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# Higher Education Internationalisation and Mobility: Inclusion, Equalities and Innovation Supporting Roma Students to Access Higher Education

**Roma, Education, and Higher Education policies:  
The International Context and the Case of Sweden**

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**Report**

A Project funded by Horizon 2020: The EU Programme for Research and innovation Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Research and Innovation Staff Exchange (RISE).  
Grant agreement No 643739





To Cite:

Alexiadou, N., Norberg, A. 2015. Roma, Education, and Higher Education policies: The International Context & and the Case of Sweden. Report as part of the *Higher Education Internationalisation and Mobility: Inclusion, Equalities and Innovation* Project. Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, Research and Innovation Staff Exchange, Horizon 2020. Grant agreement No. 643739.

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## Executive Summary

### Project Aims

The Higher Education Internationalisation and Mobility (HEIM) project investigates policies, interventions and methodologies for the internationalisation of higher education in different national locations. HEIM focuses on the Roma community in Europe as a critical example of a marginalised group, at both staff and student levels, to consider how principles of equity and inclusion can be applied to higher education internationalisation strategies and programmes.

HEIM is a collaboration between three universities (Seville, Sussex, and Umeå) and the Roma Education Fund (REF), in Hungary. The project comprises a number of different work packages, delivered over 3-years, from January 2015 to December 2017, including secondments, staff exchange and collaborative inquiry.

The specific work package informing this Report on *Supporting Roma Students in HE* involved researchers from Seville, Sussex, and Umeå being seconded to the REF head-offices in Budapest, Hungary in March 2015.

### The scope of the report

The current report provides a review of the international policy context relevant to issues of education access for Roma young people. We present and evaluate selected policy frameworks that regulate the access of Roma children and young people to high quality education, and policy solutions that have been offered in response to existing inequalities. Our report draws on documentary and academic analysis of relevant policy documents, reports and articles, produced by international organisations, civil society, and national agencies. Our selection of such documents is informed by their focus on the definitions of Roma rights, Roma education, and HE access.

In particular, we examine:

1. The regulatory frameworks provided by the Council of Europe, the United Nations, and Civil Society, as far as these pertain to education rights. We discuss issues of implementation and the implications of actions taken to redress national practices of discrimination against Roma students.
2. We focus on the European Union framework, and we review education and higher education policy. We provide a critical account of the capacity of the EU to implement successfully the *National Roma Inclusion Strategies* (NRIS) in the sphere of education. We discuss such capacity from the perspective of policy analysis of the ET2020 framework, and the nature of the ‘soft law’ instruments employed to effect change.
3. Finally, we focus on one national case: Sweden. We provide an account of the Swedish strategies on Roma education, and highlight areas for policy action and (possibly) policy learning.

## Recommendations

### (1) Use of disaggregate data and enforcement capacity

- Lack of statistical data on Roma children that are in and out of school has been identified by the UN and Civil Society organisations as a major problem since it impedes policy action. This is even more problematic for Roma citizens moving across the EU.
- Most countries in Europe do not register populations by ethnicity and Roma organisations have an ambiguous or negative position towards registration by ethnicity. But, there are good examples of countries registering people by ethnicity in biannual or quarterly Labour Force surveys – this should be encouraged as a more generalized practice.
- To overcome the implementation challenges of national action plans for Education the EU has the capacity to steer reform through the use of the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Funds.
- National and local authorities across the EU should be made aware of the rights of migrant Roma (and other ethnic minority) populations in terms of access to education. Countries across the EU (including the so called ‘destination’ wealthier states) often show poor understanding and insufficient respect to rights of EU migrant citizens as these are related to residence status.

### (2) Definitions of ‘integration’, ‘equality’ and ‘inclusion’

- There is a need to develop a policy definition of inclusion & integration from the European Commission and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in developing indicators for the NRIS. Such a definition could draw on developed versions of ‘equality’ emerging from a UN human rights framework, and be linked to specific indicators that are outcome-based.
- Drawing on both the UN and the European Roma Rights Centre recommendations, we argue for a definition of equality and inclusion that addresses the prevailing attitudes in the wider populations, as these often result in discriminatory practices for Roma children and young people. Such definition will also provide ways to operationalise intercultural rights.
- There should be full participation of Roma communities, and NGOs in the design of strategies for the integration and progression in education systems. This would also link with definitions of *equality as a participatory process* giving voice to the communities concerned and hence improving the chances of policy solutions that are more fair, effective and sustainable.

### (3) School segregation and pathways to HE

- Placement of Roma children in ‘special education’ settings is a common practice, despite the legal challenges to many States. The European Commission should take stronger action in

monitoring such practices – and making attendance at mainstream schools for Roma children a condition for ESF funding.

- Residential and hence socio-economic and ethnicity-based segregation cannot be addressed in the same way. Our recommendation is that the European Commission takes a critical position to the widespread practice of *free parental choice of school* that is exercised increasingly throughout Europe. The conventional wisdom that parental/individual choice is a ‘good’ higher than equality, should be re-examined and the outcomes of such a practice should be made more explicit to the European Parliament and to Member States governments. Incentives should be given to schools and municipalities to integrate children in common, non-selective, and high quality schools for all.

#### **(4) Sites of responsibility for Roma education & policy learning**

- NGOs and donors are still fundamental in many countries in Europe to ensure the access of Roma children and young people to good quality education. Their gradual withdrawal should only be considered when national governments can convince the European Commission, UN related organisations and major NGOs of their commitment to addressing educational inequalities for Roma young people. Such commitments should be evidenced by:
  - (a) Statistical data of student outcomes that show a serious closing of the gap in achievement and progression of Roma students in education;
  - (b) Statistical data of employment patterns that show a closing of the gap in employment possibilities for young Roma;
  - (c) Affirmative actions that aim to operationalise equality legislation and equality policy commitments that the Roma Decade countries have made to international organisations. Such actions should be evidenced by the embedding of equality policies and practices in the way the state administration is organised, but also the ways in which state and private sector employment reflects the make-up of the population
- We suggest a closer cooperation between Decade countries with countries such as Sweden that have longer traditions of designing effective measures of inclusion for minorities in successful (compulsory) education pathways. This could be in the form of policy learning consistent with the soft measures of EU governance of education policy in the Europe 2020 strategy. Sweden has models of ‘integration’ schools that can act as examples of good practice of genuine integration for pupils of migrant background - very much consistent with the wider UN definitions for equality and inclusion.
- Sweden can benefit from policy learning of successful initiatives in Eastern and Central EU countries that offer examples of good practice in relation to Roma access in HE.



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## PART I

### Roma, Education, and Higher Education Policies - Internationalising the Issues

#### Introduction

Roma<sup>1</sup> people in Europe face systematic direct and indirect discrimination, high levels of unemployment and poverty and significant political and social marginalisation. This has been an experience for most Roma people throughout the continent, with starker manifestations in Eastern and Central European countries.

Until the collapse of Communism in these countries European Roma have had somewhat better chances of accessing equal basic rights by reliance on state institutions that guaranteed a degree of employment and access to education. This ended in the post-1989 period, and the transition to neo-liberal market economies (Herakova, 2009). Increasingly a person's level of education determined labour market outcomes in a more direct way, and "social upward mobility seems to be more and more determined by family assets, in terms of social, economic and cultural capital" (Brüggemann, 2012:9).

As a result of factors including extreme poverty, segregation, stigmatization, and high dropout rates among Roma young people, their attendance beyond primary school is dramatically lower than the average. In 2013, in South-East Europe only 18% of Roma children attend secondary school, compared with 75% of the population, and less than 1% of Roma attend university<sup>2</sup>.

