANNOT PROVIDE ALL THE HELP A CHILD NEEDS.



A similar case was mentioned by another family whose daughter suffered from a disability. According to the father, a staff member at the school disregarded the fact that the daughter had hearing difficulties even though the school had been notified of this. He maintained that other Roma families had complained about the same person and her attitude to Roma children.

## SCHOOL AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL STAFF

In the course of the field research, a total of 25 school and other educational staff were interviewed who work with Czech and Slovak Roma children in and out of the school setting in the eight areas surveyed.

Of the total, thirteen were British, eight of Eastern European non-Roma origin and four of Eastern European Roma origin.<sup>47</sup>

Eight of the staff were male while 17 were female.

### **Leicester**

The field research in Leicester took place on 9 and 10 June 2011 at the local comprehensive school Babington Community Technology College.<sup>48</sup> At the end of the 2010–11 school year, the secondary school, which has a total of approximately 800 students on roll, had 57 Slovak, Czech and Romanian Roma students on roll. All of them ascribed themselves as Roma.

A teacher for ethnic minority attainment informed the research team that “according to last year’s GCSE statistics, no Roma pupil left year 11 without five examination passes at A-G. All had been in the country less than two years.”

*“This year, nine Roma pupils left year 11 and they have all been in the UK and our school less than three years. Two have gained 5+ passes grade A\*-C at GCSE (not all included Maths and English), one pupil has 4 A\*-C passes. The other six will all leave with more than 5A\*-G. However, when we look at our current year 10 (now) which has 13 percent Roma pupils, we believe we have several pupils who will leave with 5A\*-C with English and Maths which is what is required for university entry.”*

<sup>47</sup> Babington College, Leicester, employs a Slovak/Czech Roma student tutor/liaison officer and a Slovak non-Roma attendance officer; Bishop of Rochester Academy, Chatham, employs one Polish non-Roma and three Slovak non-Roma staff members; St Ann’s Primary School employs a Roma teaching assistant; the West Midlands Consortium employs two Roma community liaison workers; NHS Derby.

<sup>48</sup> Babington is a specialist technology college and has been a National Challenge School since June 2008. More than half of the students are from a diverse range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The ethnic profile has changed considerably since the last inspection to include a number of Somali, Czech, and Slovak Roma students. Just under half of students do not have English as a first language; 43 different languages are spoken in the college. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is high at 40 percent. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high and the number of students with statements is well above average. Mobility is high, although gradually reducing. Available online: <http://schooletc.co.uk/school-babington-community-technology-college-120294>

This was supported by the school's Roma student tutor and liaison officer who noted that one of the Roma students had the best attainment in maths in the whole of Year 9 and ten other Roma students attained similar results. She believed that these 11 students (20 percent), and possibly more, would be able to go on to higher/tertiary education.

According to the teacher for ethnic minority attainment, of the total of 57 Roma students, 13 (24 percent) were on the special needs register but only two had full statements. The others would be classed as having mild learning difficulties associated with prior low levels of literacy. Their academic skills would have been considered poor at the time of their arrival; the school understands that this is due to low prior attainment and expectations and not low cognitive ability. However, in the three years of working with 100 Roma pupils, the school had come across only two Roma students (2 percent) who needed to attend a special school because their school was unable to meet their needs. He added that they were aware that Roma pupils are routinely sent to Special Education Needs schools in certain countries but chose not to ask about this when they joined the school and just set high expectations with staff and pupils from day one.

According to the Roma student tutor and liaison officer, the school often came across cases of Roma children who had been placed in special school or *de facto* segregated school or classes in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Even though some of the parents may have decided not to mention it at the initial interview, the school would find out gradually in the course of the enrolment process. She understood that none of the students at Babington suffered from any form of mental disability; nonetheless, she claimed that some of their students (approximately 23), who came from very deprived backgrounds in Eastern Slovakia, were academically weak when they started at Babington. She believed this was due to the fact that not enough attention had been paid to them by teachers in Slovakia and the Czech Republic and the fact that their parents had had no education themselves. As a result, she felt the children had trouble thinking logically and lacked language skills when starting school in the UK. However, some of the students at Babington attended school for the first time in the UK as they had not enrolled at school in Slovakia at the age of seven.

In her opinion, it was important for Roma families to focus on their present lives in the UK where the school system offers their children a multicultural approach, equal opportunities, and more attention from teachers.

As for social cohesion issues in the school setting, language barriers were noted to be still a problem between the British and some of the Slovak students. (She believed the aspect of the Roma students' ethnicity played no role in this whatsoever as the main bone of contention was their Slovak nationality: i.e., British versus migrant, East European, non-British.) However, according to her, this has been improving for the past two years thanks to a number of teachers who have been spending a lot of time with the Slovak Roma students doing music, sports, and other activities and have encouraged them to take pride in their Slovak/Roma identity.

Attendance was noted to be another issue for a number of Roma families even though this has been improving largely thanks to good communication with the school as well as due to the fact that the vast majority of the Roma families are interested in their children's education: better education was one of the main driving forces when deciding to leave Slovakia or the Czech Republic.

Currently, the average attendance for Roma pupils at Babington is approximately 90 percent which is 4 percent below the national standard set by law (i.e., 94 percent). At the same time, attendance for 32 of the 54 Roma students is above 90 percent. Two of the main reasons for families' failure to attain the minimum requirement (94 percent) are, according to her, poverty and high mobility. As Babington is located a distance away from where most of the Roma families live, commuting becomes very expensive and some families are unable to pay for the bus fare (GBP 23 per month, according to one Roma parent who is currently unemployed). However, the liaison officer has been able to improve attendance by most of the Roma students since, according to her, "she has been driving around and fetching those students who did not turn up in the morning".

According to the school's pastoral worker, none of the Roma students at Babington could be called special needs pupils apart from their lack of English and some catching up. The school offers a lot of support to the pupils and to their parents and does not consider that their limited English classifies them as special needs students. All the students at Babington can have some teaching in the *head-start* unit to help with English and other learning issues, which most of the Roma children attend once or twice a week, but only if they need to.

*"I do not see any difference between the Roma pupils and the non-Roma ones in terms of their ability or their potential, it is just a question of catching up. After a year or so they are at the same level as their peer group. They do tend to stick together and speak in Romanes, which can seem a bit exclusive to some outsiders. Having such a large Roma cohort has been interesting and I think they have brought a lot of new ideas into the school, certainly they have livened things up and they are very talented at music and dance. We have had some very good performances which the rest of the school really enjoy."<sup>49</sup>*

The research team at Equality were invited to participate in the school's Roma Enrichment Day on 10 June as part of the annual celebration of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) History Month. On that day, all the school got together to celebrate Roma, their culture, history, and language, in order to make non-Roma students understand and appreciate the various ways in which the Roma have enriched the dominant cultures in which they have lived over the past thousand years, since their arrival from India. This was done by a series of workshops: one on Romanes in which the participants learnt basic phrases in Romanes; one on the history of Roma, the traditions, culture, and symbols (i.e., the Roma flag); a workshop on storytelling by Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers and how

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Babington College's pastoral worker; 10 June 2011.

they came to the UK in the 15<sup>th</sup> century; a workshop on Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller drawing and painting; and a workshop on building temporary wooden dwellings. All the students at Babington were required to attend these workshops in order to learn something about the various GRT communities living in the UK.

The whole school then assembled in the school theatre and watched performances by a Roma music and dance group. The school's music teacher accompanied the performance with commentary on the history of Roma music and the contribution made by Roma musicians such as Django Reinhardt.

