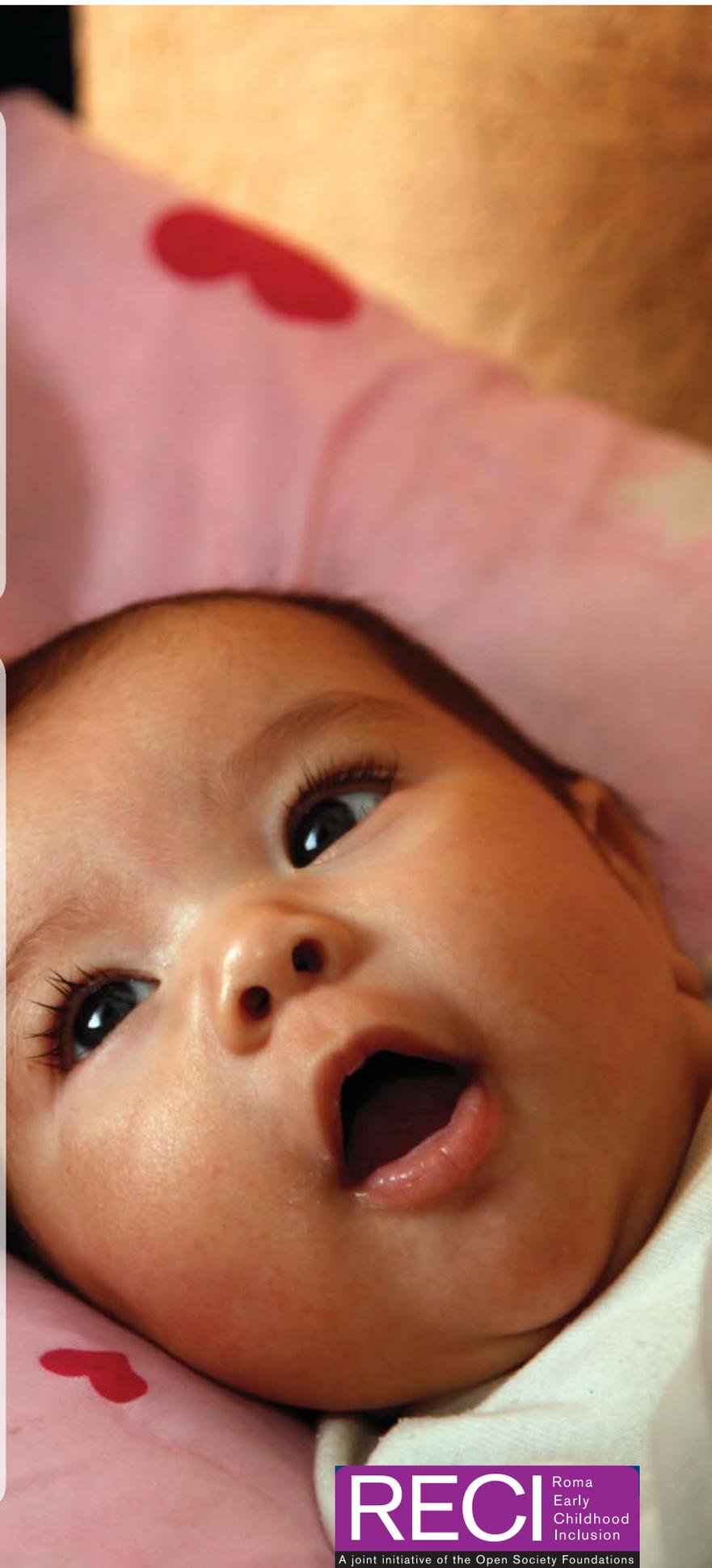


# Roma Early Childhood Inclusion+

Czech Republic Report





# **Roma Early Childhood Inclusion+**

Special Report on Roma Inclusion  
in Early Childhood Education and Care

Czech Republic

November 2015



Authors

**Arthur Ivatts**

**Karel Čada**

**Lenka Felcmanová**

**David Greger**

**Jana Straková**

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For further information, please contact:

Iliana Sarafian | Open Society Foundations | [iliana.sarafian@opensocietyfoundations.org](mailto:iliana.sarafian@opensocietyfoundations.org)

Szilvia Pallaghy | Roma Education Fund | [szpallaghy@romaeducationfund.org](mailto:szpallaghy@romaeducationfund.org)

Deepa Grover | UNICEF | [degrover@unicef.org](mailto:degrover@unicef.org)

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## The Sponsoring Agencies

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**UNICEF** (the United Nations Children’s Fund) has been working in the Central and Eastern Europe region and the Commonwealth of Independent States since the 1990s, with the objective of protecting and promoting the rights of children, especially those from the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. UNICEF is a member of the Steering Committee of the *Decade of Roma Inclusion*. UNICEF is engaged in developing systematic and coherent engagement with Roma issues through the key entry points of early childhood development and basic education. UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children’s rights, to help meet their basic needs, and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children’s rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children. UNICEF insists that the survival, protection, and development of children are universal development imperatives that are integral to human progress. UNICEF mobilizes political will and material resources to help countries, particularly developing countries, ensure a “first call for children” and to build their capacity to

form appropriate policies and deliver services for children and their families. UNICEF is committed to ensuring special protection for the most disadvantaged children—victims of war, disasters, extreme poverty, all forms of violence and exploitation, and those with disabilities.

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## A Note on Terminology

The text of this Special Report on Roma Inclusion in Early Childhood Education and Care seeks to comply with the European Commission and the Council of Europe’s adopted usage of the term “Roma.” The term “Roma” in this report, in common with the inherent definitions used widely in publications by the Council of Europe, the European Commission, and other international institutions, refers to a diverse community of related groups that would include, but not be limited to, Roma, Sinti, Manouche, Gitano, Resande, Romer, Romanlar, Domlar, Lomlar, Kaale, Egyptians, Ashkali, Tattare, Gypsies, Scottish Travellers, Mandopolini, Ghurbeti, Beyash (Bajaši, Rudari/Ludari), Jevgjit, and many others that are understood to be part of the wider Roma populations across Europe and beyond. By using the term “Roma” it is understood that the Sponsoring Agencies and the authors intend no disrespect to individual communities. Readers should note that the usage of the term is not intended in any way to deny or erode the diversity that exists across Roma and Traveller groups. It is to be noted that a significant and growing Roma middle class exists, which participates fully and with dignity as citizens in the countries and societies in which they live, including the Czech Republic, without sacrificing their ethnic and cultural identity.

## Glossary of Terms

**Attendance:** The routine daily appearance and full participation of a child for each scheduled kindergarten or school day.

**Conventions:** A Convention is an international agreement between countries. These are usually developed by the United Nations or other international organizations. Governments that ratify Conventions are obliged to incorporate them into their own laws and to make sure that these laws are applied and respected.

**Crèches:** The formal provision of professional care, including food, shelter, stimulation, play, and development, for young children under the age of 3.

**Early childhood education and care:** Educational provision and child/family care and support for children from birth through age 8.

**Early childhood:** Prenatal period through to 8 years of age, which in practice includes the first years of formal education.

**Educational inclusion:** The education of all children together with no organizational arrangements that would separate children on grounds of gender, class, age, ethnicity, ability, disability, language, religion, or sexual orientation.

**Enrolment:** The administrative process of placing a child officially on the register of an educational institution.

**Ethnic disaggregation:** The capacity of data to be collected, formulated, and presented in a way that will show data differences in relation to children's/people's ethnic differences.

**Kindergarten/school capacity:** The formal number of designated child/pupil places.

**Kindergartens:** Institutional preschool provision of professional education for young children generally between the ages of 3 and 6, although in some cases children both younger and older are to be found in kindergarten.

**Lower secondary school:** Institutional provision of professional education for children between the ages of 12 and 15.

**Mainstream basic school:** Institutional provision of professional education for children between the ages of 6 and 11.

**Postponement:** Delay in starting formal compulsory education at the age of 6 years.

**Practical basic school:** Institutional provision of professional education for children with special educational needs between the ages of 6 and 15.

**Prejudice-based discrimination:** The exercise of power and prejudice in a way that discriminates against a person or group of people on grounds of a difference such as gender, ethnicity, age, class, ability, disability, language, religion, or sexual orientation.

**Pre-primary preparatory year:** The provision of formal education for children between the ages of 5 and 6 in preparation for formal compulsory education.

**Race hatred:** Intense dislike of another person or group of people on grounds of their race and/or ethnicity.

**Racist bullying:** The exercise of abusive power intended deliberately to be hurtful and/or damaging, by an individual or group of individuals against another individual or group of individuals, on the grounds of ethnic and/or racial differences; victims are often defenceless in a process that may be frequently repeated.

**Social exclusion:** A process by which an individual or group of people is/are denied access to the same rights and entitlements in a society as members of the majority population.

**Socially excluded locality:** A neglected residential area where a majority of residents suffer social exclusion and poverty.

**Socio-economic background:** The status of a person, family, or group of people in terms of their social class and level of income.

**Special educational need:** An assessed and/or experienced learning difficulty that might need additional support.

## List of Abbreviations

<b>CAHROM</b>	Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues
<b>CSI</b>	Czech Schools Inspectorate
<b>CZK</b>	Czech Crown
<b>ECEC</b>	Early Childhood Education and Care
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organization
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>RECI</b>	Roma Early Childhood Inclusion
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Contextual Introduction

- This report on the early childhood education and care (ECEC) of young Roma children in the Czech Republic departs somewhat in its approach from previous Roma Early Childhood Inclusion (RECI+) Studies and Reports. The preparation of this report was led by the Open Society Foundations. The RECI initiative, which is ongoing, is a joint venture of three Sponsoring Agencies, namely: the Open Society Foundations Early Childhood Program, the Roma Education Fund, and UNICEF.
- The principle reasons for a Special Report on Roma Inclusion in Early Childhood Education and Care at this stage of events, and not a full RECI+ Research Study and Report, include: the critical importance of ECEC for all children, particularly those from marginalized and economically disadvantaged backgrounds;<sup>1</sup> the pressing need for a timely contribution to the ongoing legislative actions and important national debates surrounding Roma education and inclusion in the Czech Republic; and to assist and support the government and public authorities, and educational decision makers and practitioners tasked with fulfilling their responsibilities in a context of critical international scrutiny.
- The need for a timely contribution is well illustrated within the recent European Commission's evaluation of the Czech Republic's National Roma Integration Strategy. The assessment stresses this particular need and priority by stating, "Ensuring access to, and promoting participation of Roma children in quality inclusive preschool education needs to be reinforced" (European Commission 2014a). Such sentiments were also reflected in a 2012 report by the Czech Ombudsman, which cited "the lack of preschool education" as one reason for the failure of Roma children to do well in elementary school (Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues [CAHROM] 2015).<sup>2</sup>

1 The Council of the European Union (2013) recommends, "Increasing the access to, and quality of, early childhood education and care, including targeted support, as necessary" (p. 6).

2 The ECEC system in the Czech Republic comprises two main structures. Formal Settings for children under 3 years of age (sometimes, but not exclusively, crèches) fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Industry and Trade and operate under the Trade Licensing Act and general legal regulations. These settings are normally centre-based but a small number of home-based settings exist. Kindergartens, which fall under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, are intended for children aged between 3 and 6. In addition to kindergartens, the Trade Licensing Act also provides the legal basis for the establishment of centre-based (and possibly home-based) facilities for children over 3 years, but the latter facilities are not publicly subsidised and have not yet been developed to any significant degree. From age 5 children are legally entitled to free pre-primary preparatory education. Compulsory primary education starts at age 6. However, despite entitlements to one year of preschool education, the associated costs (e.g. meals, transport, and equipment) frequently present a serious hindrance for the many families suffering poverty and social exclusion.