The geographical spread of Roma groups across Europe, and the increasing widening of the European Union project, has meant that issues to do with Roma education are no longer seen exclusively in national terms. As many of the reports and papers on this area suggest, Roma issues are being internationalised, with a range of inter-governmental and transnational organisations focusing their policy attention to the challenges facing Roma people.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Roma" is used here, as well as by a number of international organisations and representatives of Roma groups in Europe, to refer to a number of different groups (such as Roma, Sinti, Kale, Gypsies, Romanichels, Boyash, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom) and also includes Travellers, without denying the specificities and varieties of lifestyles and situations of these groups (European Commission, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Expert paper prepared by UNICEF on Ending discrimination against Roma children, in Council of Europe report "Ending discrimination against Roma children". Doc. 13158 (<http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/XrefViewPDF.asp?FileID=19545&Language=EN>).



Across Europe and in particular through the expansion and deepening of the European Union integration project, political and economic rights of citizens have taken precedence over social rights. There is no European welfare state as such. Still, the creation and strengthening of European citizenship has been important to the EU. In 2013, the EU initiated the European Year of Citizens, in celebration of the achievements of citizenship and to highlight the positive progress since.

Constitutional reforms have reinforced citizens' political (mainly) and social (to a lesser extent) rights through Treaties but also the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the constitutional status of citizenship has been strengthened in Article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) (European Commission, 2013).

Many of these developments that concern basic citizenship rights have bypassed significant segments of the European population. The (about) 10-12 million Roma people of Europe are prominent amongst them.

In recognition of the persistent and widespread social and economic marginalisation of Roma people throughout Europe there has been significant policy action from three major international organisations, in relation to Roma rights: The United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the European Union<sup>3</sup>. All three organisations provide a legal and political framework that addresses questions of rights for Roma, but there are differences as to the binding nature of such frameworks for states. In addition the World Bank and associated NGOs have been active in developing and funding initiatives but this is not going to be covered other than very briefly in this report, and in relation to specific education initiatives. This is of course not new action, both the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe have, since the mid-1990s promoted the issue of Roma rights in the European agenda.

## **Council of Europe (CoE) & Roma Rights**

1) The Council of Europe has been a fundamental organisation for Human Rights with member states committing themselves to public international law through signing and ratifying Conventions, but without transferring any sovereign powers to the organisation. The CoE is politically significant in taking decisions and focusing policy action on certain areas of human rights. Through the European Court of Human Rights it monitors the implementation of human rights commitments and legislation in member states. Relevant Conventions in education concern education specific but also wider Conventions that concern the Protection of Human

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<sup>3</sup> The EU has a special significance for the protection of Roma minorities since this was addressed in the 1990s during the pre-accession negotiations for the central-eastern European countries.



Rights and Fundamental Freedoms - including prohibition of discrimination (1950), and more recently the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages (1992), and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995).

2) The Council of Europe has also paid particular and more specific attention to the Roma in Europe, through the publication of numerous Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers on issues of national and regional development policies, but also on the education of Roma children (see for example, Recommendation DM/Rec(2009)4).

3) In 2010 the CoE introduced a major policy framework for dealing with Roma issues in Europe, launching the so called *Strasbourg Declaration on Roma* (CoE, 2010). The aim of the Declaration was to focus the attention of European societies and governments on dealing with neglected issues of (a) discrimination, citizenship and the rights of children and women within Roma communities, (b) social inclusion as related to employment, healthcare, housing and education, and (c) issues of empowerment and access to justice. The Declaration was followed by initiatives to train Roma mediators and lawyers<sup>4</sup> to facilitate Roma community accessing their legal and human rights in their countries.

4) The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities makes a link between 'integration' and 'education' referring to 'integration in diversity', arguing for balance between common values and language and information/representation of minorities in the school curriculum.

5) The inter-governmental work on Roma issues received further visibility in 2011 when a new Ad Hoc Committee of Experts (CAHROM) was created - with relevant Roma organisations and stakeholders acting as observers. The task of CAHROM is to analyse and to evaluate national policies and practices, and to facilitate the exchange of 'good practice' across CoE members. CAHROM has up to now endorsed 3 major reports on education, produced by experts of selected member states:

- Thematic report on school attendance for Roma children, in particular Roma girls (Finland, Latvia, Norway, Sweden)
- Thematic report on school drop-out/absenteeism of Roma children (Netherlands, Hungary, Spain, Sweden)
- Thematic report on inclusive education for Roma children (Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, United Kingdom)

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<sup>4</sup> The following site provides a compilation of reports, recommendations and policy initiatives and Court rulings compiled by the CoE: <http://wayback.archive-it.org/1365/20140719015104/http://hub.coe.int/en/web/coe-portal/event-files/our-events/council-of-europe-meeting-for-roma>



None of these 3 reports addresses Higher Education. Instead, they focus on identifying and discussing solutions to the problem of Roma children access to Basic Education, issues of segregation, racial and institutional discrimination, and higher than average levels of drop-out from school (both compulsory and upper secondary) for Roma pupils. These pre- Higher Education stages are of course fundamental if accessing HE is to become a possibility for Roma young people.

**Problems of implementation and enforcement** - Even though the CoE Conventions are part of international law, the voluntary nature of membership means that states decide which Conventions to sign and ratify (in some cases just sign and not ratify), or entirely opt-out of. Also, the European Court of Human Rights has been criticised for failing to take action against member states that do not fulfil their legal obligations. In 2007 there was for the first time a legal challenge to the systematic segregation in education on the basis of ethnicity, whereby Roma children in the Czech Republic were identified as 27 times more likely to be placed in ‘special schools for the mentally disabled’. A case was brought to the European Court of Human Rights (*D.H. and Others v The Czech Republic*) that ruled that this pattern of segregation violated non-discrimination protections in the European Convention on Human Rights. Each applicant received 4,000 EUR for being falsely labelled as having a disability and relegated to substandard schools and to jobs (ERRC, 2015). Despite the very low level of financial compensation, this case was the first successful challenge to systemic racial segregation in education to reach the European Court of Human Rights.

## **The United Nations & Roma Rights**

1) The UN is the foremost intergovernmental organisation for the protection of human rights and has a global membership reach. Its Declarations are not legally binding but many countries incorporate the provisions of these Declarations into their national laws. When member states ratify Conventions these have the force of law and there are various mechanisms (experts, working groups, special rapporteurs) that monitor compliance. In terms of its significance for the Roma population, there is a strong academic argument that sees the UN as a very advanced intergovernmental forum for the definition of ‘rights’ in legal and policy terms - despite having a weaker form of legal enforcement capacity on member states compared to the Council of Europe or the European Union: “although the EU provides a legal institution that can impose specific obligations to the states, its documents do not fully apply the standards on human rights as have been pushed forward by the United Nations” (Xanthaki, 2015:3).

2) Specifically, the UN has made more progress in defining and interpreting the term ‘integration’ as applied to minorities, and clarifying that integration and the protection of minority cultures are not antithetical. So, the Human Rights Committee has promoted the need to raise awareness of minority cultures by the majority; and the Committee on the Elimination

of Racial Discrimination (CERD) has insisted on Roma self-identification and active participation in policy making in relation to the Czech Republic. Also, since 2005 the UN has established the Commission on Human Rights (2005/79), and set up the position of a Special Rapporteur on minority issues. CERD has argued for affirmative action for Roma people through the taking of ‘Special Measures’ for Roma but some States seem to have interpreted this as permission to do, but not a requirement.

3) The United Nations actions move beyond defining citizenship and minority rights in liberal terms as a legal status based on nationality. Their interpretation extends the concept to political participation, but also to issues of identity and belonging that recognise that these are not necessarily contained within national territories. This ties in with the idea that ‘a right’ is not merely about legal entitlement (often not enjoyed by non-citizens for instance), since to enjoy such rights there needs to be the appropriate “social structures through which power, material resources and meanings are created and articulated” (Nash, 2009:1069).