On 9 June 2011, the research team also visited the local complementary (extended) school for Czech and Slovak Roma parents. The school had been recently launched by Babington College staff, supported by their Roma teaching assistant and a team of English as a second language (ESOL) teachers from the local Further Education college. The extended school, which opens every Thursday from 4 to 6 pm, currently offers basic numeracy, literacy and English language classes to approximately 80 Czech and Slovak Roma parents. Some of the parents interviewed for this study pointed out that the number of Roma children placed in special or *de facto* segregated education in Slovakia and the Czech Republic was disproportionately higher than those of non-Roma children. (see page 38 on Parents.)

### **Chatham**

The field research took place on 16 and 17 June 2011. On the first day, the research team conducted focus groups and interviews with parents, students, and the school staff at the Bishop of Rochester Academy (BORA).

BORA is a new Church of England secondary school which was established in September 2010 as a merger of two schools: Medway Community College and Chatham South School. The beginnings of the school have been accompanied by a number of controversies, including the suspension of the former principal in April 2011<sup>50</sup> and a higher than average number of permanent exclusions.<sup>51</sup>

According to a senior staff member, since its establishment, the school has been seen to be sympathetic to Roma students by enrolling substantial numbers of them; as a result, it has become very unpopular with non-Roma parents, particularly in 2010–11. Previously, they had only one or two new pupils a month starting school there; this year, the numbers have increased substantially.

<sup>50</sup> Available online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-12987875>

<sup>51</sup> Available online: [http://www.kentononline.co.uk/medway\\_messenger/news/2011/may/20/exclusion\\_zone.aspx](http://www.kentononline.co.uk/medway_messenger/news/2011/may/20/exclusion_zone.aspx),  
[http://www.kentononline.co.uk/medway\\_messenger/news/2011/march/27/schoolgirl\\_fight.aspx](http://www.kentononline.co.uk/medway_messenger/news/2011/march/27/schoolgirl_fight.aspx)

There are 76 Roma pupils enrolled at BORA. The school employs one Polish non-Roma English as an Additional Language (EAL) teaching assistant, one Slovak non-Roma maths teaching assistant, a Slovak non-Roma attendance officer, and a Slovak non-Roma family liaison worker (this post is co-funded by Medway Council).

During a focus group with a senior staff member, the attendance officer, the community liaison worker, the two teaching assistants, and a project coordinator from Medway Council, it was noted that community and race relations have been tense since the arrival of the Slovak Roma. It was felt that this was due to the indigenous community's resentment to the presence of all or any Eastern European migrants. Socially and economically, Chatham is a very deprived area and social cohesion has been an issue there for a long time. In and out of the school setting, racism has been a problem: the indigenous students were said to refer to the Slovak Roma students as "Kosovan" for some reason. There was an incident that was reported as racist involving an English pupil attacking a Roma student.

Generally, according to the Polish and Slovak non-Roma staff, there were issues with literacy levels, discipline, truancy and attendance (which was at 72 percent) of the Roma students. Three of the Roma students were disabled. None of the Roma students were registered as having special education needs. In spite of the fact that the staff thought many of the Roma students were seriously underachieving, according to them there were some who were getting into high assessment groups. In fact, they felt 26 percent of the 76 Roma students would be able to go on to further education. Furthermore, 15 percent of the students were thought to have made a lot of progress in English. The staff thought the subjects the Roma students generally did well at included maths and music while they did not do so well at physical education and English. However, it was noted that Roma boys were very good at football: in fact, the school was helping them to run a football club.

In the senior staff member's opinion, there were a lot of Roma students at BORA who had been sent to special schools or *de facto* segregated schools in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Questions on the student's education history was part of the enrolment process.

The school provided a number of out-of-school activities for the Roma students organised by the Slovak liaison worker who had a very good relationship with the predominantly Slovak Roma (and some Czech Roma) students and their parents. The activities included a football club and a Roma dance group which has been performing at various events in and out of Medway.

Very early on, it became clear that due to its very short experience of working with Roma students, the school, with a substantial cohort of recently arrived Roma students, relied heavily on its East European staff when assessing the Roma students and their abilities. The vast majority of the Roma students were considered to have insufficient levels of English. During the focus group with the staff members, the researchers highlighted that

with a few exceptions, most of the Roma students seemed to have been put into an English as an Additional Language (EAL) unit separated from other, non-Roma students. This appeared strange as according to the headteacher at Luton Junior School, which is one of BORA's primary feeder schools, those children who had previously studied at Luton left the school with fluent (or almost fluent) English and highly improved attainment in literacy, maths, and science. The researchers also noted that the students said that they were not receiving adequate instruction and support.

The staff admitted there were issues regarding community cohesion and expressions of racism among the non-Roma pupils aimed at Roma and other ethnic minority pupils that was having a negative impact on attainment and discipline. However, it was not apparent that the matter was being actively dealt with. There were also some problems with the Roma pupils, particularly the boys and their sexual behaviour that was deemed inappropriate for their age.

The staff also expressed their concerns about the lack of engagement from Roma parents. This was supported by the AIMER project coordinator who said that there had been efforts to offer the parents literacy and language classes but this had apparently failed. The researchers noted that it was interesting to compare this situation with the complementary school for Roma parents in Leicester which was popular and well attended. Moreover, some of the Roma who lived in Leicester had previously lived in Chatham. It was suggested that in order to improve the situation in Chatham, BORA school staff should visit Babington Community Technology College in order to exchange ideas and share knowledge.

On 17 June 2011, the researchers visited Luton Junior School,<sup>52</sup> a primary school which has 51 mostly Slovak and some Czech Roma pupils on its roll. Due to the Roma communities' high mobility, the numbers were said to be very fluid.<sup>53</sup> According to the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, the school has one Roma student for whom her parents were trying to get special support. This amounted to 4 percent of all the Roma students enrolled there.

<sup>52</sup> The school is slightly smaller than average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities is well above average and has increased to 50 percent. Pupils' needs link largely to social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of pupils leaving and entering the school throughout the school year is extremely high. At the time of the last inspection, it was identified that the school's intake had altered considerably and it continues to alter week by week. Currently, just over half of all pupils are of White British heritage and close to half come from minority ethnic groups. An exceptionally high proportion of pupils are new to education and often speak very little or no English. The proportion of pupils from Eastern European backgrounds has more than doubled since the last inspection; many join the school in Years 5 and 6, are of Slovakian or Gypsy Roma heritages, and have not attended school before. Available online: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/filedownloading/?id=145867&type=1&refer=o>

<sup>53</sup> In Chatham, the research team were able to identify relatives and friends of some of the students interviewed during the field research in Leicester.

Luton Junior School has been receiving increasing numbers of Roma students since 2007: according to staff, "their EAL provision rose from the original 1.6 percent to 22 percent in a week".<sup>54</sup> The arrival of this substantial number of Roma students has resulted in tense relationships with the indigenous students and their parents, who were resentful of the fact that there was such a large group who had arrived at the same time. The Roma students "stood out", because they were isolated, did not know how to play in the playground, and only spoke Romanes among themselves. This led to a number of incidents in the playground targeting the Roma, including one case recorded as a racially motivated attack by a non-Roma English boy physically assaulting a Roma boy. The attacker has been permanently excluded from the school.

However, over the course of the past four years, community cohesion at the school has been improving and the non-Roma English (and other) children have gradually come to understand, recognise, and appreciate their Roma classmates' skills and abilities which include dexterity in dance and gymnastics and special talents in maths. Also, the school staff have been organising events for the students to celebrate and encourage diversity and acceptance of the Roma's cultural heritage. Every term, the school holds a 'Language of the term' event which was Slovak at one point, with a special focus on Roma. The staff maintained that after the event, the Roma's confidence shot up and it encouraged their parents to get more involved. According to the headteacher, even though there is a persisting language barrier, the Roma parents (who heavily rely on interpreters) now come to the school on a daily basis and get involved in both in-school and out-of-school activities, which was rare at the beginning. This has been also helped by the fact that the school has a policy of Free School Meals entitlement for all Roma students.

