

**Inclusion of Roma Students in Europe: A literature review and examples of policy initiatives**

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## *Abstract*

Roma communities form Europe's largest ethnic minority. However, they are also one of the most marginalised groups and face similar challenges in all countries, including poverty, precarious housing, underemployment and low educational attainment. Although a strong international commitment to foster the inclusion of Roma communities has been observed from 2005 onwards, the overall situation has not significantly changed. Regarding education, some important achievements have been reached, mainly in terms of literacy rates. Yet, Roma students still lag behind and are often the most excluded group.

This paper first analyses European countries' conceptualisation and categorisation in relation to ethnic minority groups. A brief history of the concepts of race and ethnicity helps understand how different countries define ethnic minorities, establish administrative categories, and why there is a substantial gap in the data on particularly Roma students but also Roma communities. This historic intellectual frame further allows to clarify the different approaches European countries adopt to tackle the issues faced by Roma communities. While colour-blind countries tend to prohibit data collection on ethnic minorities and prioritise an integrated approach in policy making, other countries might allow for more precise data and prefer a targeted approach. These logics are reflected in the elaboration of educational policies.

Based on these observations, this paper further explores how different European countries act to foster the inclusion of Roma students in education. For this purpose, policies and initiatives aimed at improving Roma students' performance and sense of belonging at different levels of schooling are described and analysed. Because the "Roma question" is primarily a European one, different levels of governance are taken into account, from the regional to the local. Moreover, against the background of challenges that governments have been facing in addressing the inclusion of Roma students, civil societies' initiatives are attributed a significant place in this paper.

Finally, the few evaluations available on policies and projects related to the inclusion of Roma students in Europe indicate that the most efficient initiatives are those that (1) link both a combination of mainstream and targeted approaches under the "explicit but not exclusive" principle, (2) are community-based, fostering capacity building of Roma participation, (3) are conscious of cultural disparities. This paper ends with a reflection on the growing field of intercultural education and its potential connection to Roma students' well-being.

## Résumé

Les communautés roms constituent la minorité ethnique la plus large d'Europe. Cependant, elles sont également l'un des groupes les plus marginalisés et font face à des défis similaires dans tous les pays, notamment une situation de pauvreté, de précarité du logement, de sous-emplois et des niveaux de scolarisation bas. Un fort engagement international pour l'inclusion des communautés roms depuis 2005 semble avoir eu des effets relatifs, sans notablement améliorer leur situation générale. En ce qui concerne l'éducation des élèves roms, des objectifs importants ont été atteints, notamment en termes d'alphabétisation. Toutefois, ils restent souvent le groupe le plus exclu, avec des performances et niveaux de scolarisation au plus bas.

Ce travail analyse en premier lieu la manière dont les pays européens conceptualisent et catégorisent les minorités ethniques. Une brève histoire des concepts de race et d'ethnicité permet de comprendre comment différents pays définissent ces minorités culturelles, créent les catégories administratives, et pourquoi nous observons un manque important de données relatives aux étudiants roms et aux communautés roms en général. Alors que les pays qui adoptent une approche dite *colour-blind* ont tendance à interdire la collecte de données sur les minorités ethniques et priorisent une approche intégrée dans l'élaboration de politiques publiques, d'autres ont une approche plus souple. Ces derniers reconnaissent différentes minorités culturelles et préfèrent une approche plus ciblée pour répondre aux problématiques auxquelles elles font face. Ces logiques s'expriment dans l'élaboration de politiques publiques en matière d'éducation.

Sur la base de ces observations, ce travail explore comment différents pays européens agissent pour l'inclusion des élèves roms dans l'éducation. Dans ce but, des politiques publiques et initiatives visant à améliorer les performances et le sentiment d'appartenance des étudiants roms à différents niveaux d'éducation sont ici décrites et analysées. Du fait de la dimension essentiellement européenne de la « question Rom », plusieurs niveaux de gouvernance sont ici pris en compte, du régional au local. De plus, il est important de noter que face aux défis auxquels les gouvernements font face pour l'inclusion des élèves roms, des initiatives de la société civile occupent une place importante dans cette recherche.

Finalement, les rares évaluations disponibles sur les effets de projets et politiques publiques en faveur de l'inclusion des élèves roms en Europe indiquent que les initiatives les plus efficaces sont celles qui (1) lient à la fois une approche intégrée et ciblée sous le principe de « ciblage spécifique mais non-exclusif », (2) sont basées sur les communautés, favorisant le développement de compétences et la participation des roms, et (3) sont conscientes des disparités culturelles. Ce travail se termine avec une réflexion sur le champ grandissant de l'éducation interculturelle et ces connexions possibles avec le bien-être des élèves roms.

## 1. Ethnic Groups and National Minorities: Conceptualisation, Categorisation and the Case of Roma

This section provides a brief history and definitions of the notions of *race* and *ethnicity* in Europe. These are two closely related concepts that have had different meanings through time. There is still no consistent international definition on their exact significance. Academics nonetheless agree on (1) the social and historic dimensions of these notions and (2) the fact that they have acquired different values, or meanings, depending on the context where they are used or not. As *race* and *ethnicity* remain blurry and porous concepts, lack of clarity is observed in countries' administrative categorisation and data collection on ethnic minority groups. This latter notion itself is still vaguely defined. Overall, it is possible to separate countries in two categories with *colour-blind* on one side who do not distinguish ethnic minorities, and those who do and, as a result, have clear policies addressing ethnic-related issues.

Furthermore, depicting the bases of this intellectual frame allows understanding some issues faced in the categorisation and data gathering related to Roma communities in Europe. In fact, academics and experts agree that there is a substantial gap in data related to the situation of Roma in Europe. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the fact that, unlike most public and policy discourses, Roma communities are highly heterogeneous, with different dialects and practices. In spite of unclear definitions and different approaches across countries, it is acknowledged that Roma communities form Europe's largest ethnic minority and are categorised as such in European and national policy making.

### 1.1. Race, Ethnicity? Definitions and (blurry) boundaries

#### 1.1.1. Emergence of two related concepts

There are different views on what would be exact definitions for *race* and *ethnicity*. For more than 50 years, academics – mainly from France and the English speaking world – have tried to reach an understanding of these two terms, still considered blurry notions.

The etymology of the word *race* remains subject to controversies, but its emergence as a scientific concept in Europe can be traced to the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Bancel, David and Thomas, 2014<sub>[1]</sub>). Through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *race* gained appraisal in academic debates. It originally emerged within biological sciences which observed physical variations of human beings in order to establish categories that would reflect the existence of different human species. Various natural scientists thus tried to demonstrate that human beings, depending on their origins, have specific physical attributes – such as the size of their bones or the shape of their skulls – that prove the existence of distinct human *rac*es. Shortly after however, this notion progressively acquired a strong social dimension through the complex combination of various historical processes. Some defendants of its social implications have attempted to link the biological and the social to argue that variations in human behaviours and socio-cultural “evolution” were based on variations in physical attributes.<sup>1</sup> Categorisation, then, would not only be a horizontal and physical comparative endeavour, but became the basis to demonstrate an objective hierarchy between human species at different stages of “civilisation.” The validity of the concept of *race* was nonetheless progressively questioned as social scientists demonstrated that its very meaning makes sense only subjectively, in terms of socio-historic relationships between



peoples. They showed that *race*, the way it was understood, had little scientific bases, and a presupposed superiority between human species could not be proved objectively (*Ibid.*). In Europe, the concept of *race* lost its dominance following the atrocities of the Nazi Regime during the Second World War. A major illustration of this shift in dominant thinking is a 1952 essay written by the eminent French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. This essay was part of a series of publications led by UNESCO aiming at invalidating racialist theories by demonstrating the lack of scientific foundations of the hypothesis of a division of human beings in three “primitive races” (Lévi-Strauss, 1952<sup>[2]</sup>). *Race*, as a scientific and official concept, was then dropped by most European countries, both academically and in political discourses. While legal frames and political discourses present a contrasted situation, the notion of ethnicity took over in the European academic sphere.

*Ethnicity* derives from the Greek word *ethnos*, meaning “a nation.” *Ethnos* was initially used to refer to peoples who had a different political organisation than the one practised within the Greek Empire. Later, “ethnic” in English, and its counterparts in some other languages, began to be used to refer to “pagans”, i.e. any person without religion (Martiniello, 2013, p. 23<sup>[3]</sup>). Therefore, until recently, although the concept of *ethnicity* bore a quite pejorative dimension, it was used to qualify groups perceived as different for adopting different political and religious practices. However, it did not refer to any physical features, nor did it qualify groups perceived as different based on “cultural” or “ethnic” characteristics. Through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *ethnicity* gained a new meaning that would bring it closer to current representations. It was first used by anthropologists to describe “exotic” societies being intrinsically “other” for having different cultural practices. From that moment on, while the dominance of *race* started to decline, the notion of *culture* – or rather *cultures* – and of *ethnicity* became increasingly accepted elements of human categorisation. People are different not only because of their place of birth or physical features, but also, and mostly, because they have distinct cultural practices and representations. The evolutionist theories were progressively abandoned, and different cultures, at least in the mainstream academic sphere, began to be seen as relatively equal. However, *ethnicity* was mainly seen as a static concept establishing clear boundaries between different cultural groups. From the 1950s onwards, social sciences began to question the presupposed objectivity and non-permeability of the notion of *ethnicity* (Brubaker, 2009<sup>[4]</sup>). While academics understood that cultures were not frozen, and that different groups with different practices were interacting within a same cultural context, *ethnicity* became an even more central concept in social sciences. It is now understood as a social construct based on social interactions and subjective identification (Bertheleu, 2007<sup>[5]</sup>; Zoïa, 2012<sup>[6]</sup>; Martiniello, 2013<sup>[3]</sup>; Meer, 2014<sup>[7]</sup>).

In international academic literature, both concepts of *race* and *ethnicity* are closely related. They are in fact often thought of jointly, either as interchangeable notions or in an attempt to differentiate them.<sup>2</sup>

### ***1.1.2. Porosity of the concepts and the need to question intellectual frames***

Nowadays, *race* is commonly thought to be rigid, based on natural differences and external identification, while *ethnicity* is rather identified as fluid, based on cultural differences and internal identification (Brubaker, 2009, p. 26<sup>[4]</sup>). However, racial categories can be flexible, while ethnic ones may be seen as a static factor of differentiation. Since the beginning of the 2000s, various social and natural scientists have asked for the establishment of clearer boundaries between the notions of *race* and *ethnicity*. In 2004, for instance, the Professor in epidemiology, R. Bhopal, called academics upon further debates

around common definitions of the two notions (Bhopal, 2004<sup>[8]</sup>). He stressed the fact that “there is no consensus on appropriate terms for use in the scientific study of health by ethnicity and race, and published guidelines on how to use these concepts, from a number of journals, are yet to be adopted” (p. 441<sup>[8]</sup>). This concern can be extended to all social sciences, in which the blurriness and the porosity of these two terms have sparked intense and rich academic debates for over five decades (Roth, 2016, p. 1313<sup>[9]</sup>). The lack of international definitions and standards is mirrored in the fact that countries’ approaches in the categorisation and policy making related to ethnic minorities differ – sometimes greatly – from one to another.

Despite the fuzziness of the notions of *race* and *ethnicity*, there seems nonetheless to be a consensus on at least two fundamental elements in the international literature:

1. First, the interpretation of the concepts and their meaning vary depending on the context in which they are used. For example, while *race* is commonly used in the English speaking world, it is almost non-existent in the French context where it acquired a strong negative connotation through history. It is also frequently used by many scholars in the United States, who emphasise its social origins rather than its biological bases. Regarding *ethnicity*, its meaning substantially varies from, for instance, African contexts where numerous cultural groups can cohabit and clearly differentiate themselves, to some European societies where a dominant majority usually categorises ethnic minorities based on nationality only.
2. Following this observation, the second agreed element relates to *ethnicity* – and to a certain extent *race* – being the result of social constructs and as such, ethnic boundaries being moving constructions within their own history (Bertheleu, 2007, p. 12<sup>[5]</sup>).

*Race* and *ethnicity* are therefore concepts that do not bear a meaning in themselves, but whose potential value depends on the use we make of them and their significance in specific contexts (Meer, 2014<sup>[7]</sup>). They both have a history and a meaning that has to be put in a temporal and a geographic situation. *Ethnicity*, for long absent in common and academic discourses, tends to be preferred today over *race*. One should not forget, then, that most notions are the product of social interactions rooted in a specific history, and, consequently, that “we need to think critically about the intellectual frames through which we have come to understand what we name as racial and ethnic differences amongst and across populations” (p. 13<sup>[7]</sup>).

### ***1.1.3. Definitions for the purpose of this paper***

The concept of *race*, though it can bear a positive meaning (e.g. for the Black rights movement in the United States), is most often negatively perceived in Europe (Bertheleu, 2007<sup>[5]</sup>; Lentin, 2008<sup>[10]</sup>; Simon, 2017<sup>[11]</sup>), with the marginal exception of the United Kingdom. The notion of *race* emerged within biological sciences and was linked to the differentiation of anatomical characteristics and apparent physical features. Wendy D. Roth writes that “[w]e can understand *race* as a cognitive structure that divides people into hierarchically ordered categories on the basis of certain physical or biological characteristics that are believed to be inherent. An individual’s *race* is shaped by both her own identification and the attributions and reactions to others” (Roth, 2016, p. 1311<sup>[9]</sup>).

Therefore, because of their ambiguity and negative connotation in various European societies, and as clarified in the OECD *Strength through Diversity project* framework, the

concepts of *race* and *racial diversity* are considered invalid for the purpose of this paper. The concept of *ethnicity* will be preferred. *Ethnicity* seems to go well beyond phenotypical considerations and allows for a more dynamic view on the moving boundaries of one's identity.

As mentioned above, *ethnicity* is a complex notion with porous boundaries that is still widely debated, though there is consensus on the fact that it corresponds to a social construct. Two sociologists were determinant in shaping the modern definition of *ethnicity*. First, the Norwegian anthropologist F. Barth, in an early influential work in 1969, argued against the “static objectivism” (Brubaker, 2009, p. 29<sub>[4]</sub>) that was then prevailing in social studies on the concept of *ethnicity*. Nearly two decades later, the German pioneer of sociology Max Weber, extended this approach to the Western European intellectual sphere by defining ethnic groups “as socially constructed and ethnicity as contextual, situational performative and fluid” (Surdu and Kovats, 2015, p. 7<sub>[12]</sub>). Though his rich contribution to the definition of the notion was relatively long ignored, he was among the first ones to de-essentialise the concept of *ethnicity* by challenging frozen presupposed boundaries between different racial or ethnic groups (Brubaker, 2009<sub>[4]</sub>; Zoïa, 2012<sub>[6]</sub>). What makes an individual pertain to an ethnic group rather than another depends on various factors, including cultural practices, a potential common ancestor, but also how s/he perceived her/himself and how s/he is perceived (Bhopal, 2004<sub>[8]</sub>; Meer, 2014<sub>[7]</sub>; Roth, 2016<sub>[9]</sub>). Therefore, ethnicity represents a dynamic dimension of an individual's identity as a part of a broader group sharing common identification, and as opposed to other groups identifying themselves and being identified as different.

In this paper, M. Martiniello's definition is adopted. It is both broad and specific enough to encompass the various dimensions of *ethnicity*. He writes:

*L'ethnicité constitue une des formes majeures de différenciation sociale et politique d'une part, et d'inégalité structurelle, d'autre part, dans la plupart des sociétés contemporaines. Elle repose sur la production et la reproduction de définitions sociales et politiques de la différence physique, psychologique et culturelle entre les groupes dits ethniques qui développent entre eux des relations de différents types (Martiniello, 2013, p. 29<sub>[3]</sub>).<sup>3</sup>*

While including the physical aspect as part of what defines one's ethnicity, this definition goes much further to include not only the psychological and cultural dimensions, but also the political one. The concept of *ethnicity* is dynamic, continually produced and negotiated by individuals dependently of the context they live in. It is based on interactions between groups that generate ongoing (re)definitions of the boundaries between them. Ultimately, *ethnicity* is fundamentally a criteria of differentiation that can be both a source of recognition and valorisation, and of inequalities and discrimination.

## 1.2. Countries' categorisations and approaches to minorities

### 1.2.1. Majority population and minorities: Categorisation and data

Following the intellectual considerations and frame described above, we understand that countries have distinct ways of defining and differentiating groups living within their borders. In European societies which are the main focus of this paper, the increasing diversity triggers raising challenges and reflections on countries' categorisation of their population.

A country's population is here understood to be separated in (1) a *majority population* and (2) *national – or visible -<sup>4</sup> (ethnic) minorities*. Significant differences exist in the administrative categorisation processes that might have an impact on the policy making towards national minorities. For instance, the United Kingdom as well as some Central and Eastern European Countries (CEE), officially use the notion of *ethnic minority groups* – though *minority ethnic groups* is sometimes preferred. Other countries, mostly in South and Western Europe, recognise the existence of minorities without referring to ethnic dimensions, defining those minorities according to the nationalities or origin of individuals. In this last case, ethnicity is not officially recognised as a criteria of differentiation, and ethnic minority groups do not appear in censuses and statistics nor in policy making (Box 1.1).

Because ethnicity is “multidimensional and is more a process than a static concept” (United Nations, 2017, p. 204<sub>[13]</sub>), diversity categories have changed over time<sup>5</sup> and as advised by the United Nations’ *Principles and Recommendation for Population and Households Censuses*, “ethnic classification should be treated with moving boundaries” (*Ibid.*). It is prohibited by most national laws to ask for an individual’s race or ethnicity. When it is allowed, it is based on self-identification only. The way countries define and collect data on diversity might have a significant impact on policy making and how they tackle issues related to marginalised communities, including Roma communities in Europe. Moreover, “[i]t has been shown that terminology in itself is not a good indicator for policy frameworks” (Pap, 2015, p. 38<sub>[14]</sub>). Ambiguous terminology is a good indicator, however, showing that policy makers either do or do not take sides in broader debates on the multi-ethnic situation of states (*Ibid.*).

#### Box 1.1. Diversity Statistics

In 2017, the OECD Statistics and Data Directorate led a study with Member Countries’ National Statistics Offices in order to understand current practices regarding how diversity data are collected across countries.

One of the main findings is that countries can be separated in three categories regarding the way they categorise different visible minority groups present within their borders. The three categories are the following:

- “A large bulk of countries, mainly the older EU member states, only collect information on migrant status;
- Countries, mostly in Eastern Europe as well as the United Kingdom and Ireland, gather additional information on race and ethnicity;
- Countries in the Americas and Oceania collect data on racial/ethnic and indigenous identity.

Figure 1.1. Diversity Collection Practices in OECD Member and Partner Countries



The studies show that the majority of European countries collect data on diversity based on migrant status. In this case, legal frameworks and administrative categories usually do not allow the collection of information other than the country of birth (the nationality), which is still considered just one possible dimension of ethnicity and insufficient to establish consistent statistics. Only some CEE countries and the United Kingdom have legal definitions of race and/or ethnicity and allow for disaggregated data in censuses. The way countries define ethnic minorities within their borders and collect related data, impacts on policy making towards ethnic minority groups, including in education.

Source: (Balestra and Fleischer, 2018<sub>[15]</sub>).

### 1.2.2. Approaches to ethnic minorities - European “colour-blind” societies

Balestra and Fleischer’s (2018<sub>[15]</sub>) categorisation reflects the *colour-blind approach* adopted by most European countries. The notion of *colour blindness*, or *ethnicity-blindness*, applies to countries who choose not to use ethnic categories in policy making and, most of the time, in data collection. Although they recognise the necessity of anti-discrimination policies, they refuse to create categories based on ethnic differentiation that they consider as a potential threat to national cohesion. Moreover, although National Statistics Offices may collect data based on ethnicity, governments might choose not to consider this dimension in policymaking.

Various authors are strongly critical of the lack of ethno-racial statistics in most of Europe and question the relevance of this approach as an intellectual and policy frame to achieve equality and cohesion in multi-ethnic societies (Zoia, 2012<sub>[6]</sub>; Simon, 2017<sub>[11]</sub>). They advocate for a *colour-conscious* statistical approach and policy frames, and denounce *colour-blind policies* that hinder having relevant data in order to assess and target the needs of some marginalised fringes of the population. In contrast, countries adopting a *colour-blind approach* tend to fear that categories based on ethnicity might generate further discrimination and end up being dangerous for the groups concerned. They defend an approach based on *equality through invisibility*, believed to ensure equality of all before the law without the necessity of dividing the population in ethnic or racial groups (Simon, 2015, p. 66<sub>[16]</sub>).<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, according to Hungarian doctor András L. Pap, specialist on minority rights, there is a specific terminology, or three “clusters” in legal and policy frameworks related to (ethnic) minority groups (Pap, 2015<sub>[14]</sub>). Depending on its specific context and approach, a country that recognises the existence of minorities within its borders will adopt:

- A minority rights frame, tailored for *national minorities*
- An anti-discrimination frame, tailored for racial/ethnic minority groups
- Social inclusion measures, corresponding to an institutionalised mix of national, racial and ethnic categories (p. 37<sub>[14]</sub>).

These political and philosophical dilemmas are subjects of ongoing debates within Europe and determine the frame upon which governments tackle issues related to national/ethnic minority groups. The case of Roma communities in Europe is a key example of the efficiencies and shortcomings of such policy frameworks. Roma can be considered as (1) part of a disadvantaged group (socio-economic disadvantage, migrant status) or (2) a national ethnic minority in itself. These elements further shape educational policies and, as a result, have an impact on the inclusion of Roma children and adolescents in European education systems.

### 1.3. Roma Communities: The Largest Ethnic Minority in Europe

#### 1.3.1. Demography

Roma are considered to be the largest ethnic minority on the European continent. They represent approximately 11 million people, with an estimated population share in the EU that ranges from 10.3% in Bulgaria, 9.1% in the Slovak Republic, 8.3% in Romania, 7% in Hungary, 2.5% in Greece, 2% in the Czech Republic, 1.6% in Spain to less than 1% in most of the other countries (European Commission, 2018, p. 5<sub>[17]</sub>).<sup>7</sup> However, there is a substantial lack of data, which makes it difficult to give an up-to-date account of the demography and repartition of Roma groups across countries. Depending on the source, the estimated number of Roma in Europe can vary between 8 million and 12 million people.<sup>8</sup> Challenges in data collection can be explained by three main factors.