4) This ‘fuller’ interpretation of rights in the case of Roma entitlement to education can be found within UN provisions in a way that the EU does not address as comprehensively (Xantaki, 2015). As an example of this wider interpretation of rights, the human-rights approach emphasises the connection between inequality, discrimination and poverty, and links minority peoples’ identity to their cultural and linguistic heritage:

*Human rights-based approaches to development are essential and must give greater attention to the promotion and protection of minority rights, which offers an important path to development for national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities (UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues Rita Izsák, 2014).*

5) The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has contributed two large and very significant reports on Roma issues that drew on Roma Household Survey data:

In 2003, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report *Avoiding the dependency trap* provided statistical evidence showing that a significant number of Roma in the EU face severe challenges in terms of illiteracy, infant mortality and malnutrition.

In 2009, the Data in focus report on ‘The Roma’ by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) supplied statistical data showing that a substantial proportion of Roma are affected by what they perceive as very high levels of discrimination.

The second important report, was published in 2012, *The Situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States Survey - Results at a Glance*<sup>5</sup>.

The significance of these reports lies in the robust and widespread statistical evidence they provide, but also, politically they provided impetus for international and transnational organisations to focus policy attention to the conditions of Roma people lives<sup>6</sup>.

6) The UN (as well as many of the NGOs and Rights organisations working on minority and Roma issues) highlight the need for the collection of data at national level<sup>7</sup>:

*A major barrier in assessing and tackling disparities is the lack of data disaggregated by ethnicity, religion or language. Data is vitally important for effective poverty reduction and yet, within aid modalities on poverty, the collection of ethno-cultural disaggregated data is not uniformly supported. In 2005, UNDP published MDG Monitoring and Reporting: A Review of Good Practices, wherein it recommends that, “Whenever possible, disaggregated data should be used to highlight disparities across gender, ethnicity, geographical location, age or other dimensions of inequality”... .. In a few countries where disaggregated data exist, these reflect clearly the inequalities between majority and minority groups. Equally, they provide essential baseline data upon which to base targeted interventions and monitor progress... Disaggregated data is also essential in this regard and allows inequalities to be statistically demonstrated, and progress towards targets to be monitored and evaluated. (Izsák, 2014)*

6) There are 3 key recommendations that emerge from the UN (and more specifically the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and the

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<sup>5</sup> “FRA, the UNDP and the World Bank coordinated their work and contributed to this process by providing data, analysis and evidence-based advice. The three organisations, funded partly by DG Regional Policy of the European Commission and partly through their own resources and others, coordinated their expertise to undertake survey work in 11 EU Member States and in neighbouring European countries” (p.5)

<sup>6</sup> There are two large secondary studies that were published on the basis of these reports:

- a. The World Bank, Ringold, D., Orenstein, M.A. and Wilkens, E. (2005) Roma in an expanding Europe: Breaking the poverty cycle, Washington D.C., The World Bank, [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTROMA/Resources/roma\\_in\\_expanding\\_europe.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTROMA/Resources/roma_in_expanding_europe.pdf)
- b. Brüggemann, C. 2012. Roma Education in Comparative Perspective. Analysis of the UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011. Roma Inclusion Working Papers. Bratislava: United Nations Development Programme.

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted however, that Roma civil society organisations are ambiguous on the issue, and have not taken a clear position on the argument for data segregated by ethnicity (ERCC meeting, 27 March 2015). This seems to derive from a deep distrust of governments and a fear of offering self-identification as Roma.

Special Rapporteur on Minority issues), that are particularly pertinent for dealing with Roma rights issues. These are as follows:

- There is strong need for states to collect and compile disaggregated data that allow inequalities to be identified, quantified and measured. This is necessary for a ‘goals driven’ policy approach to deal with inequalities, for the designing of targeted solutions, and the monitoring and evaluation of progress. Also, politically, the lack for statistical data is also frequently used by governments as a formal justification for inaction;
- Highlighting the need for states, for the UN and other relevant organisations to develop ‘objectives’ and ‘targets’ for addressing inequalities faced by minorities;
- The need for states to develop well-designed and targeted affirmative action policies and programmes to address the economic, social and educational exclusion or marginalisation of minority groups.

## **The European Union – Roma rights and education**

Across Europe the issue of school segregation affects Roma children in almost all countries with high numbers of Roma populations. Segregation based on race or ethnicity is “within the parameters of racial discrimination, as segregation is a formalised and institutionalised form of racial discrimination” (Xanthaki, 2005:516). There are two areas of ‘segregation’ that seem to affect Roma children disproportionately:

- (a) Segregation of Roma children and placement into special educational needs schools, following processes of assessment. This is a common form of segregation and one that has been successfully challenged by the European Court of Justice<sup>8</sup>.
- (b) Segregation of Roma children on the basis of residential segregation. This is a much harder form of segregation to deal with, because it is the outcome of policies of parental choice of schools that operate quite widely across Europe – the segregationist outcomes of parental choice have been documented by research and have a strong ethnicity and socio-economic dimension in all countries that have put them in place. It is a form of segregation that rarely allows for legal redress, since the reasons for segregation are not explicit.

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<sup>8</sup> The European Court of Human Rights has a host of cases dealing with the education rights of Romani children:

[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma\\_childdiscrimination\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_childdiscrimination_en.pdf)

1) The EU is founded on the values of “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, as it follows from Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union and in particular from Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union”. In recognising these legal and human rights, the European Council identifies the issues of social exclusion, discrimination and inequality, and the need for the EU to have an explicit commitment to combat these (drawing on Article 3 of the Treaty on the EU, and Articles 9, 10 of TFEU).

2) The Treaty of the European Union specifies ‘equality’ as one of the founding values of the union (Art 2), and takes the responsibility to “combat social exclusion and discrimination” and the “protection of the rights of the child” (Art 3). Further provisions in the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU enable the European Council to take appropriate action to combat discrimination “based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation” (Art 19(1)). More specifically for education, Council Directive 2000/43/EC1 “lays down a framework for combating discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin throughout the Union in relation to employment and training, education, social protection (including social security and healthcare), social advantages and access to, and supply of, goods and services, including housing” (Council of the European Union, 2013).

3) The European Union has instruments that are used to improve the inclusion, non-discrimination and equal opportunities of the Roma especially in education. Some of these instruments are financial (potentially the most powerful ones), with fewer legal instruments to implement change.

4) Education and Higher Education policy are governed by the principle of subsidiarity, which restricts the legal competence of the EU to intervene in the content or organisation of member states’ systems. Education policy is now based on ‘soft’ governance mechanisms such as the Open Method of Coordination, which rely on policy learning, benchmarking and informal normative pressures for the achievement of ‘common agreed goals’ (Fink-Hafner and Deželan, 2014; Lange and Alexiadou, 2010)

5) (i) Even though the conditions of Roma citizens’ life has been mentioned and to some extent discussed in European Council Conclusions and Commission Staff Working Documents during the 2000s, the first critical policy development took place in 2011 when the European Council endorsed an “EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020”. Member States are required to develop National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) around four specified areas for policy action for member states: Education, Employment, Health, and Housing. The Framework applies to all EU member states, but each national government is expected to tailor it to their own circumstances.

(ii) In the EU Framework, the Commission calls on Member States to:

- ensure a minimum, primary school completion,
- widen access to quality early childhood education and care,
- ensure that Roma children are not subject to discrimination or segregation,
- reduce the number of early school leavers, and,
- encourage Roma youngsters to participate in secondary and tertiary education.

(iii) Despite the fact that countries are developing the NRIS, there are no specific indicators developed by the Commission. But, the EU delegated to the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) the task to form an indicator's working group. The participation of Member States (MS) to the working group is voluntary (10 MS were represented in 2012). We have not found any public document where results of the working group work are reported.

(iv) Most of the measures covered by these initiatives refer to citizens of the MS countries, but they are not designed to deal effectively with issues of *migrant populations*, and particularly with migrants without papers, as a large proportion of Roma are. Key issues around migration and recognition of citizenship rights: (a) migration of citizens of one EU country to another (the usual issues that (poor) migrants face), in addition to (b) migration of Roma people from one EU country to another when no formal citizens papers are available. Even though the free movement of persons, as established in the Treaty, is “one of the most tangible and successful achievements of European integration as well as being a fundamental freedom” (see Council Conclusions, 2011:7), in relation to Roma migration, it has been seen as a threat and a problem, with countries reacting in often disproportionate ways against a perceived ‘influx’ of poor Roma migrants (that usually does not have much correspondence to reality (see ERRC, 2014)).