In order to accommodate the needs of the increasing number of Roma students at Luton, the school has been given additional finance by Medway Council which is funding the post of an EAL teacher as part of the AIMER project.<sup>55</sup> She currently teaches maths to 12 Roma students and literacy to 14 Roma students. The school also employs a Polish non-Roma liaison officer/teaching assistant who has gained a lot of confidence from the Roma students and their parents.

In the three staff members' view, many Roma students have made very good progress in Year 5 and 6 due to the school's scheme of pre-teaching vocabulary.<sup>56</sup> In fact, according to their results, most of the students were meeting national standards for Year 5 and 6. In this respect, Key Stage 2 (ages 8 to 11) is the most important preparation point in the English education system. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher thought that none of the students

<sup>54</sup> Interview with the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher at Junion Luton School, Chatham, 17 June 2011.

<sup>55</sup> The AIMER Project (Achieving the Integration of Migrant Communities and Ethnic Residents) involves partners from UK, France, and Belgium. It is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) within the INTERREG IV A 2 Seas Programme. The main aim of the project is to integrate migrant communities and the host countries in the UK, France, and Belgium. Available online: [http://www.aimerproject.eu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=35&Itemid=1&lang=en](http://www.aimerproject.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35&Itemid=1&lang=en)

<sup>56</sup> Pre-teach vocabulary: teaching key vocabulary words prior to working with the lesson or unit. Available online: <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/nceo/presentations/NCEO-LEP-IEP-ASCDGlossary.pdf>

Pre-teaching vocabulary before meeting it in a text, for example key words such as technical terms, or words in unfamiliar contexts. Available online: [https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/TEV\\_A4.pdf](https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/TEV_A4.pdf)

they had on roll suffered from any kind of mental disability and believed that if adequate attention was given to them by the school staff, all of them would be able to go on to secondary and tertiary education successfully.

Nonetheless, there were a few cases where a student was not making the expected progress in Year 3. According to the school staff, this was down to poor attendance and frequent tardiness, also to the fact that they had no previous experience of schooling and low expectations among some of the parents. The attendance officer provided the researchers with the following figures on their Roma student's attendance:

- Unauthorised absence: 6.1 percent for Roma and 0.9 percent for other pupils
- Overall attendance: 90.4 percent for Roma and 95.1 percent for other pupils
- Lateness: 3.6 percent for Roma and 1.4 percent for other pupils.

### **Rotherham**

On 11 and 13 July 2011, field research was undertaken at St Ann's Junior and Infant School<sup>57</sup> and Winterhill Secondary School.<sup>58</sup>

At the time of the field research, there were 78 students on roll at St Ann's Junior and Infant School, and 80 plus students on roll at Winterhill School, all of whom ascribed as Roma.

St Ann's Junior and Infant School has 54 Slovak and 22 Czech Roma students (and two Romanian Roma students who did not attend school regularly). According to the learning mentors, the Czech and Slovak Roma students' attendance was improving hugely: one of them had 100 percent attendance. The same applied to their attainment: according to their records which are disaggregated by ethnicity, the Roma are the fastest achieving group among all the different ethnic groups at St Ann's Junior and Infant School at which 43 different languages are spoken.

Eleven years ago, 69 percent of St Ann's Junior and Infant School's students were of Asian origin; however, over the past four years, this has changed dramatically: the Roma now represent more than half of the school's total

<sup>57</sup> St Ann's Junior and Infant School is a large school in an urban setting. Its pupils come from a very wide cultural mix; between them, they speak over 20 different languages at home. The school has admitted a number of refugees and asylum seekers in recent years and more recently a significant number of children from Eastern Europe. These include a significant number of Gypsy, Roma, and Travellers whose attendance is irregular. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to that in most schools, but the proportion at an early stage of speaking English is very high. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is also very high. The school has gained a Healthy Schools, Artsmark Gold, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Investors in People, and two Leading Aspect awards. Available online: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/filedownloading/?id=966523&type=1&refer=>

<sup>58</sup> Winterhill School is a much larger than average secondary school, which mainly serves the wards of Rotherham West and Keppel. The proportion of students who are entitled to a free school meal is larger than the national average. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average and has risen by seven percentage points in the past three years. However, the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The percentage of students who speak English as an additional language, although below the national average, has almost doubled in the past three years. The school is a specialist technology college. The school was served with a notice to improve in January 2009 because the standards reached by students at the end of Key Stage 4 were too low and students were making inadequate progress. Available online: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/filedownloading/?id=950407&type=1&refer=>

number of students (approximately 140). It was noted that community tensions, which have been present in Rotherham for many years, but particularly since the arrival of more sizeable groups of Roma, were sometimes spilling into the school setting.

According to the staff, a small number of pupils have a range of disabilities. However, these were dealt with within mainstream education and none of them had a statement of special education needs.

During a focus group with the two learning mentors, the headteacher and an education welfare officer (EAL) from Rotherham's Children and Young People's Services, it was noted that a number of the school's Roma students had come from highly excluded Roma settlements in Eastern Slovakia. These students came with very little or no history of attending school, and therefore with very low ambitions and expectations. This was not helped by the fact that their parents had had very little or no educational history or had been placed in special schools which meant they could not help or motivate their children. Yet, according to the participants, although problems persisted with sending children to school on a regular basis, this had improved tremendously over the past two years and most Roma parents now appreciate the benefits of education. The school has been trying to motivate the parents by providing toiletries to the families free of charge: it had been noted that some of the most deprived families had had very poor hygiene and dental care habits when they arrived in the UK as they had often come from dwellings with no running water or toilets.

The school also employs a Roma teaching assistant who was interviewed by the researchers. According to her, there were differences among the various national groups of Roma at the school and even though she was aware of a number of students with hearing problems, physical disabilities, speech or learning difficulties, and behavioural issues, she could appreciate the fact that all of these pupils were now being educated within mainstream schooling in the UK. In her experience, most Roma children were sent to either special or *de facto* segregated schools in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. She said that she used to go to elementary school in Usti nad Labem. There they had a career adviser who did not treat Roma equally. She wanted to go on to secondary school but was not allowed to. In the end, at the age of 17, she migrated to the UK and sought political asylum here. She noted that had she not done so, she would have probably ended up unemployed and reliant on social assistance whereas here, she was able to do this prestigious job.

On 13 July 2011, the research team visited Winterhill secondary school which has more than 85 Roma on roll who make up 18 percent of the total number of students who come from more than 30 different national groups. The vast majority of the Roma students are of Slovak origin. According to two members of staff, the school comes across cases of Roma who had been sent to special or *de facto* segregated schools in Slovakia or the Czech Republic when asking about previous education history as part of the admission process.

According to the interviewees, at the time of enrolment into Winterhill School, five (6 percent) of their Roma students had learning difficulties and lacked some social skills but were still educated within mainstream schooling. One of the five Roma students suffered from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) but none of them suffered from any form of mental disability.

According to Rotherham's EAL curriculum adviser for primary schools who participated in the focus group, there was a case of a 14-year-old deaf Slovak Roma girl in Rotherham who had never been to school, had never had her ears tested, and had never worn a hearing aid until she was given this in the UK for the first time. The Curriculum Adviser worked in close cooperation with the parents: in the end, they actively cooperated with her and even agreed to their daughter being sent to a special school for the deaf. She has been attending school successfully and is now enrolled in college. According to the adviser, there were a number of isolated cases of blind or deaf Roma children who were either sent to a special school for the deaf or the blind, or attended an integrated hearing/visual impairment unit in a mainstream setting.