## Inequalities in ECEC in the Czech Republic for Young Roma Children

- In any international comparison, the Czech Republic exhibits a relatively high level of educational inequality. The main equity-related policy challenges in the Czech Republic relate to the inadequate supply of ECEC provision, the delayed start of mainstream schooling, and a rigidly differentiated education system in which certain children, particularly Roma and children with disabilities, are structurally excluded from mainstream educational opportunities.
- Such structural exclusion usually takes the form of separate schools or sometimes differentiated classes attached to mainstream schools. Prior to the Education Act of 2004, these institutions were previously defined as “special schools” or classes. The Act stipulated that these schools were to be renamed “practical basic schools.”
- The Czech Republic exhibits one of the lowest participation rates in child care under 3 years among European Union (EU) countries, and the situation has not changed in the last decade (Lindenboom and Buiskool, 2013).
- There is a significant shortfall in kindergarten capacity in the Czech Republic. High national demand for kindergarten places in the Czech Republic is illustrated by the number of applications for kindergarten places outnumbering available places by two to one. It is estimated that the shortfall in kindergarten places is in the region of 27,000 (Hůle, 2015).
- The lack of kindergarten capacity to meet the national need for child places is seriously problematic for many Roma parents and particularly those living in isolated rural areas where kindergarten provision is known to be weak or non-existent.
- Practical (previously special) basic schools can establish pre-primary classes and pupils who complete their pre-primary preparatory education year in such schools usually continue in non-mainstream practical basic schools, though the original purpose of preparatory classes was to prepare children for mainstream basic schooling. This is a further example of inequality in the education system with potentially damaging impacts on the schooling and wellbeing of young Roma children.
- Within the Czech Republic’s education system it is very difficult to examine educational data that affords ethnic disaggregation. This makes it challenging to accurately measure and evaluate the effectiveness of policy, provision, and practice initiatives aimed at securing improvements in equal access, regular attendance, and satisfactory attainment of Czech Roma children and other ethnic minorities.
- There is no systematic monitoring of the participation rates of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in kindergartens in the Czech Republic.<sup>3</sup> A study of the educational progress of Czech Roma children states that approximately 48 percent of Roma children participate in some form of one-year pre-primary preparatory education (in kindergartens or preparatory classes established for children from disadvantaged backgrounds in mainstream basic schools), compared to 90 percent of the majority population; this proportion has not changed much over the last decade (Gabal Analysis and Consulting 2009).

3 Kindergartens are not obliged to maintain records on children with socio-economic disadvantage. Only children with disabilities and disadvantages are identified in yearly returns. While mainstream basic schools are supposed to maintain records for children who are socio-economically disadvantaged, there is no methodology for their identification; identification is usually based on the arbitrary judgement of teachers.

- Mainstream basic schools have autonomous authority over enrolment procedures and can exercise assessments on the readiness and suitability of a child for admission. If there are concerns about a child's capacity to cope with the demands of learning and to meet the behavioral (level of maturity) expectations, enrolment can be deferred with a recommended referral to a psychological guidance center. Assessments for school readiness are not standardised in the Czech Republic and the country has one of the highest rates of school enrolment postponement in Europe (15 percent).<sup>4</sup>
- For socially disadvantaged children, pre-primary preparatory classes in mainstream basic schools (and as previously mentioned, practical basic schools), may be established for the year before they should start compulsory schooling at 6 years of age. One academic analysis showed that, in the vicinity of "socially excluded areas" where a significant proportion of Roma live, pre-primary preparatory classes are established outside the mainstream basic schools twice as often as they are within the mainstream (Gabal Analysis and Consulting 2009).
- A sizable proportion of Roma families live in areas defined as "socially excluded localities." The number of residents in such areas is estimated to be in the region of 95,000 to 115,000, and it is further estimated that Roma families make up 87 percent of the population in these impoverished places (Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues [CAHROM] 2015, 5).
- Since 1989, and the introduction of a market economy, the number of Roma experiencing unemployment has risen dramatically, with estimates ranging between 65 percent and 90 percent depending on the particular locality.
- It is noted that 3.7 percent of pupils in the Czech Republic complete their compulsory education outside mainstream education in practical basic (previously special) schools and classes. Although this percentage has been declining in recent years, the Czech Republic has the European Union's third highest number of children defined with special educational needs and educated outside mainstream basic schools.
- The unenviable circumstances thus described for many young Roma children living in socially excluded localities are exacerbated somewhat by the ever present threats of racially motivated violence and frequent expressions of organized race hatred together with prejudice-based discrimination on the part of some public services, including some kindergartens and schools (Amnesty International 2015).
- Data collected for the 2011 regional Roma survey organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank, and European Commission, highlighted significant differences between Roma and non-Roma children in their participation in preschool institutions (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and UNDP 2012).<sup>5</sup> This finding resonates with the Gabal Analysis and Consulting

4 In this context, a school or a class outside of the mainstream is either a special or practical school or similar such (possibly termed "zero") class within a mainstream basic primary school.

5 In addition to the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Greece, Poland, Estonia, Portugal, and Italy participated in the survey. Data collection for the Czech Republic was conducted by Median. The data correspond to the 2012 UNDP/World Bank survey "Roma Education in Comparative Perspective" finding that 28 percent of Roma children aged 3 to 5 in the Czech Republic were attending kindergarten compared to 65 percent of their non-Roma peers; 34 percent of age 6 Roma children were found to not attend any kind of institutional education.

(2010) research previously mentioned in terms of similar disparities between Roma and non-Roma participation rates in the pre-primary preparatory year; among the sample, 28 percent of Roma children and 65 percent of non-Roma children aged 3 to 6 years were enrolled in a preschool institution (Gabal Analysis and Consulting 2010).

- The 2011 regional Roma survey revealed that 33 percent of Roma children living in urban locations were enrolled in kindergartens; whereas, in rural areas only 17 percent were enrolled. People forced to live in socially excluded localities tend to move to remote villages with little functional and developed infrastructure, including quality preschool opportunities; as a result, social exclusion in the Czech Republic ceases to have its dominant urban character (Office of the Czech Government 2012).

## Preschool Education and Roma

- This report also wishes to draw attention to the fact that some pre-primary preparatory classes (sometimes called “zero classes”) are organized in mainstream basic schools (for children who have reached age 6) on the grounds that the school is heavily oversubscribed and there are insufficient places for 6-year-olds in the Grade 1 class or classes. Despite a child’s actual enrolment at age six—or, more frequently, unsuccessful enrolment (in the case of recommended postponement) in a mainstream basic school—these so-called pre-primary preparatory classes can become part of a structural inequality when they are misused in a discriminatory way to segregate classes for Roma children who may have already completed the pre-primary preparatory year in kindergarten. The motivation for the establishment of such classes in mainstream basic schools is said to relate to competition for pupils between schools in a national context of declining pupil numbers and as a way of ensuring the segregation of Roma pupils. Some parents are given misinformation by some mainstream basic schools in this connection. Such policies delay Roma pupils’ start with their non-Roma peers, which may disadvantage them for the rest of their lives.
- For these reasons, a disproportionate number of young Roma children end up in practical (previously special) basic schools or similar special classes in mainstream basic schools. These realities have led to widespread international critical commentary (Amnesty International 2015).
- This aspect of the education system in the Czech Republic operates against the best interests of all young children and profoundly so for those from disadvantaged backgrounds and particularly Roma children.
- The view that many Roma children are “better off in practical basic schools” is reported to remain widespread among teachers. Some teachers label Roma pupils and parents as lacking discipline and failing to value education (Amnesty International 2015, 7 and 19). A study in 2008 confirmed that Czech teachers were almost three times more likely to recommend that a Roma child go to a practical school than a non-Roma child in the very same situation (Svoboda and Morvayová 2008).
- Practical basic schools are also often viewed as a better option by some Roma parents and children who have had first-hand negative experiences in mainstream basic schools. Roma parents report that mainstream basic schools are neither willing nor able to prevent the racist bullying of their children (Svoboda and Morvayová 2008; Amnesty International 2015).

- The Czech Schools Inspectorate (CSI) reported in 2010 that 35 percent of Roma pupils were classified as “mentally disabled”<sup>6</sup> and went on to describe this fact as discriminatory given that Roma only make up 2.37 percent of the Czech Republic’s population. In 2015 the CSI reported that 32 percent of Roma pupils were studying under educational programs for pupils with “mild mental disabilities.” Given that the percentage of children with special educational needs of any given population cohort who might need separate provision should be in the range of 2 to 3 percent, this finding is particularly stark.
- A report issued by the European Commission in 2014 states that the Czech Republic has made no tangible progress in dismantling the segregation of Roma children in schools with substandard education, finding that between 30 and 40 percent of Roma children are in such institutions, where non-Roma pupils only represent 2 percent of these segregated pupil cohorts (Farkas 2014, 18).

## Conclusions and Recommendations

ECEC education in the Czech Republic, as elsewhere, has typically had low status within the field of education. The provision of ECEC, or lack of it, creates numerous barriers to access, including prejudice and discrimination, particularly for young children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, including Roma families. In light of the research findings described within this Special Report on Roma Inclusion in Early Childhood Education and Care, the Government of the Czech Republic (led by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and other relevant Ministries and agencies) is invited to give serious consideration to the following recommendations.

The re-issuing of an affirmative statement on the Government’s commitment to ECEC in the Czech Republic for all its citizens, and the initiative of a new national priority to bring informed coordination and reality to a comprehensive early childhood orientated reform program, and for this commitment to be reflected, fortified, and implemented by the establishment of a standing National Preschool (ECEC, age range 0 to 8 years) Working Group to be set up and Chaired by the Minister of Education.

Notwithstanding the recommendations, policy proposals, and actions stemming from the timely establishment of a National Preschool (ECEC) Working Group, it is further recommended that reforms include:

1. Continued national debates surrounding an agreed professional consensus on the definition and understanding of “inclusive education” and “pupils with special educational needs,” and for these to be compatible with international best practices and expectations and enshrine equal dignity, respect, and treatment for all children irrespective of their diversity of need, background, or ethnic heritage.
2. A Government commitment, based on an objective feasibility study and as a prioritised part of a national ECEC strategy, to increase support to families of young Roma children, including, but not limited to, increased access to crèches, together with a rapid and adequate expansion of kindergartens for ages 2/3 to 6; prioritised within a set timeframe.
- 6 As before, please note that the authors present this phrase and “mild mental disabilities” in quotation marks given that they are seen, probably, as a traditional and literal translation from earlier legislation. Such phrasing is, however, considered extremely offensive to many European Citizens and demeaning to the child—and thus not in keeping with modern understandings and terminology surrounding children with special educational needs, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

3. A significant obligatory element for all initial pre-school and basic school teacher training courses in all colleges and universities, as well as for in-service training for serving teachers and support/assistant staff, which focuses specifically on the theory and practice of inclusive education.
4. Recruitment and training by the CSI of sufficient, well qualified, and experienced Roma teachers, as well as a significant number of school directors (from kindergartens, basic primary, basic practical/special, basic lower secondary, and upper secondary schools) with a proven and verified record of successful inclusive practice. The welcome practice of visiting schools with Roma experts should be continued and extended.
5. The policy on the appointment of appropriately trained Roma teachers, mediators, and teacher assistants should be strengthened and scaled-up nationally.
6. All necessary legislative, legal, or administrative actions taken by the appropriate authorities within central government to ensure that any amendments to the preschool legal context take due cognisance of the important national debate (at the time of writing) concerning the compulsory preschool year. Irrespective of the outcomes of this debate and subsequent government decisions, it is strongly recommended that national policy developments secure for all children a universal entitlement to quality, equitable, and inclusive ECEC services, irrespective of their needs, socio-economic backgrounds, or ethnic heritage.
7. All necessary legislative, legal, or administrative actions taken by the appropriate authorities within central government to ensure that **within one year** the pre-primary preparatory year (whether compulsory or an entitlement) is implemented **only** within kindergartens and mainstream basic schools.
8. All necessary legislative, legal, or administrative actions taken by the appropriate authorities within central government and local (municipalities, district, and/or regional) education authorities to ensure that no school or class in any kindergarten, mainstream basic primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, or practical basic school shall plan or organize itself in any ways that result in ethnically segregated schools, classes, or groups of pupils/students within classes or other contexts (e.g. school assemblies, sports teams, etc.).
9. All necessary legislative, legal, or administrative actions taken by the appropriate authorities within central government to encourage more local authorities and schools to adopt enrolment procedures exploiting new technologies that aid in the elimination of bias in the selection of pupils.
10. All necessary legislative, legal, or administrative actions by the appropriate authorities within central government to ensure—through encouragement, support, appropriate funding streams and, if required, central direction—that municipalities, districts, and/or regional education authorities with legitimate statutory duties in regard to kindergarten and school provision are advised to devise strategic policies to eliminate ethnic segregation and educational discrimination in their territory and sphere of influence.
11. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports—in close cooperation with the Czech Statistical Office, other relevant Ministries (e.g. Health, Housing, Employment, Justice, etc.), public service providers, the Czech Schools Inspectorate, and relevant legally competent authorities—would be well advised to establish a national policy of data collection reliant upon routine mechanisms and standard indicators

for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of all public service provision, particularly the operation and practice of educational institutions and all public service provision related to legislatively approved educational reforms.

12. All necessary legal or administrative actions taken by the appropriate authorities within central government, particularly the Ministry of Justice, to ensure that national, local, and social media comply with national and international laws on anti-discrimination, xenophobia, and hate-speech, and that infringements will be pursued and dealt with in strict accordance with the law (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, October 2015).

A number of these recommendations have important addenda, which are presented in *Chapter 3*.



# INTRODUCTION

This Special Report on Roma Inclusion in Early Childhood Education and Care was commissioned by the Sponsoring Agencies in late 2014. A contract was awarded to the Institute of Research and Development of Education at Charles University in Prague. The report is intended to aid the appropriate authorities in ensuring for all Roma children the development of unhindered, unsegregated, and equal access to quality ECEC services and provision. The growth of early childhood services in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern European countries provides a unique opportunity to promote research-based advocacy within processes of democratic consultation and through securing collaboration among key state institutions, legally competent authorities, majority populations, and minority communities, including Roma.