6) The EU framework was linked to the Europe 2020 Strategy (approved by the Council in 2010). The Strategy is focused around 5 targets for the EU, one of which is the target to reduce the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion – out of whom many are Roma – by at least 20 million by the year 2020: “strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”, where education features prominently as both a priority (developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation) and as one of the 5 headline targets”. This target in particular needs data that is explicit about socioeconomic background. It is not explicitly tied to ethnic or linguistic minority identification since it focuses primarily on poverty and exclusion on the basis of poverty.

- One of the seven flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, covers actions related to the social inclusion of the Roma.

7) In terms of political commitment in dealing with issues of Roma people, the last five years have been very significant for the European Union. In 2013, the adoption of the Council of the European Union Recommendation on “Effective Roma integration measures in the member

states employment, social policy, health and consumer affairs”, even though not legally binding for Member States, was discussed as a big breakthrough in the unanimous commitment of EU States to deal with the challenging issues of Roma exclusion:

*... an important demonstration of the Member States' joint commitment to invest more, and more effectively, in human capital so as to improve the living conditions of Roma people across Europe" ... "We cannot afford to let them down. Now is the time for Member States to allocate substantial EU funding in the 2014-20 period, together with national money, to help Roma communities to realise their full potential, and to demonstrate the political will at all levels to ensure the money is well spent (Commissioner László Andor, DG-Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion)*

*The key tools for Roma integration are now in Member States' hands and it is important that words are followed with action. We will not hesitate to remind EU countries of their commitments and make sure that they deliver. (Vice-President Viviane Reding, Justice Commissioner)*

8) Member States are invited to present their NRIS, or (as an alternative) to specify policy measures for Roma within their wider social inclusion policy framework - with National Contact Points set up in each country. But, as in most areas of social policy, the legal competence to act on an issue rests with the national governments.

9) The first NRIS were submitted and in 2012 the Commission published their Communication “National Roma Integration Strategies: A first step in the implementation of the EU Framework” assessing the structural requirements that different MS have planned for dealing with the areas of Education, Employment, Healthcare and Housing.

10) In 2014 the Commission published a major *Report on the Implementation of the EU Framework for NRIS* that “measures for the first time progress made in the four key areas ..., as well as in the fight against discrimination and the use of funding. It also assesses the progress made at EU level” (European Commission, 2014).

11) The main relevant funds for Roma integration are the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The financial Regulations set out that at least 23.1% of the Cohesion policy budget would be earmarked to investment in people - through the ESF, allocating at least 20% of this amount in each MS to combating poverty and social exclusion.





## EU and Higher Education

1) The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was launched in 2010 following the tenth anniversary of the Bologna Declaration, and aims to ensure “comparable, compatible and coherent systems of HE in Europe” (EHEA website, 2015).

2) The ‘Europe of Knowledge’ agenda has also brought universities at the center of the European Commission concerns, which has expanded its HE activities considerably throughout the 2000s and linked HE policy developments to the Lisbon strategy and the European Research Area (Alexiadou & Findlow, 2014).

3) The Bologna Process launched in 1999 (as intergovernmental process outside of the EU), aims to promote collaboration, but also to transform the product and the process of Higher Education. Even though one of the main purposes of the Bologna process has been to strengthen the competitiveness of European HE and to foster student mobility and employability, the Bologna documents emphasise also the ‘public good’ dimensions of European HE: *A Europe of Knowledge* is recognized as a driver for social and human growth and as a component of European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the necessary competencies to face the challenges of the future, together with an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space (Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education, Bologna, 19 June 1999).

4) Further developing the ‘social dimension’ is part of the current priorities of EHEA and is seen as part of the social responsibility of universities. It is concerned with widening access of under-represented groups to higher education “as a precondition for social progress and economic development”, with the latest Bucharest Communiqué setting the goals of EHEA as quality higher education for all, enhanced employability, and strengthening mobility as a means for better learning.

5) Importantly for issues of ‘citizenship’, the Ministerial Conference reiterated a commitment to promoting “student-centred learning” and “higher education as an open process” that encourage students to develop as: ... active participants in their own learning and intellectual independence and personal self-assuredness alongside disciplinary knowledge and skills. Through the pursuit of academic learning and research, students should acquire the ability to confidently assess situations and ground their actions in critical thought. (Bucharest Ministerial Conference, 2012).

6) The social dimension is a more recent complement to an older and stronger focus on the employability of graduates, to be achieved through improving the connections between higher education, employers and students, but also by increasing the research links, innovation and entrepreneurial potential of courses and students (ibid.). Still, even as far back as 2009, we see

an argument that points towards stronger approaches to HE widening participation than had been thought of earlier:

*The student body within HE should reflect the diversity of Europe's populations. We therefore emphasize the social characteristics of higher education and aim to provide equal opportunities to quality education. Access into HE should be widened by fostering the potential of students from underrepresented groups and by providing adequate conditions for the completion of their studies. This involves improving the learning environment, removing all barriers to study, and creating the appropriate economic conditions for students to be able to benefit from the study opportunities at all levels. Each participating country will set measurable targets for widening overall participation and increasing participation of underrepresented groups in HE, to be reached by the end of the next decade (Leuven Communiqué, 2009, para 9).*

7) But, despite the proclamations of the EHEA documents, one of the main problems with this discourse is that Higher Education policy has been assigned a central role in the improvement of European economies, with knowledge production and research activities viewed primarily (if not exclusively) as economic investment and economic assets. One of the main critiques here, coming from one of the 'new' member states, is that foregrounding the economic functions of universities overshadows the social and cultural dimensions of their responsibilities, and in some national contexts undermine the projects of democratization where universities have played a particularly important role (see Pavlin et al., 2013, in relation to Slovenia).

8) Following the implementation of the EU Framework, the Commission found that despite some action in a few number of countries, post-compulsory education and training (including HE) is challenging for most countries - with serious implications for social inclusion and for labour market participation:

*Beyond compulsory schooling, enrolment differences between Roma and non-Roma become even larger. This is particularly detrimental to Roma integration and makes a difference in the labour market as the lack of professional skills and qualifications prevents Roma adults from accessing quality employment. There are few systemic measures encouraging the participation of Roma youngsters in further education, or helping Roma students to reintegrate into the education system after they have dropped out. Although in Poland, Finland and Sweden measures were put in place to increase the number of students who complete secondary and higher education and to enhance vocational education and training of adult Roma, in most Member States, similar measures are rather sporadic, mainly consisting of scholarships for talented students. In the field of youth, non-formal and informal learning are also important instruments*

*to develop skills and increase employability among young people* (European Commission, 2014:10)

9) There are however, examples of good practice that suggest progress is possible, if there is sustained national commitment to inclusion policies. Romania has been highlighted in the 2014 Commission report for its affirmative action programme for Roma in HE. These are mainstreamed programmes that offer dedicated places for Roma for admission to public universities (in the academic year 2010/11, 555 places have been granted, and in 2012/13, 564 places). There is no doubt this is a positive development with concrete outcomes for individual students. But, in terms of equality of opportunity, there are some areas that can still be improved.

In some countries quota systems are vulnerable to manipulation by individual students (usually of non-minority status) or by University Faculties (see, Idrizi, 2013 in relation to FYROM). In addition, research from the Roma Education Fund suggests that: “Roma students enroll more frequently in humanities and social sciences and less frequently in science, technology, engineering or mathematics, as compared to the mainstream students”, and they “generally come from less privileged socioeconomic background than the mainstream students.” (Garaz, 2015).