During the focus group, the issue of community tensions came up again. As in the case of St Ann's Junior and Infant School, the staff felt it was spilling over into the school setting. In Rotherham, over the past seven years, community relations have been tense particularly among the Asian and Roma groups who were settling in areas populated predominantly by settled or semi-settled Asian communities. The staff also said that some Roma families were exacerbating this by moving houses every six months and not paying council tax. As a result, relations between Asian and Roma students were tense at school but this was dealt with in the school. The school had a well-developed community cohesion action plan and most of the activities focusing at improving relationships among students and tackling racism were funded from the 'Go for it' funding stream.<sup>59</sup> The staff underwent in-house training, and as part of the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller History Month, they had school days on Roma culture, traditions, history, and identity, including classes on Roma traditional folk tales and displays with images and captions in Romanes and Slovak or Czech. They had classes for Roma parents. The school also ran a programme of team building with the local football club. This was also helped by the fact that the school's headteacher went out of his way to talk to the Roma students in the school corridors and support them.

The school faced particular challenges with Roma parents: engaging, involving, and supporting them and with poor school attendance of pupils, which was at 74 percent but was improving (as opposed to the overall attendance of 93 percent) due to both supportive and punitive measures. Nonetheless, the staff felt that now was the time when their Roma students had started to make visible progress: their attainment started to reach Level 4 this year, even for some of the weaker students who were integrated in higher-level classes and were catching up with the rest of the class. Generally, their Roma students were very good at maths and science, practical skills (hair

<sup>59</sup> Available online: <http://www.stlouisrcc.bucks.sch.uk/article.aspx?id=439>

and beauty), performing arts (music and dance), and the school focused on providing them with ESOL classes instead of GCSE. A Year-10 Roma student was doing his apprenticeship at Rotherham Football Club. Overall, they believed that in the future, 10 percent of their Roma student cohort might go on to higher and university education even though they felt it was still early days.

### **Wolverhampton**

On 4 August, field research was undertaken in Wolverhampton at the premises of the West Midlands Consortium. Since EU accession in 2004, the number of Czech and Slovak Roma moving into Wolverhampton has been increasing steadily and according to a local Traveller teacher who has been working with Czech and Slovak Roma, there were approximately 500 Roma children registered with schools in Wolverhampton who ascribed themselves as Roma. He nonetheless believed that the real number was probably in the region of 700 or more.

The Traveller teacher was aware of the 2007 judgement by the European Court of Human Rights and the sensitivities surrounding the issue of special and *de facto* segregated schools in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In fact, the West Midlands Consortium was employing a Roma school liaison worker who had been sent to a special school in the Czech Republic and was now working in conjunction with a number of Wolverhampton-based primary and secondary schools.

According to the Traveller teacher, some of the local schools with Roma pupils on roll were still struggling to understand who the Roma are, their cultural background, and the political and socio-economic circumstances from which the Roma families came from. He believed that there was still, need for teacher training and awareness raising on various aspects of Roma identity, culture, and language, particularly in the school setting and in those agencies working with Roma children (i.e., social services). He also thought that more information was necessary about the pupils' education history in order for British school staff to understand the specific experience of Roma children who had been unlawfully sent to a special or *de facto* segregated school in the Czech Republic or Slovakia and who were studying in mainstream education in the UK. He thought it ironic that these same children were now studying in English.

In fact, in his opinion, the issue of languages was a very topical one considering the fact that most Roma children in the UK are multilingual. He took the view that multilingualism is a gift but it can also become a burden if unrecognised and properly taken care of by professionals in the school setting. The Traveller teacher believed that some school and other staff still failed to recognise that recently arrived Roma pupils may initially struggle not just with English, but within the whole linguistic environment in which they are expected to operate. That entails speaking English in the school setting or to English-speaking friends, Romanes to friends in the playground; and not always the same dialect, Romanes and/or Czech and/or Slovak at home. He claimed that his service (i.e., the West Midlands Consortium) has repeatedly been called upon by a number of local primary and secondary schools with Roma students on roll, using the knowledge and experience of their two Roma School Liaison Officers.

In one case, he believed that a Czech Roma primary school pupil was underachieving for a brief period of time for precisely the same reason: the school failing to recognise the complexity of the linguistic milieu in which he was operating.

### **Derby**

On 25 August, Equality researchers conducted field research in Derby. They were helped by a local Community Support Worker of the National Health Service (NHS) Assertive Outreach Team.

For the past seven years, Derby's Roma community has been growing; at the moment, outside Greater London, it has one of the largest Roma communities in the UK.

The NHS team, which is based at the local Primary Care Trust, provides holistic support centred on the general area of healthcare. Multi-agency working has been highly efficient in Derby, involving the City Council noise management team, Family Action, and the local Education Service for Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers to which healthcare workers have been referring and signposting their Roma clients.

The community support worker, who at the time of our visit worked with approximately 20 Roma children, was aware of the fact that a disproportionate number of Czech and Slovak Roma pupils had been sent to special or *de facto* segregated schools in their home countries. He noted that most of his Roma friends and acquaintances had been sent to special schools in spite of the fact that they did not suffer from any kind of mental disability. As a person who in his previous capacity of a senior support worker in the Czech Republic also worked with people with learning disabilities, he believed that none of the Roma children he worked with in the UK would be assessed as having special education needs. However, he was aware of at least five Roma children who had been sent to a special or *de facto* segregated school in Slovakia or the Czech Republic and were studying in mainstream schooling in the UK. He doubted that any of these children were mentally disabled; only they needed a little extra attention from teachers and other school staff to help them catch up. He claimed that some of them were slightly hyperactive and there was a higher than average incidence of hearing problems (and very poor dental hygiene); nonetheless, he confirmed that even these five or so children were being educated in mainstream schools.

He also noted that he came across cases of East Slovak Roma children who had been prescribed medicines by Slovak psychiatrists; some of these children had been sent to special schools, based on psychological assessment according to which they suffered from behavioural problems. Although he felt that the Roma teenagers he worked with could get restless and hyperactive at times, particularly around the time of puberty, he considered that the children concerned were perfectly capable of functioning in mainstream settings without the prescribed medicine, in just the same way as their non-Roma peers.



MOST OF THE ROMA STUDENTS INTERVIEWED IN THE COURSE OF THE RESEARCH SAID THEY PREFERRED SCHOOL IN THE UK BECAUSE OF THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO THEM AND THE ABSENCE OF RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION AT UK SCHOOLS. THIS VIEW WAS CONCURRED BY THE PARENTS INTERVIEWED DURING THIS STUDY, WHO VALUED THE ABSENCE OF DISCRIMINATION, RACISM, AND ANTI-GYPSYISM IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE UK. ALL OF THEM BELIEVED THEIR CHILDREN'S CHANCES TO SUCCEED LATER ON IN LIFE WERE MUCH BETTER HERE IN THE UK THAN IN SLOVAKIA AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC.

# CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the study have shown that overall, 85 percent of all the Roma pupils interviewed who currently study in mainstream schooling in the UK had been previously placed in a special school or class, a *de facto* segregated (i.e., Roma only) school or a predominantly Roma kindergarten in the Czech Republic or Slovakia. There was no difference in this figure of 85 percent between those that were attending primary school and those attending secondary school.