- First, some Roma families are nomads<sup>9</sup> and most often not taken into account in censuses as they are usually based on sedentary households.
- Second, countries adopting the colour-blind approach described above do not usually define Roma communities as an ethnic minority in itself,<sup>10</sup> which prevents from having official data.
- Last but not least, qualitative research on statistical methodology shows that minority groups, mostly ethnic ones, have the tendency to answer negatively when asked if they are from a different ethnic background than the national majoritarian one. Regarding Roma people, this issue is particularly prominent since they have been undergoing widespread discrimination and often show a significant distrust towards the government and its institutions (Balestra and Fleischer, 2018<sub>[15]</sub>; Helakorpi, Lappalainen and Mietola, 2018<sub>[18]</sub>; Alexiadou, 2019<sub>[19]</sub>; OECD, 2019<sub>[20]</sub>).

There is, therefore, a twofold major problem in collecting data on Roma individuals: the strong mistrust of Roma individuals and Roma organisations on the one hand,<sup>11</sup> and the rejection of ethnicity categories in official data on the other (Alexiadou, 2019, p. 10<sub>[19]</sub>).

Across different official sources, the number of individuals perceived as Roma in Europe can then vary from 1 to 5 million (Liégeois, 2015, p. 20<sub>[21]</sub>). As a result, by fear or by lack of relevant category to identify to, a significant number of Roma individuals are invisible in most censuses. Based on some official statistics and academic research, an estimate of the number of Roma individuals in the different European countries can however be made (Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1. Estimated Number of Roma in Europe**

	Low hypothesis	High hypothesis		Low hypothesis	High hypothesis
Albania	90 000	100 000	Luxembourg	100	150
Austria	20 000	25 000	Macedonia	120 000	160 000
Belarus	10 000	15 000	Moldavia	20 000	25 000
Belgium	25 000	30 000	Netherlands	35 000	40 000
Bosnia-Herzegovina	30 000	40 000	Norway	2 000	3 000
Bulgaria	700 000	800 000	Poland	40 000	50 000
Croatia	20 000	30 000	Portugal	40 000	50 000
Cyprus	500	1 000	Romania	1 800 000	2 500 000
Czech Republic	250 000	300 000	Russia	300 000	400 000
Denmark	1 500	2 000	Serbia-and-Montenegro	400 000	450 000
Estonia	1 000	1 500	Slovakia	480 000	520 000
Finland	8 000	10 000	Slovenia	8 000	10 000
France	280 000	340 000	Spain	700 000	800 000
Germany	150 000	200 000	Sweden	30 000	40 000
Greece	200 000	300 000	Switzerland	30 000	35 000
Hungary	550 000	600 000	Turkey	400 000	500 000
Ireland	25 000	35 000	Ukraine	50 000	60 000
Italy	90 000	110 000	United Kingdom	90 000	120 000
Latvia	5 000	7 000	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7 003 600</b>	<b>8 712 650</b>
Lithuania	2 500	3 000			

Note by Turkey: The information in this document with reference to “Cyprus” relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognises the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of the United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the “Cyprus issue”.

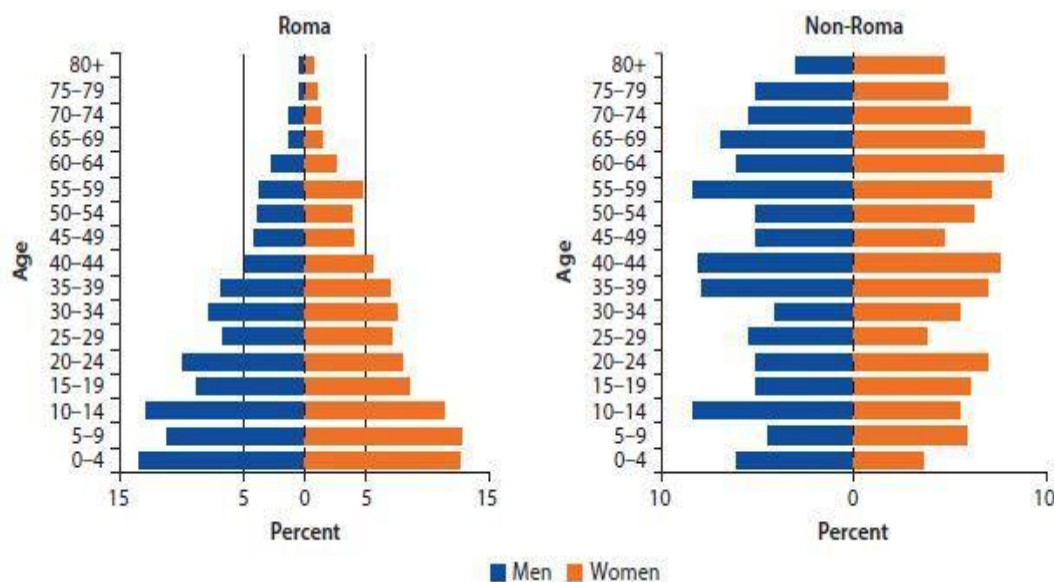
Note by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Union: The Republic of Cyprus is recognised by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Source: (Liégeois, 2015, p. 21<sub>[21]</sub>).

Furthermore, Roma populations tend to be younger than the average European ones, with a lower life expectancy and higher birth rates (FRA, 2016, p. 17<sub>[22]</sub>). Data from 2009 showed that in the EU, 35.7% are below 15, while this is the case for less than 16% of the population as a whole. The average age for Roma is 25 years old, compared with 40 for the European non-Roma population (The Velux Foundations, 2019<sub>[23]</sub>). In Hungary for example, the Roma age pyramid contrasts drastically with the non-Roma one (Figure 1.2). Various academics and international organisations have stressed the importance of Roma inclusion based on the fact that Roma youth will represent a growing part of the work force

in European ageing economies (Gatti et al., 2016<sup>[24]</sup>; OECD, 2019<sup>[20]</sup>; Bednarik, Hidas and Machlica, 2019<sup>[25]</sup>).

**Figure 1.2. Roma versus Non-Roma Distribution of Male and Female Population by Age in Hungary**



*Note:* The data used in this 2016 World Bank Group’s report are from 2011. Although there does not seem to be additional actual data on Roma distribution by age in European countries, the most recent studies (mainly led by the European Fundamental Rights Agency - FRA) show that Roma population remain younger compared to the average population.

*Source:* (Gatti et al., 2016, p. 29<sup>[24]</sup>).

### 1.3.2. Heterogeneity and terminology

A fact too often ignored in official data collection - and broadly unknown within the general population – is the considerable heterogeneity of what is defined and perceived as “Roma” in political discourses in Europe. There is often confusion on who Roma people are. *Roma* is an umbrella term that means “man” or “human being” in Romani and was chosen by some Roma associations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the 1990s to be an official category (European Commission, 2012, p. 15<sup>[26]</sup>; Surdu and Kovats, 2015<sup>[12]</sup>). It is now commonly used to define a community that is a mosaic of different groups with disparate practices and situations.

What makes the “homogeneity” of Roma groups is their believed common origin. Two centuries of scholarships have been working to understand the roots of Roma communities (Matras, 2015<sup>[27]</sup>). There is academic consensus that Roma are descendants of the Rajput<sup>12</sup> – “sons of kings” – warriors, who were scattered across Europe and other continents through history. These warriors left India in the 11th century and followed centuries of bloody battles and invasions led mainly by the Ghaznavid Empire in present day Afghanistan (Kirova and Prochner, 2015<sup>[28]</sup>). The majority of them settled in the Balkans, though various groups spread throughout Europe, and to other continents through later migration processes. The main element upon which researchers base their hypothesis, besides ancient documents that indirectly picture Roma groups,<sup>13</sup> is the Romani language. Although there are many variations of Romani dialects, linguists have identified common roots all leading to ancient Hindi. Roma individuals are most often at least bilingual; they



speak a national language, and a variant of Romani, though it may happen that they speak Romani only.

In spite of the vast diversity that characterises Roma communities across Europe, they tend to be separated in three main groups:

- Eastern Roma groups, mainly living in CEE countries, but today also in Western Europe, as a result of migrations since the collapse of communist regimes at the end of the 1980s;
- The Sinti or Manush, who mainly live in France, Germany, some central European and Nordic countries;
- The Gypsy (mainly used in the United Kingdom), *Gitanos*, *Gitans* or *kale*, often associated to “travellers” who mainly live in southwest Europe.<sup>14</sup>

These denominations remain unclear, and are often used indistinctively in common language and official discourses. There is, in fact, a plethora of subgroups Roma communities identify to. In Hungary alone, for example, there are about 30 subgroups, such as the Romungro, Lovari and Beash. The majority speaks the national language and primarily identify as Hungarian (FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, 2015, p. 55<sup>[29]</sup>). Moreover, although the term Roma can be used as encompassing all these groups, Roma individuals and communities can possibly disagree with and refute any resemblance with another group qualified as Roma. The diversity that characterises Roma communities in Europe is therefore greater than commonly thought. It is also multidimensional, and the process of identity identification is as much complex as misunderstood. It should not be forgotten that *Roma* refers to all the distinctive groups mentioned above, characterised by diverse practices and socio-economic situations. Therefore, in this paper, the expression *Roma communities* is used to imply the vast diversity that characterises them.

### ***1.3.3. Roma as an ethnic minority group?***

Most often, Roma communities are arguably defined as the largest “*ethnic minority*” in Europe. As mentioned in the definition above, ethnicity is a dynamic concept based on relationships and boundaries definition and redefinition among different groups who believe sharing a common identity (same nationality, ancestry, cultural practices etc.). Moreover, authors explain that one of the main foundations of ethnicity is the intertwining of how individuals perceive themselves and how they are perceived (Brubaker, 2009<sup>[4]</sup>; Meer, 2014<sup>[7]</sup>; Roth, 2016<sup>[9]</sup>; Balestra and Fleischer, 2018<sup>[15]</sup>). For sharing similarities in linguistic and practices, as well as common challenges, Roma communities are perceived and defined as a unified ethnic minority by European institutions and referred as such in European level policy making. However, Roma individuals do not necessarily see themselves as part of a common group, and build more complex identities. Roma is rather a political notion shaped by political institutions and Roma representatives in order to facilitate policy making and the issues linked to the marginalisation of most Roma communities. In this sense, most authors argue that the “Romani ethnicity,” rather than being an objective concept, is a contextual construction (Coquio, Catherine and Poueyto, 2014<sup>[30]</sup>; Matras, 2015<sup>[27]</sup>; Liégeois, 2015<sup>[21]</sup>). While this categorisation can be a useful process, it is not the end product, and it should not undermine the rich diversity found within Roma communities.<sup>15</sup>

At the national level, countries across Europe use different administrative denominations, depending on which approach they adopt towards *national (ethnic) minorities*. To date, there is no consistent common definition in international law of what does or does not

constitute a national minority in Europe (Baranowska, 2014<sup>[31]</sup>). Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political of 1966 and non-binding documents such as the *UN Principles and Recommendations on Population and Households Censuses* constitutes the few references, which contain very broad definition. The Council of Europe 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities,<sup>16</sup> clearly states that no satisfying definition was reached. Therefore, it is up to States to define which groups form their *national minorities*, and whether the categories are based on ethnic characteristics or not. The Czech Act on the Rights of Members of National Minorities, for example, recognises ethnic national minorities, which it defines as follows:

*A community of citizens of the Czech Republic living in the Czech Republic, who differ from the other citizens mostly by their common ethnic origin, language, culture, and traditions. They represent a minority and at the same time try to preserve their identity, language, and culture to protect the interests of their community, which has formed during history.*<sup>17</sup>

While some countries, like the Czech Republic or Slovenia,<sup>18</sup> recognise Roma communities as a national minority in their Constitution and acknowledge the necessity to implement a legal framework, Roma are often not granted the status of *national minority* in other countries because of (1) their heterogeneity, (2) their transnational character, (3) the absence of “Roma State,” or (4) European countries’ *colour-blind* approach. In this last case, Roma are not officially recognised as a group and, if they find themselves excluded, are integrated within broader categories whose disadvantages are not considered to be linked to ethnicity but rather to a precarious socio-economic situation and/or broad discrimination issues.

Overall, the following official categories can be encountered that relate to Roma communities:

- “Travellers” or “*Gens du voyage*”;
- “Gypsies and travellers”;
- “Nomads”;
- “Roma”, potentially with a declination of subgroups to acknowledge their differences.

Countries opting for “Travellers” or “Nomads” alone are those adopting a total colour-blind approach and therefore do not officially recognise Roma communities as forming an *ethnic minority group* in itself. In this case, they are considered part of a wider *national minority* defined on the basis of a nomadic lifestyle. The boundaries of these categories remain however quite unclear, and academics tend to be strongly critical towards the impact of hiding the diversity within groups/Roma communities under too simple and confused administrative denominations (Coquio, Catherine and Poueyto, 2014<sup>[30]</sup>; Alexiadou and Norberg, 2017<sup>[32]</sup>).<sup>19</sup> While some countries do not recognise Roma as an ethnic minority, others have extensive legal protections that ensure the rights of these communities, usually starting with the constitution. As explained later on, administrative categories, political-philosophical orientation (and political motivation) will determine the existence or not of policies targeted to Roma communities as a specific ethnic minority and how they are perceived by wider society.

At the European level, a recent 2018 study of the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) is among the few works that relatively clearly mentions the different groups that can be encompassed by the term “Roma” in policy making. It includes not less than 10 different

groups separated in 4 categories (FRA, 2018, p. 5<sub>[33]</sub>). Finally, the term “Romani” may also be encountered in official national denominations. “Roma,” “Romani” and “Gypsy” are often interchangeable notions, with the exception of Norway that separates Roma and Romani in two distinct categories based on variations in lifestyle and language (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015<sub>[34]</sub>; Helakorpi, Lappalainen and Mietola, 2018<sub>[18]</sub>).

## 2. Policy Approaches and Initiatives for the Inclusion of Roma Students

The first policies targeting Roma students in education in Europe were strongly assimilationist<sup>20</sup> and were mostly linked to settling policies aimed to tackle the “Gypsy question” throughout the 1950-1960s (Kirova, Anna; Thorlaskon, 2015, pp. 382-383<sup>[35]</sup>). Initiatives for the integration of Roma communities in European countries began in the 1990s with various documents published by the Council of Europe. Later, the Decade for Roma Inclusion (2005-2015) showed a genuine international commitment to address the considerable challenges faced by Roma communities in Europe. During this period, poverty, health, housing, education and employment were defined as the main priority areas in order to improve their situation.

Since then, the focus – at least in policy discourse – switched towards the concept of inclusion. Various policy initiatives and projects led by NGOs and international organisations to foster the inclusion of Roma students in education systems and in society in general emerged. States have been strongly encouraged to create and implement policies to put an end to the marginalisation and exclusion of Roma communities across Europe.

As part of the OECD *Strength through Diversity* project, this paper now focuses mainly on the inclusion of Roma in education systems in Europe in order to highlight existing policies and practices, analyse their strengths and unveil the main remaining challenges towards the inclusion of all Roma students.

### 2.1. Roma students still lag behind

#### 2.1.1. (Lack of) General data on Roma in Europe

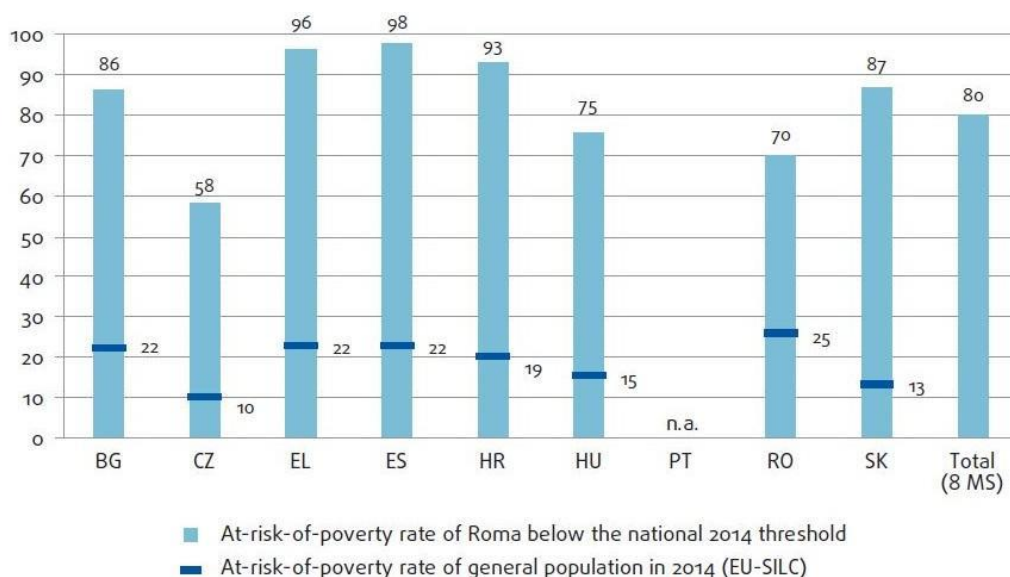
The general lack of data, especially of recent data, on Roma students makes it rather difficult to have an exact picture of their situation in Europe. Academics and experts have highlighted the necessity of disaggregated data collections in schools, where vulnerable groups such as some ethnic minorities may face specific challenges due to their origins (OECD, 2010<sup>[36]</sup>; Bojadjieva, 2015<sup>[37]</sup>). While some studies are essential in collecting qualitative data – such as family’s perceptions on education –, one of the most recent quantitative studies available covering several OECD Member Countries is FRA (European Fundamental Rights Agency) 2016 EU-MIDIS II - Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey from which findings on Roma people have been gathered (FRA, 2016<sup>[22]</sup>). Moreover, this survey is aligned with a similar one from 2011 (FRA, 2012<sup>[38]</sup>), thus enabling one to observe the evolution in the situation of Roma communities in Europe. On top of sporadic official governmental data, FRA relied to a great extent on its own data and some Eurostat’s statistics to give an account on the situation of Roma in terms of poverty, housing, health, employment and education in European countries.<sup>21</sup> In addition, various European Commission’s reports and a World Bank 2016 report on the equality of opportunities for Roma children in CEE countries also contain a rich amount of data (Gatti et al., 2016<sup>[24]</sup>). Most data of the World Bank report were collected jointly with the UNDP.<sup>22</sup> However, most figures are from 2011, and are mainly used for comparison and to uphold some current observations.<sup>23</sup>

Overall, the available data show that the participation of Roma children in education improved over time, and drastic progress has been made in terms of literacy, greatly reducing the gap between Roma and non-Roma students. Yet, the existing gap in terms of

educational attainment between Roma and non-Roma children remains significant, especially beyond compulsory education. There is, however, an absence of quantitative data related to the well-being of Roma students at school.<sup>24</sup>

In spite of a plethora of documents issued, projects implemented and funds dedicated to the inclusion of Roma communities in Europe, they remain one of the most marginalised communities on the continent, still facing similar challenges as in the past. The reasons for this phenomenon are complex and intertwined and are based, among other elements, on historical processes, structural discrimination dynamics, and a compartmentalised approach that might fail in taking into account the complexity of the situation of most Roma communities. Numerous households live below the poverty line in countries where poverty has been almost fully erased amid the non-Roma population. The few studies aiming at collecting data on Roma communities in Europe show quite alarming numbers. In most countries they live in, Roma people have a higher chance to live in poverty (Figure 2.1), to suffer from hunger, to live in a precarious household, to be under-educated, and to be unemployed – a situation that has not substantially changed since 2011 (FRA, 2012<sup>[38]</sup>; FRA, 2016<sup>[22]</sup>; Gatti et al., 2016<sup>[24]</sup>; OECD, 2019<sup>[20]</sup>).

**Figure 2.1. At-risk-of-poverty rate of Roma people in ten European countries**



*Note:* The countries represented are Bulgaria (BG), Czech Republic (CZ), Greece (EL), Spain (ES), Croatia (HR), Hungary (HU), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), and the Slovak Republic (SK).

*Source:* (FRA, 2016, p. 14<sup>[22]</sup>).

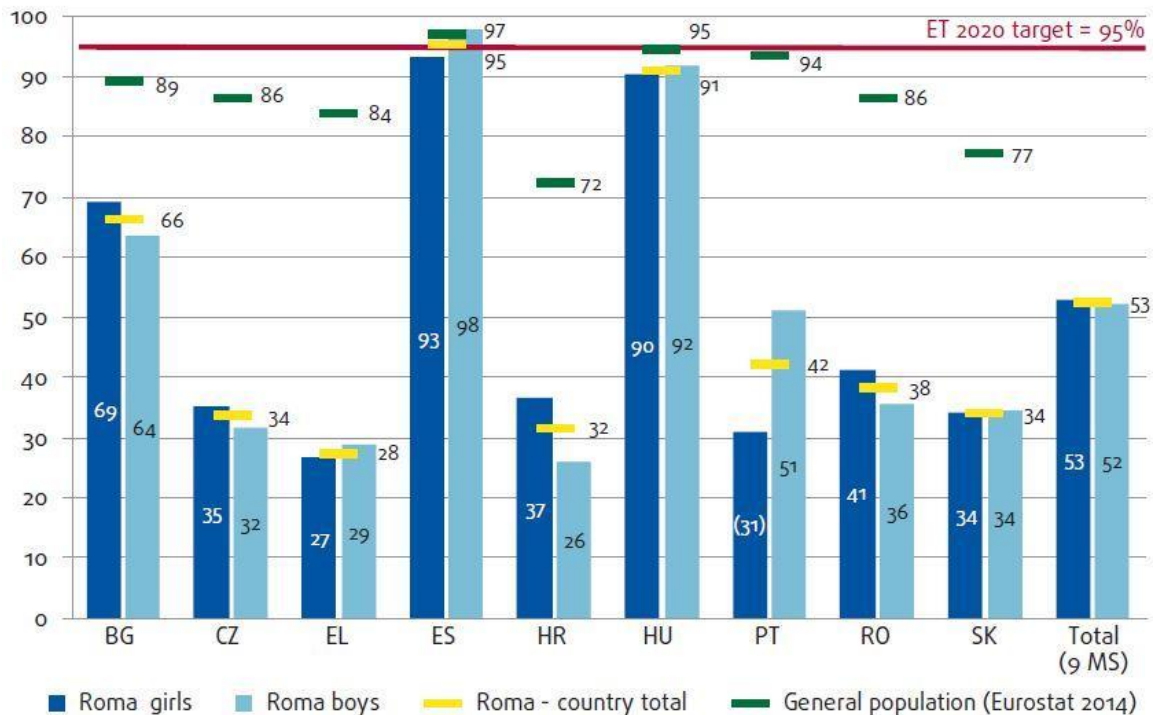
Regarding the situation of Roma children and adolescents specifically, studies show that Roma children are twice as likely to be at risk of poverty compared to non-Roma children (Gatti et al., 2016, p. 18<sup>[24]</sup>). Due to the issues faced by Roma communities, they often suffer from multiple disadvantages, including poverty and discrimination on the basis of their ethnic origin. These disadvantages are closely related to Roma students' worryingly low performance and attainment in European school systems.