The higher concentration on humanities and social sciences is often correlated with weaker success in the labour market for Roma graduates. Further research from REF suggests that University Roma students have a more affluent socio-economic background than the average Roma, but, they still come from a more disadvantaged background compared to mainstream students in their respective countries (Garaz, 2014). There is a strong argument in support of affirmative action HE programmes, that, even though do not target the most marginalised communities have “great potential in forming a critical mass of Romani intellectuals armed with the necessary knowledge to become outspoken public advocates for their group’s cause, to contradict negative stereotypes associated to their group by giving the example of their own professional path, and to constitute a valuable social capital for their less fortunate peers” (ibid. p.295).

10) Through European Commission schemes, Higher Education mobility and internationalisation are addressed through the funding opportunities of the ERASMUS+ programme, which has seen a 40% increase in its budget for the 2014-2020 period<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Defined as “the Union Programme for education, training, youth and sport as well as on the 2014 Erasmus+ Annual Work Programme — International dimension of Higher Education (Heading 4) and 2015 Erasmus+ Annual Work Programme.” [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/discover/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/discover/index_en.htm)

Cooperation projects and strategic partnerships, can help develop new approaches to addressing some of the educational (and HE) challenges faced by Roma students and communities<sup>10</sup>.

- We have not yet found any data concerning the participation of Roma HE students to the Erasmus+ programme. This would be valuable knowledge around issues of internationalisation and mobility of Roma students - in addition to that achieved through the Roma Education Fund scholarships.
- REF supported financially Roma students in Erasmus programmes. But we do not have data on the total ratio of Roma students in the Erasmus programme group.

11) The Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development provides also further opportunities to develop or strengthen policies for Roma access to HE field.

### **Limitations of the EU Policy Framework in Education and Higher Education**

- **Implementation effectiveness**

Legal competence to act on all areas and sectors of education rests with national governments. Education is considered in the Commission as a sensitive policy area, and covered by the principle of subsidiarity. As such, the Council introduced for the first time in 2000 the Open Method of Coordination as a set of ‘soft-law’ measures (Lisbon Council Conclusions, 2000) and began to develop a common education policy. It is important to consider the domestic level of policy-making because in contrast to the classic community method the education OMC does not set out legally binding objectives and does not provide for any formal sanctions in case of non-compliance with its goals. Hence, the OMC attributes a significant role to member states in the realization of its co-ordination aspirations (Alexiadou & Lange, 2013:38).

The definitions of educational equality / integration are almost exclusively human capital investment driven, and so more limited and narrow than the human rights approach of the UN and many of the NGOs that work in the field of Roma education. For example, in the Europe 2020 Strategy, education is identified rather simplistically as the solution to wider social problems: “... better education levels help employability and progress in increasing the employment rate helps to reduce poverty” (Europe 2020, p.9).

The ERASMUS+ programme draws on reports that connect how “human capital inequality affects economic growth”, and how the programme itself “tackles that through improving educational opportunities” ([http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm)).

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<sup>10</sup> In Sweden, 2 national agencies are responsible for the ERASMUS+ programme: The Swedish Council for Higher Education, and, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society.

Such statements marginalise questions of inequalities that draw on any dimension other than that between the perceived link between investments in higher education knowledge, economic growth, and the generation of employment of graduates. In addition, “how employment is distributed” is not addressed (Nicaise, 2012:333), something that research studies specifically on Roma HE graduates have described in relation to which HE specializations are open to Roma students (Garaz, 2014).

In addition to EU and Bologna issues with relevance to Roma inclusion, we shall briefly present a further political framework<sup>11</sup> that is significant especially for education matters.

- This report is very brief on this framework, since it will be addressed more fully in the other HEIM project Reports.

### **Additional Political Frameworks on Roma Inclusion**

In addition to the CoE and EU policy frame for Roma inclusion, there is a third framework that is particularly relevant to Education and Higher Education issues:

(1) *The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015* that was initiated by the Open Society Foundations and the World Bank. The Decade represents a political commitment of 12 governments<sup>12</sup>, and a number of intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, as well as Romani civil society<sup>13</sup>, to working towards Roma inclusion. Education has been identified as one of the four priority areas for the Decade (together with Health, Employment and Housing). Even though the Decade itself does not provide funding for particular inclusion initiatives, it provides a forum for training and for disseminating knowledge about financing

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<sup>11</sup> There are three major political frameworks on Roma inclusion: The EU Framework, the Council of Europe launch of the “Strasbourg Declaration on Roma” (CoE, 2010), and the Decade for Roma Inclusion. In addition to these political frameworks, there is international law and the activities of the United Nations.

<sup>12</sup> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Spain.

<sup>13</sup> The international partners organizations are: Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues - OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), Council of Europe (CoE), European Commission (EC), European Network Against Racism (ENAR), European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF), European Roma Information Office (ERIO), European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP), International Romani Union (I.R.U.), Open Society Foundations (OSF), Roma Education Fund (REF), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) - The UN Refugee Agency, United Nations Children`s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank (WB), World Health Organization (WHO).  
(<http://www.romadecade.org/faq.php>)

initiatives. In addition, it has set up monitoring mechanisms of the Decade National Action Plans that are developed and implemented by the participating governments.

The Decade has been very influential on the EU - an interesting example of ‘policy learning’ of a transnational organisation through the engagement with civil society:

*The Decade for Roma Inclusion has been a strong inspiration for the EU Framework. It has been playing a very positive role in mobilising civil society and ensuring the smooth transition of enlargement countries into the EU Framework. The work of civil coalitions coordinated and supported by the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat has also showed a strong added value.* (European Commission, 2014:12)

(2) The commitment of the Decade to improving education opportunities for Roma children is shown in the establishment of the Roma Education Fund (REF) in 2005. REF defines its mission as the closing of the gap in education outcomes between Roma and non-Roma, and supports programmes that aim at high quality education, scholarships for studying at post-compulsory school level, and the desegregation of education systems.

(3) In many European countries policies segregating Roma children have been practiced extensively, and often justified using culturalist arguments (the protection of the ethnic identity of Roma children). But, research studies from NGOs specialising on Roma children have shown the detrimental effect of this dual policy of ‘equal’ but ‘different’ schools which produce very unequal outcomes for children.

(4) The REF Scholarship Programme is a particularly interesting policy and funding initiative for HE since it offers “merit-based competition academic scholarships for Roma students pursuing Bachelor, Master, or Doctorate degrees at state-accredited universities” in many of the Decade countries and beyond<sup>14</sup>.

(5) REF is supporting (through grants) Roma Versitas in a number of countries: “the training and scholarship program of Roma youngsters in higher education”<sup>15</sup>. It is an organisation committed to the “academic development of participating Roma students, whether learning English, improving IT skills or gaining fluency in their mother tongue”. Versitas pays particular attention to issues of identity, and the importance of Roma students to identify themselves as Roma while also citizens of their countries of origin (<http://www.romaversitas.hu/?q=en>).

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<sup>14</sup> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Kosovo, Montenegro, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey and Ukraine.

<sup>15</sup> REF supported RomaVersitas in Hungary, RYROM, and Serbia, and since 2014 also in Moldova, Albania, Bulgaria and Kosovo.

(6) An example of a successful initiative in widening participation in post-graduate studies for Roma students, is provided by the Central European University (CEU) that offers the Roma Graduate Preparation Program<sup>16</sup>. The program was established in 2004<sup>17</sup>.

## PART II – Sweden & the Roma minority

The history of Roma in Sweden from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards is, as in many other countries, filled with alienation and acts of discrimination. The history from 1900 has been described in an official “white book” in 2014 (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet, 2014). The right for Roma children to attend school is established as late as 1960, and the Roma people’s struggle first for the *right to* school and then *rights within* the school has been described in detail in a dissertation by Rodell Olgac (2006).

(1) Since 1999, the Roma have a recognized minority status in Sweden, as one of five minorities. The Roma population is most often estimated to about 50 000 persons, in a population of 9.6 million, (about 0,5%).