Only a small percentage of the overall cohort of Roma pupils (2 to 4 percent) at the UK schools surveyed were regarded as requiring special education needs (SEN) because of learning difficulties or disabilities that made it more difficult for them to learn or access education than most children of the same age. For these Roma pupils, this extra or different help is given within the mainstream school. In the UK, none of the students interviewed have had a statutory assessment for special education needs (SEN), a more detailed analysis that is required when a mainstream school cannot provide all the help a child needs. A high percentage of recently arrived Roma pupils (90 percent) received English as an Additional Language (EAL) support, as did their recently arrived non-Roma peers of different national or ethnic backgrounds for whom English was a second language.

Most British professionals working with Roma in the field of education who were interviewed are aware of the high percentage of Roma representation in *de facto* segregated or special schools in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. They regarded this as a remarkable practice.

Evidence from the study showed that the more the Roma pupils were integrated within classes and schools, the fewer problems existed both in and out of school in terms of community cohesion. This contrasts with the view of the majority of Roma students that they had experienced racist bullying or some sort of verbal abuse by their non-Roma peers at Czech and Slovak schools, as well as discriminatory and unequal treatment by their teachers who were said to have punished them physically in a substantial number of cases. Roma in seven out of the eight locations surveyed said they were not experiencing any form of racism in UK schools and they felt that the teachers were kind and helpful and were willing to give them time on an individual basis.

Most of the Roma students interviewed in the course of the research said they preferred school in the UK because of the equal opportunities offered to them and the absence of racism and discrimination at UK schools. This view was concurred by the parents interviewed during this study, who valued the absence of discrimination, racism, and Anti-Gypsyism in the school system in the UK. All of them believed their children's chances to succeed later on in life were much better here in the UK than in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The Roma parents

believed that it would take generations to change educational practice in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and some doubted whether it would ever change.

The findings of the study demonstrate that the way that Roma children are currently educated in special or *de facto* segregated settings in the Czech Republic and Slovakia is not justified by their educational, social, or cognitive abilities. In fact, all of the Roma children who participated in this study and had been sent to special or *de facto* segregated schools in Slovakia and the Czech Republic were successfully studying in mainstream schooling in the UK. Taken as a whole, there was little difference between the attainment and assessed potential attainment of Czech and Slovak Roma children who had been placed into special or *de facto* segregated schools and of those Roma children who had attended mainstream schools in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Moreover, the vast majority of the British professionals interviewed for the purpose of this study believed that there was little or no difference between the attainment and assessed potential attainment of the Czech and Slovak Roma children who had been placed into special or *de facto* segregated schools when compared to the attainment by their other recently arrived non-Roma peers. Many of the Roma parents interviewed thought that it would take generations to change educational practice in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and some doubted whether it would ever change. The testimonies of Roma pupils and parents captured in this report provide powerful anecdotes.

The UK education services have had many years of practical experience in providing quality targeted education to Gypsy, Roma, Travellers (GRT) and other ethnic minority groups. When the Eastern European Roma started to arrive in the UK in substantial numbers, these education services were in a position to use this experience to offer the same support to Roma children and young people. At no point was it ever a possibility that these newly arrived Roma pupils should be educated differently.

Over the last two decades schools and colleges in the UK have developed many areas of expertise whilst teaching and coming to understand their Roma students' culture and history. This has all resulted in the fact that some areas of the UK now have the best examples of GRT education in the whole of Europe, as confirmed by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in its 2009 report entitled '*The situation of Roma EU citizens moving to and settling in other EU Member States*'. There is no reason why this good practice cannot be shared with other practitioners in other areas of the UK and, indeed, in other countries of Europe. It would be to the great benefit of Roma children everywhere if this were to happen.

The Council of Europe has been implementing a scheme of training Roma mediators in education, health, and other areas from some countries in Europe.<sup>60</sup> This is also regarded as good practice by the European Commission

<sup>60</sup> Available online: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/default_en.asp)

and NGOs, although the programme has yet to be extended to the UK. In the UK, a Roma mediator role in education is often referred to as a Roma liaison officer. Some of these liaison officers were interviewed during the research.

The practice of segregating Roma children from their non-Roma peers perpetuates stereotyping, discrimination, and exclusion. The exclusion of Roma children into a separate and *de facto* segregated schooling stream in Slovakia and the Czech Republic is a complex and long-term phenomenon; as such, it requires a complex and long-term solution. Although education is a key component in the process of fostering the social inclusion of Roma, longstanding experience from the UK and the findings of this study show that education cannot function on its own, without the engagement of other agencies working in the field of social inclusion. The findings of the study show that the British model of multi-agency working has been successful in many areas in the UK. It approaches the issue of the social inclusion of Roma (and other communities) in a holistic way: this means that in order to ensure the well-being of every child, including the Roma, education initiatives must go hand in hand with initiatives in the areas of employment, housing, healthcare, and access to social welfare. In order for any child, but especially a Roma child, to study in mainstream schooling, the whole family unit must be 'mainstreamed'.

It is worthwhile mentioning at the end of this report that although we have concentrated this study on children from Slovakia and the Czech Republic, segregation and discriminatory education of Roma is something that is widespread in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The same study could be conducted with Roma children from Romania and Bulgaria (and other states) who also appear to thrive once placed in a mainstream UK school setting. The key to Roma empowerment and success in the job market lies in the quality of the education offered to the children. It is vital that all children are treated equally and that they all grow up as part of an accepting multicultural society.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study demonstrate that educating Roma children in special or *de facto* segregated schools in the Czech Republic and Slovakia is not justified by their educational, social, or cognitive abilities as all of the Roma children who participated in this study, and who previously had been sent to special or *de facto* segregated schools in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, were successfully studying in mainstream schools in the UK. Therefore, all levels of the Czech government should act and take practical measures to implement, without further delay, the 2007 judgement by the European Court of Human Right. The Czech government should ensure that meeting their legal obligation is a priority.

A planned approach needs to be formulated and implemented to use the research findings to dispel the myth that placing Roma pupils in special schools or Roma only/*de facto* segregated schools in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (and other countries that have similar policies) is in the best interests of Roma. An array of tactical opportunities should be identified to use the research to influence the debate in these countries.

This planned approach should use the learning, good versus less-effective practice identified in the research to engage education decision-makers, opinion-makers (including news and specialist media), and practitioners at national and local levels in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in a discussion about what policies and practices have been proven to improve the academic attainment of Roma pupils.

The Czech and Slovak governments should consider disseminating the findings of this research to all schools that have Roma children enrolled. In both countries the experience of the Roma Education Fund should be used in the design of early childhood education programmes, which should be considered as an effective tool for school integration.

In the UK, the learning identified in the research should be promoted and shared with other schools in the towns and cities that have Roma communities living there.

Schools that took part in the research should consider forming a network to share experience and practice using electronic and/or face-to-face channels. If formed, this network should consider inviting other schools with Roma pupils to join it.

The UK Department for Education should consider how it can help disseminate good practice that increases attendance levels and the academic attainment of Roma pupils.

The UK government (and other funders) should consider the impact of spending cuts on services that help increase attendance and attainment of Roma pupils, in particular the Roma mediators working with schools and local authorities and the TESS and EMAS services.

The benefits from employing Roma liaison staff or 'mediators' working with schools and Roma families should be promoted to schools and local authorities, using examples from this pilot research as well as other examples from a wider range of schools. The Council of Europe and European Commission should consider extending their Roma mediators programme to include the UK.

National governments, the European Commission, and the Council of Europe should consider the introduction of a universal EU-wide educational 'record' or 'passport' for all children.<sup>61</sup> This might contain information about the child's educational history and contact information for their previous/current school. Children would travel with this document (which would not contain any confidential information) and hand it to their new school when registering for attendance. This would allow continuity and consistency in a child's education and it would also flag up a child who was absent from education for longer than one month.