### **2.1.2. The enrolment of Roma in early childhood education and care remains low**

In most countries, Roma children's attendance of early childhood education and care (ECEC) seems to have slightly increased, but remains far behind the rate for the average

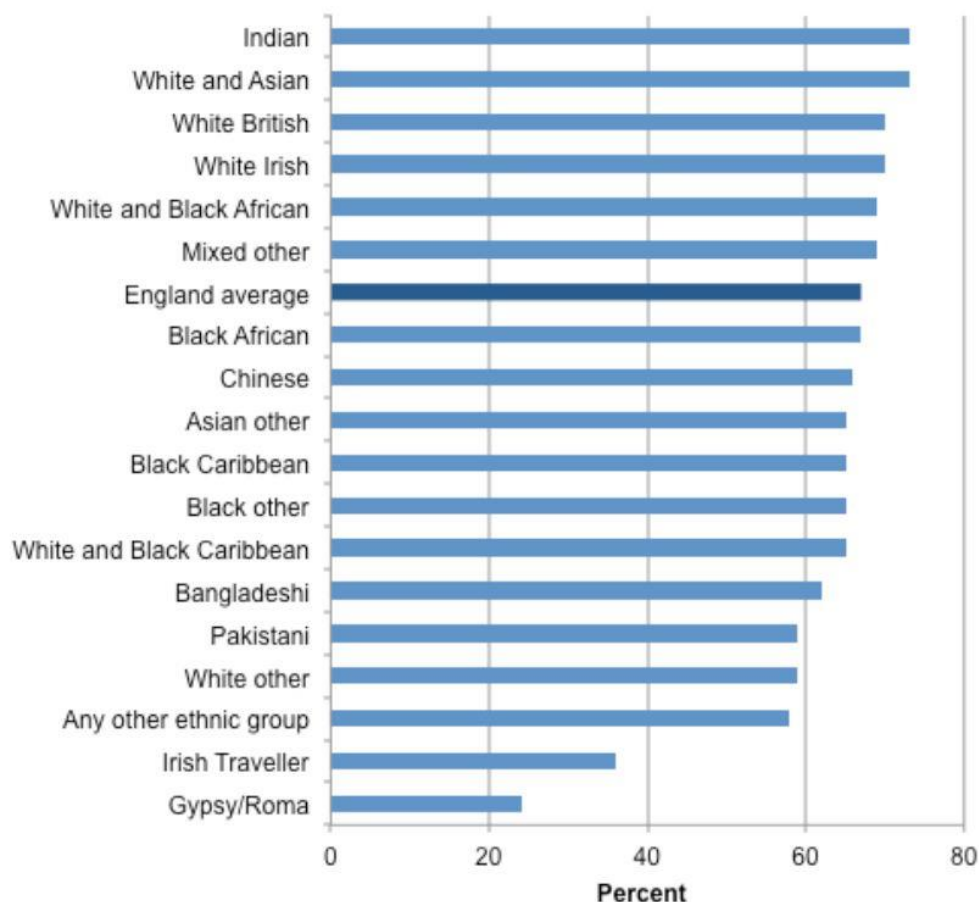
population. FRA observes a 5% increase in the share of Roma children attending preschool between 2011 (47%) and 2016 (53%) (FRA, 2018, p. 25<sup>[33]</sup>). However, with the exception of Hungary and Spain, it is still considerably below the non-Roma population and remains far from European targets (Figure 2.2).

**Figure 2.2. Children aged between 4 years and the (country-specific) starting age of compulsory education who participate in ECEC, by EU Member State (%)**



Source: (FRA, 2016, p. 23<sup>[22]</sup>).

Overall, the data available highlight that Roma children tend to be half as likely or less to attend preschool. While the share of Roma children attending preschool rarely exceeds 50%, Eurostat estimates that, on average, 95% of children in the EU between 4 and the starting age of primary education attend school.<sup>25</sup> In the United Kingdom, the 2016 Race and Disparity Audit report – one of the rare documents providing disaggregated data on students from diverse ethnic origins in Europe – shows that in England, “at age 5, around a quarter of Gypsy and Roma pupils achieved a good level of development (Figure 2.3), making them around 3 times less likely to do so than average” (Cabinet Office, 2017, p. 19<sup>[39]</sup>).

**Figure 2.3. Percentage of 5 years old achieving a good level of development, England, 2016**

Source: (Cabinet Office, 2017, p. 20<sub>[39]</sub>).

The reasons explaining this phenomenon are multiple and interconnected. They vary from spatial segregation and lack of access to transportation to a lack of trust from Roma parents towards the institution of education that they may see as a threat to their identity. In addition, Roma parents might be concerned for their children's well-being because of bullying and other forms of prejudices in the school and the classroom. In some cases, some families prefer early childhood education and care to be taken care of by the family rather than school in order to fortify family ties and attachment (Brüggemann, 2014<sub>[40]</sub>). Since the fundamental importance of ECEC in later school performance and attainment has been widely recognised, various policies and initiatives have been developed and implemented to increase the participation of Roma children in ECEC activities (see section 2.3.2). Yet, a long way remains ahead regarding the participation and inclusion of Roma children in ECEC in European countries.

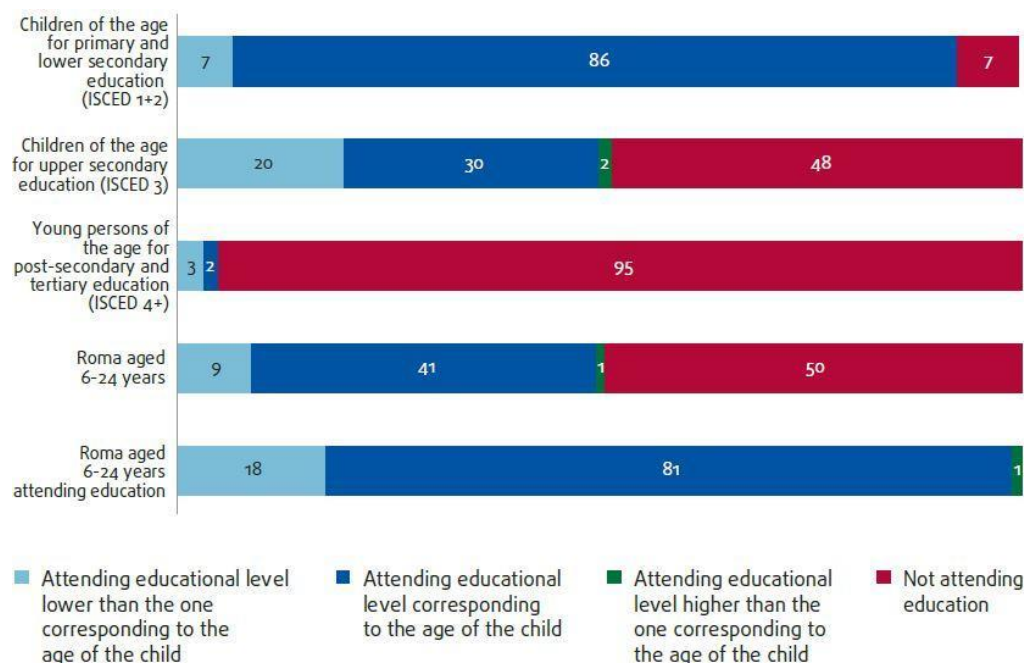
### ***2.1.3. High enrolment in primary school***

The enrolment in primary school is high, although overall slightly lower than that for non-Roma students. FRA observed that the share of Roma students in compulsory education did not significantly change between 2011 and 2016. For Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Portugal, the Slovak Republic and Spain, Roma enrolment rates in compulsory education are above 90%, the highest being in Spain (99%), closely

followed by Hungary (98%). The situation remains worrying in certain countries, such as Greece where 69% of Roma children were attending school in 2016 (FRA, 2016, p. 25<sub>[22]</sub>).

Nonetheless, these numbers do not show the whole picture of the situation. In fact, data and empirical evidence suggest that a significant share of Roma children do not attend school at a level that corresponds to their age. This phenomenon seems more common for children and adolescents at the age of attending upper secondary and post-secondary education (Figure 2.4).

**Figure 2.4. Roma aged 6-24 years by educational level they attend (%)**



*Note:* The countries represented are Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, and the Slovak Republic.

*Source:* (FRA, 2016, p. 26<sub>[22]</sub>).

This situation, barely mentioned in studies, has a substantial impact on the well-being of students who are exposed to rejection from other students of lower age. As a result, Roma students might struggle to find their place within the class, a situation that tends to generate frustration and demotivation.

Academic underachievement also remains a critical concern both in primary and secondary schools. In the United Kingdom, for example, Gypsy students have the lowest educational performances and attainment among all the country's ethnic minorities and most Roma adolescents leave school at the age of sixteen (Cabinet Office, 2017<sub>[39]</sub>). In some contexts, national Roma students also perform worse in comparison with students with an immigrant background (Rozzi, 2017, p. 29<sub>[41]</sub>). This phenomenon is due to a complex set of factors, including discriminatory practices against Roma communities that can have a direct impact on Roma students' well-being and academic performance (see section 3.2.2).

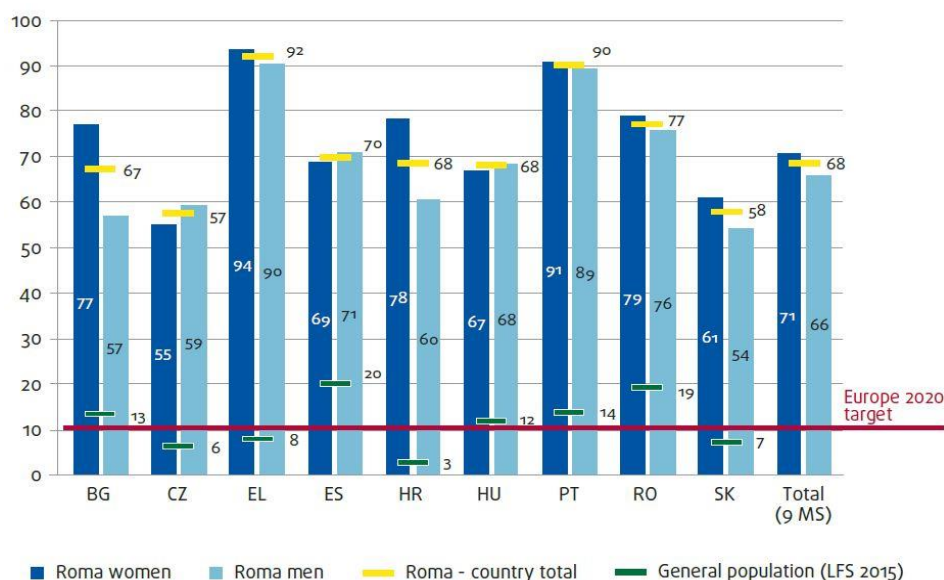


### 2.1.4. Early dropouts and low enrolment in secondary education, a persistent issue

While literacy was one of the main achievements of the Roma Decade (Friedman, 2014<sup>[42]</sup>) and countries substantially reduced the attendance gap between Roma and non-Roma students, early dropouts and low educational attainment remain a common issue for Roma students across European countries. Numerous studies have been pointing out the persistence of widespread discrimination against Roma students, as well as the lack of quality and inclusiveness of most education systems – social issues and structural shortcomings which contribute to leaving a significant number of young Roma prematurely out of school (Myers, McGhee and Bhopal, 2010<sup>[43]</sup>; Gatti et al., 2016<sup>[24]</sup>; FRA, 2018<sup>[44]</sup>; OECD, 2019<sup>[20]</sup>).

Data show that the share of Roma students (18-24) who leave education and training early is very high (Figure 2.5). FRA estimates that in the countries that took part in its study, on average 68% of Roma students are considered early leavers from education and training. In absolute values, there are considerable gaps between Roma individuals and the general population. In Portugal for example, while 14% of the general 18-24 population are considered early leavers, this figure reaches 90% within the Roma population. In Spain, these figures are 20% and 70% respectively, and 7% and 58% in the Slovak Republic (FRA, 2016, p. 27<sup>[22]</sup>). There has nonetheless been a decrease in the share of early school leavers, which reached 86% in 2011 among the Roma population age 20 to 24 (FRA, 2012, p. 15<sup>[38]</sup>).

**Figure 2.5. Early leavers from education and training, aged 18-24 years, by EU Member State (%)**



Source: (FRA, 2016, p. 27<sup>[22]</sup>).

Early dropouts and low educational attainment are the result of complex issues. This phenomenon is already observed in secondary school where dropouts and enrolment after the mandatory age are in strong contrast with the situation in primary school. P. Hamilton (2018<sup>[45]</sup>), specialist on childhood studies and educational programmes, summarises the main identified causes for this phenomenon as follows:

- An ill-fitting curriculum;
- Low teachers' expectations and negative attitudes (see section 3.2.4);
- A lack of understanding of the “Gypsy culture,” mainly based on a lack of intercultural communication and misguided assumptions of a unified Roma culture;
- Weak home/school relations;
- Limited or negative experiences of Roma parents with schools;
- Mobility issues linked to travelling;
- Gender and cultural factors not acknowledged by mainstream schooling (see section 3.2.3).

This situation is a sign that, though the number of primary school students increased significantly, school systems and the surrounding social factors hardly allow the possibility of a quality and sustainable education when it comes to Roma students. Roma individuals rarely attend higher (see section 2.3.5) education and often leave school worryingly early, without completing secondary education. The following Table 2.1 elaborated by the European Commission (2019<sub>[46]</sub>) summarises the situation of Roma children and adolescents in education.

**Table 2.1. Situation of Roma in education (2016)**

<b>Highest achieved education (aged 16+):</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Upper secondary, vocational, post-secondary: 18%</li> <li>○ Lower secondary: 38%</li> <li>○ Primary: 29%</li> <li>○ Not completed primary: 14%</li> </ul>
<b>Share of Roma children attending education corresponding to their age*:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Primary or lower secondary: 86%</li> <li>○ Upper secondary: 30%</li> <li>○ Post-secondary and tertiary: 2%</li> </ul>
<b>Segregation in education** (aged 6-15):</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Attends schools where all (13%) or most (33%) students are Roma</li> <li>○ Attends classes where all (13%) or most (31%) students are Roma</li> </ul>

\*: Share of Roma children of the respective country specific age that corresponds to a given level of education attending this level of education, out of the total number of Roma children of that age.

\*\* : The topic of segregation in education is tackled in section 3.2.1 of this paper.

Source: (European Commission, 2019, p. 5<sub>[46]</sub>).

## 2.2. Governance and Policy Approaches

### 2.2.1. Prominence of European legal and policy frameworks

Because Roma people, to a large extent, are perceived to form a transnational ethnic community, the “Roma question” is fundamentally a European one (Liégeois, 2015, p. 28<sub>[21]</sub>) and national policy making is intimately linked to the European governance. There is a consistent legal framework in European law as well as policy frameworks related to the protection of minorities and the fight against discrimination, starting with the European Charter on Human Rights' article 21 on non-discrimination. Specifically for the EU, article 2 of its founding Treaty already states that “[t]he Union is founded on the values of

respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.” Article 10 also specifies that Member States shall fight discrimination based on, among others, ethnic origin<sup>26</sup>. The EU Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EU) is a unique document and the most referred to, aimed at eliminating racial and ethnic discrimination in law and practice across the EU’s member states. It can be paired with the Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA that obliges to use criminal penalties to fight against racism. The Racial Equality Directive is considered as the most powerful document available to foster inclusive education for ethnic minorities.

After mostly unsuccessful attempts between the 1990s and the early 2000s, it is not until recently that a consistent policy framework was established and countries committed to tackling the issue of Roma exclusion. Currently, there are two main overall policy frames in Europe directly related to Roma inclusion:

1. **The Decade for Roma Inclusion (2005-2015)**, movement led by international organisations such as the World Bank, the Council of Europe and the UNDP. Numerous frameworks such as National Inclusion Strategies and guidelines such as the 10 Principles for Roma Inclusion (European Commission, 2010<sup>[47]</sup>), were created during that period in order to accompany countries in developing effective national inclusion strategies.
2. **EU documents and projects on Roma inclusion created under its four policy areas of education, employment, health, and housing for a “social Europe.”** This combination constitutes “a mix of legal, policy and funding instruments around Roma inclusion, combined with Roma advocacy and civil society participation” (Alexiadou, 2019, p. 9<sup>[19]</sup>). One of the most recent examples is the European Parliament’s Resolution on fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU of 25 October 2017<sup>27</sup> aimed to foster Roma communities’ human rights and fight anti-Gypsyism (see definition section 3.2.2). Inclusion policies correspond to policies that “aim to insert the Roma in the mainstream of society (mainstream educational institutions, mainstream jobs, mainstream housing)” (European Social Fund (ESF) Learning Network, 2015, p. 10<sup>[48]</sup>) without cultural assimilation, fostering a sense of belonging and overall cohesion. Within this context, education has come to be understood as key in the inclusion of Roma communities, and educational projects have been highly encouraged and funded by international organisations.<sup>28</sup>

There are therefore various legal documents, non-binding recommendations and guidelines as well as available funding to promote Roma inclusion. Most frameworks remain at the European level, although Roma rights, such as education, are implemented nationally. Since welfare in general and mainly education is organised under the principle of subsidiarity, soft law applies in relation to education and intercultural policies at the European level. It is up to countries to establish the type of policies they believe necessary to tackle challenges faced by minorities in education within their borders. As a result, European documents that suggest strategical and policy frameworks aimed to improve accessibility, adequacy, availability and adaptability of education systems for all with an explicit focus on Roma students are for most non-binding. The Europeanisation of the issue on the one hand and the lack of political will at the national level on the other are two elements that require further attention and have been denounced by academics and NGOs that fear the risk of losing consistency in policy making (Alexiadou, 2017<sup>[49]</sup>).

In 2011, following a call from the European Commission,<sup>29</sup> the EU created a Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) that complements the Racial Equality Directive. Countries were encouraged to develop and implement their own NRIS in order to foster the inclusion of Roma communities within their borders up until 2020. Soon-to-be new EU members from Eastern Europe were imposed the necessity to establish a NRIS as a prerequisite to enter the Union. It was seen as a proof that they would comply with EU's value related to human rights and the protection of minorities. Countries all created a Roma strategy that was assessed by the European Commission in 2012.<sup>30</sup> The Framework for NRIS focuses on four main areas: education, employment, healthcare and housing.

Regarding education, Member States and future Member States were mainly required to (1) eliminate school segregation and the misuse of special needs education; (2) enforce full compulsory education and promote vocational training; (3) increase the enrolment in early childhood education and care; (4) improve teachers' training and school mediation; and (5) raise parents' awareness on the importance of education (European Commission, 2012<sub>[26]</sub>). These goals were crystallised in the *Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the member states* that sets a series of recommendations "to ensure equal treatment and full access for Roma boys and girls to quality and mainstream education and to ensure that all Roma pupils complete at least compulsory education."<sup>31</sup>

In practice, the ministries of education, sometimes in partnership with other relevant ministries, universities (Box 2.1), schools, local associations or local/international NGOs, usually take the lead of internationally-funded projects. They determine the legal and strategic frame delimited by national laws on education, strategies on inclusiveness (if applicable) and non-discrimination regulations. The main provider of funds for Roma inclusion is the European Social Fund (ESF) which grants countries a budget in programming periods (currently 2014-2020).<sup>32</sup> Countries can allocate a significant part of this budget to the inclusion of Roma in mainstream society. Even though all countries have anti-discrimination acts and most have legal protections for minorities, the fact that Roma may not be recognised as an ethnic minority can prevent the specific issues that they face from being tackled. Since the early 2000s, there have been policy debates whether to use mainstream or targeted policies to foster Roma inclusion.

#### **Box 2.1. University-led Programmes – towards the inclusion of Roma students in Greece**

Greece has developed an extensive framework shaping programmes directed to minority students, starting with the law 2413/1996 "Greek Education Abroad, Intercultural Education and Other Provisions" also known as the Law of Intercultural Education. Following this Act, the Greek government has funded and supported various educational actions led by universities and aimed to encourage the integration of Roma children in Greek schools.

##### **Projects for the integration of Roma children**

Education programmes in Greece started in the 1990s along with the obligations of an EU Member State. The government selected several programmes proposed by Greek universities for the integration of Roma in education. These projects followed each other over time and were progressively evaluated. The first wave of programmes started in 1997. The first phase was called "Gypsy children's education" and was implemented by the University of Ioannina. Its second phase, named "The Integration of Gypsy children in schools", was implemented by the same university from 2001 to 2004. Among the main

goals were to (1) develop specific language materials for teaching the Greek language as a second language, (2) create an alternative teaching material to support teaching in orientation classes and learning enhancement classes, (3) design an educational material for training of the teaching staff, and (4) implement pedagogical monitoring and support as well as build awareness and training. After a 2-year interruption, two other universities took the lead of the programme to further increase attendance to schools and better performance of Roma students.

#### **Monitoring and evaluation**

Although numerous projects were conducted in various European countries on Roma integration, few consistent evaluations are available. These university-led programmes are among the rare initiatives whose impact were evaluated. According to the data obtained, all three phases showed a progressive increase in the number of Gypsy children's enrolment in school and attendance, with more time spent at school and lower number of school dropouts.

#### **Towards inclusion**

Between 2010 and 2013, a corresponding project was implemented, focusing on Roma adults and pre-school education. Since 2016, the act "Inclusion and Education of Roma children" was integrated in the Operational Programme "Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning 2014-2020." Among the act's goals is "improving the school access and attendance of Roma children, the systematic attendance of school aiming at children's progress in compulsory education, and, regarding those who have left school, their reintegration into the education system was pursued." The operation is to be implemented by the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in partnership with the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the University of Thessaly.