In Sweden there is no registration by ethnicity, so these are only estimates. The Council of Europe averages estimations from different sources to 42 500, whereas a 1999 study from Skolverket estimated the Roma population in Sweden as low as 20 000 (Skolverket 1999), which possibly did not include the group “Resande” (travellers), which do not always consider themselves as Roma, so the present official term in Sweden is now “Roma och Resande”.<sup>18</sup> Estimations of a higher added number of about 100 000 people are common.

(2) The Roma minority in Sweden is comprised of a number of subgroups. The biggest group is the *Resande* (“travelers”), usually estimated to constitute a little less than or about half of the Swedish Roma. They are the group with the longest traditions in Sweden, dating back to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, and are generally considered to be well integrated into Swedish society. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the *Kelderash* group arrived from Eastern Europe. The Finnish Roma, *Kale*,

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<sup>16</sup> “The Roma Graduate Preparation Programme\* (RGPP) is an intensive 9-month programme that prepares outstanding Roma graduates with an interest in social sciences and humanities to compete for places on Master's-level courses at Central European University and other recognized universities”.  
(<http://rap.ceu.edu/node/39638>)

<sup>17</sup> The programme is run by the Roma Access Programmes (RAP) unit of CEU, and is funded by the Ford Foundation, the VELUX Foundations, the Roma Initiatives Office of the Open Society Foundations, the Sigrid Rausing Trust, and the Roma Education Fund

<sup>18</sup> In the following, the term “Roma” will be used, meaning “Roma and Resande”.

arrived from the late 1950s from Finland. They may share ancestral roots with Swedish Resande, but had earlier been dislodged from Sweden to Finland and had when Sweden lost Finland to Russia in 1809 been isolated from the Swedish Resande.

Following the Yugoslav wars, refugees of Roma *Lovari*, *Tjurari*, *Gurbeti* and *Arli* groups came to Sweden as asylum-seekers. More recently, *Roma EU migrants* from Romania and Bulgaria and other eastern EU countries have appeared in Sweden, with a limited permission to reside in the country up to a period of three months as European citizen without employment. These Roma are not considered a part of the Swedish Roma minority.

(3) In 2012 the Swedish Riksdag launched a 20-year cooperative Roma strategy framework, with the title: “A Coordinated Long-term Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2012–2032” (Regeringens skrivelse 2012).

The strategy, initiated by The *Delegation for Roma Issues*, aims at equal sustainable opportunities between Roma and non-Roma born 2012, in 2032. Many reports, white papers, books and studies preceded this decision, and it was also a result of the new minority strategy of the year 2000 (see Govt. Bill 1998/99:143 & Prop. 2008/09:158), with the official recognition of five minorities in Sweden, their rights, cultures and languages. These are Roma and Resande, Swedish Finns, Jews, the Tornedalen Mienkäli-speaking population and the Sami people, of which the last also was again declared as an indigenous population of Sweden. It was declared that all these populations had been living very long in Sweden and are part of the cultural Swedish heritage. At the same time it is declared that individuals decide for themselves if they want to belong to a minority or not. They may also themselves define what this belonging to a minority means to them.

(4) The Roma strategy is also a result of earlier failed inclusion projects and measures, of repeated criticism from the Council of Europe (See: *Romers och Resandes Mänskliga Rättigheter i Europa*, 2010) and a new actuality for the Roma questions in the EU and the UN. The new Swedish strategy for the Roma relies on at least four essential principles. These are recognition, partnership (inclusion of both the Roma and all relevant societal institutions and organizations in implementation of the strategy), a human rights perspective, and long-term/sustained/determined policy measures.

### **Higher Education of Roma in Sweden – challenges and action**

The progress of inclusion of Roma persons in higher education in Sweden is complex in terms of both knowledge and in bringing about change.



(1) Financing higher education is not considered as a critical issue for individual students, as (a) there is no tuition cost (fee), and (b) the cost for living is usually covered by a combination of grant and loans for a maximum of 12 semesters, from the state student financing organization CSN. This applies uniformly to all students, and, it is considered sufficient to enable all students, regardless of family background, to study at post-upper-secondary level. If needed, there are also solutions for free education and grants and loans for preparatory education courses. The loans for studying at a lower (preparatory) level are written-off when the individual continues his/her studies, since the student has won access to and continued higher education. As a result of these funding arrangements for studying at HE, there are no financially-driven affirmative actions of any kind in Sweden in relation to minorities or to any other disadvantaged young people.

(2) However, these comparably generous conditions for participating in higher education have not changed the socio-economic profile of Swedish students as much as politicians once hoped for. Low-income- and low-educated households in Sweden are not so well represented in higher education, although a young student can decide to participate in higher education independent of the family finances. There are other related factors, such as an unwillingness to take loans for education, lower trust that higher education will pay off by securing a good job and perhaps another kind of fear of non-successful studies or unemployment as a graduate with high study loans than in a family with other expectations and economy.

(3) The question of who belongs to the Roma and Resande minority is built on estimates and self-identification. Individuals are also free to define what their belonging to a recognized minority in Sweden means to them. There is no census or other registration of ethnicity, which also makes data collection difficult. On a local school or network level there are of course observations, experiences and estimates, but these can hardly be generalized, but perhaps give an indication anyway. The 1999 report *Romer i Skolan* suggests that Roma pupils who complete the first nine years of school, (the mandatory part), may be counted at 1-2%, or even a couple per thousand. It is not clear what this estimation built on, and if it is true it gives a very dark picture. Both this report and other reports tell about high absence rates, lacking contact between school and families, negative expectations concerning ambitions and results from teachers and schools. We should remember though, that these kinds of estimations concern the self-identified and identifiable Roma students. There can be other people of Roma origin, beyond the estimated 50 000, who do not identifies themselves as Roma in schools – and are just Swedes or refugees from former Yugoslavia.

- Here we provide a worked example, as an illustration, not an estimate, of transition-through-school mechanisms. If an age cohort of Roma people in Sweden (50 000) is about 650 persons and 50% of these 650 pupils in a specific year come through the first 9 years of the education system, that means there is about 325 students who qualify for a programme at

upper secondary school. If we assume that 75% continues to upper secondary school, that means, 244 students. Among these, vocational programmes may be more attractive and easier to get in to but does not automatically qualify them directly for university education. If we have 100 students in university-preparing programs. 50% of these finish with complete qualifications, 50 persons, and are eligible for some university education programs. Of these half do not continue studies at once, or not at all, so we have 25 young Roma students to start university. Half of these do not complete a degree, which is a usual figure. 13 persons a year with Roma background would then graduate from university. If half of these at this stage want to identify themselves as belonging to the Roma minority, although they have Roma relatives, that means there would only be seven persons. With the background of this hypothetical counting example, it is no surprise that newspaper articles shows up now and then, telling us that a Roma young person is, as far as is known, the first one to finish a law degree or become a teacher of a specific kind among Swedish Roma. There are probably more, but it is reported in this way, because Roma in higher education are quite few.

- The national average in Sweden for people age 25-64, the potential work force, that have three years of post-secondary education or more in 2013 (independent of degrees) was 25%, varying between communities: from 9% (Munkfors municipality) to 55%, Danderyd municipality in Stockholm (SCB 2013). The figure for the Roma population is probably less than half of the lowest levels among municipalities in sparsely populated areas.

### **Examples and case studies – Second chance pathways to HE**

- Swedish adult education in municipalities, Kommunal Vuxenutbildning, offers both studies to attain the education level of compulsory schooling, and for completing an upper secondary qualification to enable university education. This education is also tuition-free, and there is a possibility of a study loan for personal subsistence which is cancelled if the individual concerned continues to university and takes up further loans. Some Roma have ended up with big study loans for these levels of basic and qualifying education as they have not completed or not continued. It has been proposed that for at least the compulsory level, there should not be needed any study loans, but personal subsistence for adults should be financed in another way. Nothing is yet decided.<sup>19</sup> These second-chance opportunities can end up in debt, and one or two examples of indebted students in a social network may discourage potential students from taking this alternative which could have led them forward.