This pilot research should be developed into a substantial scientific survey in the UK covering all national groups of Roma, now that the methodology has been piloted and important initial findings are now available.

<sup>61</sup> An example of such an approach is Europass, which brings together into a single framework several existing tools for the transparency of diplomas, certificates, and competences. See: <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/>



WE HAD A RACIST TEACHER WHO LIED ABOUT THE STANDARD OF READING OF ROMA CHILDREN. SHE MAINTAINED THEY COULDN'T READ WHEN IN FACT THEY COULD READ WELL. SHE ALSO HIT THEM WITH A STICK. ROMA CHILDREN WERE HELD BACK A YEAR OR MORE AS A RESULT OF HER LYING. FOUR OF MY CLASSMATES WERE SENT TO A SPECIAL SCHOOL.

# ANNEX A: CASE STUDIES

## THE K AND H FAMILIES

Both families come from the Czech Republic. The H family came to the UK in 1999 to seek asylum here and were given Leave to Remain. The K family came to the UK in 2010. In both cases, the parents had been sent to a special school. When asked how come, they said it was a common practice to send Roma children to special schools at that time. According to Mr K, out of a thousand pupils, only ten would be non-Roma.

Mr and Mrs K as well as Mrs H left the special school in the ninth grade. Mr H felt the special school in the eighth grade and went on to study at a vocational school to become a lock smith. However, he decided to leave in the second grade of the vocational school. None of them have a diploma. They all said finishing school, albeit special, was a big achievement in their families at that time. Their parents, who had lived in Slovakia, either never went to school or dropped out in the second or third grade.

Mr and Mrs K have three children. Two of their daughters (the eldest and second eldest) suffer from a hearing impediment which is of a genetic nature as their grandfather suffered from the same health problem. Before moving to the UK in 2010, they had been sent to a special school, not just because of their Roma origin but also because of the hearing problem. Upon arrival in the UK, they were enrolled into mainstream primary schools. One of the daughters with the hearing problem is about to be given a hearing aid. Even though she has never worn this before, she has been able to learn to speak English very well. In fact, according to her father, she is a very good pupil since the school recommended that upon finishing Year 3, she should start studying in Year 5 as of this September. The parents made it very clear that there is no going back to the Czech Republic for them as mainstream schooling does not expect to be working with Roma pupils. They said they didn't want their children to have to overcome the same obstacles as they felt their chances were equal to those of their British classmates. They felt that their children did not face any hostility due to their Roma ethnicity, in spite of the fact that some of their peers knew they were Roma.

The H family have four children. They came to the UK in 1999. Their eldest son is their only child who has experienced schooling in the Czech Republic. He started school in the UK and when the family went back to the Czech Republic in 2001 for two years, the school authorities automatically enrolled him into a special school, without consulting this with the parents. According to the parents, their son's knowledge of English and other subjects was much more advanced than those of his peers: as a result he was sent to a class with children who were two or three years older than him. However, it was still a special school which the parents did not approve of. Yet, according

to both Mr and Mrs H, they were given no form to sign regarding his placement at the special school. Their son is now 17 and studies at a local college to become a car mechanic.

Both the H and K family lived in a block of flats where there were common toilets and showers in the corridor outside. The municipality turned on hot water only twice a week so they could not wash properly.

It is also interesting to note that the K family are related to the H family who were forcefully evicted in 2006 by the then mayor. The case dates back to November 2006 when the local authority in an East Moravian town, headed by the then Mayor, had forcibly evicted a group of Roma from their housing in a town-owned property. According to Mr K, those families which were evicted into a metal container are now being evicted by the municipality who is converting the facility into a homeless shelter. As the Roma have nowhere to go, they are planning to join their friends and relatives in the UK.

## THE M FAMILY

The M family comes from the Czech Republic. The family first came to the UK in 2007 moved to their present location in 2009.

Mr M was placed in a special school. He was told that he was a difficult child and that it would be much better for him there. As he admits, his parents didn't contest the recommendation. As a result, school was very easy for him. At that time, he had no idea what it meant in terms of his future chances within the labour market. In spite of this, he worked for a local NGO for a number of years and was one of the main founders at a major social housing project which, to date, continues to house many Roma families.

The M family now have five children: two boys and three girls. The two youngest ones haven't started school yet. All of the three remaining children started school in the Czech Republic. Now they attend local secondary schools in England.

Their eldest daughter is now 15. She attended elementary school in the Czech Republic. For the first four years, she attended a mixed class with other non-Roma and Roma children. In year 5, the school introduced a new system and decided that it would be best to put all the Roma children in one class. She had two non-Roma classmates, the rest were all Roma. The school didn't notify the parents of this change, nor did they tell them that their daughter would be following a reduced school curricula. She attended this class for two months only because the family then moved to the UK where she was enrolled into a mainstream school.

While talking to the parents, it transpired that a similar approach was applied in the case of Mr M's niece. According to him, she was a slow learner but not someone who should be sent to a special school. Yet, the teachers didn't spend enough time explaining things to her; as a result, she started to lag behind and had to repeat the same class twice. In the end, the school decided that it would be best to send her to a special school where she would be taught at a slower pace. She was then transferred there without the parents' fully informed consent.

## THE A FAMILY

Mr A comes from the Czech Republic. Although he was a shrewd child who attended a local elementary school until year 3, he was sent to a local special school. After finishing school, he went on to work.

The A family moved to the UK in 2006. Mr A did many jobs at first. He now works for the West Midlands Consortium as a Community Liaison Officer for the Roma families living there.

Mr A has a 15-year-old daughter who attends a local college. Before moving to the UK in 2006, she had attended a local elementary school. One day, he was asked to come to the school and the teachers told him that his daughter was not clever enough and would have to be transferred into a special school. Mr A didn't accept this recommendation and spent the next two years persuading the school and the school's psychologist not to transfer her to the special school. In the end, he succumbed to the pressure and agreed. His daughter was transferred to the special school, which she attended for eight months. Then the family left for the UK. His daughter is enjoying her studies at College in the UK. She is very good at English and also likes business. She says she loves going to school and she loves how the teachers treat her. Not long ago, she was playing a football match at a school event and the school sent them a magazine with a photo of her inside. It meant so much for the family.

She would like to become a manager one day. She has good marks and her attainment is in the region of 70–80 percent. Knowing that she was recommended to study at a special school in the Czech Republic and is now capable of studying at a mainstream college in the UK, both Mr A and his daughter feel it is possible in the UK because of equal opportunities. This is why going back to a country which excludes Roma from education and employment is no option for the family.

## THE H FAMILY

The H family come from Slovakia, where they lived in a predominantly Roma area in very low standard housing, which often had no heating. The flat had five rooms and accommodated all the family which numbered 17 people. The husband and wife came to the UK three years ago but speak very little English.

At home, they speak Romanes and also Czech and Slovak. They have six children and are expecting a seventh. They are renting a five-bedroom house. Mrs H had her first child at the age of 17. They both went to a special school and stayed until they were 17. Mrs H only got to the primary level in a special school and never graduated, Mr H went to a secondary special school to learn bricklaying. Neither of them are employed in the UK: Mrs H is at home with the children and Mr H currently does not have a job.

Mrs H has hearing and sight problems and her sister, nephew and niece; and her father were all partially sighted and had hearing difficulty; her mother also has minor hearing problems. They all went to special school. No assessment was ever done: they were automatically sent to a special school. No one explained why and they knew that going to that kind of school and being Roma, they would have no chance of decent employment. Mrs H said it was normal to be beaten by the teachers in her school.