Source: (Calogiannakis et al., 2018<sup>[50]</sup>)

### **2.2.2. "Normative dilemma" – Targeted approach v. mainstream approach**

Two main non-exclusive categories of policy approaches can be adopted by countries towards the inclusion of Roma students and Roma communities in general in mainstream society (European Social Fund (ESF) Learning Network, 2015<sup>[48]</sup>; Alexiadou and Norberg, 2017<sup>[32]</sup>; Neumann, 2017<sup>[51]</sup>; Alexiadou, 2019<sup>[19]</sup>):

- The *targeted approach*, whose goal is the improvement of the Roma minority specifically. Its defendants argue that Roma students suffer from exclusion not only because of their socio-economic situation, but also because of discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity. The fact that they are subject to a specific form of discrimination requires policies tailored for Roma students as a distinct group. Discrimination can take various different shapes, including bullying and physical violence, and be expressed at all levels, including in political and academic discourses, the classrooms, schools and educational policies (Brüggemann and D'Arcy, 2017<sup>[52]</sup>). Targeted policies towards Roma communities might therefore be seen as needed in order to reduce the specific barriers to inclusion and imbalances faced by Roma individuals.
- The *mainstream approach* that aims to foster inclusion for the whole school population without categorising a distinct ethnic minority that would endure

specific issues. Its tenants argue for an ethnically blind approach with a special focus on civic equality embodied in a general anti-discrimination and human rights frame. In this case, policies aim to increase opportunities for Roma in dealing with institutions of education as a whole (Helakorpi, Lappalainen and Mietola, 2018<sup>[18]</sup>; Alexiadou, 2019<sup>[19]</sup>). They worry that a targeted approach might “ethnicise” Roma identity which would be against inclusionary principles, and prefer a rights-based approach directed to all citizens without special attention to a group based on ethnic characteristics. They may also criticise targeted policies for ignoring satellite problems and/or homogenise the Roma population that is highly diverse, not only in terms of practices but also in terms of socio-economic status. On the contrary, the mainstream approach has been criticised for making Roma invisible and ignoring prominent issues at the roots of their exclusion. In those countries that adopt a colour-blind approach when it comes to policy making and/or do not officially recognise Roma groups as an ethnic national minority, few national policies target them specifically. As a result, in all areas including education, they tend to target socio-economic disadvantage and do not implement complementary measures to respond to marginalisation or exclusion challenges linked to racism and ethnic discrimination.

This dilemma faced by countries in ethnic minority-related policy making is also linked to a fundamental public policy debate analysed by researchers working on social justice such as the American philosopher Nancy Fraser. She explains that, nowadays, in the production of welfare policies, countries face a continuous tension between a policy of redistribution and a policy of recognition. In the case of Roma, whether a country decides to adopt a targeted or a mainstream approach, in educational policies for instance, will determine its orientation in terms of redistribution (towards disadvantaged groups in general) and recognition (of the visible minority concerned). Fraser argues that the injustice faced by marginalised groups is twofold, with a mix of socio-economic and cultural symbolic injustices (Fraser, 2011<sup>[53]</sup>), and that both approaches have to be linked in order to foster social justice.<sup>33</sup> This orientation is the one promoted by European institutions for nearly 15 years.

This normative dilemma is likely to create institutional tensions and challenges in terms of policy coherence. For example, following two decades of attempt to Roma inclusion, Sweden’s educational policy orientation related to Roma communities is subject to a delicate balance. In spite of a strong commitment from the Government towards the inclusion of Roma students and their success in education, there seems to be a significant tension in the institutional Swedish context. According to Norberg and Alexiadou (2017<sup>[32]</sup>), in Sweden, “which has traditionally followed an ethnicity-neutral approach to the protection of minorities, the policy intentions written in the strategy for Roma inclusion may be resisted or marginalised under the more generic approach of equality and education for all” in which redistribution is likely to take precedence over recognition. This tension is a complicated one to resolve in the field of education, mostly “when questions of identity and cultural marginalisation become embedded in questions of education (under)achievement and (under)performance.”

European institutions have tried to solve this dilemma by arguing for policies based on the *explicit but not exclusive targeting principle*. It guides the European level governance on Roma inclusion (Gatti et al., 2016<sup>[24]</sup>) and corresponds to the second principle of the ten Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion. Defendants of this “half-way” approach consider that:

*Experience has shown that mainstream measures by themselves do not reach the majority of socially excluded groups, and this is even more true for groups like Roma who are often far away from the system. On the other hand, countries that have mainly opted for measures exclusively targeting the Roma population have found that in some cases these have led to segregation in public policy and have had limited social impact (European Social Fund (ESF) Learning Network, 2015, p. 44<sub>[48]</sub>).*

Under this principle, Roma students are targeted without excluding other beneficiaries. In countries where the colour-blind approach prevails, targeting Roma communities as an ethnic group is often impossible. To get around this problem, these countries might use explicit targeting policies that rely on geographic location or socio-economic status. Such an approach allows to combine targeting and mainstreaming in policy making and can be relevant when most Roma communities show similar socio-economic characteristics and/or live in the same areas.

However, it is noted that the *explicit but not exclusive approach* is yet to be generalised across European countries, and that national-level policies for equality and inclusion of ethnic minorities, including in education, are controversial projects that often hardly pass the different governance levels within a country (Alexiadou, 2019, p. 10<sub>[19]</sub>).

## 2.3. Policies and Initiatives for the inclusion of Roma students

### 2.3.1. What does inclusion mean for Roma students?

Although new and still scarce, there is a growing body of research that analyses the necessary prerequisites to foster the success of marginalised Roma students. Academics seem to increasingly agree on the significance of “inclusive education policies and discourses at national and local level, school systems that offer educational pathways to disadvantaged students, support, mentoring and career guidance, good family relations with school and peer help in academic engagement, as well as well-being of young people” (Alexiadou, 2019, p. 2<sub>[19]</sub>). Few countries directly refer to the “inclusion” of students from ethnic minorities in education as such in legal documents and policy frames. The article L111-1 of the French *Code de l'Éducation* (Education Act)<sup>34</sup> for instance, states that the public service of education “must take care of the inclusion of all children in education, without any distinction.” Later on, the article L123-2 on higher education says that it shall contribute to “the construction of an inclusive society. To this end, it takes care of fostering the inclusion of individuals, without any distinction based on origin, social status or health condition.” Though minority students’ rights may be mentioned in constitutions and education acts, they are usually limited to references to anti-discrimination and the right to be taught in their mother tongue.

Inclusive education is understood to be built not only on anti-discrimination policies but also on the identification of compensatory mechanisms in education to create systems that are affordable, accessible, acceptable and adaptable to all learners’ needs. A broadly recognised definition of inclusive education comes from UNESCO, which describes it as “[a]n ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination” (UNESCO, 2009<sub>[54]</sub>). It is closely linked to the concept of educational equity that usually means supporting all students to reach their learning potential without setting formal or informal barriers or lowering expectations based on diversity that apply to a particular student or a group of

students. The key difference between the two approaches is that while inclusiveness requires education systems to evaluate and re-imagine broad educational goals and standards, equity is narrowly confined to ensuring that there are no between-group differences in existing educational opportunities across social and demographic groups.

In the case of students from ethnic minorities, in this case of Roma origin, it means that education systems must be able to implement mechanisms that foster a proper environment for the well-being of these students and that would allow them to attain their full potential. An inclusive education system is one that allows all students to feel safe and achieve their full academic potential. Also, they should feel that the education system is in accordance with their own cultural values and representations while being enrolled in mainstream schools. The role of policy makers and educators is to address these challenges – guaranteeing the educational achievement of all while strengthening intercultural understanding and social justice (OECD, 2010<sup>[36]</sup>). Several measures are taken by European countries in order to create such an environment and prevent the exclusion of Roma children and adolescents in education.

### ***2.3.2. Investment in ECEC and access to primary school***

The literature widely acknowledges the importance of ECEC in addressing social inclusion. The strategic framework for European co-operation in education and training also suggests as a target that at least 95% of children should participate in preschool education.<sup>35</sup> Evidence shows that a lack of investment in early childhood education tends to widen existing gaps between different socio-economic backgrounds and maintain significant barriers to access, including discrimination, that primarily impede the most marginalised groups from succeeding in school later on (Ivatts et al., 2015<sup>[55]</sup>; Felfe and Huber, 2016<sup>[56]</sup>; OECD, 2018<sup>[57]</sup>). Roma children are among the groups most impacted by an overall weak political commitment to increase the enrolment of children in ECEC, a phenomenon that has been criticised by several supranational institutions. While an increasing number of European countries are introducing mandatory preschool,<sup>36</sup> some have attempted to enhance their ECEC systems, with Roma children as a specific target (Box 2.2). Investing in pre-school as well as the first years of compulsory school might foster a potential equaliser role of the school that is still relatively dormant in most education systems (Gatti et al., 2016<sup>[24]</sup>). In the case of Roma students, such investment is most likely to reduce the existing gaps with the general population in education (Bednarik, Hidas and Machlica, 2019<sup>[25]</sup>).

#### **Box 2.2. Free preschool for all Roma children in Croatia**

Croatia has an extensive legal framework related to national minorities. The country's framework for public education includes the Primary and Secondary School Education Act; The Act on the Use of Languages and Scripts of National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia; and The Act on Education in the Languages and Scripts of National Minorities.

In Croatia, Roma communities represent less than 1% of the total population, and are one of the 22 recognised national minorities that are protected in the Constitution and through other laws (FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, 2015, pp. 35-37<sup>[29]</sup>). Inclusion in pre-primary, primary and secondary education programmes for Roma children is ensured to bridge the gap caused by their socio-economic situation and to increase the possibilities for their success through compulsory primary education.<sup>37</sup>



In 2009, the Croatian Ministry of Education declared free preschool for all Roma children, with transportation and food provided. The Ministry identified school enrolment and pre-primary education as key areas, and have worked with the Roma Education Fund from 2007 onwards on the inclusion of Roma children into mainstream kindergartens. In the cases where preschool enrolment is not possible, the Ministry offers a year of preparatory classes in order to foster a fluid transition to mainstream schools.

Even though it remained below the targeted standards, the participation of Roma children in preschool education significantly increased, as did primary school enrolment. However, drop outs remain high, even in primary schools. Several authors argue that preschool education alone is far from enough, and highlight the necessity of tackling wider structural problems (FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, 2015, p. 36<sup>[29]</sup>; Felfe and Huber, 2016<sup>[56]</sup>).

Success in primary school for Roma children is intimately linked to their participation in ECEC, and some countries have developed a strategy to foster inclusion at the preschool level. Norway 2017 Kindergarten Act and Framework Plan for example, clearly protects the interests of children from national minorities, including Roma children. Among others, the Framework Plan states: “The learning area shall include knowledge of Sami language, culture and traditions and knowledge of Norway’s national minorities. Groups with long-standing ties to a country are defined as national minorities. In Norway this includes Kvens / Norwegian Finns, Jews, Forest Finns, Roma and Norwegian Travellers / Tatere” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017, p. 56<sup>[58]</sup>).

In the Czech Republic, Roma are part of the 14 recognised national minorities and have the lowest educational attainment. The Framework Educational Programme for pre-primary education, the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports must ensure the implementation of a “multicultural” education from the preschool level onwards which applies to all national minorities, including Roma communities. In practice, it mainly refers to both education in the minority language and changes in the curricula (Jeřábek and Tupý, 2007<sup>[59]</sup>).

Most often, governments fund projects aimed at improving the overall quality of ECEC while having a special focus on locations with the most disadvantaged children, which might correspond to locations inhabited by a large number of Roma families (Box 2.3). One example can be found in Slovenia. In its *National Programme of Measures of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Period 2017-2021*, the early integration into the educational system is a core objective. More specifically, the country is developing new models of preschool education in Roma settlements, and integration of Roma assistants in kindergartens (Roma Civil Monitor, 2019<sup>[60]</sup>).

### **Box 2.3. Enhancement of the ECEC System in Hungary**

#### **Government-funded project “Sure Start Children’s Houses” (SSCHs)**

NESET, an advisory network of experts working on the social dimension of education and training, prepared a document for the European Commission in which it analysed the

effects of policies and civil society's projects towards the inclusion of Roma children in ECEC in European countries. One of the projects chosen was SSCHs in Hungary.

#### **The project**

Following the British example of “Sure Start”, the Hungarian Government started to build a network of centres in 2006 to ensure access to early development and day care for children in disadvantaged regions, especially in poor villages with a Roma population. Since the ending of EU funding for Sure Start Children's Houses in 2014, the Government has continued to fund the programme from its national budget. The main goal is to provide help for young children to ease their access to and enrolment in kindergarten, as well as to prepare them for a successful school education. The core long-run objective of the SSCH programme is to establish strong co-operation with parents (or future parents) and other partners from relevant services (workers in health, social and early childhood care) in order to promote the physical, mental, social and emotional development of young children.

#### **Implementation**

Since 2013, when pre-school education became compulsory for children aged 3-7 years, SSCHs have provided services to children under three. From 2013, the Sure Start Children's Houses programme has become part of Hungarian Child Protection Law as a basic component of child welfare services. Currently, 135 SSCHs are funded across the country. The Hungarian Government is planning to increase this number to 240 in the next year as a response to the growing number of children living in poverty.

*Source:* (Vandekerckhove et al., 2019, pp. 69-73<sup>[61]</sup>)

### ***2.3.3. Initiatives to reduce the language barrier and support the relationship with Roma parents***

Research identifies language as one of the main drivers of integration. For instance, a recent OECD working paper found that the measure judged as the most important to promote integration of newcomers into the Dutch education system is to facilitate the acquisition of the Dutch language (Bilgili, 2019<sup>[62]</sup>). In the case of Roma people, measures related to language mainly concern students with an immigrant background. Roma communities long established in a territory most often speak the national language, though not always fluently.

While some countries clearly state that national minorities (“Roma” or “Gypsies” may or may not be defined as one of them) have the right to receive classes in their mother tongue and special support to learn the national language, “colour-blind” countries manage access to mainstream schools differently. In order to reduce the language barrier and foster inclusion, countries can resort, among others, to the following measures:

1. **Establish special transitory classes.** In France, for instance, where Roma communities do not form a national minority in itself, interventions in education are directed to foreigners and *gens du voyage* identified as disadvantaged groups. French policies in terms of education for these groups are based on two categories: (1) *élèves allophones nouvellement arrivés – EANA* (newly arrived students whose mother tongue is not French), and (2) *enfants issus de familles itinérantes et de voyageurs – EFIV* (children coming from itinerant families and of travellers). Even if these categories do not target Roma students directly, most

of them can be found in one or the other.<sup>38</sup> The Ministry of Education implemented special Centres, *centres académiques pour la scolarisation des élèves EANA et EFIV – CASNAV*. *CASNAV*s are found in different academies and have branches in several schools on the territory attached to the academy concerned. They act as transitory classrooms. They are in charge of welcoming the students concerned and provide French classes and specific courses on different disciplines under the French curriculum. Although these students benefit from special care, a recent report written jointly by the *Défenseur des droits* and the *INS HEA* University identified several issues. They observed that when given in French a similar test they took a year ago in their mother tongue, a significant number of students obtain worse results. They recall that linguists estimate that a foreign-born child who does not speak French at all would require on average seven years to become fluent. Consequently, a year alone is far from enough and the classes should be adapted and take into consideration the language barrier and the time factor (Armagnague and Rigoni, 2018<sub>[63]</sub>). Moreover, concerns have been raised on the inability of such an approach to tackle issues faced by Roma communities specifically that are related to discrimination, socio-economic marginalisation and, sometimes, a nomadic lifestyle.

2. **Use of mediators.** The use of Romani (native) speaker mediators in schools by some countries constitutes an example of targeted policy for Roma students when these are recognised as part of a national minority. The goal is not only to support the students and increase their performance, but also make the link between the school and the family and improve the children's well-being. For this reason, the use of mediators with a Roma background is seen as a major tool to foster Roma parents' involvement. It proved to be crucial for the inclusion of the community as whole, although the importance of a direct dialogue with Roma communities has also been highlighted (see section 3.3.2). Romania was the first country in Europe to institutionalise the use of the Roma school mediators, a concept that was first introduced by the Romani NGO *CRISS* (Gatti et al., 2016, pp. 75-76<sub>[24]</sub>). Several CEE countries, as well as some Nordic ones, resort to mediators in schools to foster the inclusion of Roma students. Nordic countries are particularly active in using Roma mediators which might be considered important in maintaining Roma identity while keeping the children in mainstream schools (Helakorpi, Lappalainen and Mietola, 2018<sub>[18]</sub>).

The recruitment and training of Roma mediators is extensively promoted by European institutions. In 2011, the Council of Europe and the EU jointly launched the *ROMED* project that “has been leading an initiative aiming to train mediators in delivering quality mediation between Roma communities and local authorities.”<sup>39</sup> With over 1300 mediators trained in 22 countries, this project aims to expand mediation way beyond the school and empower Roma communities through mediation and representation.

#### ***2.3.4. Diversity-conscious curricula: sense of belonging and fight against discrimination***

The importance of including diversity in the curriculum is broadly recognised. Numerous academics and educators agree on the fact that, in order to achieve a united and peaceful society, a separate education for each ethnic group should be avoided. To this end, “certain criteria must be met, the first of which is to respect the linguistic and cultural capital of ‘difference’, taking its position in the curriculum and school culture and considering it an

important factor for the psychosocial and cognitive development of the students, which represent diversity” (Calogiannakis et al., 2018, p. 174<sub>[50]</sub>). In the case of ethnic minority students, an inclusive curriculum is one that should be meaningful to students’ cultural backgrounds and allow mainstream education to adapt to the various needs of the learners. By doing so, it might both promote academic achievement and sense of belonging to the school.

It is also highlighted that ethnic minority students who are taught on the basis of an inclusive curriculum show greater interest in education and adapt more easily to different environments (Cerna et al., 2019, p. 100<sub>[64]</sub>). As a result, inclusive curriculum-based innovations have can have a significant role in improving Roma students’ learning outcomes (Themelis and Foster, 2013<sub>[65]</sub>).

In the long-run, diversity-conscious curricula tend to reduce the level of racial bias among all students which is crucial to social cohesion. FRA considers that to include Roma history in the curriculum is a powerful tool in fostering Roma children belonging to school and fighting discrimination based on their ethnic origin (FRA, 2018<sub>[44]</sub>). In spite of these considerations, most European countries’ curricula do not respond to the needs of Roma students, with no reference to Roma culture and history. A number of them nonetheless attempt to tackle the issue by including geographical, cultural and historical references to Roma communities. However, it has been highlighted that in most cases, these references are inappropriate (Council of Europe, 2020<sub>[66]</sub>). On these last observations, the Council of Europe in a recent report (p. 22<sub>[66]</sub>), concludes:

*While only 8 out of 21 European countries and Kosovo refer to Roma in their curricula for the subjects “geography”, “history” and “civics”, Roma are mentioned in textbooks from all countries investigated here, even when the curriculum does not prescribe it. However, the representation of Roma mostly falls within a limited number of thematic contexts and can still be seen as largely insufficient, often stereotypical and in some cases inaccurate.*

Three Nordic countries are a step further in terms of a diversity-conscious curriculum. J. Helakorpi, S. Lappalainen and R. Mietola analysed policies from Finland, Norway and Sweden and concluded that they all propose measures related to (the need of) providing knowledge about Roma and Travellers in school (Helakorpi, Lappalainen and Mietola, 2018<sub>[18]</sub>). Schools have to provide and teach information on ethnic minorities, and Roma communities are officially recognised as such in the three countries. In Sweden, the green paper on Traveller policy clearly mentions the duty of schools to teach knowledge on Roma history, culture, conditions and language. This knowledge should be integrated in subjects such as social sciences and history. Moreover, both Swedish and Finnish policy documents imply that to include Roma knowledge in the curriculum contributes not only to the representation of Roma culture, but also to (the need of) its preservation. However, it has been observed that schools, if they show a commitment to inclusive education, tend to wonder how to design a diversity-conscious curriculum (Ibid.). For countries that have policies related to such a curriculum, the focus might be on developing guidelines on how to concretely design it and ensuring consistent implementation across schools. Governments can also fund initiatives aimed to develop pedagogical materials that can be used in the classroom in order to teach knowledge about Roma communities and create more inclusive environments (Box 2.4).

#### **Box 2.4. A Kit to Include Roma Knowledge in the Curriculum in Portugal**

##### **Extension of the Portuguese framework for inclusive education**

In the past two years, Portugal has shown a substantial commitment towards the inclusion of Roma students, and inclusive education in general. The *Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo – LBSE* (Law of the Bases of the Education System, Decreto-Lei n.º 54/2018), aligned with the Portuguese Constitution, guarantees in its article 3 a right to difference which implies the “consideration and valorisation of different knowledge and cultures”, along with the right to participation of the communities concerned. Besides deepening its National Integration Strategy (2013-2020) following a dialogue with civil society in 2018, the country collected diversity data on Roma students and created an important data base (*Perfil Escolar da Comunidade Cigana 2016-2017*).<sup>40</sup> In this context, various projects have been designed and implemented for the Portuguese Gypsy communities.

##### ***Kit Pedagógico – Romano Atmo***

In 2017, the Support Fund for the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma Communities (*Fundo de Apoio à Estratégia Nacional para a Integração das Comunidades Ciganas – FAPE*) was created. It was managed by the Portuguese High Commissioner for Migration, and supported by the municipality of Seixal and the State Secretariat for Citizenship and Equality.

Within the FAPE, the Association for the Development of Portuguese Roma Women (*Associação para o Desenvolvimento das Mulheres Ciganas Portuguesas – AMUCIP*) developed a pedagogical kit for educators called *Romano Atmo*. This kit corresponds to a folder with various documents on Roma culture(s), language(s) and history that teachers can use in their courses. At the same time, it was used to empower Portuguese Roma women. After testing the use of the kit in two groups of schools in the country, the project received new funding in 2018 in order to disseminate the kit to other schools.

The initiative led to positive results and was welcomed by Roma communities. These results were exhibited and discussed in July at a Seminar in Lisbon.<sup>41</sup> A report on the project’s impact and a systematisation of its activities will be published soon in AMUCIP’s *Memória Viva* (Living Memories).

*Source:* (Direção-Geral da Educação (DGE), 2019<sub>[67]</sub>).

#### **2.3.5. Measures to increase the participation of Roma in higher education**

In OECD countries, nearly 42% of adults aged between 25 and 34 attained higher education in 2015, this reached 44.5% for the same age group in 2018. In Europe specifically, 42.2% had attained higher education in 2015, increasing to 44.5% up to 2018 (OECD, 2020<sub>[68]</sub>). Comparable data on higher education between Roma and non-Roma in the European Union are rather scarce, if not non-existent. Studies previous to 2015 found that, in countries where data are somewhat available, an estimated Roma population of 1% to 4% have a higher education degree, being often the most underrepresented group in the tertiary level (The Velux Foundations, 2019, p. 20<sub>[23]</sub>).