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<sup>19</sup> See the green paper from 2013, <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/21/38/62/f61413a9.pdf> , p.159-162

- Three folk high schools working on upper secondary level but with older students who want to get more qualifications; Agnesbergs, Sundbybergs and Marieborgs folk high schools, have taken special measures to widen participation for the Roma minority. Agnesberg, founded 2007, has a profile as a Roma folk high school, the other schools have special programmes for Roma who want to study, and they can prepare for entering higher education<sup>20</sup>.
- Malmö University College planned a programme at a preparatory level to prepare Roma students to enter teacher education programs, but the initiative was closed down due to not sufficient student interest.<sup>21</sup>
- Södertörns University College has been given the responsibility for teacher education in romani chib<sup>22</sup>. Södertörn also has a contract with Skolverket, the national agency of education, to arrange shorter education solutions for the so called ‘bridge builders’ municipalities, who act as mediators between schools and families.<sup>23</sup>
- The “bridge builder” concept is a part of the pilot project phase 2012-2016 in five Swedish municipalities that have been chosen to produce best practices of Roma integration for other municipalities to follow. Some other municipalities also have started bridge builders, and there have been similar concepts around earlier, but not as far as is known connected to any university courses<sup>24</sup>.
- There are certain media that promote education and competence development among Swedish Roma and Resande communities, presenting examples of stories of educated Roma and how they moved to their present jobs. These are the magazine **É Romani Glinda**<sup>25</sup> (The Roma mirror), the radio programme **Radio Romano**<sup>26</sup> and the more scientific and critical **E Romani Journal**<sup>27</sup> which also seems aimed at knowledge development trough research and research dissemination relating to Roma issues.

The Swedish Roma strategy 2012 (Regeringens skrivelse, 2012) is a part of the overall Swedish minority strategy. It stretches over 20 years, with the overall objective that a Roma child born

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.agnesbergshsk.se/>, <http://sundbybergsfolkhogskola.se/>,

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.romskinkludering.se/romskinkludering/SiteCollectionDocuments/pdf1672\[1\].pdf](http://www.romskinkludering.se/romskinkludering/SiteCollectionDocuments/pdf1672[1].pdf) , p

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.esv.se/Verktyg--stod/Statsliggaren/Regleringsbrev/?RBID=15145>

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[https://www.sh.se/p3/ext/custom.nsf/news?openagent&key=utbildning\\_for\\_brobyggare\\_lanken\\_mellan\\_romska\\_familjer\\_och\\_skolan\\_1392897027757](https://www.sh.se/p3/ext/custom.nsf/news?openagent&key=utbildning_for_brobyggare_lanken_mellan_romska_familjer_och_skolan_1392897027757)

<sup>24</sup> On ‘bridge builders’ in municipalities:

[https://www.sh.se/p3/ext/custom.nsf/news?openagent&key=utbildning\\_for\\_brobyggare\\_lanken\\_mellan\\_romska\\_familjer\\_och\\_skolan\\_1392897027757](https://www.sh.se/p3/ext/custom.nsf/news?openagent&key=utbildning_for_brobyggare_lanken_mellan_romska_familjer_och_skolan_1392897027757)

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.romaniglinda.se/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/default.aspx?programid=2122>

<sup>27</sup> <http://romaniejournal.com/>



2012 shall, when entering adult life in 2032, have equivalent possibilities compared with a peer of the non-Roma population. This is going to be done not by projects or special organisations, but by work in municipalities and authorities to ensure that the Roma population is also included in application of the laws, regulations and objectives that are already there. Cooperation with the Roma people and their representatives in all contexts and phases of development is strictly emphasised as a necessary condition for sustainable change. What has been identified as the biggest mistake in earlier strategies is that no one asked the Roma people about projects and strategies, with authorities taking a paternalistic attitude, as if the Roma population cannot know what is best for them.

The earlier government appointed report: “Romers rätt – en strategi för romer i Sverige” (SOU 2010) proposed goals in the education area for the end of the 20-year period, to ensure that as many Roma people as in the non-Roma population participated in higher education and received degrees. However, this did not become an explicit part of the final strategy which works towards a right-based approach in mainstreaming the application of the existing frameworks to Roma young people, in order to ensure ‘equivalent’ conditions to the non-Roma. There are no special funds for special actions to ensure this goal is reached. Instead it is a question for municipalities, authorities, universities and other public bodies in cooperation with the organisations of the Roma on how this goal can be operationalized in various localities.

The Swedish Roma strategy 2012-2032 clearly stands out as different, in relation to both the EU 2020 goals and the Roma Decade (of which Sweden was not a part); it stretches longer in time and is clearly aimed at sustainability and normalisation in access to rights but without assimilation of culture, and in cooperation with the minority themselves as stakeholders. It remains of course to be seen if this approach will be successful. The EC assessment of this strategy shows both appreciation and caveats, such as unclear funding, needed timeframes and lacking measureability.<sup>28</sup> Another critical factor may be Roma representation and advocacy, which is closely related to education level. There is a number of organisations with varying claims to represent the Swedish Roma and/or Resande. Within these organisations there are Roma activists with education or equivalent experience and training, but are there enough of them, and can they become a more united and more qualified force to represent the Roma and Resande with a strong enough voice?

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<sup>28</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/country\\_factsheets\\_2012/sweden\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/country_factsheets_2012/sweden_en.pdf)

## PART III - Report Recommendations

Our recommendations are organised on the basis of ‘themes’. These are not intended to be comprehensive, but emerge from our engagement with selected policy research on Roma issues in education, and our involvement in the HEIM project. Most of our recommendations refer to policy actions necessary to improve equality of access to education for Roma students, as a precondition for establishing pathways to tertiary and Higher Education.

### Theme 1: Use of Disaggregate Data - and Enforcement Capacity

One of the major problems identified by ERRC, by REF and other NGOs is the lack of data on Roma children that are in and out of school. Most countries in Europe do not register populations by ethnicity and the numbers that organisations and governments have are either incomplete (see problem of lack of formal citizen rights) or inaccurate because they rely on self-identification - this problem has been highlighted by the United Nations, as well as civil society organisations (Muller & Jovanovic, 2010; Kullmann, et al. 2014).

In addition to accurately estimating access to education provision within national authority jurisdictions and over national ethnic minorities, there are problems with EU (Roma) citizens who move to reside in another member state of the union. According to ERRC (2014b) the rights of these groups are often overlooked by both national and international organisations and their residence status interferes with their accessing to education rights.

All international organisations have made significant progress in bringing policy attention to the rights of Roma people, and specifically to their right to an equal education. But, they possess weak legal instruments in their disposal to effect policy change. A stronger instrument at least for the EU is financial in the form of the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

- **Recommendation (i):** the use of the funds can be a strong steering mechanism for monitoring national progress against the stated goals for education development of Roma people. The EU can tie such monitoring process to demands on Decade countries to produce disaggregate data (as requested by both the UN and various NGOs) - using the successful examples of countries registering people by ethnicity in biannual or quarterly Labour Force surveys.
- **Recommendation (ii):** national and local authorities across the EU should be made aware of the rights of migrant Roma (and other ethnic minority) populations in terms of accessing to education. Countries across the EU (including the so called ‘destination’ wealthier states) often show poor understanding and insufficient respect to rights of EU migrant citizens as these are related to residence status (ERRC, 2014b).

## Theme 2: Defining ‘Integration’, ‘Equality’ and ‘Inclusion’

REF and other NGOs seem to have designed their own definition of inclusion /integration that ideologically draws on the human rights discourse rooted in the UN actions, and in practice is operationalised in terms of ‘*closing the education achievement gap*’ between Roma and non-Roma students in the various national contexts.