The need for the RECI+ Studies and Reports stems from the convergence of different rationales. First is the difficult situation of Roma populations and their children in the Central, Eastern, and South Eastern European countries that has been increasingly researched and documented during the last decade by many international organizations and continues to be at the top of the human rights and political agendas of inter-governmental organizations, including the European Commission of the European Union and the Council of Europe. Secondly, the growing commitment of national Roma populations and their national governments to address the lack of progress in this situation.<sup>7</sup> And thirdly, an understanding that the early childhood period, from birth to 6 years old, and birth to 3 in particular, is the foundation not only of individual health, wellbeing, and educational attainment, but also of later success in lifelong learning and employment.

The Sponsoring Agencies and the authors of this report are fully cognisant of the significant strides being taken as well as the challenges being faced by the Government of the Czech Republic and other legally competent authorities to introduce inclusive education and, in so doing, improve the educational fortunes of all children—particularly Roma children. The difficulties inherent in this process are shared by other Member States of the European Union, especially the accession countries of 2004 and 2007.

International evidence confirms the socio-economic plight of a majority of Roma in the Czech Republic (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and UNDP 2012, 25). The unfavourable socio-economic situation of Czech Roma is largely caused by deep-

7 As evidenced by wide participation in the *Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015* and willing compliance with the European Commission's request for the development and implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies 2012–2020.

rooted social problems linked to economic exclusion and marginalisation, poverty and high rates of unemployment, low educational attainment, inadequate housing and living environments, poor health conditions, and prejudice and discrimination towards them on a broad basis.

Negative perceptions of Czech Roma remain part of daily opinions among the majority of the Czech population, often focused on the perceived lifestyle and child rearing practices of Roma families. Research evidence confirms that ethnic prejudices and attitudes exist in Czech society towards minorities to a large extent, particularly towards the Roma population. According to STEM Research Agency (2014), only 11 percent of non-Roma Czech citizens would be happy with Roma neighbours. Such widespread attitudes seem to have changed little over the last two decades and will have a strong negative impact on preschool education policy, provision, and practice for this particular group of vulnerable children and their families (STEM Research Agency 2014). A majority of Czech Roma feel that they are negatively perceived by members of the majority society and socially discriminated against as a consequence (STEM Research Agency 2014).<sup>8</sup> In the 2009 European Union “Minorities and Discrimination Survey,” Czech Republic Roma respondents reported the highest levels of overall discrimination (64 percent) (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2009).

## Quality Preschool Education is Particularly Beneficial for Roma Children

Comparative analysis of the educational pathways of Roma and non-Roma pupils has shown that enrolment and regular attendance in kindergartens positively affects the achievement of socially excluded children (Gabal Analysis and Consulting 2010). Starting at good quality kindergartens is a tangible compensation for children from families suffering abject poverty and social stress. A 2013 European Union report commented, “Children growing up in poverty or social exclusion are less likely than their better-off peers to do well in school, enjoy good health and realize their full potential in later life” (p. 1). Having identified poverty reduction and social inclusion as critical factors in improving life chances, a 2013 Council of the European Union report recommended “supporting Roma at all stages of their lives, starting as early as possible and systematically dealing with the risks they face, including by investing in good-quality inclusive early childhood education and care” (p. 9).

Research indicates that the advantages of preschool education have a far longer lasting and positive impact on children’s life chances if they are involved in quality full time preschool education from the age of 3 years.<sup>9</sup>

There is thus a growing body of robust international evidence demonstrating the economic and social importance of investment in early childhood development (World Bank 2010). This Special Report on Roma Inclusion in Early Childhood Education and Care is thus based on recent research material that has highlighted the circumstances and needs of young Roma children in the Czech Republic.

8 Of the Roma surveyed in 2011, 60 percent had experienced discriminatory treatment because of their ethnic origin in the 12 months preceding the survey (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and UNDP 2012, 27).  
9 The principal arguments have been made by Heckman and Masterov 2004; see also Brooks-Gunn 2003.

## Methodology

Unlike the previous RECI+ Studies and Reports, the methodology adopted by the research team has focused on an analysis of existing research material and the team's expert knowledge and experience in the field of inclusive education, rather than the additional and routine RECI+ design and implementation of fieldwork research. Given this approach, the report relies heavily, but not exclusively, on quantitative data.

It is to be noted that there is a considerable mismatch between the official census data on the number of Czech Roma in the Czech Republic and the unofficial estimates made by reputable international organizations. The national census in 2011 revealed 13,150 people who voluntarily described themselves as Roma.<sup>10</sup> There is a general recognition, however, that this figure is seriously inaccurate, especially given that 40,370 persons in the same 2011 census listed Romani as their first language.<sup>11</sup> It is also interesting to note that when Roma were first designated as a census category in 1991, 114,116 Roma elected for this ethnic self-ascribed status (Brearley 1996). Estimates on the number of Czech Roma range widely, with the European Roma Rights Centre claiming it to be between 150,000 and 350,000.

A further complication hindering more accurate population data is that many informed observers note that significant numbers of Czech Roma have migrated to other countries since 2004, including many seeking asylum in Canada. The Council of Europe uses an estimate of 250,000 for the number of Roma in the Czech Republic (approximately 2.37 percent of the country's total population) and this will be accepted for the purposes of this report.<sup>12</sup> In terms of the Roma age profile, it is known that 30 percent of Roma are under the age of 15 (the national average is 15 percent) and that only 5 percent are over the age of 60 (in comparison to the majority population average of 21 percent).

## Structure of the Report

This report consists of three main chapters. The first chapter enumerates all the mechanisms contributing to the development of educational inequalities in the Czech Republic's education system, which are summarized to provide a context for the focus of this report—the ECEC of Roma children. It highlights the lack of ECEC provision for children under the age of 3 years (in terms of insufficient professional support to young Roma children, including that provided in some circumstances by crèches),<sup>13</sup> problems related to insufficient kindergarten<sup>14</sup> capacity (available child places), and low participation of Roma children in ECEC programs overall. This chapter also deals with the transition

10 The national population was re-coded in 2011 as 10,562,214.

11 Many Roma in the Czech Republic speak the Romani language (Rromani-chib, Romanës). Although some Roma are bilingual, many do not have a good command of standard Czech (or Slovakian) due to exclusion from education and segregation from the majority population. Dialect variants are said to include northern central Romani and Lovari. Romani belongs to the Indo-Aryan group of the Indo-European language family and is related to Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, and other Indian languages.

12 As stated in the text, the percentage of Roma as a proportion of the population in total in the Czech Republic is estimated to be between 1.4 percent and 2.8 percent (Amnesty International 2015). The figure of 2.37 percent is accepted as reasonable and sound for the purposes of this report.

13 In this report, the term "crèches" suggest provision of care for children under the age of 3 years; crèches are the most common form of institutional provision for the Roma in this study. It is to be noted, however, that crèches are only one form of support for working parents in the Czech Republic and provision is very limited on the ground.

14 The term "kindergarten" is used to describe formal educational provision for children between 3 and 6 years of age according to the National Curricula Framework Educational Program for pre-primary education, though kindergartens are also often attended by children one year younger and/or one year older.

from preschool settings to primary education, and the placement of Roma children into schools with reduced curricula. All this has to be understood in the context of a highly diversified education system that “sorts” children into different educational pathways early in life, starting as early as Grade 1 in primary school. Another problem discussed is the large proportion of postponed primary school enrolments.<sup>15</sup> The first chapter is based on statistical data and data from the Czech Longitudinal Study of Education, which studied educational transition in compulsory education.<sup>16</sup> These are complemented by available data from other available research surveys.

The second chapter analyzes the level of inequalities in ECEC provision for Roma children. It is the main analytic chapter of the report and describes the participation of Roma children in kindergartens and how this impacts their successful enrolment into primary education. The analysis is based on: Czech data collected for the 2011 regional Roma survey organized by the UNDP, World Bank, and European Commission (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and UNDP 2012); research into the educational pathways of Roma pupils (Gabal Analysis and Consulting 2010); group interviews with Roma parents (Nová škola 2011); and regional situational analyses produced by the Office of the Czech Government Demographic Information Center (2011).<sup>17</sup>

In comparison with their non-Roma peers, Roma children’s enrolment in preschool education is markedly less frequent. The key causal issues identified by the analysis include economic reasons, the different parental priorities of socially excluded families in comparison with other more affluent groups in society, and direct and indirect discriminatory barriers in preschool institutions. However, as stated above, it is well known that the beneficial influence of preschool education is more significant for marginalized and materially deprived Roma children than for their non-Roma counterparts.

The third chapter draws conclusions and lists a number of key recommendations, some with addenda.

15 In the Czech Republic approximately 20 percent of children enter school one year later than the expected age.

16 Research carried out by the authors of this report between 2011 and 2015 with a grant funded by the Czech National Science Foundation.

17 See also Dvořáková, Klusáčková, and Klusáček 2012; SPOT 2013.

# CHAPTER 1.

## Inequalities in ECEC in the Czech Republic for Young Roma Children

### 1.1 Structural Inequalities for Roma Children

- 1.1.1 In any international comparison, the Czech Republic exhibits a relatively high level of educational inequality. The main equity-related policy challenges in the Czech Republic relate to the inadequate supply of early years provision, the delayed start of mainstream schooling, and a rigidly differentiated education system in which certain children, particularly Roma, are structurally excluded from mainstream educational opportunities.
- 1.1.2 Within the system of basic schools,<sup>18</sup> there are regular mainstream basic schools (primary for ages 6 to 11, and lower secondary for ages 12 to 15), basic schools and classrooms for gifted pupils, and also “practical” basic schools where teaching is conducted according to a reduced curriculum. High differentiation also occurs at the upper secondary level. These challenges present particular difficulties for Roma children, as well as for non-Roma children from families suffering socio-economic deprivation.

### 1.2 Lack of Public Childcare Provision for Children Younger than 3 Years

- 1.2.1 The Czech Republic exhibits one of the lowest participation rates in childcare for children under 3 years among EU countries (less than 3 percent, the second lowest participation rate after Poland), and the situation has not changed in the last decade (Lindenboom and Buiskool 2013). According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs,<sup>19</sup> one indicator of the shortfall in care and support to families with very young children was that there were only 46 crèches providing public care for children younger than 3 in 2010; these crèches were attended by 0.5 percent of the relevant age group.<sup>20</sup> Care of children under 3 is mainly organized on a private business basis, though some kindergartens (intended

18 In the Czech Republic, compulsory education lasts nine years (6 to 15 years of age, ISCED 1+2 educational levels) and is provided by basic schools divided into two stages (five years of primary education and four years of lower secondary education). Both stages work under the same management. Starting with the second stage, there is the possibility of continued compulsory schooling in secondary general schools: in eight-year secondary general programs after the 5th year, or in six-year secondary general programs or conservatoires after the 7th year. Admission is based on an entrance examination.

19 [www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/13744/78294-2012.pdf](http://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/13744/78294-2012.pdf)

20 Before 1989 crèches were the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and were widely used.

for children older than 3 years) also accept slightly younger children (see Table 1).<sup>21</sup> This situation denies access to high quality ECEC to those families most in need, and it also strongly disadvantages young mothers in the labor market (Straková and Veselý 2013).

Table 1. Proportion of children attending kindergartens since 2005/2006

Age	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
< 3 years	25.4%	23.0%	23.0%	24.8%	26.7%	27.4%	25.9%	26.7%	30.3%
3 years old	74.6%	76.6%	75.3%	76.5%	76.1%	75.6%	75.3%	75.2%	77.2%
4 years old	90.0%	90.7%	90.9%	89.4%	88.3%	86.7%	84.4%	86.9%	87.4%
5 years old	95.8%	93.7%	93.2%	92.8%	91.4%	91.2%	89.1%	88.2%	90.4%
6 years old	22.7%	22.3%	21.6%	21.0%	20.6%	20.5%	20.7%	18.0%	17.1%
> 6 years	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.3%	0.4%

Source: Czech Statistical Yearbook of Education 2013/2014. <http://toiler.uiv.cz/rocenka/rocenka.asp>

## 1.3 Insufficient Kindergarten Capacity

1.3.1 Table 1 shows a decline in participation in pre-primary education in recent years. The Czech Republic faces a population decline and the decline in the child population is estimated to be between 17 and 22 percent (European Commission 2014b, 25–26). In the last few years, however, the decline has been partially and temporarily balanced by a wave of births to parents born in the late 1970s and early 1980s (strong population years). As a result, there is currently a shortage of available child places in kindergartens.<sup>22</sup> In the 2013/2014 academic year, 60,281 applications for a child kindergarten placement were rejected (Hůle 2015).<sup>23</sup> The data is deceptive, though, as the number of rejected applications is not equal to the number of rejected children. This is because many parents often apply to more than one kindergarten to increase their chance of successful enrolment. This practice is particularly prevalent in the major cities (Prague and Brno). Analysts estimate the number of missing available child places to be in the region of 27,000 (Hůle 2015).