There are several barriers faced by young Roma in accessing higher education. These obstacles might vary across Roma communities and countries, although some are recurrent and echo challenges faced by Roma families at other levels of education, such as mobility,

language, cultural norms and identities; material barriers such as poverty, inadequate housing, homelessness and access to healthcare; discrimination in schools, higher education, the media and policy discourses; bullying and racism; and parental lack of knowledge and experience of the education system which is exacerbated for Roma with an immigrant background due to differences across education systems.

In order to increase the access and participation of Roma students in higher education, several countries have implemented specific measures, mainly targeted initiatives. The European Commission found that European Member States mainly pay attention to measures (36% of all) that try to improve the educational attainment of Roma such as preventing drop-out, encouraging completion of secondary education and continuation to tertiary education (European Commission, 2019<sup>[69]</sup>). Policy initiatives have mostly aimed to diminish the impact of socio-economic background, implement positive discrimination measures such as scholarships for Roma, ethnic quotas or extra points (The Velux Foundations, 2019, p. 20<sup>[23]</sup>) as well as compensate for educational gaps, mainly through catch-up support to reduce linguistic and cognitive gaps (European Commission, 2019, p. 14<sup>[69]</sup>).

In addition, universities, mainly in CEE, have designed projects aimed to promote the inclusion of Roma students. These include preparation programmes, fellowships and the establishment of a Romani studies department. Finally, non-governmental actors and international (governmental) organisations have a central role in fostering access, participation, inclusion and post-graduation opportunities for Roma students. Table 2.2, elaborated by the Velux Foundations, provides an insight in policy initiatives/measures and projects that have been developed by the different actors in order to enhance equity and inclusion for Roma students in higher education.

**Table 2.2. Main Challenges Faced by Roma Students and Examples of Education Measures to Address these Challenges**

MAIN CHALLENGES	EXAMPLES OF HIGHER EDUCATION MEASURES TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES		
ACCESS PARTICIPATION GRADUATION EMPLOYMENT	Non-state actors	Access	Roma Academic Club (SL)
		Participation	Shaping Academic and Employment Skills for Young Roma (SK, HU)
		Post-graduation	Integrom Programme (HU) Internships (FRA, CoE, EP, OSCE)
	State level	Access	Ethnic quota (AL, RS, KS) Extra points (HU) Reserved places (RO) National Action Plan for Equity of Access (IRL)
		Participation	Social scholarship for Roma (CZ, PT, HU) The use of European Social Funds (PT)
	University level	Access	You also have a chance! CVEK & University of Economics (SK) Roma Graduate Preparation Programme, Central European University (HU)
		Participation	Romani Studies departments (CZ, SK, HU) Fellowships, Central European University – Harvard University (EN) University of Oxford and the Blavatnik School of Government (EN)

*Note:* The countries mentioned are Albania (AL), the Czech Republic (CZ), England (EN), France (FR), Hungary (HU), Ireland (IRL), Kosovo (KS), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Russia (RS), the Slovak Republic (SL), and Slovenia (SL). Organisations mentioned are the Roma Education Fund (REF), the Council of Europe (CoE), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Parliament (EP).

*Source:* (The Velux Foundations, 2019, p. 21<sup>[23]</sup>).

Due to little data available on the participation and experience of Roma in higher education, it is rather complicated to provide longitudinal analyses on the effect of implemented initiatives. This issue makes it rather impossible to evaluate equity and inclusion outcomes of these measures. The 2016 FRA EU-MINDIS II estimates that in the countries surveyed, an average of 2% of Roma were enrolled in higher education in 2015 (FRA, 2016, p. 25<sup>[22]</sup>). However, the study underlines that “[n]et enrolment rates for post-secondary and tertiary education for Roma in all countries are based on fewer than 20 observations. Therefore, only total value for all countries is presented, which is still based on a low number of observations” (*Ibid.*).

Recently, some countries have been addressing the lack of data and information on inclusion of Roma in higher education. For example, Slovenia has initiated a targeted research project called *Inclusion of Roma students in upper secondary and higher education as well as adult education: drivers and obstacles faced by members of the Roma community in Slovenia after completing compulsory basic education (2018-2020)* led by the Institute for ethnic studies.<sup>42</sup> On the basis of the data collected and from various sources, the study estimates that, during the 2018/19 school year, around 170 Roma students attended upper secondary schools and two Roma adults participated in upper secondary education in adult education institutions. It also found that, similar to the previous school year, most students attended vocational upper secondary education (3 years), technical upper secondary (4 years) and short vocational education (2 to 3 years). More than half of them were from the region of Pomurje (north-east part of Slovenia).

In addition, it has been highlighted that while most scholars have been looking at “cultural” aspects and the socio-economic situation of Roma families, nothing has been done to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of these measures as well as to assess the structural and institutional barriers Roma face in higher education (Garaz and Torotcoi, 2017<sup>[70]</sup>). Another concern expressed by Roma youth organisations, among other stakeholders, relates to the transition from higher education to the job market. Even when they access the tertiary level, a significant number of Roma from different communities and backgrounds face substantial difficulties to find opportunities on the job market, due to both discriminatory practices and an inadequacy between their training and the market’s needs (ERGO Network, 2017<sup>[71]</sup>). On this last point, the European Commission notes that the transition from education to employment by supporting vocational education, career development and lifelong learning, and capacity development of professionals has recently been an important focus among the European Union. It represents 9-11% of all educational measures they identified (European Commission, 2019, p. 14<sup>[69]</sup>).

Research shows that targeted measures that increase Roma participation might lead to important individual and social outcomes. Discussing whether affirmative actions (i.e. targeted measures) should focus only on the most marginalised Roma, S. Garaz argues that even when such initiatives do not target the most marginalised members of Roma communities, they might have “a great potential in forming a critical mass of Romani intellectuals armed with the necessary knowledge to become outspoken public advocates for their group's cause, to contradict negative stereotypes associated to their group by giving the example of their own professional path, and to constitute a valuable social capital for their less fortunate peers” (Garaz, 2014, p. 295<sup>[72]</sup>).

### ***2.3.6. Importance of non-governmental actors to fill the gaps in the provision of education***

The issues continuously faced by Roma communities have led various NGOs and local associations to fill the gaps and tackle poverty and discrimination where no State’s action

is implemented. In fact, civil society actors have a fundamental role in the provision of education (Armagnague and Rigoni, 2018<sup>[63]</sup>; Alexiadou, 2019<sup>[19]</sup>). Their policies and actions “to a large extent substitute for the functions and responsibilities of local and national governments, and they perform equality work at local level” (Alexiadou, 2019, p. 13<sup>[19]</sup>). Various civil society organisations working on Roma inclusion have been created since the beginning of the century. They connect local communities with governments, often with the support of European institutions. They provide both practical help (financial and material) and moral support (valorisation, cultural activities). This subsection gives a few examples of civil society-led initiatives at the different levels of schooling.

Following an initiative from the REF,<sup>43</sup> two international networks, Together Old and Young (TOY) and the Romani Early Years Networks (REYN), launched the “TOY for inclusion” project in several European countries in 2018. The goal of TOY for inclusion is to create Play Hubs where children and adults can play and learn together around games and workshops. This initiative quickly thrived to involve nearly 4 000 children at the end of the year, one third of them being Roma, in 8 Hubs across 7 European countries.<sup>44</sup> These spaces are not only becoming a springboard for numerous Roma children to enter mainstream primary schools, but also help creating links between schools and families. On a broader perspective, these Hubs allow relationships to be created between Roma and non-Roma families in a common space of socialisation. The project received positive feedback both from policy makers and Roma families, and won the 2018 Life Learning Awards in the Best Learning Environment category. Actions that target hard-to-reach beneficiaries, including students from a migrant background and from ethnic minority groups, are planned to be strengthened.

In Hungary, Romaversitas, an organisation established in 1996, supports Roma students throughout their academic studies at secondary and university levels. Over the past 20 years, they have supported nearly 300 students to succeed in their studies and become high skilled professionals through financial aid, adapted training and community support.<sup>45</sup>

These examples show that the ultimate goal of such civil society organisations goes beyond mere educational achievement. In fact, they continuously work on two factors fundamental to fostering the inclusion of Roma students in education. On the one hand, they contribute to the removal of both socio-economic and discrimination barriers and, on the other, they help build the capacities of young Roma by creating aspirations and community networks where neither would exist.

National policies have an important role to play in supporting these actors. Some experts and academics argue for the need to break down the barriers between a legitimate “formal” education provided by governments’ institutions and some private schools and an “informal” education provided by NGOs and associations often under the label of “popular education.” In this sense, co-operation should be strengthened, and these actors advocate that the separation has lost its significance and is often an obstacle for civil society structures to be recognised as providers of a quality education for, among others, Roma students (Armagnague and Rigoni, 2018<sup>[63]</sup>).

France’s *camions école*, or school trucks, provide an illustration of a partnership between the state and civil society. The Ministry of Education’s 2012 circular on the schooling of children from travelling families and those adopting a nomad lifestyle mentions the possibility of implementing moving schools as “temporary missions” aimed to ensure schooling and the link between the family and the school when the latter is precarious.<sup>46</sup> These movable schools do not replace mainstream schooling, but rather act as a transitory classroom for children whose family do not adopt a sedentary lifestyle. In the case of Roma



students from these families and those living in precarious households out of city centres, truck schools have proven to be a great support and provide a quality education. The association ASET (*Aide à la Scolarisation des Enfants Tsiganes*), relying on the national curriculum and the help of the Ministry of Education, has been managing these kind of classrooms in the north of the country for decades.<sup>47</sup>

### 3. Policies for Roma Inclusion in Education – Challenges and Perspectives

In spite of great efforts towards inclusive practices, the inclusion of Roma students in education remains a fundamental concern in Europe. Countries' education systems still face significant challenges impeding the efficient implementation of policies and projects in the long run. The literature identifies segregation (territorial and in education), anti-Gypsyism, cultural views and the lack of professional development for managing diversity to be among the main challenges.

At the same time, opportunities might arise from these. Among others, a focus on Roma students' well-being and an intercultural approach seem to be promising practices that could benefit Roma communities across countries. Such orientation requires a holistic approach based on inclusive education.

To ensure that all Roma students have equal access to a quality education and feel included is key in addressing the marginalisation and exclusion of Roma communities. As much as education is a powerful tool for social mobility, inclusiveness is crucial for fostering equality and promoting social justice.

#### 3.1. Evaluation and monitoring of Roma inclusion initiatives

Monitoring and evaluation is crucial in ensuring better learning and the efficiency of ulterior policies and projects (OECD, 2013<sup>[73]</sup>). It can help generate confidence in the policies, strengthen weak areas and inform future planning and action. In the area of Roma inclusion, however, consistent evaluation reports are drastically scarce in all key areas. Among the available ones, most can be nonetheless found in the field of education (Fresno et al., 2019<sup>[74]</sup>; European Commission, 2019<sup>[46]</sup>).

A recent (ongoing) report providing a meta-evaluation conducted by the European Commission Joint Research Centre gives an account of the situation of evaluations conducted across Europe in relation to Roma inclusion. They identified 125 reports in the fields of education, employment, healthcare, housing and non-discrimination/fighting anti-Gypsyism and selected sixty-four of them considered as the most reliable. Their two major critical observations relate to the fact that (1) the number of easily accessible evaluation reports in the various fields is relatively low (2) evaluations using robust evaluation methods are scarce (Fresno et al., 2019<sup>[74]</sup>). They also identified other issues at the roots of major existing gaps in monitoring and evaluation initiatives, mainly a lack of (i) co-ordination between the different actors involved, (ii) political will to convey successful initiatives to the national level and (iii) disaggregated data. Few consistent national or subnational reports are available. Mostly, evaluation initiatives are led by the European Commission, the Roma Civil Monitor Project, and in some local contexts, by universities involved in co-financed projects.

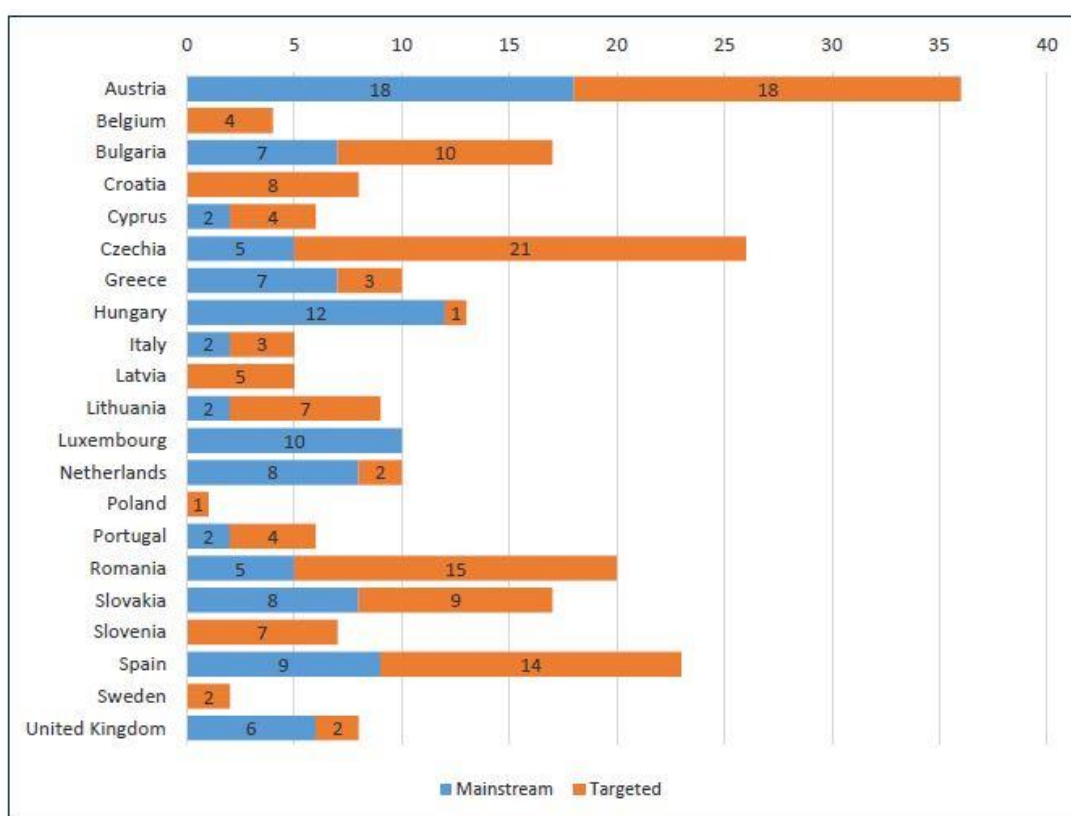
The most consistent evaluation studies at the national level are those conducted yearly by the Roma Civil Monitor Project, which was initiated by the European Commission and consists of the production of yearly country monitoring reports by local NGOs. It aims to effectively monitor and evaluate national initiatives, while ensuring the participation of civil society including Roma communities. The first monitoring cycle of the NRIS (2017) focused on structural preconditions of successful implementation, the second (2018) on the key policy areas and the third (2019-2020) on the blind spots in Roma inclusion policies.<sup>48</sup>

These reports are available in English, and often in the local language, provide in-depth analyses on the efficiency of policies at the system-level while identifying some remaining challenges in relation to education, employment, housing and healthcare.

The European Commission also conducts yearly assessments (Staff Working Papers that are communicated to other European institutions) of countries' advances on the implementation of policy initiatives for the progress of their NRIS. Regarding the area of education, they highlight that it is the one that has seen most initiatives and progress. In addition, these evaluations show that an increasing focus has been put on the fight against segregation and the promotion of inclusive education.<sup>49</sup>

Regarding the type of measures implemented by countries, the Commission 2019 Staff Working Document identifies that in 2017, out of a total number of 243 measures relevant for education, more than half (140) were targeted (European Commission, 2019, pp. 12-13<sub>(69)</sub>). The following Figure 3.1 provides an overview of the types of measures adopted by different countries.

**Figure 3.1. Number of measures implemented in the area of education by type of measure (mainstream or targeted) in 2017**



Source: (European Commission, 2019, p. 12<sub>(69)</sub>)

The majority of available and reliable evaluations are thus led by the European Commission, often in partnership with independent civil society actors. Over time, the studies agreed on several points, including the need to combine mainstream and targeted policies, while these used separately can have a negative impact or merely ignore core discrimination issues.

In education, the evaluations have highlighted several successes related to the increase of participation of Roma children in ECEC, in mandatory schooling and, for an encouraging numbers of countries, a reduction of early leavers from education. They, however, point out rather similar remaining challenges across Europe that impede the success of policy initiatives implemented for Roma inclusion. Mainly, these challenges correspond to low overall levels of education among Roma adults, increasing school segregation in some countries, often, but not always resulting from residential/territorial concentration, drastic dropouts at the upper-secondary level and a widespread anti-Gypsyism still relatively misunderstood (European Commission, 2019<sup>[46]</sup>). Various reports of the Roma Civil Monitor, such as on France (2019<sup>[75]</sup>) or Hungary (2019<sup>[60]</sup>), also highlight the particular and significant challenges faced by Roma children and adolescents living in slums and other informal settlements to access, succeed and remain in education.

## 3.2. Main identified barriers to the achievement of the inclusion of Roma students

### 3.2.1. Segregation in education, a rampant and multidimensional issue

Roma students' segregation is not a new phenomenon and is a reality in several countries. Since the early 2000s, this situation has led the European Court of Human Rights to initiate various infringement procedures and sanctions under anti-discrimination and human rights international legal documents.

Although desegregation was a core priority of the Decade for Roma Inclusion that sparked numerous projects (Friedman, 2014<sup>[42]</sup>), one of the main conclusions of the 2015 Roma Inclusion Index created by the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation was that the “[o]verrepresentation of Roma in special schools has possibly worsened. Overall segregation of Roma in education may also have increased during the Decade time frame” (Bojadjieva, 2015, p. 16<sup>[37]</sup>). In the same year, NGOs such as Amnesty International warned that the situation of Roma students' segregation had not substantially improved and could be worsening in some countries (Amnesty International, 2015<sup>[76]</sup>). The organisation recalled that “international human rights monitoring bodies, (...), emphasise that states must give particular consideration to the educational needs of economically and socially marginalised groups, such as those living in poverty, ethnic and linguistic minorities, children with disabilities and indigenous children” (p. 15<sup>[76]</sup>).

FRA confirmed the Decade Secretariat Foundation's concern. The Agency estimates that, overall, the share of Roma students attending schools where “all classmates are Roma” increased from 10 to 15% between 2011 and 2016 (FRA, 2018, p. 31<sup>[44]</sup>). Several authors even consider that most education measures targeting Roma during the Decade not only failed, but have also been “agents of segregation through the maintenance of ghetto schools” (Kirova and Prochner, 2015, p. 372<sup>[28]</sup>). On average, 46% of Roma children attend segregated schools and/or classes where all or most children are Roma. Segregation in education remains a core issue mainly in CEE, but is also encountered in Southern Europe. (European Commission, 2019<sup>[69]</sup>).

School segregation can take four main different shapes:

1. **Residential segregation.** In the neighbourhoods where Roma represent the highest share of the total population, schools tend to be filled with Roma children only. Although spatial segregation is often a key source of segregation in service provision such as education, it is rarely the only cause.
2. **Separate schools for Roma students** may also exist while neighbouring schools are filled with non-Roma students. This situation is usually the result of broader social dynamics, including the “white flight phenomenon.”<sup>50</sup>
3. **Segregation happens within the school**, where separate classes for Roma students are created.
4. Last but not least, numerous organisations and official reports have observed the (sometimes overwhelming) **presence of misdiagnosed Roma children in special needs schools** (Amnesty International, 2015<sup>[76]</sup>; Ryder, Rostas and Taba, 2014<sup>[77]</sup>; FRA, 2016<sup>[22]</sup>; Neumann, 2017<sup>[51]</sup>; FRA, 2018<sup>[44]</sup>; OECD, 2019<sup>[20]</sup>). Studies in fact show that Roma children are often overrepresented in special needs schools in various European countries, schools in which they can amount to more than half of the total number of students. One of the main identified reasons is the fact that they are more likely to fail cognitive tests taken between preparatory classes and mainstream schools because of the language barrier. Preparatory classes can refer to special classrooms meant to prepare children and adolescents with a learning lag, or who recently arrived to a country and do not speak the national language, to enter the mainstream school system. Instead of considering cultural and structural factors, municipalities and schools usually rely on standardised and culturally-biased tests, and often come to the conclusion that Roma children are more likely to lack cognitive skills and be students with special needs or mental disability (Council of Europe and Commissioner for Human Rights, 2017<sup>[78]</sup>). As shown by the Roma Civil Monitor and European Commission’s annual reports, the placement of Roma children in special schools is especially common in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic and Hungary.<sup>51</sup> As of today, they were 3 infringement cases launched by the European Commission against the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and Hungary under the Racial Equality Directive concerning misdiagnosis of Roma children as well as their segregation in mainstream education.

School segregation, whatever form(s) it takes and despite measures adopted at the European level, remains a major source of concern. It has been identified as one of the main drivers of inequality and exclusion, and empirical data show that it is crucial for Roma students to enter mainstream schools if they are to have further prospects in secondary and tertiary education (Alexiadou, 2019, p. 5<sup>[19]</sup>). As a matter of fact, an acute inequity and a substantial lack of inclusion measures persist within the education systems of most European countries, starting with school segregation.

Some countries have attempted to tackle this issue through legal and policy changes. In Hungary, for instance, segregation is prohibited by law, mainly under the Equality Treatment Act. Between 2002 and 2010, the government consistently worked on establishing a frame in order to fight school segregation and reduce the marginalisation of Roma children. However, experts estimate that among other elements, the decentralised functioning of the education system and the lack of strategy for an inclusive education

based on Roma students' needs consistently prevent the phenomenon from decreasing (FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, 2015, pp. 54-72<sup>[29]</sup>).