The current EU definitions draw on legal (and primarily liberal) definitions of equality for all, and on human capital development definitions that are mainly focused on education as investment. However useful these are, they do not go far enough in fully endorsing and operationalising the intercultural dimensions of equality discussions that are needed for debating not just economic futures of the Roma population, but also their integration in their respective societies without the loss of their identity. The balance between issues of preservation of identity and the assumed ‘integration as assimilation’ models implied by an exclusive focus on human capital development needs to be retained.

- **Recommendation (i):** There is a need to develop a fuller and more explicit policy definition of inclusion /integration from the European Commission (as the major policy actor that has some degree of enforcement capacity on Member States, but also uses the ESF to distribute relevant funding). Such a definition could draw on existing and more fully developed versions of ‘equality’ emerging from a human rights framework, and be linked to specific indicators that are outcome-based.
- **Recommendation (ii):** Drawing on both the UN and the European Roma Rights Centre recommendations, we also argue for a definition of equality that applies not merely to enabling the Roma groups in their responsibility to access available education, but also to dealing with the wider society and the prevailing attitudes in the wider populations that often result in discriminatory practices for Roma children and young people. Such definition will also be a way to operationalise intercultural rights and forms of exchange.
- **Recommendation (iii):** The full participation of Roma communities, representatives or/and Roma NGOs in the design of strategies for the integration and progression in education systems. This would also link with definitions of equality as a participatory process giving voice to the communities concerned and hence improving the chances of policy solutions that are more fair, effective and sustainable.

## Theme 3: School Segregation and Pathways to HE

The placement of Roma children in special education schools impedes avenues of progression within the school system very early. Progression to tertiary or higher education is not possible to consider when this is practiced.

Segregation based on residential concentrations of populations can in principle lead to progression within schooling, and even to higher education. But, it has been observed that this practice is usually accompanied by very low quality schooling for the disadvantaged children. As a result, the outcome is still that transition to higher levels of education is de facto unlikely if not impossible.

**Recommendation (i):** Placement of Roma children in ‘special education’ establishments is a common practice, and despite the legal challenges to many States that exercise this practice, the practice remains widespread. The European Commission should take stronger action in monitoring such practices – and making attendance at mainstream schools for Roma children a condition for ESF funding.

**Recommendation (ii):** Residential and hence socio-economic and ethnicity-based segregation cannot be addressed in the same way. Our recommendation is that the European Commission takes a critical position to the widespread practice of free parental choice of school that is exercised increasingly throughout Europe. The conventional wisdom that parental/individual choice is a ‘good’ higher than equality, should be re-examined and the outcomes of such a practice should be made more explicit to the European Parliament and to Member States governments. Incentives should be given to schools and municipalities to integrate children in common and non-selective schools for all.

#### **Theme 4: Sites of Responsibility for Roma Education Issues & Policy Learning**

(a) In a many of the Roma Decade countries it is Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and private donors who are often most active in developing targeted affirmative action programmes (such as those provided by REF and Versitas) with impact on education investment - evidenced by some successes in completion of elementary and secondary education of Roma children, and in the financial support through scholarships and grants for the completion of university and post-graduate education of Roma students. In conjunction with the more developed EU framework for the inclusion of Roma people, many European governments have used these as an excuse to evade (or de facto avoid) their legal and political responsibility to ensure equality for minorities in their countries - by reframing the Roma issue as a European and not a national problem (Vermeersch, 2012).

(b) The research and academic literature, but also practice from Nordic countries (such as Finland and Sweden) suggests that good State governance and management of minority people education can be effective in addressing the education rights of minorities. But, in these countries too we observe a large gap in the educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma young people, despite their strong traditions of equality embedded in their national systems of education over the last 50 years, and the lack of recent upheavals in terms of political, economic or social transitions.

(c) The ambition for the future would be that national governments and state administrations (central, regional, local) in the Decade countries adopt the successful education initiatives tried and developed by NGOs, and scale them up at a national level - this would also feed effectively into the EU's National Roma Integration Strategies. This would also allow a gradual withdrawal of NGOs and private funders/donors from dealing with fundamental issues of Roma education (and other) rights, that 'belong' to the jurisdiction and responsibility of States.

(d) Research from NGOs in the region (ERRC and REF) suggests that the political and economic circumstances of many countries in central and eastern Europe mean they are not yet ready for such withdrawal - and this is likely to leave a large gap in provision of legal, financial and wider investment decisions and affirmative policies on addressing inequalities for Roma populations. The danger of substituting the responsibilities of States in this task, should be balanced against the greater danger of leaving large numbers of minority students without adequate basic provisions of education. Drawing on these observations, we put forward 2 recommendation on this theme:

- **Recommendation (i):** NGOs and donors are still fundamental to ensure the access of Roma children and young people to good quality education. Their gradual withdrawal should only be considered when national governments can convince the European Commission, UN related organisations and major NGOs of their political commitment to addressing educational inequalities for Roma children and young people. Such commitments should be evidenced by:

(a) Statistical data of student outcomes that show a serious closing of the gap in achievement and progression of Roma students in education;

(b) Statistical data of employment patterns that show a closing of the gap in employment possibilities for young Roma;

(c) Affirmative actions that aim to operationalise equality legislation and equality policy commitments that the Decade countries have made to international organisations. Such actions should be evidenced by the embedding of equality policies and practices in the way the state administration is organised, but also the ways in which state and private sector employment reflects the make-up of the population.

- **Recommendation (ii):** A closer cooperation with countries such as Sweden that have longer traditions of designing effective measures of inclusion for minorities in successful (compulsory) education pathways (despite the still problematic outcomes of minorities - there is substantial research knowledge on improving policy and practice). This could be in the form of policy learning and exchange of good practice consistent



with the soft measures of EU governance of education policy as adopted by the Europe 2020 strategy. As an example, Sweden has models of ‘integration’ schools that can act as examples of good practice of genuine integration for pupils of migrant background - very much consistent with the wider UN definitions for equality and inclusion (see example of the Umeå based school, Hedlunda:

<http://www.skola.umea.se/hedlundaskolan.4.13c1b69101a982ca2a800051758.html>)

Sweden has a ‘good practice’ model to offer in relation to the compulsory levels of education – but, not sufficient attention has been devoted to the post-compulsory and higher education sectors.

Many of the Eastern and Central European countries have examples of good practice in relation to Roma access in HE that Sweden can learn from. In particular, we wish to draw policy attention to (a) the case of Romania and the affirmative HE programmes for Roma students; (b) the Roma Graduate Preparation Programme that supports Roma students financially and in the form of mentoring schemes, for continuation of their Higher Education studies beyond the degree level; and, (c) the activities of RomaVersitas that designs local programmes aimed specifically to Roma students, and combining financial support with academic and professional development support for students in HE in different countries.

Both these examples have great potential for identifying policy solutions for other countries that (like Sweden) have a more uniform approach to equality policies in terms of University access, based on meritocratic criteria of selection that traditionally favour the more socio-economically advantaged parts of the population.

We hope that HEIM can contribute to this type of knowledge exchange.

## **Acknowledgements**

We are grateful to the staff at Roma Education Fund headquarters, who gave us guidance and support during our stay and work in Budapest. We want to express our thanks particularly to Judit Szira (REF Director) and to Stela Garaz (Programme and Studies Officer) who helped us with all aspects of the research. We are grateful to Márton Rövid (Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat), Bernard Rorke, Gábor Daróczi (Roma Versitas), András Ujlaky and Darya Alekseeva (European Roma Rights Centre) for giving us some of their valuable time and expertise, as well as staff and students in the Central European University.

Thanks also go to the staff in REF: Azam Bayburdi, Dan Pavel Doghi, Dennis Omondi Yonga, Marius Taba, Merziha Idrizi, and Anastasia Jelasity for their help and friendship.



Last but not least, we wish to thank Mayte Padilla-Carmona, Tamsin Hinton-Smith, Emily Danvers, and Alejandro Soria our partners for this Secondment for many interesting academic and political discussions around equalities and minority rights in education.

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March, 2015

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