1.3.2 Although children in their last year of kindergarten (age 5 or 6)<sup>24</sup> have a legal right to attend kindergarten free of charge, the attendance of 5-year-olds has been declining significantly. One reason is that there are no clear guidelines for acceptance or rejection by kindergartens in response to child place applications. In 2011, the Czech Ombudsman noted: “The criteria guiding the entrance procedure to kindergarten should concern themselves with the child and not a judgement about the parents” (Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues [CAHROM] 2015). This statement was a response to the fact that most kindergartens prioritized the children of employed parents and sometimes even

21 In the view of the Sponsoring Agencies, crèches are an important form of provision for marginalised young families, especially if parents (mothers especially) are engaged in the labor market. Crèches can thus provide helpful services to working parents, but crèches are only one among a number of services to which families with young children should have access.

22 The statistics relate to all public, private, and denominational kindergartens in the school register administered by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Kindergartens included in the register should follow the national curriculum and comply with the rules set for kindergartens. They are regularly evaluated by the Czech Schools Inspectorate. Municipalities are the organizing bodies of public kindergartens.

23 In 2012/13 the rejected applications numbered 58,938.

24 In the Czech Republic, children are supposed to start compulsory education at age 6. The last possible kindergarten year is the school year in which a child reaches 6 years of age.

parents working for the government; there was no evidence, however, linking parents' educational backgrounds and the successful enrolment of their children in kindergartens.

## 1.4 Low Involvement in Pre-primary Education of Children from Disadvantaged Backgrounds

- 1.4.1 There is no systematic monitoring of the participation rates of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in kindergartens. A study of the educational progress of Czech Roma children states that some form of one-year pre-primary preparatory education (kindergartens or preparatory classes established for children from disadvantaged backgrounds in mainstream basic schools) are attended by approximately 48 percent of Roma children (compared to 90 percent of the majority population); this proportion has not changed over time (Gabal Analysis and Consulting 2009). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working with Roma communities point out that the shortage of available kindergarten places has a greater impact on Roma pupils due to the lack of motivation by kindergartens to accept Roma children.
- 1.4.2 As a consequence of the shortage of available kindergarten places, together with the potential for discrimination in enrolment procedures, Roma children are less prepared for mainstream education than non-Roma children. The UNDP, World Bank, and European Commission's 2011 study of 750 Roma households in socially excluded areas and 350 non-Roma households in the same neighborhoods showed big differences in participation rates in pre-primary education and a strong relationship between kindergarten attendance and labour market participation. Only 29 percent of the Roma adults had attended at least two years of kindergarten (compared to 66 percent of the non-Roma adults). The study also showed that 57 percent of Roma had never attended kindergarten (compared to 18 percent of non-Roma). The study concluded that kindergarten attendance prepares children for further education and increases the chances of school success and stronger socio-economic family status (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and UNDP 2012, 14).
- 1.4.3 The 2011 study also surveyed Roma mothers of children under 6 years in order to explore the participation rate in ECEC provision for children aged 0 to 6. Only 30–40 percent of children in the 4/5 year cohort attended any type of early childhood education and care (kindergartens, crèches, children's groups, etc.). The barriers to enrolment and regular participation were found to be mainly financial (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and UNDP 2012, 14).

## 1.5 High Levels of Postponed Primary School Enrolment

- 1.5.1 Prior to compulsory schooling, children undergo an enrolment procedure that is exclusively the responsibility of the individual school's management. Children's ability to focus on tasks and vocabulary are some of the aspects assessed. In general, children are assessed in terms of their readiness for school or their "maturity." If the teachers observing a child are uncertain about her/his readiness for the learning demands of the school, they can refuse enrolment and recommend that parents consult with a psychological guidance center. Each school determines what level of "maturity" is expected as a basis of acceptance for enrolment.
- 1.5.2 The system of testing for school readiness is not standardized across the psychological guidance centers. A center can recommend that parents seek a postponement of school enrolment for their child, or enrol their child in a non-mainstream class or practical

basic school.<sup>25</sup> The Czech Republic has a relatively high level of school enrolment postponement. In 2013/14, 15 percent of pupils postponed their school enrolment. Neighbouring countries have much lower school postponement rates (8 percent in the Slovak Republic and Germany, and 4 percent in Austria).

- 1.5.3 The Czech Longitudinal Study of Education carried out by the authors of this report in the spring of 2014 showed that enrolment postponement is more frequently considered in the case of boys than girls (65 percent of boys, 35 percent of girls). The same study found that children with postponed school enrolment often come from families with a lower socio-economic status, and generally demonstrate lower pre-mathematical and visual perception skills than children without postponed enrolment.<sup>26</sup> In 43 percent of the cases, school postponements were the decision of the parents; in a similar proportion of cases it was reported that postponements were recommended by professionals outside the family, such as a kindergarten director or a physician (Institute of Research and Development of Education, Charles University 2014). The enrolment procedure can often lead to the placement of a child in a preparatory class (for children one year younger) or in a class or school with a reduced curriculum.
- 1.5.4 Experts involved in initiatives focused on improving the education of Roma children argue that the assessment tests used for school readiness are limiting and culturally biased and lead to inappropriate and inadequate decisions about the readiness for school of Roma children (Roma Education Fund 2008). Enrolment procedures and their impact on children's educational careers have not been systematically studied, nor have the effects of enrolment postponement.
- 1.5.5 The Czech Republic has a low ratio of grade repetition (approximately 1 percent); it is thus possible that enrolment postponement has a distorting impact on educational data in regard to the rates of grade repetition. There is no statutory guarantee that during the period following enrolment postponement children are being systematically supported and coached towards improvement in their identified school readiness deficiencies. Some children attend preparatory classes in mainstream basic schools where they are systematically prepared for enrolment. In 2014/2015 these classes were attended by 3,819 pupils (only 3.2 percent of all Grade 1 pupils). However, most children tend to spend their enrolment postponement time in the same kindergarten where they first experienced formal education.

## 1.6 Education of Roma and Other Disadvantaged Pupils in Schools with Reduced Curricula

- 1.6.1 Schools for pupils with special educational needs have a long tradition in the Czech Republic's education system. Until 2004, there were three types of special schools: schools for children with "mild mental disability"<sup>27</sup> (attended by more than 5 percent of pupils in compulsory education), schools for children with moderate and severe mental

25 In this context, a school or a class outside of the mainstream is either a special or "practical" basic school or such a class within a mainstream basic school.

26 Some children with postponed enrolment, however, come from a high socio-economic status and paradoxically demonstrate good "school readiness skills."

27 Please note that the authors present this phrase, "mild mentally retarded," and "mild mental disabilities" in quotation marks given that they are seen, probably, as a traditional and literal translation from earlier legislation. Such phrasing is, however, considered seriously dated language that is extremely offensive to many European Citizens and demeaning to the child—and thus not in keeping with modern understandings and terminology surrounding children with special educational needs, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

disability, and schools for children with specific physical disability. Pupils who leave compulsory education from schools for the “mild mentally retarded” used to have limited educational and employment opportunities, since the final certificate from a special school was not seen to be of the same value as a certificate from a mainstream basic school. The Education Act of 2004 stipulated that these schools were to be renamed “practical basic” schools or classes. The pupils in the newly defined “practical” basic schools, however, are still educated according to the “Supplement to the Framework Education Program for Children with Mild Mental Disabilities.” This reduced curriculum, which is applied for all nine years of compulsory education, places emphasis on practical learning activities and pupils are presented with a reduced range of subjects and learning opportunities in comparison to pupils in mainstream basic schools. This “Supplement” to the educational program may also be used for pupils who are integrated into mainstream classes for reasons of teacher assessment surrounding their alleged learning capability.

1.6.2 In this Special Report on Roma Inclusion in Early Childhood Education and Care, schools/classes for pupils with “mild mental disabilities” are called “practical basic schools” according to the current legislation. This was an attempt by the government to demonstrate compliance with the 2007 milestone D. H. Judgement. The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights decided that 18 Roma pupils who were placed in special schools in the Ostrava region between 1996 and 1999 were discriminated against by the Czech Republic (*Case of D. H. and Others v. the Czech Republic*). Subsequently, the European Commission called on the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic to take measures to prevent future discrimination against Roma children in education (Devroye 2009). In response to the judgment, Decree 73/2005 Coll. was amended. According to the amendment, however, practical basic schools could accept pupils that were not diagnosed as “mentally disabled” for a so-called “diagnostic stay” and could also accept pupils with social and health disadvantages if they were not successful at mainstream basic schools. The D. H. case brought to the attention of the Czech society in general that Roma children were 27 times more likely to be placed in a special school than a non-Roma child (Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues [CAHROM] 2015, 6). The situation changed in September 2014 when another amendment to Decree 73/2005 Coll. came into force. The latest amendment abolished the diagnostic stay as well as the education of children with social and health disadvantages at schools for children with “mild mental disability.” However, there is no description of the term “school for children with mild mental disability” in the current legislation and the monitoring of its implementation in practice is thus very difficult. Many practical basic schools do not present themselves as schools for children with “mild mental disability” and it remains unclear which schools are affected by the latest restrictions.

1.6.3 In 2010 the Czech Schools Inspectorate revealed that 83 percent of the new “practical” basic schools continued to function as “hidden special schools.” It is to be noted that 3.7 percent of pupils complete their compulsory education outside mainstream education in practical basic (previously “special”) schools and classes. However, the proportion of pupils educated outside the mainstream has been declining: in 2004 it was 4.7 percent.<sup>28</sup> According to the Network of Experts in Social Sciences of Education and Training (NESSE), the Czech Republic is a country with a relatively high proportion of pupils diagnosed with special educational needs and a relatively high proportion of special needs pupils educated outside the mainstream—the third highest proportion after Germany and Belgium (Ballas et al. 2012). The Czech Republic also has one of the highest numbers of special/practical basic schools per 100,000 pupils in compulsory education (Ballas et al. 2012, 99). The annual report of the Czech Schools Inspectorate for academic year 2009/10, which focused on the issue of placing pupils in practical

28 Czech Statistical Yearbook of Education 2004/2005 and 2013/2014. <http://toiler.uiv.cz/rocenka/rocenka.asp>

basic school settings, shows that many Roma pupils were referred to these schools by psychological/counselling centers without a diagnosis of “mental disability” or any other diagnosis from a medical institution. Highlighting the finding that 35 percent of Roma pupils were classified as “mentally disabled,” the 2010 CSI report described this pattern as discriminatory. The stark and worrying nature of this assessment is underlined by the fact that, as previously noted, the Roma only make up approximately 2.37 percent of the total population in the Czech Republic.

1.6.4 Studies on the educational pathways of Roma pupils revealed that Roma children are ten times more likely than majority children to be diverted to schools or classes outside mainstream education (Gabal Analysis and Consulting 2009 and 2010; Ballas et al. 2012). Gabal Analysis and Consulting (2009) reported that 40 percent of Roma children complete their compulsory education in practical basic schools that are provided for so-called “mentally disabled” children. The same study also showed that only 30 percent of Roma boys and 50 percent of Roma girls who had initially been enrolled in mainstream basic schools finished their studies in the same class in which they had started their education. This data suggests that a very significant percentage of Roma pupils were transferred at some stage into practical basic schools. Since 2009/10, the CSI carries out regular monitoring of Roma children in schools that educate pupils with diagnosed special educational needs.<sup>29</sup> According to the 2015 CSI report, approximately 32 percent of the children studying under educational programs for pupils with “mild mental disabilities” were Roma, which is highly disproportionate to the number of Roma in the Czech Republic. The same report states that the proportion of pupils educated according to mainstream curricula increased by 19 percent from the previous school year (2013/14) and the proportion of Roma pupils educated according to mainstream curricula also increased by 12 percent. The proportion of pupils educated according to the “Supplement to the Framework Education Program for Children with ‘Mild Mental Disabilities’” decreased by 25 percent, though the proportion of Roma pupils educated according to reduced curricula decreased by only 11 percent (CSI 2015). Though modest, these statistics are in some respects encouraging.

1.6.5 For socially disadvantaged children, pre-primary preparatory classes in kindergartens, mainstream basic schools, and practical basic schools may be established for the year prior to starting their compulsory schooling at 6 years of age. One academic analysis showed that in the vicinity of “socially excluded areas,” pre-primary preparatory classes are established outside the mainstream basic schools twice as often as they are within the mainstream (Gabal Analysis and Consulting 2009). The fact that practical basic schools educating children according to reduced curricula can establish pre-primary preparatory classes is a subject of criticism from NGOs supporting Roma children’s inclusion in mainstream basic schools. They argue that when pupils complete their pre-primary preparatory education in such schools, they usually continue in practical basic schools, despite the fact that the original purpose of preparatory classes was to prepare children for mainstream basic schooling.