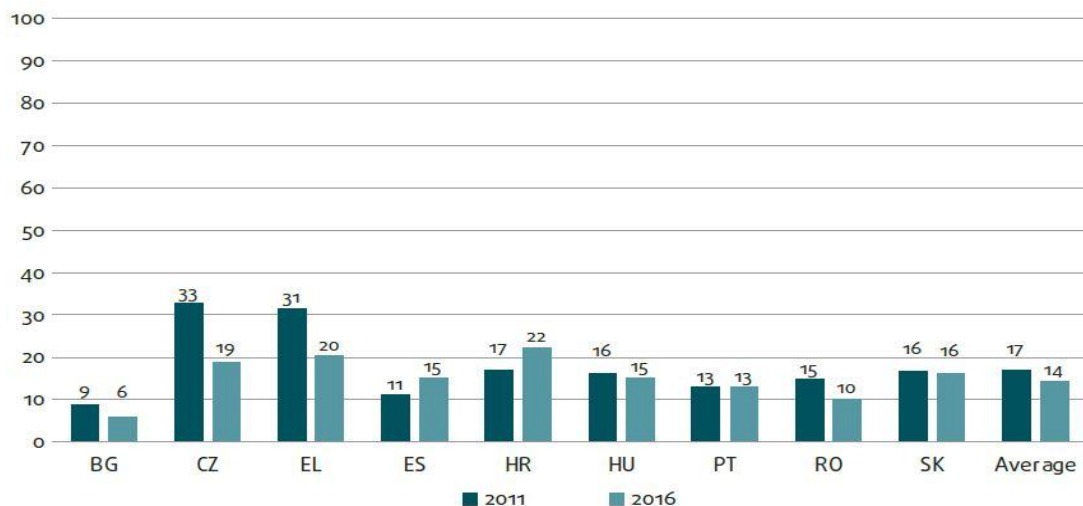
### 3.2.2. *Anti-Gypsyism and stigma in the political discourse, how does it impact Roma students?*

*Discrimination* corresponds to “all actions and practices of dominant groups that have a negative differential effect on subordinate groups” (Brüggemann and D’Arcy, 2017, p. 575<sup>[52]</sup>). In the educational context, it operates at different levels: (1) in education policies; (2) in schools; (3) in the classroom. Discrimination also exists in discourses and research (*Ibid.*). Anti-Gypsyism has been identified as a specific form of racism and discriminatory practices towards Gypsies/Roma people, and a significant obstacle to the efficacy of policies for the inclusion of Roma students. It is defined by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe as follows:

*A specific form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanisation and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among others, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatisation and the most blatant kind of discrimination* (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), 2011, p. 3<sup>[79]</sup>).

Anti-Gypsyism is still widespread across Europe. FRA’s 2018 report on the issue shows that a significant percentage of adolescents and parents feel discriminated when in contact with a school institution (Figure 3.2). This phenomenon reaches its peak in Greece with 20% of the individuals questioned that feel discriminated. Moreover, there is no general trend in terms of increase or decrease of the perceived discrimination by Roma families. For instance, while it diminished by 14% in the Czech Republic, it increased from 11% to 15% in Spain and remained the same in Portugal (13%) and in the Slovak Republic (16%) (FRA, 2018<sup>[44]</sup>).

**Figure 3.2. Respondents (16+) who felt discriminated against due to being Roma when in contact with schools (%)**



Source: (FRA, 2018, p. 17<sup>[44]</sup>).

There is still little – though growing – academic literature on the topic of the discrimination of Roma students in education and its systemic impact (Brüggemann and D’Arcy, 2017<sup>[52]</sup>). The scarcity of empirical research coupled with the lack of data on Roma students makes it difficult to evaluate the effects of such discrimination. Besides widely recognised negative impacts on socio-emotional well-being, some available studies show that discrimination and stereotypes might have a direct negative effect on Roma students’ performances (Brüggemann, 2014<sup>[40]</sup>; Slobodnikova, 2018<sup>[80]</sup>). Discrimination against Roma students can take different shapes. At school, in its most direct form, anti-Gypsyism can be expressed through:

- Verbal attacks;
- Physical violence;
- Ongoing bullying;
- Rejection or low expectation from teachers based on negative ideas and a homogenised view on a “Roma culture.”

Anti-Gypsyism can also be subtler and more diffused. In this case, it will be mostly encountered in research and the political discourse. For example, Charlotte Lassen Olesen and Leena Eklund Karlsson demonstrate that in Danish policy discourse, the representation (or the image) of “the Roma” tends to be rather paternalistic and translates a profound stigmatisation of Roma communities. They are mainly represented as an alienated, non-empowered group in contrast to the majority population, and lacking some socially required qualities (Lassen Olesen and Eklund Karlsson, 2018<sup>[81]</sup>).

Regarding the situation in Italy, E. Rozzi explains that although the Italian National Office on Anti-Racial Discrimination (UNAR) in its 2012 Nation Roma Inclusion Strategy asked for the nomad camp policy to be replaced, Italy is the only country still using the category of “Nomads” to qualify Roma communities as a homogeneous entity (Rozzi, 2017, pp. 17-38<sup>[41]</sup>). This unified and essentialised image of Roma groups contributes to frame the society’s view on Roma individuals and, as a result, shapes education policies and the way Roma students are treated in schools. Rozzi concludes that “[t]he question of appropriate policies regarding the Roma population is first and foremost a problem of representation; that is, the definition of the object of the policies develops the cognitive framework for interpretation of reality” (Rozzi, 2017, p. 37<sup>[41]</sup>).

### ***3.2.3. Cultural barriers? Prejudices on Roma culture and gender representations***

There is a common misconception from school actors as well as policy makers that there is a “Roma culture” distant from – sometimes too distant, or even in opposition to – the mainstream culture encountered in schools, and in education in general. Proponents of this idea believe that the tenacity of the issues related to the marginalisation of Roma students in education, such as low performance or early dropouts, is almost exclusively due to Roma communities’ lack of interest in formal schooling. In these cases, the observation *per se* that Roma students continuously lag behind the majority population and any other ethnic minority, and the believed “disinterest” of Roma parents in education may be seen as sufficient reasons that uphold this argument.

On the other hand, several academics and experts argue that the implementation of effective policy for the inclusion of Roma students is hindered by the existence of prejudices against Roma culture. They worry about common perceptions seeing the distancing of Gypsy children from such an institution as a natural and expected outcome (Myers, McGhee and

Bhopal, 2010<sup>[43]</sup>; Rozzi, 2017<sup>[41]</sup>; T. Zachos, 2017<sup>[82]</sup>; Hamilton, 2018<sup>[45]</sup>; Helakorpi, Lappalainen and Mietola, 2018<sup>[18]</sup>; Calogiannakis et al., 2018<sup>[50]</sup>). They point out that Roma families react because school systems are overall not adapted and Roma communities all over Europe fear assimilation. In this sense, school tends to be perceived as a threat to their identity. Under this logic, instead of labelling a “Roma culture” incompatible with schools, the focus has to be on the necessity of schools, and overall countries’ education systems, to adapt in order to better respond to Roma students’ needs. Therefore, the “disregard” of Roma parents towards school is rather considered as a historically rooted mistrust towards school. In other words, the “failure” of Roma students is not an inevitable fate, but is rather due to the lack of affordability, adaptability, accessibility and adequacy of education systems that lead them to be exclusive.

Qualitative studies show different results on Roma families’ views on education and suggest that mainstream education would benefit from taking them into account instead of considering them too distant. While some families may see education institutions quite negatively, empirical evidence, however, often highlights that Roma parents value primary school and encourage their children to at least reach a high level of literacy, which is mirrored by the high rate of enrolment in primary schools (Myers, McGhee and Bhopal, 2010<sup>[43]</sup>; Hamilton, 2018<sup>[45]</sup>; Helakorpi, Lappalainen and Mietola, 2018<sup>[18]</sup>). A 2015 research report on the situation of Roma in Latvia, for instance, estimates that 98% of the Roma parents interviewed considered it important for their children to be literate (Freimanis et al., 2015<sup>[83]</sup>). It seems, however, that significant challenges arise during the transition to secondary schools that have an impact on early dropouts and the low enrolments of Roma students after the mandatory age of schooling.

Authors also agree on the fact that in some contexts, most Roma families often do not trust secondary schools and/or barely see the interest they could get from it as a community (Freimanis et al., 2015<sup>[83]</sup>; Sime, Fassetta and McClung, 2018<sup>[84]</sup>; Hamilton, 2018<sup>[45]</sup>). In fact, different cultures have different views on both childhood and education and this dimension tends to be entirely forgotten in mainstream education systems. Margaret Mead, American anthropologist pioneer in childhood studies who led various field studies in the Samoa Islands, was one of the first social scientists to demonstrate that childhood and adolescence are experienced and perceived differently across cultures (Mead, 1928<sup>[85]</sup>). Roma communities may have a different vision that does not consider adolescence as a transitional period of one’s life. In more traditional Roma families, a Roma child is directly considered as an adult when she/he is able to help his parents and the community. As a result, secondary education might be seen as unnecessary and a potential threat in the sense that it might make the young adult grow apart from the community and her/his duties towards it. It is nonetheless essential to avoid assuming a single view on education for all Roma families as there can sometimes be a sharp distinction between and within Roma communities (Brüggemann, 2014<sup>[40]</sup>). As mentioned earlier in this paper (see section 1.3) in spite of being perceived as a single ethnic group, there is a great diversity between and within Roma communities across Europe. It implies a diversity of representations and practices, including in relation to education. As such, it is crucial to involve the concerned Roma community/ies at the earliest stage of any initiative.

Gender roles might also have an impact on Roma students’ school attainment. Very few studies analyse the impact of gender representation of Roma communities on the education of children and adolescents. The research available is mostly qualitative and allows understanding certain dimensions of the “dissonance” sometimes observed in educational values between Roma culture and the majoritarian non-Roma one. Along with an “earlier adulthood,” gender norms seem to be a significant factor causing young Roma people to



withdraw from secondary education. In fact both elements are intertwined: while they become adults earlier than within most European non-Roma cultures, they acquire the obligations and status coming along with this situation, status to a great extent linked to gender norms (Myers, McGhee and Bhopal, 2010, p. 537<sup>[43]</sup>; World Bank Group, 2014<sup>[86]</sup>). Overall, there seems to be consensus between academics and practitioners on the following:

- **Gender roles** tend to be sharper in Roma communities;
- **For boys**, becoming an adult means contributing to the family/community economy. When they know how to read and count properly, boys tend to follow the path of their father and learn to execute the same job. They may otherwise be oriented to activities providing more immediate returns, which draws young men out of school at an early stage;
- **For girls**, it has been observed that early marriage remains a common issue within various Roma communities. The traditionally perceived role of women potentially leads numerous girls to assume a gender assigned position within the family and the community where they take care of children and domestic tasks, drawing them out of school at an early stage;<sup>52</sup>
- **Gender disaggregation** in data collecting should be considered as a necessity in order to better measure the impact of these issues (OECD, 2010, pp. 93-113<sup>[36]</sup>; Bojadjieva, 2015, p. 14<sup>[37]</sup>).

In terms of gender gap in education, no significant differences are observed in primary schools (FRA, 2016<sup>[22]</sup>). FRA however highlights that gender imbalances increase later with on average 72% of Roma women between 16 and 24 neither in employment nor in education or training (FRA, 2016, p. 21<sup>[22]</sup>) in the countries surveyed. It can be later on reflected in the labour market where, in the Slovak Republic for example, Roma women are substantially underrepresented in comparison to Roma men (OECD, 2019, pp. 92-93<sup>[20]</sup>). Roma women indeed tend to face greater challenges than men, and face additional challenges as extreme poverty, exclusion and discrimination further force disadvantages linked to gender inequalities.

### 3.2.4. *Teachers and diversity – Perceptions on Roma students and lack of training*

Studies such as OECD TALIS 2018 show that diversity in the classroom is today a common reality faced by teachers in most countries (OECD, 2019<sup>[87]</sup>). Data and information from TALIS have to be carefully used here because they mainly refer to diversity related to immigrants and students whose mother tongue is different from the national language, which represents only a part of Roma communities in European countries. However, the study provides interesting insights on teachers' perceptions on and schools' responsiveness to diversity in general. The results are rather positive and show a growing interest for diversity within school actors (*Ibid.*). Building capacity for teachers to embrace diversity and have the necessary tools to teach students from diverse backgrounds is today essential to face challenges arising with a growing diversity in the classrooms (OECD, 2010<sup>[36]</sup>).

According to a recent report from the European Commission on the preparation of teachers to cultural diversity in education, there are three categories of countries when it comes to competences for diversity in initial teacher education (ITE) in Europe:

1. A majority of countries with explicit diversity-related competences in the competence framework or similar documents, such as Austria, Belgium, Lithuania or Finland;

2. Countries with indirect diversity-related competences, such as France, Italy or the Netherlands;
3. A small group of six countries, all from Eastern Europe with the exception of Switzerland, with no reference to diversity-related competences (Public Policy and Management Institute, 2017<sub>[88]</sub>).

In spite of observing the presence of diversity-related competences in competence frameworks and legal documents, the authors of the report express their concern about “[a] limited recognition and operational description of diversity-related competences risks creating shortcomings in the preparation of future teachers” (p. 47<sub>[88]</sub>). In other words, as mentioned for policies related to diversity-conscious curricula (see section 2.3.4), although a majority of countries have developed frameworks with clear references to diversity in teachers’ education and training, significant implementation challenges remain.

When it comes to training educators to deal with ethnic minorities induced diversity, and particularly with Roma students, the literature depicts a rather concerning situation. Kirova and Prochner explain that “Roma children entering school encounter a vastly different world from their home culture, with different expectations for teaching and learning, as well as for relationships among learner and with teacher” (Kirova and Prochner, 2015, p. 382<sub>[28]</sub>). Moreover, teachers tend to have low expectations for Roma students who are still presumed to have academic and social deficits (Kirova and Prochner, 2015<sub>[28]</sub>; T. Zachos, 2017<sub>[82]</sub>; Hamilton, 2018<sub>[45]</sub>). They are often blamed for their “failure” in school, with little questioning of the school functioning in itself and teachers’ approach to diversity. This observation has nonetheless to be nuanced. D. T. Zachos showed that in Greek schools, a high number of teachers rather attribute the low results of Roma students to inflexible curricula and the absence of intercultural education pedagogy. However, they do not believe that they themselves have a significant role in Roma students’ success or failure (T. Zachos, 2017<sub>[82]</sub>). Yet, teachers have a crucial role in the inclusion of Roma students. In providing support and constructive feedback as well as adopting a positive attitude, teachers might foster Roma students’ learning and achievement.

This issue might be due to the fact that, although efforts have been made in various European countries, teachers in most schools still do not have a consistent intercultural training that gives them the tools to handle diversity and create the conditions of an environment favourable to Roma students’ achievement and well-being. Moreover, schools with the highest share of Roma students tend to be in disadvantaged neighbourhoods with a poor educational provision. The literature stresses the fact that while these schools are the ones most in need of greater infrastructures and qualified educators, they often lack highly skilled teachers and the necessary equipment to provide a quality education.

Besides establishing a more consistent and targeted allocation of resources, one part of the solution can be to provide a consistent intercultural education to teachers and heads of schools, and attract more Roma individuals into the teaching force. In fact, evidence shows that schools with a high percentage of Roma students should be staffed with teachers who have the required experience and certified training in multicultural issues (Peček, Macura-Milovanović and Vujisić-Živković, 2014<sub>[89]</sub>; Kirova and Prochner, 2015<sub>[28]</sub>). The teachers most likely to succeed in fostering the inclusion of Roma students are those who “demonstrate a strong will to support the educational progress of Roma children, have high expectations for each pupil, provide Roma students with additional incentives, modify the curriculum and adjust their teaching to the children’s culture and local community history” (T. Zachos, 2017, p. 1024<sub>[82]</sub>).

### 3.3. Towards a holistic approach through inclusive education

In spite of numerous projects implemented to promote the integration or the inclusion of Roma, various communities still face considerable challenges in all European countries without exception. The overall situation of Roma communities has not substantially changed over the past two decades, although several specific areas, such as literacy, have seen undeniable achievements. Numerous academics and practitioners agree that educational interventions should be systematically linked to more general social interventions. In fact, the few evaluations available show that “holistic” and community-based projects, i.e. projects at the school level that consider broader social issues and involve local communities, have proven to be the most efficient in addressing the diverse dimensions of Roma exclusion and marginalisation, and create environments favourable to their inclusion. Therefore, a holistic approach takes into account the multidimensionality of the challenges faced by Roma communities, promotes the participation of all stakeholders and adopts an integrated policy approach (i.e. an approach that tackles several policy areas in a comprehensive way).

#### 3.3.1. Involving the community and strengthening networks

The exclusion undergone by individuals from ethnic minorities is often multidimensional. The intersectionality of Roma students’ exclusion and marginalisation is complex and has important policy implications – it deserves to be further studied as well as clarified in inclusion strategies. For instance, a young Roma girl might suffer from discrimination based on her ethnic origin, socio-economic situation and gender issues together. Following the same logic, the low achievements of a young Roma boy may be due to a mix between discrimination, poverty and traditional gender roles imposed by the family. Alexiadou recalls that “pathways are not predetermined, rather they are negotiated and shaped by participants in their interactions with the school, family and wider social networks, and framed by welfare resources, policies and practices around equality and opportunity” (Alexiadou, 2019, p. 15<sub>[19]</sub>). It seems important to keep in mind the correlation of these elements and the multidimensionality entailed by the notion of inclusion when it comes to policy making in favour of the inclusion of Roma students.

Based on previous and current initiatives led by governments and civil society, potential solutions have been identified that could be further developed by policy makers and schools to tackle the multidimensionality of Roma students’ exclusion. Overall, these perspectives suggest:

1. **In policy making: combining mainstream and targeted policy.** While, on the one hand, the targeted approach alone received broad critiques that identified it as potentially leading to further segregation of Roma students, on the other, the use of the mainstream approach alone has proven to be inefficient in certain contexts. Ignoring the specific issues faced by these communities, including historical exclusion and discrimination based on ethnic origin, might hinder the marginalisation that they face from being properly tackled. As mentioned above, (see section 2.2.2), there seems to be a growing consensus among international organisations and academics on the necessity of combining the targeted approach with the mainstream approach in order to address the social and structural problems at the roots of the marginalisation of Roma students. In this sense, projects based on the specific but not exclusive targeting principle set by the EU seem to be among the most efficient ones (Box 3.1).

### Box 3.1. “Ready Set Go!” Project: increase access to kindergarten in Romania

Another initiative evaluated by NESET was the “Ready Set Go!” project in Romania. This initiative aimed to increase access to kindergartens among Roma children aged 3-6, and to improve their pre-school enrolment and participation.

#### The project

The project was implemented between December 2014 and April 2017 by the Roma Education Fund Romania Foundation (REF-RO) in partnership with 5 local NGOs, with technical advice provided by the office of the World Bank in Romania. It was implemented in eleven localities from 6 Romanian counties (Bihor, Călărași, Dâmbovița, Ialomița, Mureș and Sălaj). The selected localities were in poor rural areas with limited access to pre-school education services and facilities (i.e. kindergartens), particularly for the most vulnerable (specifically but not exclusively Roma) children. The idea was to improve the overall quality of kindergartens with a focus on the access of Roma children.

#### Implementation

Within the frame of the projects, the organisations involved implemented:

- New pre-school places in kindergarten facilities;
- A kindergarten programme focused on improving the institutional quality of Early Childhood Development (ECD) services;
- Parental support and empowerment activities – including the literacy programme Your Story, Home School Community Liaisons, and community events.

#### Results

Over 570 children aged 3-6, who did not have access to education before the project, were enrolled into the kindergartens for 2 school years. Moreover, 1 446 individuals benefitted from educational toys and games through the establishment of the toy libraries.

This project is an example of mainstream approach specifically targeting Roma children, but not only, based on a territorial approach. The activities implemented also allowed the link between the families and the schools to be strengthened, by involving the communities.

Source: (Vandekerckhove et al., 2019, pp. 78-82<sup>[61]</sup>).

2. **At the school level:** *incorporating the inclusion of Roma students in the school project.* For instance among the recommendations in conclusion of the French report from the *Défenseur des droits* in partnership with a university, is mentioned the necessity for school to design inclusion programmes for Roma students (Armagnague and Rigoni, 2018<sup>[63]</sup>). This might include welcoming the families, organising events around Roma culture, and ensuring that teachers and school principals are trained for such activities. In fact, evidence shows that teachers often do not know how to deal with cultural diversity, which makes capacity one of the priorities to promote an inclusive education. Schools with specific projects for Roma students and the desire to develop strong links with Roma families have

proven to be the most inclusive and enhance students' performances and well-being (Box 3.2). Studies identified, for instance, that Roma students enrolled in mainstream schools where they also have access to a Roma teaching assistant, adapt quicker and achieve better results than Roma students in mixed standard classes without such support (Gerganov, Varbanova and Kyuchukov, 2005<sup>[90]</sup>; Bešter, Medvešek and Pirc, 2016<sup>[91]</sup>). To help schools, ministries of education in partnership with academics and civil society can elaborate guidelines on how to design an inclusive school project, with a part focusing on Roma students. For instance, in Portugal, the *Direção Geral da Educação* (General Directorate for Education), released in April of this year an extended guide for schools to “promote the inclusion and educational success of Gypsy communities.” This guide gives detailed directives on (1) the welcoming of children, youths and adults, (2) the school network and the distribution of children, (3) educative modalities, (4) the professional development of teachers and other school staff, (5) the creation of an inclusive school atmosphere, (6) the designing of an inclusive curriculum and orientation on pedagogical practices, (7) the relation with the communities and the different stakeholders, (8) the use of intercultural mediators and “youth technicians,” and (9) the monitoring and evaluation process (Direção-Geral da Educação (DGE), 2019<sup>[67]</sup>). This presupposes a relative decentralisation of the school system to allow greater flexibility for municipalities and schools in the allocation of resources (human and financial) and the design of the curriculum. Furthermore, to ensure an efficient distribution of resources and identify the best initiatives at the school level, it will be important to also implement monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in school.

### **Box 3.2. Good practices for the inclusion of Roma children in schools in the United Kingdom**

The Traveller Movement,<sup>53</sup> a charity based in the United Kingdom that works with Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (GRT), released a report in 2019 aimed as a guide for schools to create an environment likely to enhance outcomes and a sense of belonging for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children in education.

Through empirical research with teachers and Roma families, and some quantitative analysis, they identified the most efficient practices implemented in UK schools. These schools are the ones responding to the most significant issues that are exclusion, admission and transport, bullying, discrimination, attendance, special educational needs and elective home education.