They feel that there is little to compare between the schools in the UK and in Slovakia. They are very pleased with the children's progress and the staff are all very good and treat them with respect. Mrs H believes that if she had been able to go to such a school she would have had more chances in life. They would like their children to finish school and to have the education to get the jobs that they want.

The children did not go to school in Slovakia. Their oldest child is 12 years old and goes to a school in UK. Their children knew no English when they arrived but they speak it well now. All the children go to mainstream school and so far no hearing problems have been picked up.

They have an 11-year-old son who attends a Junior School in England. He likes football, maths, and ICT. He goes to an after-school club, he goes to church regularly and enjoys school. The only problem has been at lunch time when he has had some fights: as a result, he was excluded for two days. At their son's school, there is an English boy who picks on the Roma children. One day, their son hit him. All the parents were called into school afterwards. Mr and Mrs H feel it was not fair as their son was the only one punished. They did not understand fully and did not feel it was explained well to them: that is their only complaint about the school.

## THE S FAMILY

The S family come from a Roma settlement in Slovakia, which was a segregated area where no non-Roma lived. They lived in a house with no running water, utilities, or a toilet. They had to fetch water from a nearby well. The local Health Support worker has been working with the family for the past three years. When they originally came, they had serious problems and all the adults were heavy smokers, smoking approximately 50 cigarettes a day. Now they have all given up smoking which the local Health Support worker regards as a major success.

All the adults in the family were sent to a special school where there were Roma children only. The women in the family did not progress beyond special primary education as all of them became mothers and housewives. They have five children, all of whom attend mainstream local primary and secondary schools in the UK. All of their children who go to school love going there and the young ones cannot wait to start school.

Their son (age 12) now attends Year 6 at a local school. He attains well in maths and ICT and his English has improved according to the end-of-year report he received. He is the only child who attended school in Slovakia. He was sent to a Roma class in a mixed school but had to repeat Grade 1 three times. He has not had to repeat a single year in the UK and the parents and grandparent are hopeful that one day he will be successful. It would have not been possible in Slovakia where there is a lot of racism and discrimination against Roma, especially in the fields of education and work. The family noted that after the cuts to benefits in 2004/2005 and with Slovakia joining the Eurozone, it has become difficult for long-term unemployed Roma to survive. That was the main reason for which they decided to leave Slovakia. Although it has not been easy in the UK, they do not regret the choice and feel that this was the only way of ensuring a better future for their children.

## THE K FAMILY

The K family came from a Roma settlement in Slovakia eight months ago.

They have three children, the daughter is nine, the son is eight, and the youngest child is four. The two elder children both attend a local school in the UK. Even though they have recently moved to the UK and their children had no English when they came, they are starting to make progress in English, literacy, and numeracy. They both got a very good report at the end of the school year. Over the summer, they have been attending a local language school run by the junior school. (The parents pointed out that back in Slovakia, both children were also good at German which they were taught at school because their town has a sizeable German minority.)

The class their elder children attended at a local Elementary school was predominantly Roma/*de facto* segregated. According to the parents, even though both their children were attaining well, their teacher made them repeat a year. The parents were very frustrated because, according to them, their daughter was one of the best students in German and she had As in all other subjects. Their son had hearing problems at that time and had to undergo a surgery; as a result, he had to repeat a year as well. They thought the teacher was not treating their children fairly because they were Roma. The parents were very sceptical about the whole school and its prejudiced attitude to Roma because they maintained that everything was separate for Roma: they would have separate breaks and would be separated from the non-Roma children at lunch as well. There were no Roma teaching assistants, only non-Roma teachers. They also described how all Roma children had to wait in front of the school building in the morning when it was cold while all the non-Roma children would be let in.

Before going to elementary school, both their children had been sent to a Roma only kindergarten. The parents said they wanted them both to attend the mainstream kindergarten in the non-Roma part of the town but they were told that there were no vacancies for Roma children. They were very dissatisfied with the Roma kindergarten: although it was run by non-Roma, there was no hygiene and a mix of age groups which they thought was not good (babies as young as several months mixed with much older children).

The father has been working abroad for many years: in the Czech Republic, Germany, Wales, and England. From what he had seen abroad, he knew there was a better life for his children and wife; this is why they decided to leave Slovakia. Even though, according to them, there were some Roma in their town who studied at a special secondary school, they both said they knew their children had no future in Slovakia when it came to schooling or work.

They felt that in the UK, they would be able to do what they were capable of doing: they said their children were still too young to know what they would like to do one day. Both the parents said that their daughter was very good at drawing and painting and the son was good at maths. They were inspired by their relatives' children from another location in the UK: one of them has just started university there and the other is a supervisor at school. They were certain that they did not want their children to grow up with no education, in a segregated society, and with no prospects of finding work.

# ANNEX B: INTERVIEW GUIDES

## FOCUS GROUP OF ROMANI PUPILS

*Number of participants*

*Gender*

*Nationality/Ethnicity*

*Ages*

*Country of origin*

*UK school they are attending*

1. Where (which locality) in the Czech Republic/Slovakia did you live? (Please note if a rural or urban locality)
2. How long have you lived in the UK?
3. What would you like to be one day after finishing education?
4. How long did you study at a Czech/Slovak school?
5. Which primary school did you attend back in the Czech Republic/Slovakia?
  - Mainstream (with classmates of other ethnicities)
  - Segregated (mostly with Roma classmates)
  - Special remedial school/class
  - Practical school/class
6. What did you like best in the school you studied at in the Czech Republic/Slovakia? What did you dislike in that school? Why?
7. What would you say was good and bad about your teachers in the Czech Republic/Slovakia? About your class and classmates? And the subjects?
8. What were your results in the Czech/Slovak school at which you studied? What marks did you get in the Czech/Slovak school?
9. Why do you think you went to a segregated special/practical school in the Czech Republic/Slovakia?
10. How did you get accepted in your school in UK? Was it complicated or rather easy? How were you received by the teachers and classmates?
11. Did you know any English before entering the UK school?
12. How would you compare your current school with your former CZ/SLO school? (Please check especially the curriculum, teachers, interactions with classmates and school atmosphere, school infrastructure, extracurricular activities, school support—e.g., after-school classes)
13. How did you learn English?
14. Which school do you go to now?

– Mainstream

– Special

15. How are you doing at school now?

16. What do you like best at school now?

What do you like least at school now?

17. Can you rate your six favourite to your six least favourite school subjects?

18. What do you think of the school and the teachers?

19. What are your favourite things to do outside of the classroom?

20. Do the teachers and your classmates know you are Czech/Slovak?

21. Do the teachers and your classmates know you are Roma? How do they treat you?

## ROMANI PARENTS

*Gender*

*Nationality/Ethnicity*

*Languages spoken*

*Age*

*Country of origin*

1. Where in the Czech Republic/Slovakia did you live?

2. Were your neighbours in the Czech Republic/Slovakia mostly of the same ethnicity as your family or were they of a different ethnicity?

3. How would you describe your house in the Czech Republic/Slovakia? (Please check about basic facilities; water, sewage, gas pipeline, heating, inside toilet, etc.)

4. How many rooms were there in your house in the Czech Republic/Slovakia? How many families and people shared the house? Did your child have their own room?