1.6.6 The view that many Roma children are better off in practical basic schools remains widespread among teachers (Amnesty International 2015, 19). Teachers frequently subscribe to the stereotypical view which labels Roma pupils and their parents as lacking discipline and failing to value education. Practical basic schools are also often viewed as a better option by some Roma parents and children who have first-hand negative experiences in mainstream basic schools. Roma parents report that mainstream basic

29 Roma are, for the purpose of this monitoring, defined as individuals who regard themselves as Roma or are regarded as Roma by their residential district. All schools that educated at least one pupil with diagnosed special educational needs have been included in the monitoring.

schools are neither willing nor able to prevent discrimination and bullying of their children (Amnesty International 2015, 27).

- 1.6.7 One expert analysis on the data from the 2011 UNDP/World Bank/European Commission's regional Roma survey showed that there are markedly significant differences between Roma and non-Roma adults with respect to attainments and educational outcomes (Median 2015). This analysis confirmed that 15 percent of Roma pupils dropped out prematurely from compulsory education, 10 percent achieved practical basic school completion, and 43 percent achieved mainstream basic school completion. Only 3 percent achieved completion in upper secondary education with the school leaving examination; among non-Roma this type of education was achieved by 40 percent, with 11 percent of this cohort continuing into higher education. The regional Roma survey also showed that Roma adults who completed practical basic school participate in the labour market to a much lower extent than Roma adults who completed mainstream basic compulsory education (23 percent and 47 percent, respectively). Similarly, while Roma with mainstream education who are active in the labor market have the same working contracts as majority employees, Roma with practical basic school experience are more likely to have only temporary contracts.

## 1.7 Lack of Data on Socially Disadvantaged and Roma Pupils and on Practical Basic Schools

- 1.7.1 The 2004 Education Act (last amended in 2015) does not recognise the term "Roma pupil."<sup>30</sup> The Act operates with the term "socially disadvantaged pupil." However, the Education Act does not provide any recommended methodology for identifying such pupils. It is thus impossible to study rigorously the impact of various features of the Czech Republic's education system and of newly implemented measures (e.g. within the framework of European Structural Fund projects) on Roma and socially disadvantaged pupils. It is also impossible to assess in any objective way whether the situation of Roma pupils in the Czech Republic's education system has improved. It has, however, been extensively surveyed by international organizations as a consequence of the D. H. court case of discrimination against Roma children in education.
- 1.7.2 Immigrants and pupils with a diagnosed disability are identified in the statistics; their educational careers, however, are not systematically monitored. In addition, the fact that special schools were renamed "practical basic schools" makes them invisible in statistical data (it is impossible to distinguish between mainstream basic schools and practical basic schools, though these schools follow the standard and the reduced curriculum, respectively) and this makes it impossible to study systematically the education system outside of mainstream provision and to assess its quality accurately.

## 1.8 Selection in Primary Education and Paid Services within Public Education

- 1.8.1 The Czech Republic has a long tradition of highly differentiated education. Selection is exercised by both parents and schools. Alongside classes with extended instruction in a particular subject,<sup>31</sup> classes for the gifted/talented and classes offering bilingual and Information Technology assisted education have been emerging. In the expert view of the authors, school "quality" in the public eye is generally assessed in accordance with a

30 There have, however, been several surveys that visually identified Roma pupils in order to describe the specifics of their educational pathways (including their concentration in special/practical basic schools). This procedure for identification met with a negative reaction in the Czech professional community. The proportion of Roma people in the Czech Republic is estimated for the purposes of this report to be 2.37 percent.

31 Attended by 12 percent of the age cohort in the 2010/2011 school year.

school's ability to attract motivated children from motivated families, rather than its ability to provide high quality education to all children, regardless of their home background, ethnic status, and assessed abilities. In the Czech Republic's education system, schools are financed according to the number of pupils. In the last 10 years, the number of pupils attending compulsory education has decreased by almost 20 percent; this has placed significant pressures on many school budgets given the significantly reduced income to employ staff and maintain redundant school buildings (European Commission 2014b).<sup>32</sup>

1.8.2 An increasing number of public mainstream basic schools offer supplementary classes where more affluent families pay for extra educational services (e.g. English education provided by special language teachers, Montessori classes with teaching assistants, etc.). Entrance examinations are also required in some public schools that offer additional special programs. The de facto selective schools and classes are not visible in regular educational statistics, neither are offers of paid services; the differentiation of the system is not monitored. The extent and consequences of selection in the Czech Republic's education system has not been systematically studied.

1.8.3 In 2014, the Czech Longitudinal Study of Education showed that 63 percent of parents of children enrolled in their final year of kindergarten chose the school to which they wished their child to transfer at the beginning of the following school year. This represents an increase of nearly 20 percent over a five year period (in 2009 only 45 percent of parents chose a school for their child). The influencing factors surrounding school choice appear to depend on the level of parental education and the size of the community; parents with more education living in bigger cities tend to choose schools for their children more frequently. These parents choose schools very conscientiously: more than 50 percent of them visited at least one school, one-third sought information from school personnel, and others consulted other parents. The most important objective for the majority of parents in the process of school choice is to secure for the child a happy and safe environment<sup>33</sup> that is sensitive to the particular child's needs. Data show that parents do not believe the Czech Republic's education system automatically guarantees a caring and welcoming environment. According to the authors' findings from the Czech Longitudinal Study of Education, about 17 percent of parents seek a school with more demanding curricula (foreign languages, for example) or a specific pedagogy (Montessori) for their children. However, the data clearly show that the mechanisms of school choice disadvantage lower socio-economic status families because these parents have more restricted primary school choices in their neighborhoods. Schools chosen by parents irrespective of distance and cost are more likely to be attended by children of well-educated parents. Socio-economically disadvantaged parents with less educational experience not only have limited choices in regard to school quality, but, in addition, are not as able to help their children with school work (Institute of Research and Development of Education, Charles University 2014).

## 1.9 Segregation in Mainstream Basic Schools

1.9.1 One noteworthy aspect of growing differentiation in preschool and compulsory education is increasing ethnic segregation in mainstream education. Roma children are often educated in separate schools, building annexes, or classes. Discriminatory practices fuelling the creation of ethnically segregated schools and classes include: the separation of pupils into separate classes by school administrators, the refusal of school directors to

32 See also Czech Statistical Yearbook of Education 2013/2014. <http://toiler.uiv.cz/rocenka/rocenka.asp>

33 Parents had to prioritize school characteristics with respect to the choice of school for their children. They strongly preferred wellbeing over academic progress.

enrol Roma children, failure to tackle the prejudiced attitudes and behaviors encountered by Roma children attending mainstream basic schools, and the lack of measures by national and local government to address the problem of ethnic segregation. More action is needed by the government and local authorities, notably in terms of monitoring and enforcing respect for equal treatment legislation, to address the division between the so-called “Roma” and “non-Roma” schools (Amnesty International 2015).

- 1.9.2 It is often assumed that segregated schooling is the de facto result of residential segregation. But this is often not the case. School placements are organized around pupil catchment areas that have specific schools assigned to them. They are generally binding for the schools but, because parents can opt for any school of their choice, schools have the legal capacity to accept pupils from outside their designated pupil catchment area. Schools in the same or similar nearby catchment area often vary significantly in the proportion of Roma pupils enrolled.
- 1.9.3 The impact of parental choice appears to be the key driver of segregated education. Non-Roma parents overwhelmingly seek out schools with no or low numbers of Roma pupils, and remove their children from schools once they feel there are too many Roma pupils. Many Roma parents prefer to send their children to so-called “Roma schools” (schools with a majority of Roma pupils on roll) on account of the expectation, frequently based on experience, that their children will receive greater individual attention and face less prejudiced attitudes and behaviors from teachers, fellow pupils, and non-Roma parents. Many schools support these segregated divisions.

## 1.10 Possibilities of Early Intervention for Children and their Families in the Czech Republic with Disabilities and Social Disadvantage

- 1.10.1 In the Czech Republic, the term “early intervention” is primarily associated with the provision of comprehensive professional care for children with disabilities and their families. This service, defined by Social Services Act No. 108/2006 Coll., Section 54 (1), as amended, includes services for families caring for children with disabilities: *“Early intervention is a field service, possibly combined with an outpatient form of service, provided to the child and the parents of the child of up to 7 years of age who is disabled or whose development is at risk due to adverse health conditions. The service is aimed at supporting the family and child development with regard to the child’s specific needs.”*<sup>34</sup>
- 1.10.2 Early intervention in the Czech Republic is mainly provided by NGOs, some of which fall under the umbrella organization known as the Association for Early Intervention, operating in Prague, Brno, Olomouc, České Budějovice, and Ostrava. In 2014 the Register of Social Service Providers, administered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, had 45 social service providers with registered early intervention services. Of these 45 providers, the Karlovy Vary region, for example, had only one provider of early intervention with a focus on families with children with “mental and combined disabilities.” It is difficult for families with children with autism spectrum disorder to access early intervention services. The Czech Longitudinal Study of Education surveyed 229 families of children with autism; none had received any initial advice or follow-up support for the suspected diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder from an early intervention provider.<sup>35</sup>

34 [https://sluzbyprevence.mpsv.cz/dok/zakon-108\\_2006.pdf](https://sluzbyprevence.mpsv.cz/dok/zakon-108_2006.pdf)

35 The current practice can be viewed as in conflict with Article 25 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was ratified by the Czech Republic in 2009.

- 1.10.3 Educational activities for socially disadvantaged children under 3 years of age are not legally enshrined in the regulations of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports nor the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The early intervention services currently offered do not cover the needs of all socially disadvantaged children, as the provision made by the civil society sector is insufficient for the actual level of national need.
- 1.10.4 “Early intervention,” as defined by Social Services Act No. 108/2006 Coll.,<sup>36</sup> does not include support for children who have special needs due to social disadvantage. The definition of the target group in the Social Services Act significantly reduces the possibility that early intervention providers will use funds from the national budget to provide needed services for families of children whose development is at risk due to social disadvantage.
- 1.10.5 Early intervention is not enshrined in the 2004 Education Act and its implementing regulations. In its conceptual documents, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic uses the term “early care” for intervention programs aimed at the development of socially disadvantaged children aged 3 to 6 (the age of compulsory education) who do not attend kindergartens.
- 1.10.6 The role of schools, teachers, and other non-teaching staff is paramount in children’s readiness for school. Schools are organized (in terms of content, teaching practice, and culture) on the presumption that parents will provide all necessary support for their children to succeed in school. Schools and kindergartens may lack knowledge about working with diverse learners, as well as how to address individual learning needs. Special education is firmly separated from mainstream education, but special educators are probably the only professionals prepared for working with children with special educational needs.
- 1.10.7 Under the Grant Program to Support the Integration of the Roma Community, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports provides financial support for the implementation of intervention activities for socially disadvantaged children from the age of 3 years. This grant program is also applicable for preschool education support provided mainly by NGOs. However, the total volume of program funds does not allow for a national scale-up of this vital provision.
- 1.10.8 In 2008 the Government of the Czech Republic approved the *Report of the Government on the Implementation of the Concept (Project) of Early Care for Children from “Socio-culturally Disadvantaged Backgrounds” in the Field of Education for the Period 2005–2007*,<sup>37</sup> including its update, the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Concept of In-Time Early Care for Children from Socially Disadvantaged Backgrounds. This Action Plan outlines specific tasks, which are further elaborated into concrete actions with timetables to implement the element of early care for children from disadvantaged backgrounds into the formal education system in the Czech Republic. However, the measures set out in the Action Plan had not been implemented at the time of writing this Special Report on Roma Inclusion in Early Childhood Education and Care.
- 30 1.10.9 Increasing the availability and quality of preschool education and early intervention is one of the priorities of the Strategy of the Educational Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020, approved by the Government of the Czech Republic on July 9, 2014. The strategy

36 [https://sluzbyprevence.mpsv.cz/dok/zakon-108\\_2006.pdf](https://sluzbyprevence.mpsv.cz/dok/zakon-108_2006.pdf)

37 The authors present the term “socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds” with quotation marks on the grounds that it places and defines the culture of a unique group of people in a derogative way that should be avoided.

includes the following statements regarding the support of early intervention: *“In the case of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, the qualified upbringing and education of children from a very early age have a great potential to eliminate some of the disadvantages that the children bring from their families and to improve their educational chances. An urgent task for the next period, the solution of which will require interdepartmental co-ordination, is therefore to provide a systemic solution of care and education for children from a very early age”* (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2014).



# CHAPTER 2.

## Roma Children in Preschool Education

Based on the results of the 2011 regional Roma survey (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and UNDP 2012) and other complementary research, this chapter focuses on determining the current level of participation of Roma pupils in preschool education, factors that affect participation, and the effects that attendance in preschool education has on starting compulsory primary education. The findings also take into account the wider social and material conditions of life experienced in circumstances of social exclusion.