Overall, the schools having both a high GTR population and good attainment are those consistently characterised by the following elements:

- They create an environment of safety and trust;
- They cultivate an ethos of respect;
- They are committed to access and inclusion;
- They have high expectations of their pupils;
- They work in partnership with families, pupils and local communities;

- They communicate openly and respectfully with children and create good working relationships with parents.

This type of studies shows that schools with directors and teachers committed to inclusion practices that consider the various dimensions of diversity, including Roma students, have a strong impact on both students' performance and well-being. A more extensive assessment and collection of quantitative as well as qualitative data related to such "good" practices towards the inclusion of Roma students in mainstream schools could lead to a better understanding of their needs in different contexts and, potentially, to the establishment of benchmarks of successful actions to foster Roma inclusion in education.

Source: (The Traveller Movement, 2019<sup>[92]</sup>).

3. **For all stakeholders:** *Strengthening co-operation to share effective practices and establish common standards.* Sharing knowledge between countries, cities and sectors, is an efficient way of identifying and replicating successful initiatives. A prominent example is the establishment of the National Roma Contact Points network in 2012. It meets twice a year and are facilitated by the Commission or the European Platform for Roma Inclusion. In addition, they bring together European, national and local level stakeholders of Roma inclusion once a year. In order to discuss more local contexts, the working group on Roma inclusion was created by the network EURO CITIES.<sup>54</sup> A two day forum on a dimension of Roma inclusion is organised twice a year. It gathers officials, academics, civil society and citizens representing minority groups to share knowledge and think together about the best way to foster Roma inclusion. The events have taken place in cities considered as examples regarding Roma inclusion, such as Barcelona (Spain, 2018), Leeds (England, 2018) and Toulouse (France, 2019). The most recent meeting took place in September in Braga, Portugal, where participants were invited to reflect on how to develop a successful integrated plan for the inclusion of the Roma community. Another key example comes from the Balkans. In July, the Western Balkan countries gathered in Poznan, Poland, for a Summit aimed to strengthen co-operation between states. They co-wrote the *Declaration of Western Balkans Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process*, in which one of the main goals related to education is to "Increase the enrolment and completion rate of Roma in primary education to 90 per cent and the enrolment and completion rate of Roma in secondary education to 50 per cent".<sup>55</sup> More initiatives exist that bring together actors from different organisations, civil society and levels of authorities, and those are key for the success of Roma inclusion initiatives.

This list is non-exhaustive and corresponds to some general elements that have led to successful results. "Successful results" means here an increase in Roma students' performance, a stronger sense of belonging to school leading to lower dropouts, and a decrease in the discriminations faced by Roma children and young people, which implies that non-Roma students and families show greater tolerance and solidarity. As mentioned, such results are often obtained following initiatives based on the involvement and participation of the local Roma communities as a whole in school-related issues.

### ***3.3.2. Projects and policies based on a genuine participation of Roma students and their communities are among the most successful***

Involving families and strengthening parental participation need to be part of a whole school approach focused on fostering inclusion. Sociologists have long stressed the fact that the school is among the main spaces of socialisation that help build children and young people's social skills. Policies related to Roma teacher assistants and mediators, and projects such as INCLUDE-ED in Spain or TOY for Inclusion all over Europe, show that involving the community and building capacities constitute some of the most powerful tools to foster inclusion. Evaluations related to these initiatives highlighted an increase in the performances of Roma students and a significant decrease in dropouts. Furthermore, evidence shows that community dialogue and participation can be central dynamics in desegregation, though a strong political will and wider structural changes are also needed for sustainable changes (Ryder, Rostas and Taba, 2014<sup>[77]</sup>).

The design and implementation of locally-based initiatives has proven to be highly effective in certain places (Box 3.3), and might be the most efficient way of tackling Roma students' exclusion in diverging contexts. The strong diversity between and within Roma communities (in terms of cultural practices, language, and identity construction) makes it difficult, if not impossible, to develop and design standardised guidelines and projects – even though some common benchmarks can be useful – that would be similarly implemented in different places where contexts might substantially differ. To guarantee an open and continuous dialogue with both Roma students, their families and the surrounding communities will be key in future initiatives. In addition, in any initiative related to Roma, the participation of Roma youth recognised as a highly diverse group should be promoted and seen as essential in guaranteeing long-term success (ERGO Network, 2017<sup>[71]</sup>).

#### **Box 3.3. Community-based projects among the most efficient practice for Roma inclusion**

##### **Case Study – La Paz (The Peace) School in La Milagrosa neighbourhood in Albacete, Spain**

INCLUDE-ED was a project co-funded by the European Commission within its Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006). The case study of Milagrosa is one of a series of 6 conducted through Europe during the same period. They were all based on local projects in highly deprived neighbourhoods. The goal of the overall project was to achieve social cohesion through education by combining academic and international debate with a strong community participation. INCLUDE-ED was based, among others, on:

- An *egalitarian dialogue*, involving the full engagement of all stakeholders in the social change process;
- A *communicative research* that relies on a constant dialogue between the researchers and the users of the services, as well as monitoring ;
- The *community participation* in all dimensions of the project;
- The *successful (education) action* – S(E)A approach that aims to identify initiatives already proved efficient in overcoming social exclusion, poverty and other kinds of social issues.

La Milagrosa was one of the poorest Roma neighbourhoods in Spain subject to a range of social problems from poverty with a 100% unemployment rate, to drug and violence problems. A project was implemented between 2006 and 2011 in the scope of the

INCLUDE-ED framework in order to tackle the neighbourhood's most significant issues through the inclusion of the community in education. Empirical research also identified that mistrust was rampant at the school levels, with families alienated from school routine and teachers seeing the situation as a lost cause. In this context, the local administration, along with education inspectors, consulted INCLUDE-ED researchers. Together they decided to transform the local school into a new educational space through the implementation of SEAs.

La Milagrosa initiative blended various elements, the most important being:

1. Recruitment of qualified teachers willing to work in the school closely with the family;
2. Participation of the families in shaping a new curriculum and schedule through regular meetings;
3. Field research with Roma families;
4. Make the teachers and families work together to build trust.

Following this experience, participants decided together to rename the school La Paz (The Peace). Interviews with families and, later on, data showed a significant improvement in the Roma students' results, while the absenteeism rate decreased from 122 to 13 students from 2006 to 2010.

*Source:* (Rozzi, 2017, pp. 187-199<sup>[41]</sup>).

Moreover, it is important to further explore the participation of children and adolescents as protagonists. Since the International Conventions on the Rights of the Child, international organisations – mainly UNICEF –, experts and academics have been advocating for the respect of children's right to participation in decision-making processes. The activities of the recently started global networks ACT2GETHER,<sup>56</sup> for instance, show that a pedagogy based on equal communication and active listening depending on the child's or adolescent's age can lead to constructive debates and strengthen the inclusion of young people in decision making. These actors promote the use of intergenerational partnerships and the need to integrate children and adolescents in decision-making processes, mostly when it is related to issues that impact them.

The ISOTIS (Inclusive Education and Social Support to foster the Inequalities in Society) Project recently conducted and evaluated such an approach. ISOTIS is a network of academics from different countries that analyses educational equity in ECEC and primary schools in 10 European countries with qualitative and quantitative methods. They focus on educational equity and the inclusion of disadvantaged groups, mainly of ethnic minority groups such as Roma students, through the analysis of different dimensions including inclusive curricula, pedagogies and educational practices, professional and organisational development, or parent and family-focused support. In April this year, an ISOTIS team of researchers published the technical report of an extended survey realised in seven European countries with children, under the paradigm of the research “with and for children” (Pastori et al., 2019<sup>[93]</sup>). The study was conducted in order “to complement the interviews aimed at parents, conducted in the scope of the project, to enable better understanding of experiences, perceptions and opinions of young children from native-born low income families, and families with ethnic minority and immigrant backgrounds regarding inclusion and well-being at school.”<sup>57</sup> Among others, this study includes the views of Roma children



on inclusive education in several countries. The main results are yet to come, and they will be important to consider in the design of future policies related to the inclusion of Roma students, and more generally of all disadvantaged groups.

Every student could benefit from such a pedagogy. Fostering ongoing communication and participation of children and adolescents will be important to better assess ethnic minority group students' specific needs and, ultimately, better respond to these. In fact, promoting children's participation in general in decision making in areas that affect them might prove to be key in tackling social exclusion and improving their well-being.

### ***3.3.3. Well-being of Roma students and intercultural education***

Well-being is an element increasingly incorporated in OECD's work on children, young people and education. PISA now features well-being as a core dimension in its studies. It is defined here as a dynamic state characterised by students experiencing the ability and opportunity to fulfil their personal and social goals. According to OECD's work on child well-being (OECD, 2015<sup>[94]</sup>), the latter is multidimensional and covers:

1. Cognitive well-being;
2. Psychological well-being;
3. Physical well-being;
4. Social well-being;
5. Material well-being.

As observed in recent OECD works, embracing cultural diversity in the classroom has positive effects on students' outcomes and enhances all aspects of well-being. In fact, some of the most successful schools are the ones that provide an inclusive and intercultural environment where students feel connected and valued (OECD, 2017<sup>[95]</sup>; Guthrie et al., 2019<sup>[96]</sup>). This subpart explores the possibility of implementing intercultural education to foster Roma students' well-being.

While there does not seem to be research conducted exclusively on the well-being of Roma students in Europe, the different policies and initiatives depicted in this paper might respond somehow to several of the dimensions encompassed by the notion of well-being. Due to its multidimensionality, the well-being of Roma children clearly requires a holistic approach and involves some of the elements included in the previous subparts, such as diversity-conscious curricula, an increase in the share of Roma teachers and the involvement of the community as a whole. Moreover, studies on Roma communities' definition(s) of the concept of well-being would be necessary in order to assess how to better respond to their needs. While the material aspects of well-being rather requires redistribution policies, this subsection focuses on the intercultural approach as a potential tool to enhance its other dimensions.

There is, in fact, a growing literature and recent projects (Box 3.4) which suggest further consideration of the assets of intercultural education in order to foster Roma students' inclusion in mainstream education. The concept of intercultural education has been mainly developed in France and in Quebec, and corresponds to a pedagogy based on "mutual understanding and recognition of similarities through dialogue" (Kirova and Prochner, 2015, p. 392<sup>[28]</sup>). The ultimate goal is to create a shared space where all students' cultural differences are valued, and not put aside or simply acknowledged. In this sense, the notion of interculturalism goes beyond that of multiculturalism which is limited to cohabitation

and the acknowledgment of the existence of different cultures (Meer, 2014<sup>[7]</sup>). P. Calogiannakis, K. G. Karras and J. Ieronimakis refer to an intercultural approach as an approach:

*(...) that begins with the equality of cultures as a starting point in order to arrive at peaceful co-existence within a single society though common education of different cultures represented in it, and not a divided society with separate education for each ethnic group. In order to achieve this, certain criteria must be met, the first of which is to respect the linguistic and cultural capital of “difference”, taking its position in the curriculum and school culture and considering it an important factor for the psychosocial and cognitive development of the students, which represent diversity (Calogiannakis et al., 2018, p. 174<sup>[50]</sup>).*

An intercultural approach is, therefore understood, as a dialogic process supported by a specific pedagogy aimed to foster dialogue and the convergence of (cultural) differences to create a new common space of understanding. Overall, “[i]ntercultural education proposes that it is vital to work in co-existence recognising universal values in difference while constructing broader and richer cultures” (Salgado-Orellana, Berrocal de Luna and Sánchez-Núñez, 2019, p. 2<sup>[97]</sup>). Fostering an inclusive and intercultural approach in school requires actions at the different levels of an education system, i.e. clear legal and political frameworks, sufficient resources, capacity building and consistent changes at the school level in order to implement a new vision based on inclusion and diversity (Guthrie et al., 2019<sup>[96]</sup>).

As mentioned above, the pedagogy and the vision of childhood and adulthood encountered in various Roma communities combined with the expectations Roma parents have from school might be in sharp contrast with the mainstream Western education system. Consequently, school can be felt as alien and repressive for Roma children and adolescents, and the dialogue with families is often cut off. A growing body of experts and academics highlight the necessity of implementing schools with an intercultural programme to enhance ethnic minority students’ performance and well-being on the one hand, and benefit society as a whole on the other (OECD, 2010<sup>[36]</sup>; Kirova and Prochner, 2015<sup>[28]</sup>; Calogiannakis et al., 2018<sup>[50]</sup>; Vandekerckhove et al., 2019<sup>[61]</sup>; Rozzi, 2017<sup>[41]</sup>).

At the beginning of the 2000’s, intercultural education was already present in the education policies of most EU member states. Since then, it has been continuously promoted by European institutions as the preferred official approach to be used in schools for the “integration” of immigrant and ethnic minority group students (Tarozzi, 2012<sup>[98]</sup>). Some countries have consistently committed to creating frameworks related to the implementation of an intercultural education. Greece, for instance, already had a legal frame in 1996 with the Law 2413/1996 “Greek Education Abroad, Intercultural Education and Other Provisions” also known as the Law of Intercultural Education. In Greece, where the colour-blind approach predominates, the definition of diversity is mainly based on nationality. However, Roma students are, for the majority, Greek nationals. The lack of recognition of their cultural differences, coupled with experiences of exclusion for being different than the non-Roma Greek nationals, lead them to face complex issues in schools (Gerganov, Varbanova and Kyuchukov, 2005<sup>[90]</sup>). In spite of a clear dominance of inclusive and intercultural political and legal discourse, academics worry that educational practices appear assimilatory in practice, and point out the lack of real recognition of cultural diversity (Gkofa, 2017<sup>[99]</sup>).

Another example is Italy. The country has developed intercultural frames and plans in education since the late 1980s, when the government attempted to respond to a substantial

increase in the country's diversity (Bussotti, 2017<sub>[100]</sub>). In 2007, the Ministry of Public Instruction stated that “[t]o choose the intercultural standpoint means not to limit [schooling] to a mere strategy for immigrant pupils’ integration, nor to a compensatory special measure. It means, on the contrary, to assume the diversity as a paradigm of the school identity itself, as an opportunity to open up the entire system to all differences (origin, gender, social level, school history)” (Tarozzi, 2012, pp. 8-9<sub>[98]</sub>), showing a shift towards inclusion. Italy being a country adopting a colour-blind approach, official categories related to diversity correspond to migrant status and nationality. As a result, few intercultural frameworks and projects are tailored to Roma students.

Intercultural education is tightly linked to the involvement of the community as a whole. It also goes beyond just considering the language barrier, which can be irrelevant when Roma communities are established for a long time in a country where they are also nationals. In fact, for it to be successful, an intercultural orientation needs both a commitment to creating an inclusive school atmosphere and a desire to strengthen the participation of all stakeholders in the design and implementation of such an environment. Nonetheless, according to Tarozzi, there are two main gaps. First, there is a substantial gap between legal documents on intercultural education and their implementation. Second, each European country has a different definition and frame, which prevents the establishment of common standards (Tarozzi, 2012<sub>[98]</sub>).

#### **Box 3.4. Inclusion Through Intercultural Dialogue in Barcelona**

##### **Barcelona’s initiatives**

The intercultural approach has been mentioned in Spanish educational law since the 20th century. Although the government tried to implement policies for the inclusion of Roma people, such as including specific reference to Roma culture in the curriculum, these communities still face significant exclusion.<sup>58</sup> Barcelona is considered as one of the first and few cities that are adopting a holistic approach using intercultural dialogue (Zapata-Barrero, 2017<sub>[101]</sub>),<sup>59</sup> with Roma communities as a specific but not exclusive target. The city recently developed a strategy aimed to acknowledge and promote Roma culture and identity as a valuable part of society, and nurturing a bottom-up intercultural dialogue between Roma and non-Roma residents while fighting actively against discrimination of Roma communities.

##### **The VAKERIPEN project**

Within this dynamic, the VAKERIPEN project, led by the Interdisciplinary Research Group on Immigration (GRITim) of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra and co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme of the European Union, was recently implemented as a community-based project relying on an intercultural dialogue. The project is based on a methodology combining qualitative research with practical implementation. The main goal was to build communication between schools and Roma families in four neighbourhoods of the metropolitan area of Barcelona. Some of the activities included ongoing research, teacher training, fora and exchange between Roma and non-Roma, awareness-raising on the situation of these communities in the country. Numerous meetings and workshops were organised with different stakeholders in order to

identify the main obstacles to communication, including “cultural” ones, and create dialogue.

### **Results and perspectives**

Researchers that took part of this initiative identified some of the main obstacles faced by both sides, Roma communities and schools respectively, that affect the relationship between them. They found that Roma families encountered two main structural limitations that are the lack of resources and frequent discrimination. Schools on the other hand, pointed out the lack of resources they face themselves, and the fact that they sometimes have to perform a “social work” because some children may not have their basic needs satisfied. Teachers tended to show a negative perception on the attitudes of Roma families towards education. Interestingly, the results also showed that among the sixty families interviewed, all had high expectations from schools for their children, though some feared discrimination and assimilation.

This project shows both the necessity of understanding the underlying roots of school failure and, for this, promoting qualitative research and a dialogue respectful of cultural differences. By doing so, it can be possible to build trust and enhance the inclusion and well-being of Roma students and, ultimately, of the whole school population.

*Source:* (Hellgren and Gabrielli, 2018<sup>[102]</sup>).

## *Conclusions and Policy Implications*

Inclusion in education goes well beyond increasing students' literacy and enrolment. It entails deep reforms in the school's approach to diversity, a strong political commitment, and consideration of relevant elements from the wider social and structural context that lead to the exclusion of some ethnic groups and national minorities. Equity and inclusion are overlapping principles that should be consistently guiding educational policy and, beyond ensuring access to education, promote "quality learning spaces and pedagogies that enable students to thrive, to understand their realities, and to work for a more just society" (UNESCO, 2017, p. 18<sub>[103]</sub>). In the case of the inclusion of Roma students in education systems, this literature review emphasised several initiatives and achievements, as well as obstacles faced by European countries. In light of the significant challenges still impeding their educational attainment, more needs to be done to ensure that they can aspire to the same opportunities as non-Roma students, as well as feel safe and welcomed at every level of schooling. It seems that fostering inclusion under an integrated and holistic approach could generate positive results for this specific group of students. Based on the evidence reviewed in this paper, the necessity of further focusing on some of the following areas for the post-2020 initiative on Roma equality and inclusion<sup>60</sup> might be of significant interest to enhance the inclusion of Roma in education.

### *The role of ECEC programmes*

This paper identified that European countries have shown a consistent commitment to improve not only the access, but also the quality of their ECEC systems. Yet, in certain countries, a high share of Roma children still do not participate in ECEC. Late entry to school results in additional disadvantage and may exacerbate school segregation of Roma students in part because schools tend to hinder access to children with lower linguistic competences. Furthermore, as Jager explains about Slovenia, even though more disadvantaged children participate in preschool activities, very few programmes are tailored to them. She argues that in order to respond to their needs and fulfil their right to education, it will be necessary to invest in programmes responding to the specific issues they face (Jager, 2016<sub>[104]</sub>), while further improving ECEC access and quality for all children.

### *The importance of quality in primary school and the need to give specific attention to the transition to secondary and tertiary education*

Although the enrolment of Roma students in primary school is, with some exceptions, almost as high as that of the non-Roma population, early dropouts remain a persistent issue. Most young Roma, as many girls as boys, leave education and training at an early stage, leading only a few of them to attend higher education. Transitions within and beyond the education system is a major issue for Roma students (Alexiadou, 2019<sub>[19]</sub>). While enhancing inclusion measures in primary schooling might have positive effects for Roma students transitioning to secondary schools, further measures should be taken at the secondary level to prevent dropouts and insure transition to the tertiary level. Issues linked to this level of schooling are complex. On the one hand, some Roma families tend to show a significant mistrust towards secondary schools and/or to not consider it as useful for their children's future, and, on the other hand, it has been observed that the link between the school and the families is much weaker at the secondary level. Overcoming this disconnect

and enhancing the potential of socialisation of secondary schools could generate cohesion and significantly contribute to foster inclusion. For the school year 2019-2020, Portugal created 100 scholarships for Portuguese Roma secondary students. This initiative aims to support the frequency of school participation and the educational attainment of Roma students in the country.<sup>61</sup> The goal is hence to improve both the access to (mostly by reducing costs) and the quality of secondary education for Roma students (mostly by ensuring support) and promote successful transition from primary to secondary school.

#### *Diversity-conscious curricula including knowledge on Roma culture and history*

Some countries have already developed policies requiring schools to design such curricula. However, it has been highlighted that when Roma communities are mentioned in the curriculum, it is often through an “exotic” or “essentialising” lens that contributes to further create otherness instead of fostering unity while praising diversity (Kirova and Prochner, 2015<sub>[28]</sub>). Research shows that even if several schools are engaging in such practices, it is important to (1) be clear about which knowledge to integrate and how to transmit it (Helakorpi, Lappalainen and Mietola, 2018, p. 8<sub>[18]</sub>), and (2) ensure a consistent design and implementation of diversity-aware curricula across all schools (Cerna et al., 2019, p. 110<sub>[64]</sub>). Following this observation, it seems important to further consider the ethnocentric dimension of school curricula and encourage their development with the consistent participation of local Roma communities. Such initiatives provide an opportunity to include Roma individuals in the curriculum in a more inclusive way. They might be effective in enhancing Roma minority students’ learning and sense of belonging as well as raising awareness among the general student population.

#### *Fighting segregation in education*

In previous studies, OECD has already pointed out the negative consequences of school segregation of certain groups of students (ethnic minorities, children with disabilities, etc.) on educational achievement. It has highlighted the positive long-term effects of committing to an inclusive education supportive of disadvantaged students (OECD, 2012<sub>[105]</sub>). In 2013, PISA showed that the countries with the highest index of social inclusion in schools are also the ones that performed the best in mathematics in its 2012 survey (OECD, 2013<sub>[106]</sub>). This tendency has been confirmed, for example, in PISA 2018 which shows that most countries with the highest index of social inclusion, such as Norway, Finland, Sweden and Estonia, are also among the ones that performed the best in reading (OCDE, 2019<sub>[107]</sub>).

In spite of these considerations, in some countries, the chances for Roma children to be enrolled in special school are 27 times higher than for non-Roma children (Council of Europe and Commissioner for Human Rights, 2017, p. 8<sub>[78]</sub>). There seems to be consensus in the literature on the negative effects of separate education for ethnic minorities and the benefits from an inclusive education for the school as a whole. To tackle this issue, it is important to go beyond the mere prohibition of school segregation, and work on consistent desegregation strategies at the school and national levels (FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, 2015<sub>[29]</sub>). Due to the complexity of the issue of school segregation for Roma students, a strong political commitment and the long-term implementation of holistic projects based on a consistent participation of Roma communities are fundamental.