5. How long have you lived in the UK?

6. How many rooms are there in your house in the UK? How many families and people share the house?

7. What is your education background?

8. Are you employed or self-employed and if so, what as?

9. Until what age do you expect your child to attend school?

10. What would you like your child to be one day?

11. What does your child enjoy doing and what talents does he/she have?

12. Which primary school did your child attend back in the Czech Republic/Slovakia?

– Mainstream

– Segregated

– Special remedial school/class

– Practical school/class

13. If your child attended a special/practical school, was it because he/she is mentally/physically handicapped or visually impaired?
14. If yes, what kind of handicap does your child have?
15. If your child is not mentally/physically handicapped or visually impaired and attended a special/practical school in the Czech Republic/Slovakia, was he/she enrolled based on a psychological assessment and your fully informed consent?
16. Did anyone explain to you what school curricula are taught at special/practical schools and what your child's chances were going to be after finishing school?
17. How did your child do at that school? What marks did he/she get? Did he/she study English?
18. Which school does your child go to now?
  - Mainstream
  - Special
19. What is your child's attainment at school now?
20. Which languages does your child speak?
21. If your child went to a segregated special/practical school in the Czech Republic/Slovakia, how would you explain the fact that he/she is attending a mainstream school in the UK?
22. What did you like in the school your child attended in the Czech Republic/Slovakia? What did you dislike in that school? Why?
23. What would you say was good and bad about your child's teachers in the Czech Republic/Slovakia? And about your child's class and classmates?
24. How did your child get accepted in school in UK? Was it complicated or rather easy? How was he/she received by teachers and colleagues?
25. Did your child know any English before entering the UK school?
26. How would you compare your child's current school with his/her former Czech/Slovak school? (Please check especially the curriculum, teachers, colleagues interactions and school atmosphere, school infrastructure, extracurricular activities, school support—e.g., after-school classes)
27. Does your child enjoy attending school, and if so why, and if not, why not? Which bits do they enjoy?
28. How does the school enable your child to develop their talents further?
29. What does your child want to become one day?
30. What do you think of the quality of the school and its staff? (HT/teachers/other adults/other parents)
31. How would you rate the schools in relation to your experiences of schooling in your country of origin?
32. How do you feel your child/children are treated at school and how does that compare to their experience of attending school in your country of origin?
33. Have they experienced any racist bullying at school in their country of origin or here?(by staff/by other children)
34. Did you report it? If so, how did the school respond and was the case investigated?
35. Are there any other comments you would like to make about the schools both here and there?

## SCHOOL STAFF

*Gender*

*Age*

*Position*

*Employed by*

*Contact details*

1. How many Roma children do you work with? How many Roma pupils are enrolled at your school?
2. Which national groups of Roma have you worked with?
3. How frequently have you come across Roma children who were placed into special remedial schools/classes for the mentally disabled in their country of origin when in fact they are perfectly capable of studying in mainstream schooling?
4. How many Roma children who were previously placed into special remedial schools/classes do you teach at the moment?
5. How many of them have special needs in your opinion, and what are these needs?
6. How many of them are mentally or otherwise disabled/impaired?
7. How many of them study in mainstream schooling?
8. What is their attainment at school?
9. If the children went to a segregated special/practical school in the Czech Republic/Slovakia, how would you explain the fact that the same children are now attending a mainstream school in the UK where they are taught in English?
10. How were the Roma pupils received by their classmates? Could you give examples of good and less good integration inclusion?
11. Have there been any incidents of racist bullying against Roma pupils?
12. Did you report it? If so, how did the school respond and was the case investigated?
13. Any particular successes in educating Roma children that you would like to highlight?
14. Any particular failures in educating Roma children that you would like to highlight?
15. What help, if any, did you receive from other organisations, such as EMAS and TESS?
16. Are there subjects that Roma pupils generally do well at, and if so, what are they?
17. Are there subjects that Roma pupils generally do less well at compared to other pupils, and if so, what are they?
18. How would you assess the academic skills of your Roma pupils when they arrived to your school?
19. What is your interaction with Roma parents?
20. Do you take the same approach in liaising with Roma parents about their child's education as other ethnic groups, or a different approach? If different, how would you describe it?

# ANNEX C: GRADING IN UK SCHOOLS

## **Teacher assessments**

At the end of each key stage, a child's teacher will formally assess their performance to measure progress. Of course, a child's teacher will be informally assessing their learning at other times to help them plan future teaching. They may, for example, listen to the child read or look at their maths work. Some schools will also use optional tests to assess children's progress.

## **National Curriculum levels**

During Key Stages 1-3, progress in most National Curriculum subjects is assessed against eight levels. At the end of Key Stages 1, 2, and 3 the school will send parents a report telling them what level their child is working at. At Key Stage 1 the level will be based on the teacher's assessment, taking into account the child's performance in several tasks and tests. At Key Stage 2 the level will reflect the teacher's assessment and the child's national test results (SAT). At Key Stage 3 the level will be based on the teacher's assessment.

## **'End of key stage' tests:**

A child will take national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. The tests are intended to show if the child is working at, above or below the target level for their age. This helps the school to make plans for their future learning. It also allows schools to see whether they are teaching effectively by comparing their pupils' performance to national results.

## **Key Stage 1 teacher assessments, tasks and tests**

Teacher assessment for seven-year-olds covers:

- reading
- writing
- speaking and listening
- maths
- science

These assessments take account of how a child performed in Key Stage 1 tasks and tests for seven year olds.

The tasks and tests cover:

- reading
- writing (including handwriting and spelling)
- maths

The tasks and tests can be taken at a time the school chooses. They last for less than three hours altogether. The results are not reported separately but are used to help the teacher assess a child's work. By the age of seven, most children are expected to achieve level 2. The teacher assessment is moderated by the local authority. This is to make sure teachers make consistent assessments of children's work.

### **Key Stage 2 tests and teacher assessments**

Key Stage 2 tests for 11-year-olds cover:

- English – reading, writing (including handwriting) and spelling
- maths – including mental arithmetic
- science

These tests are taken on set days in mid-May, and last less than five-and-a-half hours altogether.

The teacher assessment covers:

- English
- maths
- science

By the age of 11, most children are expected to achieve level 4.

### **Key Stage 3 teacher assessments**

The Key Stage 3 teacher assessment for 14-year-olds covers:

- English
- maths
- science
- history
- geography
- modern foreign languages
- design and technology
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- art and design

- music
- physical education
- citizenship
- religious education

By the age of 14, most children are expected to achieve level 5. The results of the tests and the teacher assessment may be different, and it's important to look at both to get an all-round view of a child's progress. For example, a teacher may feel the child is doing better in a subject as a whole than in the parts of the subject covered by a test. At the end of each key stage, parents will get a report from the school telling them:

- the results of a child's tests (for Key Stage 2 only)
- the teacher assessment levels a child has achieved
- the results for all the children in a child's age group in the school
- the national results for the previous year

#### **Key Stage 4**

Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are usually between the ages of 14 and 16 years old. At the end of Key Stage 4 (age 16) pupils sit national examinations, usually GCSEs. A child will also be able to choose from a growing range of vocational qualifications. In Key Stage 4 a child will study a mix of compulsory and optional subjects. The subjects they will have to do are:

- English
- Maths
- Science
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- Physical education
- Citizenship

In addition, pupils have to take careers education and work-related learning. Schools must also offer religious education, SRE, and at least one subject from each of the four 'entitlement' areas.

The entitlement areas are:

- Arts subjects
- Design and technology
- Humanities
- Modern foreign languages

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ONLY A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE OVERALL COHORT OF ROMA PUPILS (2 TO 4 PERCENT) AT THE UK SCHOOLS SURVEYED WERE REGARDED AS REQUIRING SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN) BECAUSE OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES OR DISABILITIES THAT MADE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO LEARN OR ACCESS EDUCATION THAN MOST CHILDREN OF THE SAME AGE. FOR THESE ROMA PUPILS, THIS EXTRA OR DIFFERENT HELP IS GIVEN WITHIN THE MAINSTREAM SCHOOL.

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