### 2.1 Environmental and Comparative Social Contexts

- 2.1.1 There are approximately 95,000 to 115,000 people in the Czech Republic living in conditions defined as “socially excluded localities.”<sup>38</sup> Generally speaking, a socially excluded environment is typically characterized by a combination of material deprivation (linked to low income), limited access to public and private services (including kindergarten education), poor health, substandard housing, and poor residential and utility infrastructure (Burchardt, Le Grand, and Piachaud 2002; Atkinson et al. 2002). Gabal Analysis and Consulting’s nationwide mapping of socially excluded Roma communities in 2015 showed 600 such localities, whereas in 2006 only 300 such localities had been identified. Among the biggest problems in relation to socially excluded areas are poor quality of housing, overcrowded flats, insufficient legal protection of the inhabitants, and a dearth of available jobs and public services. Although there have been more non-Roma living in such localities in recent years, the majority of residents are Roma (approximately 87 percent) (Gabal Analysis and Consulting 2015). Socially excluded localities are most likely to be found in certain regions and certain parts of towns or villages, specifically in those parts seen as undesirable by other residents for a variety of reasons.

38 In the Czech context, the concept of social exclusion has dominated the analytical and the practical approach to poverty. Czech studies reveal certain characteristics that are specific to the domestic environment. Firstly, the definition is founded primarily on the material and spatial dimensions of social exclusion; a socially excluded locality equals a neglected locality. In addition to the material and spatial dimensions, these definitions foreground the symbolic dimension. Socially excluded localities are seen as “Roma” localities (75 percent have a Roma majority). A socially excluded locality or a locality at risk of social exclusion is, in the Czech context, defined as a location with a concentration of persons living in inadequate conditions (indicated by the number of persons receiving a living allowance) and inhabiting a physically or symbolically delimited space (indicated by external identification) (Gabal Analysis and Consulting 2015).

- 2.1.2 In recent years there have been cases of repeated serial migration where people, due mainly to debt, move from one substandard flat to another (Office of the Czech Government Demographic Information Center 2011; Dvořáková, Klusáčková, and Klusáček 2012; SPOT 2013). However, according to NGO social workers interviewed as part of an annual report on the situation of the Roma minority, involuntary relocation from a normal flat to a hostel represents a serious change in a family's situation, generally characterized by the route from self-sufficiency to total dependency (Office of the Czech Government 2012).
- 2.1.3 Some families live in hostels for a long time, often several years (Kostlán 2013). Most of these tenants do not have their own sanitary facilities (bathrooms, toilets) or kitchens. Families often complain about the lack of electricity and hot water. Clubhouses and children's play areas are established very sporadically. Most hostels are unfit for human habitation in terms of the lack of safe and hygienic sanitary conditions. As indicated by the European Union study cited in the Introduction, disadvantaged material conditions have a significant influence on the development of children's cognitive skills due to factors such as higher morbidity, psycho-social stress, and less cognitively rich environments where children do not have sufficient safe and clean space for play or joint activities with their siblings and parents (European Union 2013, 1).
- 2.1.4 In connection with the role of early intervention, it is also necessary to mention the different language code (the language and means of expression used by the community) of those living in isolated and socially excluded environments. Children living in excluded localities start compulsory school attendance with a limited knowledge of the Czech language. Many Roma families in socially excluded localities, as elsewhere in the Czech Republic, speak the Romani language. However, Romani is rarely used by Roma families in the company of non-Roma. Knowledge and use of the Czech language by Roma children, compared with children from majority society, is generally lower, especially at the lexicalsemantic and pragmatic language levels. Deficits at the lexical-semantic, morphological-syntactic, and pragmatic levels are more relevant to the successful acquisition of learning skills than the more noticeable imperfections at the phoneticphonological level. A study to assess the results of the "logopaedic" diagnosis of 6-year-old children showed that limited communication ability was diagnosed in 89.8 percent of the socially disadvantaged children in the research sample (Tomická 2012). It is to be remembered, however, that children in such circumstances suffer social isolation and may have advanced and confident communication skills when it comes to the use and articulation of their first language.
- 2.1.5 Children growing up in environments that are not socially disadvantaged encounter different types of stimuli and have diverse social experiences from early childhood. In their first years they may often participate with their parents or other close persons in activities aimed at the development of perceptual motor skills and foreign languages, for example, and they usually have enough toys and books, and receive sufficient adult attention. They may also have greater opportunities to meet peers outside the home environment and explore diverse social and physical environments.
- 34** 2.1.6 For children from socially excluded backgrounds, the environment of the excluded locality is often the only environment the child encounters at preschool age. Many of these children do not have any opportunities to develop their skills through educational toys, children's books, or art supplies in the period before the start of compulsory schooling.
- 2.1.7 Without the necessary support, children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds start their compulsory schooling with different knowledge, skills, and experiences than children from average majority society households. The differences can be seen in almost all areas (social and communication skills, general knowledge, forms of behaviour, and

pre-reading and pre-mathematical skills). As a result of these differences, they are at increased risk of school failure, and, in due course, dropping out of formal education all together.

- 2.1.8 Some of the present-day socially excluded localities were formed at locations where the Roma population was large even before 1989. However, most of these localities were formed as a consequence of the post-communist transformation to a free market economy in the 1990s. In this period, many Roma lost their jobs and consequently their incomes. It has been well documented that Roma were disproportionately affected by the economic restructuring and found themselves increasingly excluded (Guy 2001). Experts estimate that the unemployment rate in socially excluded areas oscillates between 65 and 90 percent (Gabal, Čada, Višek et al. 2010). Long-term exclusion from the labor market has often led to life strategy changes resulting from seriously weakened family incomes, evictions, and relocations.
- 2.1.9 Roma were pushed into unskilled jobs during the communist era and their long-term exclusion from the labour market after 1989 has resulted in a situation where approximately 8 of 10 persons of working age living in socially excluded Roma localities have no more than primary education (World Bank 2008). In addition, the educational opportunities of Roma children have not been significantly improving for the last decade; according to the World Bank (2008), more than half (54 percent) of sons whose fathers have higher than primary education display lower education compared to their parents.
- 2.1.10 Comparative analysis of educational pathways of Roma and non-Roma pupils has shown that kindergarten attendance affects the achievement of socially excluded children (Gabal Analysis and Consulting 2010). Children who attended kindergarten are clearly more successful in their educational pathways.
- 2.1.11 The 2010 Gabal Analysis and Consulting study comparing the educational pathways of Roma and non-Roma pupils showed that pre-primary preparatory classes do not have as significant an impact as kindergartens on pupils' achievement. Preparatory classes are among the specific integration tools aimed at alleviating the disadvantages of socially excluded pupils in primary education; these environments often do help socially excluded pupils cope with the load in the first year, but their effect in the following years of primary education is mostly lost. Furthermore, these classes are very often established in practical basic schools focused on pupils with special educational needs, or in mainstream basic schools in socially excluded areas with a majority of Roma pupils. This context significantly limits their inclusive nature. Last, but not least, they are only attended by the oldest age group of children in preschool education, and their effect is thus largely limited to one school year.

## 2.2 Social Exclusion and Preschool Education

- 2.2.1 Socially excluded children grow up in a more stressful environment and their households are frequently less equipped to prepare children for compulsory schooling at 6 years of age. One research study showed that the households of families from socially excluded localities have fewer books and fewer educational toys compared to more affluent families (Larson and Verma 1999). For obvious reasons, materially disadvantaged children are less likely to go to the countryside, zoo, and museums (Bradley et al. 2001; Bradley and Corwyn 2002).
- 2.2.2 The importance of the length of time during which children attend preschool education has also been demonstrated. A study in the United Kingdom in 2004 showed that children who began to attend a preschool institution before they reached age 3 displayed

greater progress than children who began later (Sammons 2010). Sammons (2010) also demonstrated that attending preschool influenced the acquisition of the skills needed for successful compulsory school access and happy participation among children from a socially excluded environment, and also has a positive influence on the home environment.

- 2.2.3 Evaluations of the Sure Start<sup>39</sup> program in the United Kingdom, which is focused on the development of early child care and development, also illustrated that it is possible for a well-set program of early child care to have positive influences on the home environment (Melhuish et al. 2010). This, however, assumes highly qualified care provided by professionally trained staff with a deep understanding of child development and parental engagement, who keep activities clearly focused on the development of the children (Eisenstadt 2011).
- 2.2.4 In practice, inclusive policies usually focus on cognitively enriching home environments and the structural impact of the materially deprived conditions of families, and the poor and sometimes threatening external environment in which the child grows up. Children in socially excluded households are more likely to witness street violence and crime (Brody et al. 2001; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Sinclair et al. 1994). In the case of urban social exclusion, children often grow up in damaged environments (Bullard and Wright 1993, 9; Moses et al. 1993; Haines et al. 2002) and more often live in poorly equipped and frequently overcrowded dwellings (Federman et al. 1996; Gielen et al. 1995; Sanger and Stocking 1991; Sharp and Carter 1992). Exposure to toxic environments, no electricity, weak or non-existent sewage disposal systems, unsafe water quality, air pollution, dangerous hazards, and excessive noise lead to more frequent health problems experienced by children and, due to stress, also to problems in cognitive development (Holgate et al. 1999; Riley and Vorhees 1991; Evans 2001). Rates of morbidity and mental discomfort are also increased by substandard housing (Evans, Wells, and Moch 2003).
- 2.2.5 The socially excluded environment, or an environment threatened by social exclusion, significantly restricts the possibility of social integration into mainstream society for both children and adults. The isolation of socially excluded localities, in particular, restricts the possibility that people living in the locality will create social contacts with people outside the locality, minimizing opportunities for mutual cooperation, sharing and formation of values, transmission of information, sharing of experience, and the learning of new social skills.
- 2.2.6 The unenviable circumstances of young Roma children living in socially excluded localities are exacerbated somewhat by the ever present threat of racially motivated violence and frequent expressions of organized race hatred, together with prejudice-based discrimination on the part of public services—including some kindergartens and schools (Amnesty International 2015).

## 2.3 Attending Preschool Institutions

- 36** 2.3.1 The regional Roma survey confirmed the differences between Roma and non-Roma children in their participation in preschool institutions. A total of 28 percent of Roma children aged 3 to 6 years were enrolled in a preschool institution (only 48 percent of Roma children in primary education had previous experience with preschool education),

39 A British government program launched in 1998, Sure Start seeks to give children from socially deprived areas the best possible start in life through early care, preschool education, comprehensive social and health support for families, and outreach and community services.

compared with 64 percent of non-Roma children in that age group (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and UNDP 2012). This percentage corresponds to the findings of previous research (Gabal Analysis and Consulting 2010). The institutions were most often public kindergartens. According to findings from the “Mapping Analysis of Socially Excluded Localities in the Czech Republic,” participation in pre-school institutions in socially excluded localities is highly variable: from 10 to 100 percent of the relevant age cohorts; participation is logically higher in localities with a lower share of unemployment (Gabal Analysis and Consulting 2015).

2.3.2 The difference in the participation rate in preschool education proved to be more significant for Roma children living in urban (33 percent) as opposed to rural locations (17 percent) (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and UNDP 2012). These findings are particularly relevant with regard to the changing nature of social exclusion in the Czech Republic. People forced to live in socially excluded localities have tended to move to remote villages with limited functional and developed infrastructure. Social exclusion in the Czech Republic has thus ceased to be primarily urban in character (Office of the Czech Government 2012). Rural social excluded localities are characterised by very limited access to social services and the availability of NGO services focused on supporting socially disadvantaged children access primary education.

2.3.3 With the exception of remote rural locations, it appears that the proximity of kindergartens plays a significant role in whether socially excluded Roma children will or will not attend kindergarten. It is interesting to note that a total of 60 percent of Roma parents send their children to kindergartens that are not located in their socially excluded localities; such children have very direct chances of meeting peers from the majority society. More than half of Roma children attending kindergarten were enrolled in kindergartens with only a few Roma pupils. In contrast, 14 percent attended institutions where they formed the majority, and 28 percent spent their time in kindergartens with 50/50 Roma and non-Roma. These findings of the regional Roma survey (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and UNDP 2012) partly confirm the assumption that preschool education fills an important role as an inclusive tool, although this assumption cannot be automatically applied to all kindergarten settings.