#### *Resourcing inclusive education*

A recent position paper from the Commissioner for Human rights of the Council of Europe on “fighting school segregation through inclusive education” observed cuts in educational

funds and a significant decrease in the budget European States allocate to inclusive education measures and programmes for disadvantaged students (Council of Europe and Commissioner for Human Rights, 2017<sub>[78]</sub>). Students and society as a whole would benefit from investments in inclusive education programmes. These programmes might give efficient results when they link (1) a mainstream approach aimed to benefit the whole school population by improving the school's quality with (2) specific goals to improve the inclusion of Roma students where it applies. Also, since it has been observed that schools with more disadvantaged students tend to have lower academic results in part because of a lack of funds and infrastructure, it will be important to develop incentives for the most qualified and trained teachers to go to these schools in order to improve the quality, adequacy and adaptability of education.

### *The value of consistent decision-making processes*

Most countries have a National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma as recommended by the European Commission. However, it has been suggested that there is a discrepancy between what inclusion represents in current educational discourse and how inclusive efforts are working for Roma students (Miskovic and Curcic, 2016<sub>[108]</sub>). Among other elements raised in this paper, gaps in implementation of inclusion frameworks might be due to both a significant lack of political will to go far in the process and a poor co-operation between different stakeholders and/or levels of policy making. Although various projects are implemented at the local level – often supported by European institutions and NGOs –, most countries do not further develop consistent and holistic strategies and policies at the national level. This issue is reflected in the project of inclusion of Roma students in education. At the same time, the decentralised functioning of some education systems makes it difficult for policy makers to develop and implement common and efficient strategies (Neumann, 2017<sub>[51]</sub>). Following these observations, it seems that it will be important to promote integrated approaches linking different relevant authorities while giving more flexibility to education systems for them to adapt and co-operate with non-state actors at the local levels.

### *The potential of technology*

To achieve stronger co-operation, technology might constitute a major tool. In France for instance, where technology is considered as a central force for inclusive education,<sup>62</sup> the government's *Resorption Bidonvilles* (Slum Resorption) Project is planning on enhancing the use of technology to foster national cooperation.<sup>63</sup> This initiative gathers different state actors who work on a digital platform where information on the slums geography, demography and situation will be shared between all stakeholders, including civil societies and academics.<sup>64</sup> Indirectly, the project will serve an important fringe of the Roma student population (known to be over-represented in those locations though no official data is available), whose records will be shared between schools, under the condition of a strict data protection policy. This could help better assess Roma students' needs and keep track of the school paths of Roma students from an immigrant background, and some from families adopting a nomadic lifestyle. Students from ethnic minorities should benefit from a greater use of ICT not only to strengthen networks and monitoring, but also to foster learning within the classroom.

Several international agencies such as the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education have stressed the potential of technology in fostering inclusion in school (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2013<sub>[109]</sub>). Research highlights that young Roma children tend to suffer from digital exclusion (Garmendia and

Karrera, 2019<sup>[110]</sup>), although mastering ICT is nowadays crucial for young people to be empowered and realise their rights. There are still very few projects that rely on ICT as a force to include Roma students, though evidence shows that the use of media technology as a pedagogical tool tends to lead to a better sense of belonging and increase participation in school (Frangoulidou, 2013<sup>[111]</sup>).

### *Empowering discourses and inclusion policies to fight anti-Gypsyism*

It has been highlighted in this paper that the treatment received by Roma students in schools mirrors the discriminations faced by Roma communities in wider society. Further fighting discriminative behaviours is important to foster more tolerant and cohesive societies. In the long run, this will benefit Roma students as a disadvantaged ethnic minority group by tackling one of the main roots of exclusion. Moreover, authors have suggested that policy and legal documents may subtly convey a devalued image of Roma communities. More positive and empowering discourses need to be normalised when it comes to Roma individuals, who tend to be victimised and depicted as lacking certain social capabilities. Critical reflexions of the content of such documents and a stronger collaboration with Roma representatives, or Roma communities directly, will be important to tackle this issue. Likewise, it will be important to better understand the definition, causes and effects of anti-Gypsyism, and address it both as a cross-cutting issue and as a self-standing area in policy making (Lajčáková, Hojsík and Karoly, 2020<sup>[112]</sup>).

### *The diversity among the Roma population*

Roma communities across Europe tend to be perceived as a homogeneous ethnic minority group, which can be substantially problematic in terms of policy making. In fact, as mentioned throughout this paper, Roma communities are highly heterogeneous, having different practices and socio-economic status. Roma individuals can be migrants or nationals, which implies different identification dynamics and language challenges. In addition, their demography varies across countries, which have different historical contexts leading to different situations and discrimination dynamics. In addition, Roma girls and women face specific challenges due to the intersection of the gender and the ethnic dimensions on diversity (FRA, 2019<sup>[113]</sup>). As such, and in line with Roma youth organisation and experts' reports for the post-2020 strategy (ERGO Network, 2017<sup>[71]</sup>; Fresno, Kolev and Meyer, 2020<sup>[114]</sup>), it will be important to consistently consider the diversity encountered among Roma communities across Europe in future policies and initiatives. Here, an intersectionality approach to policy making might help design policies adapted to the needs of the most vulnerable groups among Roma communities (OECD, 2020<sup>[115]</sup>).

### *Consistent methods for the collection of disaggregated data on ethnic minority students*

ESF Learning Network reports identified the development of indicators for data collection and the collection of data on ethnic origin as key issues for the success of programming for Roma inclusion initiatives (European Social Fund (ESF) Learning Network, 2018<sup>[116]</sup>). The collection of disaggregated data on ethnicity in general remains complex due to several issues (e.g. lack of methodology, different identification dynamics among Roma communities, lack of trust towards institutions etc.) and data remain scarce. In education, a certain flexibility to gather diversity data seems to be required in order to give an accurate account of the situation of Roma students and guarantee quality evaluations. A clearer picture on the demography, the challenges and the needs of Roma students – and on Roma



communities in general – will better inform the design and implementation of policies and projects. Countries can benefit from sharing practices on the methodology to collect such data. Several of them have tried to solve data collection issues through the use of self-identification, questionnaires involving multiple options and a stronger involvement of communities in the data collection process (pp. 20-22<sub>[116]</sub>). Those adopting a colour-blind approach, where the collection of such data is most often legally prohibited, may allow and/or facilitate the work of independent bodies to collect data on students from ethnic minorities, which in turn could be used in international studies. Also, in line with previous approaches, disaggregated data on Roma “subgroups” (i.e. on gender, migrant status etc.) might be necessary.

### *The potential of intercultural education*

Finally, inclusive education concerns every child and young individual. Countries can promote it in schools to raise awareness, promote inclusion and so that all students will benefit from a good quality education. In the specific case of ethnic minority groups’ education, in this case Roma students, intercultural education deserves special attention. It seems to be a powerful tool to foster social cohesion and, in the long run, peaceful and inclusive societies. Lack of intercultural dialogue is likely to generate societies poorly tolerant to diversity and exacerbate the exclusion of some ethnic groups. In this sense, the intercultural approach should be further considered in policy making aimed to foster the sustainable social inclusion of Roma communities in Europe, for which it has proven to have a positive impact (Salgado-Orellana, Berrocal de Luna and Sánchez-Núñez, 2019<sub>[97]</sub>).

A strong political commitment, a consistent implementation of legal frameworks related to intercultural education as well as the recognition of Roma students’ specific needs will therefore be important to strengthen the inclusiveness of European education systems. Such an approach recognising and valorising, among others, Roma culture, is likely to play an important role in strengthening Roma students’ inclusion, i.e. their sense of belonging and well-being. Through recognition and dialogue, intercultural schools could contribute to suppressing the “otherness” with which Roma communities have been sealed, and shift this vision to one considering them as fully European, though having differences with mainstream societies. Therefore, intercultural education, and overall a communication respectful of cultural variations might be a core driving force within a holistic approach to promote inclusion.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This hypothesis was the basis of social Darwinism, theorised by a group of academics who adapted Charles Darwin’s theory of the origin of species to the social world of human beings.

<sup>2</sup> Because of international academic debates and academic/political conferences, it is possible to establish a common European history of these concepts, even though their exact interpretation might vary from a context to another (Bancel, David and Thomas, 2014<sup>[11]</sup>).

<sup>3</sup> “Ethnicity represents a major form of social and political differentiation on the one hand, and of structural inequality in most contemporaneous societies on the other. It is based on the production and reproduction of social and political definitions related to the physical, psychological and cultural differences between so-called ethnic groups, which develop different types of interactions between themselves.”

<sup>4</sup> “Members of visible minorities”, “*minorités visibles*”, are terms mainly used in Canada to refer to “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour” as defined in the Employment Equity Act. See:

<https://lawslois.justice.gc.ca/Search/Search.aspx?txtSearchAll=visible+minority&txtTitle3=%22Employment+Equity+Act%22&hitsOnly=0&ddContentTyp3=Acts>.

It is used here as umbrella terms that refer to individuals of a different ethnicity than the majority group, be this ethnicity officially recognised or not.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance Richard Laux’s article on the United Kingdom *History of the Government* website: Laux, R., 7 March 2019, “50 years of collecting ethnicity data,” *History of the Government*, <https://history.blog.gov.uk/2019/03/07/50-years-of-collecting-ethnicity-data/>.

<sup>6</sup> Because of the atrocities experienced by Jewish and Gypsy communities by the Nazi regime, various European countries began a “strategy of *de-racialisation*” (Simon, 2017, p. 2329<sub>[11]</sub>) post-Second World War. It aimed to remove ethnicity and race from legal texts, political discourses and collective representations. Simon further explains that although this process was fully adopted in policy and law making, it failed at preventing “the perceptions of race and ethnicity to be reactivated as soon as racialised population came into this part of the world before and after decolonisation” (*Ibid.*).

<sup>7</sup> Moreover, it is estimated that nearly 1 million Roma live in North America. In the United States, they are not considered in need of particular attention and in Canada, they are still unrecognised (Kirova, Anna; Thorlaskon, 2015, p. 371<sub>[35]</sub>). Relatively large communities also live in Latin America and Australia.

<sup>8</sup> The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Resolution 2153 of 2017 “Promoting the inclusion of Roma and Travellers” states that “[t]here are estimated to be around 11 million Roma and travellers living in Europe today” (Council of Europe, 2017, p. 1<sub>[117]</sub>).

<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, contrary to the collective belief, nomad Roma families represent less than a quarter of the total estimated Roma population. Also, numerous families and communities live in camps – in their country of origins or as migrants, camps from where they are regularly evicted. These groups are, at best, not accurately represented in statistics.

<sup>10</sup> However, this is not always the case. Nordic and some CEE countries, for example, even though they tend to adopt a colour-blind approach in terms of policy frames, establish ethnic minority categories to foster the collection of clear diversity data.

<sup>11</sup> The widespread mistrust of Roma communities towards governmental institutions is based on historical events and atrocities against Roma populations, including centuries of slavery in various countries, mainly Romania, and the holocaust led by the German Nazi regime during which between 300.000 and 500.000 Roma individuals were killed. For a brief insight in Roma history, see for example: Muižnieks, N. (2015), “Time to cure amnesia about Roma history in Europe”, *Human Rights Comment, Commissioner for Human Rights*, Council of Europe, Consulted on April 2020: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/time-to-cure-amnesia-about-the-history-of-roma-in-europe>.

<sup>12</sup> The Rajput are an ancient cast of warriors that lived in the current Rajasthan and participated in numerous wars of invasion in the “High” Asia. See for instance: Roland, B., « RĀJPŪT », *Encyclopædia Universalis* [Online], consulted 23 July 2019. URL: <http://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/rajput/>.

<sup>13</sup> Roma communities have an oral tradition rather than a written one. As a result, the only written archives that can be found are stories told by outsiders, which creates significant difficulties in reducing existing bias in the scientific reconstitution of Roma history.

<sup>14</sup> It is important to recall that Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries have the highest share of Roma population and might face different challenges than other European societies due to specific economic and socio-historical dynamics. Although Roma communities can face some similar issues and common standard/guidelines are important, the different contexts and related challenges require different policy responses.

<sup>15</sup> Roma people are not homogenous and differ in many aspects. They are characterised by a variety of cultural practices, socio-economic status, educational backgrounds and ideological views (e.g. more conservative groups against young feminist Roma movements). This diversity implies the need of diverse policy approaches.

<sup>16</sup> See: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities>.

<sup>17</sup> Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, “Health, Minorities, Human Rights and Sociological Issues,” Consulted on 2 August 2019: <http://www.msmt.cz/areas-of-work/social-programs/health-minorities-human-rights-and-sociological-issues>.

<sup>18</sup> In the case of Slovenia, Article 65 (*Status and Special Rights of the Romany Community in Slovenia*) states: “The status and special rights of the Romany community living in Slovenia shall be regulated by law.” See: <https://www.us-rs.si/en/about-the-court/legal-basis/constitution/>.

<sup>19</sup> Simplification often leads to strong and tenuous conflation. Coquio and Pouyeto give the example

of France, where the common use of the category “*Roms*” (Roma) since 2010 generated confusion between *gens du voyage*, migrant Roma and Eastern Roma who tend to be perceived as one uniformed ethnic group (Coquio, Catherine and Poueyto, 2014, p. 24<sub>[27]</sub>). However, they have distinct practices and face different challenges.

<sup>20</sup> Assimilationist educational policies refer here to governments’ attempt to integrate Roma individuals in education systems (in terms of improving their participation) while trying to erase cultural differences. These educational policies were part of a wider strategy to coerce minority groups to adapt to the dominant one’s culture and social practices, often under the justification of national unity.

<sup>21</sup> This survey gathers data on Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Hungary, Portugal, Romania and the Slovak Republic. A “Roma and Travellers 2018-2019” survey will be released in April 2020, gathering additional data on Belgium, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. For more information, see FRA website: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2018/roma-and-travellers-survey-2018-2019>.

<sup>22</sup> These data were gathered during the Decade for Roma Inclusion. See the “Roma data” of UNDP Europe and Central Asia website:

<https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/ourwork/sustainable-development/development-planning-and-inclusive-sustainable-growth/roma-in-central-and-southeast-europe/roma-data.html>.

See also the page dedicated to Roma people on the World Bank’s website:

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/brief/roma>.

<sup>23</sup> In 2017 UNDP conducted a Regional Survey on the Socio-Economic Position of Roma, carried out in the Western Balkans and Turkey. See:

<https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/undp-roma-survey--regional-brief-2017.html>.

While providing a rich amount of data on the situation of marginalised Roma communities in that area, this survey is out of the scope of this paper and will not be used here.

<sup>24</sup> OECD’ Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) asks the language spoken at home and thus, may provide some data on Roma students. However, very few Roma students reply speaking Romani, making it close to impossible to draw out consistent patterns and variables (Bloem and Brüggemann, 2016<sub>[119]</sub>).

<sup>25</sup> See Eurostat early childhood and primary education statistics:

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Early\\_childhood\\_and\\_primary\\_education\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Early_childhood_and_primary_education_statistics).

<sup>26</sup> See: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12012M/TXT>

<sup>27</sup> See: European Parliament resolution of 25 October 2017 on fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU: fighting anti-Gypsyism (2017/2038(INI)),

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0413\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0413_EN.html).

<sup>28</sup> The emblematic structure and the most active of this period being the Roma Education Fund (REF) created in 2005. To learn more about the REF: <https://www.romaeducationfund.org/about-us/>.

<sup>29</sup> See: European Commission (2011), *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, COM/2011/0173 final,

<https://eurlex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1444910104414&uri=CELEX:52011DC0173>.

<sup>30</sup> See: European Commission (2012), *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: National Roma Integration Strategies: a first step in the implementation of the EU Framework*, COM/2012/226 final,

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1444910230246&uri=CELEX:52012DC0226>.

<sup>31</sup> Council (2013), *Council recommendations of 9 December 2013 on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States*, 2013/C 378/01,

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224(01)).

<sup>32</sup> The website of the European Commission Provides with information on the NRIS, the competent authorities and the share of the fund possibly allocated to Roma inclusion per country. See:

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/roma-integration-eu-country\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/roma-integration-eu-country_en).

<sup>33</sup> This argument has however to be balanced in the specific case of Roma. N. Fraser theory mainly applies to social movements involved in a political fight for recognition. Although some Roma organisations have undertaken such endeavour, the heterogeneity of Roma groups makes it challenging to establish a clearly defined orientation for policies linked to recognition.

<sup>34</sup> See the latest version from October 2019:

<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006071191>.

<sup>35</sup> See: [https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework_en).

<sup>36</sup> See for instance this 2019 Eurydice Report: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2019), *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition. Eurydice Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/sites/eurydice/files/kd\\_ecec\\_2019\\_report\\_en.pdf](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/sites/eurydice/files/kd_ecec_2019_report_en.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> See: <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/croatia/systems-of-support-and-specialist-provision>.

<sup>38</sup> Roma from Eastern Europe who migrated to France fit in the EANA group, while *Manouches* and *Gitans* might fit in the EFIV group.

<sup>39</sup> See: <http://coe-romed.org/>.

<sup>40</sup> See: <http://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/906.html>.

<sup>41</sup> See: <http://www.cm-seixal.pt/evento/seminario-romano-atmo-sobre-rodas>.

<sup>42</sup> See: <http://www.inv.si/Dokumenti/dokumenti.aspx?iddoc=944&idmenu1=19&lang=slo>.

<sup>43</sup> See: [https://www.romaeducationfund.org/video\\_post/roma-toy-library-network/](https://www.romaeducationfund.org/video_post/roma-toy-library-network/).

<sup>44</sup> See: <http://www.toyproject.net/project/toy-inclusion-2/>.

<sup>45</sup> See: <http://romaversitas.hu/en/>.

<sup>46</sup> See (in French): [https://www.education.gouv.fr/pid285/bulletin\\_officiel.html?cid\\_bo=61529](https://www.education.gouv.fr/pid285/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=61529).

<sup>47</sup> For an insight in the history of the association and the functioning of the first truck schools, read Camille Véger's 1995 article: Véger, C. (1995), "ASET: Des Classes "Sur Roues" pour les Enfants du Voyage", *Homme et Migrations*, 1188-1189, pp.86-89. [Available Online] [https://www.persee.fr/doc/homig\\_1142-852x\\_1995\\_num\\_1188\\_1\\_2501](https://www.persee.fr/doc/homig_1142-852x_1995_num_1188_1_2501).

<sup>48</sup> All the reports are available at: <https://cps.ceu.edu/roma-civil-monitor-reports>.

<sup>49</sup> See in particular annual Commission communications in 2012, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 (available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/roma-integration-eu\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/roma-integration-eu_en)).

<sup>50</sup> Social scientists observed that when a significant part of the student population comes from a disadvantaged background, students coming from more advantaged families tend to leave the school or the residential area. This phenomenon was initially studied in the United States to first analyse a dynamic in which Whites in a particular neighbourhood begin to leave when Blacks begin to move in (Rossell, 1975<sub>[121]</sub>). This issue tends to be poignant for Roma students as they suffer discrimination based on ethnicity on top of discrimination based on a disadvantaged socio-economic background. In fact, even if some countries conducted integration policies aimed to reduce the phenomenon of Roma segregation, they often failed to efficiently fight discrimination and prejudices they are subject to, which resulted in inefficient initiatives (Araújo, 2016<sub>[122]</sub>).

<sup>51</sup> Besides FRA studies, also see Civil Roma Monitor yearly reports available at: <https://cps.ceu.edu/roma-civil-monitor-reports>. Also see the European Commission (2019<sub>[46]</sub>) annual report on the implementation of NRIS.

<sup>52</sup> The 2018 documentary *I am Fatmira*, filmed by the Roma activist Fatmira Dajlani and produced by the UNDP gives an interesting insight into the reality of Roma women (Cirillo, 2018<sub>[118]</sub>).

<sup>53</sup> See the organisation's website: <https://www.travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/New-Government-changes-to-Planning-Policy-for-Traveller-sites-September-20151.pdf>.

<sup>54</sup> See: [http://www.eurocities.eu/eurocities/working\\_groups/Roma-inclusion-working-group&tpl=home](http://www.eurocities.eu/eurocities/working_groups/Roma-inclusion-working-group&tpl=home).

<sup>55</sup> See: <http://kosint2020.net/en/news-and-events/samiti-i-poznanit-deklarata-per-integrimin-e-romeve-ne-procesin-e-zgjerimit-ne-be-e-ballkanit-perendimor/>.

<sup>56</sup> See: <https://www.learningforwellbeing.org/activity/act2gether/>.

<sup>57</sup> See: <http://www.isotis.org/blog/2019/06/01/new-isotis-report-childrens-views-on-inclusion-at-school/>.

<sup>58</sup> See Minority Rights Group International's website: <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/gypsies/>.

<sup>59</sup> See for instance the city's 2010 Interculturality Plan, available at: <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretsiversitat/sites/default/files/pdf%20pla%20ang.pdf>.

<sup>60</sup> The EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies will end in 2020 and a new initiative is being prepared that focuses on Roma equality and inclusion. In preparation for the next Framework, several experts and Roma organisations have been meeting and preparing reports. See: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/preparing-post-2020-initiative-roma-equality-and-inclusion\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/preparing-post-2020-initiative-roma-equality-and-inclusion_en).

<sup>61</sup> See: <https://www.acm.gov.pt/-/programa-de-bolsas-roma-educa-candidaturas-abertas-ate-30-de-setembro>.

<sup>62</sup> See: <https://www.education.gouv.fr/cid133192/le-numerique-au-service-de-l-ecole-de-la-confiance.html&xtmc=plateformenumecuterique&xtnp=1&xtr=1>.

<sup>63</sup> See: <https://resorption-bidonvilles.beta.gouv.fr/#/landing#contexte>. [*The information about the platform project comes from a meeting with Jean-Paul Bachelot, consultant on education and children's rights at the DIHAL (Délégation Interministérielle à l'Hébergement et l'accès au logement); Hélène Demesy, chargée de scolarisation EANA en CASNAV et enseignante de lettres; et Isabelle Mary, chargée d'étude à la Dgesco et chargée du dossier enfants du voyage au CNED*]

<sup>64</sup> A digital platform, *Cap École Inclusive*, aimed to share practices and support materials related to inclusive education already exists, see: <https://www.reseau-canope.fr/cap-ecole-inclusive>.