## 2.4 Economic Reasons

2.4.1 For socially excluded Roma families, the financial aspect of preschool education plays a dominant role; this factor is almost never mentioned as a barrier by non-Roma families (Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues [CAHROM] 2015). The financial aspect is thus significantly more important for Roma families than for their majority counterparts living in the vicinity of socially excluded localities. In certain circumstances, the fee for kindergartens can be waived upon request (decisions are based upon the level of family income and are thus “means tested”). The fee for those who pay often ranges from CZK 300 to CZK 600 per month; the fee level is decided by the kindergarten director. However, the most significant cost item is expenses for meals in kindergartens. A total of 88 percent of Roma parents whose children attend preschool education pay for meals, most frequently from CZK 500 to CZK 600 per month. Transport costs are insignificant for most parents. According to the Office of the Czech Government (2012), 92 percent of Roma children attending kindergartens walk to school without any transport costs involved. The majority of Roma parents (80 percent) said that kindergarten attendance did not constitute any increased costs for books and stationery (generally not required in kindergarten), and when they had to spend money on items of equipment it was only in the region of CZK 150 per year. A total of 23 percent of Roma parents said that the only extra costs incurred in relation to kindergarten attendance were for clothes, which usually cost anything up to CZK 500 per year.

2.4.2 Economic reasons are among the reasons some Roma parents gave for not enrolling their child(ren) in kindergarten. A total of 48 percent said they would definitely send their children aged 3 to 5 to a kindergarten if it were free of charge. Another 25 percent would at least consider this possibility. A total of 24 percent would certainly send their children to a kindergarten if the cost of meals was covered, and 24 percent would reconsider preschool enrolment if free meals were available (Office of the Czech Government 2012). Transport to the kindergarten free of charge seems to be crucial for the third of Roma families who do not send their children to a kindergarten. Logically, this particularly applies to those who live in rural areas with poor and inadequate public transport services.

## 2.5 Enrolment Capacity of Kindergartens

2.5.1 The readiness of the preschool institution to accept children from disadvantaged environments is a highly important aspect. One research analysis noted that individual regions of the Czech Republic differ significantly in the proportions of children with specific educational needs attending preschool education (from 1 to 4.5 percent) (Dvořáková, Klusáčková, and Klusáček 2012). The authors of that analysis believe that the barriers to inclusion of these children in preschool education may, in addition to economic factors pertinent to parents, also include: the unpreparedness of kindergartens themselves, lack of early identification of special educational needs, and (thus) delayed adaptation of care to meet such needs. Last, but not least, children from socially excluded families are hindered in securing kindergarten school enrolment by the imposed requirement of parents' employment as a selection criterion (Office of the Czech Government 2012).<sup>40</sup> Other criteria that can be applied arbitrarily by the kindergarten director may include the demand for a one-off payment of the deposit for meals at the beginning of the kindergarten year, or rigid and inflexible adherence to a specific date for enrolment. In many cases, Roma parents from socially excluded localities have low awareness of the enrolment dates of local kindergartens, and in many instances Roma families are not able to comply with some or all of these qualifying criteria (Office of the Czech Government Demographic Information Center 2011).

2.5.2 According to the data collected in the regional Roma survey, factors such as parents' confidence in teachers, knowledge of the language, and/or normative preferences of child upbringing in the home environment do not significantly influence the rates of Roma enrolment in kindergartens. However, 17 percent of the Roma parents whose children did not attend kindergarten said that their child(ren) would attend if a Roma teacher was employed in the kindergarten. Certain non-economic barriers to the enrolment and regular attendance of Roma children in preschool education are also evidenced by the fact that 18 percent of Roma parents who send their children to kindergarten believe that Roma children are not welcome in the kindergartens their children attend.

## 2.6 Parental Involvement

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2.6.1 Expert opinion confirms that many Roma parents have a lack of trust in kindergartens and that the level of parental involvement of children registered in kindergartens is poor. The weak involvement of Roma parents with these preschool institutions frequently results in limited communication and some parents complain that they are sometimes given either little or even misleading information regarding, for example, the dates of admission at the start of the first semester or entitlements to welfare benefits. Another anxiety that is

40 These criteria are set by the director of the relevant kindergarten.

said to hinder a closer and more trusting relationship with kindergartens is a concern that such institutions are viewed as instruments of cultural assimilation (Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues [CAHROM] 2015).

- 2.6.2 According to the Czech Ombudsman's report of 2012, there is inadequate involvement of the parents of children from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds in the education process (Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues [CAHROM] 2015). There is a need for stronger efforts and more dialogue to be established between kindergartens and Roma families both in the interests of encouraging Roma parents to see the benefits of preschool education and to ensure registration as early as possible at the local kindergarten.
- 2.6.3 The importance of closer Roma parental involvement with kindergartens and mainstream basic schools is advocated strongly by the European Union; the Council noted that there was a need for "encouraging greater parental involvement" as part of the policies for securing Roma access to education (Council of the European Union 2013, 6). It is important to reduce the negative impact of inequality at a young age. The staff of kindergartens serving the needs of families from poor socio-economic backgrounds do not always recognise the professional wisdom of parents in their role as the main educators of their children during the early years. ECEC services should be encouraged to work more closely with parents and community actors involved in the child's upbringing. A further identified weakness is that kindergartens do not always see the importance of creating an inclusive learning environment by strengthening the link between schools and parents (European Union 2013).
- 2.6.4 The importance of kindergartens and schools fostering close and trusting relationships with Roma parents has far reaching implications for initial and in-service training of teachers and assistants. This important function demands its own set of professional skills. The Council of Europe clearly articulates its understanding of such skills in its published recommendations on Roma and Traveller education: "Schools (including kindergartens) should make strong efforts to engage Roma and Traveller parents in school-related activities in order to enhance mutual understanding. When involving parents, the school must respect their [Roma and Traveller] values and culture and acknowledge their contribution to the education of their children" (Council of Europe 2009).

## 2.7 Effectiveness of Preschool Education

- 2.7.1 The findings of the regional Roma survey (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and UNDP 2012) show that half of Roma children aged 5 and 6 are able to identify at least 10 letters of the alphabet, while of non-Roma children living in a similar environment the proportion is 75 percent. A total of 25 percent of Roma boys and girls can read at least four words, compared to 40 percent of non-Roma children. While three-quarters of non-Roma children aged 5 and 6 can write their name, the proportion for Roma children is 42 percent. A total of 60 percent of Roma children know the numbers from 1 to 10, while the proportion of non-Roma children is 88 percent. According to their parents, Roma children are less confident than non-Roma children. On the other hand, there is not a statistically significant difference between Roma and non-Roma children in confident social interaction.
- 2.7.2 The 2011 regional Roma survey data confirmed the strong influence of preschool education on all pupils' competencies. In all the monitored aspects, differences were displayed between Roma children who attend kindergarten and Roma children who do not. For example, 59 percent of Roma 5-year-olds who attend kindergarten are able to

identify 10 letters of the alphabet, compared to 37 percent of those who stay at home. Similar differences can be traced in other monitored aspects. It is interesting that the relationship is not the same in non-Roma families. The differences between majority population children who attend kindergarten and those who do not are much less significant.

- 2.7.3 It cannot be said with absolute certainty that socially excluded families do not meet the requirements and expectations of educational institutions. This is also confirmed by the report summarising the results of focus group discussions (Nová škola 2011). Mothers were invited by the moderators of the group interviews to name the skills that should be, in their opinion, acquired by children before starting school. They stated the following: holding a pencil, knowing colours, counting at least to 10, reading a little, signing their name, tying shoelaces, and doing up buttons. Although Roma families shared the same desired skills and expectations regarding children's capabilities appropriate for preschool settings, their living circumstances do not always allow them sufficient time and resources to ensure that their children acquire such skills before enrolment at kindergarten (Council of the European Union 2013, 9).
- 2.7.4 Kindergartens with well trained professional teachers who understand inclusive practice and with a richness of books and educational resources, including toys, can compensate for the negative influence of materially deprived environments experienced in many Roma households. The residents of socially excluded localities are frequently dependent on housing in hostels, which have the worst possible impact on families with young children (Office of the Czech Government 2012). Most families do not have enough money to rent a flat on the open market and obtaining a council flat is virtually impossible for these families because the administrative system is not transparent and discrimination is often exercised in the allocation of council housing.

# CHAPTER 3.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### 3.1 Conclusions

- 3.1.1 This Special Report on Roma Inclusion in Early Childhood Education and Care is intended to aid the appropriate and legally competent authorities in ensuring the development in the Czech Republic of unhindered and equal access to quality early childhood education and care services for Roma children (0 to 8 years), through responsible advocacy fortified by the force of the growing national and international research evidence underlining its importance to individual child development, welfare, and wellbeing. The conclusions and recommendations of this report aim to guide and support these competent authorities and agencies (including civil society organizations) in promoting social inclusion, improved access to educational goods and services, and social cohesion in the Czech Republic as a whole. This assistance is seen as complementary to, and supportive of, the acknowledged efforts being currently undertaken by the Czech Government and other key players to give special attention to the difficult position of the Czech Roma population, which is evidenced by their economically, geographically, culturally, and politically marginalized status. Interconnected and multi-causal, these negative factors create a closed circle of social exclusion from which many Roma families are unable to exit without significant support. To better understand the sociological dynamics, the authors wish to draw the attention of all key stakeholders to the history of Roma in the Czech Lands. The significance of this history cannot be underestimated as the underpinnings of the sensitive dynamics surrounding the situation of Roma in the modern day Czech Republic.
- 3.1.2 The principle reasons for this report include the pressing need for a timely contribution to the ongoing actions and debates surrounding Roma education and inclusion in the Czech Republic; the critical importance of ECEC for all children, but particularly those from marginalized and economically disadvantaged backgrounds; and, as mentioned, to assist and support the government and public authorities, and educational decision makers and practitioners tasked with fulfilling their responsibilities in a context of intense and growing critical international scrutiny.
- 3.1.3 The absolute need to ensure that Roma children have equitable opportunities to appropriate service support in their first three years of life and subsequent access to high quality child-centered kindergartens and mainstream basic schools during their critical early years (age 0 to 8) is a central priority of the Sponsoring Agencies.

- 3.1.4 This Special Report on Roma Inclusion in Early Childhood Education and Care highlights the significantly lower level of resources allocated to ECEC that support family and child wellbeing in the Czech Republic, compared to other European countries and the EU Member States' average. Provision is well below 10 percent for the 0-3 age cohort and significantly short of the Barcelona target of 33 percent (European Commission 2014b, 13).<sup>41</sup> Evidence also demonstrates that the Czech Republic lags behind other European countries in regard to the level of kindergarten participation of children aged 3 to 6. In a 2009 European Commission comparative study, the Czech Republic ranked 22nd out of 30 European countries; the same report highlighted significant ECEC supply shortages for both the 0–3 and 3–6 age cohorts, with the latter being 67 percent provision in relation to demand (some 23 percent less than the Barcelona target for that particular age cohort). Another comparative report noted that in the Czech Republic there was less central direction and investment in ECEC strategies; this was assessed as a dysfunctional aspect of national educational policy (Pascal et al. 2013, 25).
- 3.1.5 This national backdrop of relatively limited provision for the two preschool cohorts of young children provides little opportunity for the majority of Czech Roma families trapped in poverty and marginalization. It is a difficult and challenging period for all families when children start compulsory schooling. However, the evidence of this report confirms that these critical first steps are vital for Roma parents and their children. It will be no easy task for a government forced to work in an environment of severe political and financial constraint to comply with national equality laws, international law, and the Czech Republic's many ratified Conventions. However, as stated, significant progress has been made (Pascal et al. 2013, 35)<sup>42</sup> and it is important to build on this progress for the benefit of all children and the whole Czech society.
- 3.1.6 In the light of the findings from the research process as described within this report, these recommendations are arranged in order to suggest an appropriate sequence for the undertakings that will be required to secure access to high quality early childhood education and care for all children aged 0–3 and 3–6 years, as well as addressing other factors that indirectly negatively impact Roma families with young children. The recommendations also focus on the necessity of improving Roma children's attainment and regular attendance in kindergarten and mainstream basic school institutional settings.
- 3.1.7 The challenges related to the need to change majority attitudes towards Czech Roma (and other minority groups) are also included in the recommendations, in the interest of improving social cohesion and creating a more just and productive society for all. This report, in common with many international documents, advocates for a reform initiative in relation to the ECEC system in the Czech Republic. It is the combination of policy reforms that will prove effective.
- 3.1.8 Policy reforms need to be well drafted and strengthened politically, and be competently planned and executed through and with the support of research, feasibility studies, and pilot projects that are responsibly monitored. Eventual policies for change need to be well funded with appropriate levels of vigorous and professional evaluation from the launch date.

41 The Barcelona target for provision for children under 3 years was set in 2010.

42 The Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues (CAHROM) (2015) also commented that positive approaches towards desegregation and inclusive education seem to be gaining ground among Czech policy makers.

## 3.2 Recommendations

**Preamble:** The recommendations herein are for central Government ministries, offices, and agencies, particularly the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

Other ministries with relevant interests and responsibilities include Labour and Social Affairs, Health, Justice, Human Rights, Industry and Trade, Interior, Foreign Affairs, Regional Development, Finance, and Culture.

Other relevant offices include the Office of the Government Council for National Minorities, Inter-Ministerial Commission for Roma Community Affairs (Office of the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs), The Institute of Ombudsman—Public Defender of Rights, The Council of the Government of the Czech Republic for Human Rights, Czech Statistical Office, Agency for School Inclusion, and Agency for Social Inclusion in Roma Localities.

### **Pursuant to the following:**

- The Anti-Discrimination Act 2009;
- National Action Plan for Inclusive Education (NAPIE) (adopted by Government Resolution No.206 of March 15, 2010; amended in July 2015 and now 2016-2018);
- Roma Integration Concept of the Czech Government 2010–2013;
- National Strategy for the Fight against Social Exclusion (2011–2015);
- National Strategy for the Integration of Roma 2012–2020;
- Principles of the Long Term Czech Strategy for Roma Integration to 2015;
- The concept of in-time care for children from “socio-culturally disadvantaged” environments adopted by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports;<sup>43</sup> and
- The responsibilities implicit in the Council of the European Union’s recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States, December 2013 (Council of the European Union 2013).

**In cognisance of** pending (2015) legislative reforms in preschool education and Section 16a § 5 Amendment to the Education Act (approved spring 2015).

**And taking into consideration** the importance of children’s human rights and welfare being central to all educational and welfare reforms.<sup>44</sup>

**In light of the the central finding in this Special Report on Roma Inclusion in Early Childhood Education and Care**, namely that preschool policies, provision, and practices are failing to meet fully the needs and expectations of many families with children aged 0 to 8 years in the Czech Republic, particularly families facing socio-economic disadvantage, including many Roma families.

**The Government of the Czech Republic** (led by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports)—in close collaboration with Roma civil society stakeholders and all relevant ministries, offices, and agencies—**is invited to give serious consideration to the following recommendations:**

43 2005 Schools Act.

44 The Council of Europe’s legal standards, implementation tools, and materials on children’s rights are highlighted on the organization’s website ([www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/](http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/)). See also UNICEF 2015.

**The re-issuing of an affirmative statement on the Government’s commitment to ECEC in the Czech Republic for all its citizens, and the initiative of a new national priority to bring informed coordination and reality to a comprehensive early childhood orientated reform program, and for this commitment to be reflected, fortified, and implemented by the establishment of a standing National Preschool (ECEC, age range 0 to 8 years) Working Group to be set up and Chaired by the Minister of Education.**

The standing National Preschool (ECEC) Working Group would need to have wide ministerial representation, formalized access to all relevant data, and the support of appropriate expert consultants, including directors of relevant educational institutions. The standing National Preschool (ECEC) Working Group would also need to be vested with sufficient powers, funds, and authority to commission investigatory and feasibility studies to identify, quantify, and regularly report to Parliament any measures and changes in national, local, and institutional policy, provision, and/or practice required to ensure that all families have ready and universal entitlements to quality, equitable, and inclusive ECEC services for children age 0 to 3 and age 3 to 6, irrespective of their needs, socio-economic backgrounds, or ethnic status.

Notwithstanding the recommendations, policy proposals, and actions stemming from the timely establishment of a National Preschool (ECEC) Working Group—in cognisance of the critical importance of quality ECEC to an individual’s and to society’s health, wellbeing, and wealth in the medium and longer term—it is further recommended that reforms include:

1. Continued national debates surrounding an agreed professional consensus on the definition and understanding of “inclusive education” and “pupils with special educational needs,” and for these to be compatible with international best practices and expectations and enshrine equal dignity, respect, and treatment for all children irrespective of their diversity of need, background, or ethnic heritage.

Addenda:

- And that the national Action Plan on Inclusive Education be in line with, and based on, the Education Strategy 2020 and the current comprehensive Action Plans 2015/16 and 2016–18, and should include and endorse any relevant amendments proposed by the National Preschool (ECEC) Working Group in its deliberations on policy, provision, and practice, and for said Action Plan to be adopted in all aspects of education and implemented with genuine vigor across the whole education system (Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues [CAHROM] 2015, 21).
- It may also be considered important for a manual of inclusive education for schools and teachers to be prepared by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (in collaboration with all other relevant stakeholders), modelled on, and influenced by, UNICEF’s (2012) *The Right of Roma Children to Education*, UNESCO’s (2001) *Understanding and Responding to Children’s Needs in Inclusive Classrooms: A Guide for Teachers*, and Booth and Ainscow’s (2002) “Index for Inclusion” tool.<sup>45</sup>

45 The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports published three such manuals (preschool, primary, and secondary) in 2005, funded by the European Union PHARE Program and written by a team of Czech and United Kingdom experts under the direction of Focus Consultancy, London.

2. A Government commitment, based on an objective feasibility study and as a prioritised part of a national ECEC strategy, to increase support to families of young Roma children, including, but not limited to, increased access to crèches, together with a rapid and adequate expansion of kindergartens for ages 2/3 to 6,<sup>46</sup> prioritised within a set timeframe.

Addenda:

This policy commitment should have a number of recommended characteristics including:

- For such institutions to be free of fees and/or additional costs for children aged 3 to 6 years (initially for children in families suffering socio-economic hardship).
- Free school meals, transport (specially arranged for families in racially segregated and/or geographically isolated settings and where no alternative is available), books and other learning resources, educational visits, and after school activities for children in families suffering socio-economic hardship.<sup>47</sup>
- Decisions over kindergarten site locations and the drawing of geographic catchment areas to ensure equality of coverage and the avoidance of ethnic segregation.
- Clear and dated targets for adequate numbers of child places in kindergartens.
- Collaboration with fully qualified staff to ensure that early intervention and support provides socially disadvantaged children with the experiences necessary for their comprehensive development and successful schooling, which, in the context of their family and social environment, would be difficult to achieve without such support.
- Establish staffing salary ratios to provide additional financial incentives to attract high quality teachers and assistants to work in schools in areas of socio-economic disadvantage.
- Facilitate professional outreach to “hard-to-reach” families (in the interests of child protection, parental awareness-raising, developing trusting relationships with parents, and promoting the importance of preschool participation and regular attendance for children aged 2/3 to 6 years).
- Continuation of the duty of professional intervention for families and children at risk.
- A duty to aid and educate parents in the necessary skills for the successful parenting of young children (modelling such support on the good practice models uniquely developed and provided by certain NGOs and international agencies that have been pioneering successful work in this area for many years (e.g. the Roma Education Fund’s project, “Together to Preschool: Successful ECEC Intervention in Ostrava.”
- A duty to promote community cohesion and the scheduling of regular parent meetings that secure and embrace an institution’s ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic, and social diversity.
- The establishment of a welcoming ethos and a curriculum for all children reflective of the cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity in the community (including Roma language, history, and culture).

46 In 2014 the European Union’s Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs and Inclusion emphasised the potential of European Union funds for establishing preschool facilities and expanding their services (Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues [CAHROM] 2015, 17).

47 This is in line with the 2009 Council of Europe Committee of Ministers’ recommendations.

- A duty to establish links between local kindergartens and basic schools to cooperatively facilitate the guaranteed enrolment of all the children at the appropriate transfer age.
3. A significant obligatory element for all initial pre-school and basic school teacher training courses in all colleges and universities, as well as for in-service training for serving teachers and support/assistant staff, which focuses specifically on the theory and practice of inclusive education.

Addenda:

- To include the pedagogical skills of planning and implementing differentiation rooted in individual and ongoing pupil assessment, and incorporating intercultural perspectives together with the pedagogic skills of teaching the Czech language as a second or additional language.
4. Recruitment and training by the CSI of sufficient, well qualified, and experienced Roma teachers, as well as a significant number of school directors (from kindergartens, basic primary, basic practical/special, basic lower secondary, and upper secondary schools) with a proven and verified record of successful inclusive practice. The welcome practice of visiting schools with Roma experts should be continued and extended.
  5. The policy on the appointment of appropriately trained Roma teachers, mediators, and teacher assistants should be strengthened and scaled-up nationally.
  6. All necessary legislative, legal, or administrative actions taken by the appropriate authorities within central government to ensure that any amendments to the preschool legal context take due cognisance of the important national debate (at the time of writing) concerning the compulsory preschool year. Irrespective of the outcomes of this debate and subsequent government decisions, it is strongly recommended that national policy developments secure for all children a universal entitlement to quality, equitable, and inclusive ECEC services, irrespective of their needs, socio-economic backgrounds, or ethnic heritage.<sup>48</sup>

Addenda:

- It is desirable that the right of **every** child to be enrolled in public education without hindrance, and at the appropriate age, be protected. Specialist institutions that test children, and in some cases prevent or delay their enrolment in mainstream basic schools, should over time be transformed into advisory centers and/or locations for professional development and training. The professional context of selection testing should be replaced as soon as possible by individual pupil assessment aimed at monitoring individual progress and used as the pivotal guide for teaching and learning (Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues [CAHROM] 2015, 346-37).
7. All necessary legislative, legal, or administrative actions taken by the appropriate authorities within central government to ensure that **within one year** the pre-primary preparatory year (whether compulsory or an entitlement) is implemented **only** within kindergartens and mainstream basic schools.

48 It is to be noted that the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), recommends that such a preschool year should be made compulsory (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance October 2015).

8. All necessary legislative, legal, or administrative actions taken by the appropriate authorities within central government and local (municipalities, district, and/or regional) education authorities to ensure that no school or class in any kindergarten, mainstream basic primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, or practical basic school shall plan or organize itself in any ways that result in ethnically segregated schools, classes, or groups of pupils/students within classes or other contexts (e.g. school assemblies, sports teams, etc.).
9. All necessary legislative, legal, or administrative actions taken by the appropriate authorities within central government to encourage more local authorities and schools to adopt enrolment procedures exploiting new technologies that aid in the elimination of bias in the selection of pupils.

Addenda:

- Parents and/or their advocates should continue to be able to verify the date of receipt of their application and the institution’s maximum number of child places (known as the establishment’s “roll capacity”) within the different age cohorts and their current number on roll.
- The policy of basic school enrolment postponement should be reviewed.

10. All necessary legislative, legal, or administrative actions by the appropriate authorities within central government to ensure—through encouragement, support, appropriate funding streams and, if required, central direction—that municipalities, districts, and/or regional education authorities with legitimate statutory duties in regard to kindergarten and school provision are advised to devise strategic policies to eliminate ethnic segregation and educational discrimination in their territory and sphere of influence.<sup>49</sup>

Addenda: And for such strategic policies to include:

- The redrawing of school catchment areas to ensure better ethnic and social pupil mix.
- High-profile (professional and public) campaigns (including the use of national, local, and social media) on the importance of educational inclusion and intercultural education for community relations, social cohesion, and the quality of education provided within schools for all children and young people.
- Routine publicity initiatives (including the use of social media) with school parental cohorts for focus group discussions on the topics of race relations and social inclusion as part of the strategic policies concerned with preventing de facto segregation by parental school choice.

11. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports—in close cooperation with the Czech Statistical Office, other relevant Ministries (e.g. Health, Housing, Employment, Justice, etc.), public service providers, the Czech Schools Inspectorate, and relevant legally competent authorities—would be well advised to establish a national policy of data collection reliant upon routine mechanisms and standard indicators for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of all public service provision, particularly the operation and practice of educational institutions and all public service provision related to legislatively approved educational reforms.

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49 See Farkas (2014, p. 18) and CSI (2015). Both reports speak to the hidden patterns of Roma segregation in the Czech Republic and draw attention to the fact that 30 percent of Roma pupils were enrolled at special or practical schools (in dramatic disproportion to their national demographic status of 2.37 percent).

Addenda:

- Within said national policy on data collection, the opportunities afforded by EU legislation should be used to collect national anonymous data on pupils that allows for ethnic disaggregation analysis. This must be secured; it is crucial if national equality, anti-discrimination, and human rights legislation (including the Czech Republic's many ratified international Conventions) are to be responsibly implemented and pursuant to professional accountability.
  - The Act on the Protection of Personal Data should not be misused to frustrate educational reform evaluation processes (Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues [CAHROM] 2015, 7).
12. All necessary legal or administrative actions taken by the appropriate authorities within central government, particularly the Ministry of Justice, to ensure that national, local, and social media comply with national and international laws on anti-discrimination, xenophobia, and hate-speech, and that infringements will be pursued and dealt with in strict accordance with the law (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, October 2015).

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**Open Society Foundations – London**

7th Floor, Millbank Tower, 21–24 Millbank  
London SW1P 4QP, UK  
[www.opensocietyfoundations.org](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org)

**Roma Education Fund**

Teréz körút 46  
H–1066 Budapest, Hungary  
[www.romaeducationfund.org](http://www.romaeducationfund.org)

**UNICEF Regional Office for CEE/CIS**

Palais des Nations  
CH–1211 Geneve 10  
[www.unicef.org/ceecis](http://www.unicef.org/ceecis)

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