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**EDUCATION IN MEMBER STATE  
SUBMISSIONS UNDER  
THE EU FRAMEWORK FOR NATIONAL  
ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES**

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# EDUCATION IN MEMBER STATE SUBMISSIONS UNDER THE EU FRAMEWORK FOR NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES

*“At the level of design, a key weakness of the EU Framework is that some of the means proposed in the area of education risk compromising realization of the corresponding objectives and in turn the overall goal of ensuring that all children complete at least primary school. Moreover, although the education objectives included in the EU Framework can be expected to contribute to realization of the overall goal and to improving the situation of Roma in the area of education more broadly, a neglect of Romani girls’ disadvantage in this area relative to their male counterparts constitutes a missed opportunity to promote attention to a set of particularly pressing issues for both overall goal and general situation. Additionally, while completion of primary school may well be a necessary condition for the social inclusion of Roma, it cannot be expected to effect the changes in Roma’s employment situation needed to secure a level of economic integration conducive to greater social cohesion.”*

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## **I. INTRODUCTION: EUROPE 2020 AND NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES**

### ***I.1. Context***

The European Union’s (EU) strategy for recovery from the economic crisis that began at the end of the first decade of the 2000s is organized around three priorities: smart growth, sustainable growth, and inclusive growth (European Commission 2010: 9). While the three types of growth are presented as mutually reinforcing, explicit attention to minorities in

general and to Roma in particular comes only under the heading of inclusive growth, defined as “empowering people through high levels of employment, investing in skills, fighting poverty and modernising labour markets, training and social protection systems so as to help people anticipate and manage change, and build a cohesive society” (European Commission 2010: 17). As part of the “European Platform against Poverty” planned in the area of inclusive growth, the European Commission (EC) calls on Member States “[t]o define and implement measures addressing the specific circumstances of groups at particular risk (such as one-parent



families, elderly women, minorities, Roma, people with a disability and the homeless” as a means of “rais[ing] awareness and recognis[ing] the fundamental rights of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, enabling them to live in dignity and take an active part in society” (European Commission 2010: 19).

Published in the year after the EU’s three-pronged growth strategy *Europe 2020*, the *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020* (hereinafter “EU Framework”) notes that *Europe 2020* “leaves no room for the persistent economic and social marginalization of what constitute Europe’s largest minority,” the Roma (European Commission 2011: 2). Observing that Roma did not generally benefit from recent progress within the EU as a whole, the EU Framework is explicitly premised on the proposition that non-discrimination is not sufficient to secure social inclusion where Roma are concerned (European Commission 2011: 3). The EU Framework accordingly calls on Member States to approach the integration of Roma in a comprehensive and targeted approach focused explicitly on Roma while leaving room for covering also others in need (European Commission 2011: 3-4). Such an approach is to be elaborated in “national Roma integration strategies” (NRIS) covering the areas of education, employment, healthcare, and housing (European Commission 2011: 4).<sup>1</sup> These areas are identical with the four “priority areas” of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, an international initiative in which five EU Member States had already participated for more than six years at the time when the EU Framework was published.<sup>2</sup>

### ***1.2. Approach***

This paper examines Member States’ submissions in response to the EU Framework

in two general ways. The section immediately following this Introduction consists in a preliminary assessment of the Framework’s success in bringing about the adoption or further development of comprehensive and targeted approaches to the situation of Roma. To this end, individual submissions are catalogued according to whether they constitute policy documents at all, in terms of the extent to which submitted policy documents incorporate the targeted approach recommended in the EU Framework, and by the timeframe within which submissions were prepared.

The paper’s third and longest section focuses on education as it appears in Member States’ submissions in response to the EU Framework. Following an analysis of the EU Framework’s objectives in the area of education and the means proposed for meeting those objectives as they relate to one another and to improving the overall situation of Roma, the focus turns to the priority given to education in the submissions, measured in terms of relative space, explicit priority, and arrangements for monitoring and evaluating relevant activities. Additional sub-sections treat in turn the treatment in the individual submissions of key objectives of the EU Framework in the area of education and trends in the submissions in relation to the means by which stated education objectives are to be realized.

Drawing on the analysis of the second and third sections of the paper, the paper’s final section consists of two sets of tentative conclusions. The first set is a summary assessment of the extent to which the design of the EU Framework lends itself to improving the situation of Roma in the area of education. The second set of conclusions focuses on the submissions made in response to the EU Framework, assessing these documents in terms



of the extent to which they can be expected to improve the situation of Roma in the area of education.

Before proceeding to the paper's more substantive sections, two caveats are in order. First, the focus of this paper on education is intended to present in their best light the EU Framework and the submissions made in response to it. Taking into account the comparatively strong record in this area among the countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion (see Hauptert 2007: 25; Müller & Zsigo 2010: 53-54), which appears to have served as a source of inspiration for the EU Framework (Rorke 2013: 13; Working Group on the Decade Future 2013: 1), it might be expected that the NRIS' sections on education would generally be of higher quality than would be sections on employment, healthcare, or housing.<sup>3</sup> Second, the objects of analysis in this paper are policy documents. The paper thus does not attempt a situation analysis, an examination of the appropriateness of the planned measures for addressing the situation in individual countries, or an assessment of policy implementation. Caveats aside, this paper is intended to provide an education-focused complement to the more general analyses of submissions under the EU Framework published by the European Commission (2012a), the European Roma Policy Coalition (2012), and the Open Society Foundations (Rorke 2012; 2013).

## II. STATE RESPONSES TO THE CALL FOR NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES

### II.1. Refusals and reservations

All 27 Member States of the EU at the time of publication of the EU Framework provided an explicit response to the call for National Roma

Integration Strategies.<sup>4</sup> Of the 27, Malta was the only country not to submit a document describing relevant policies, with the Maltese submission a two-page letter from the Minister of Education, Employment and the Family to EC Vice President Viviane Reding and Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion László Andor explaining that the absence of Roma in Malta according to unofficial as well as official sources would make a strategy “disproportionate” (Cristina 2011). Whereas the letter from Malta takes a conciliatory tone and promises to revisit the issue of a targeted strategy for Roma in case of an increase in the number of Roma in the country, the submissions from Cyprus, France, and Luxembourg pose challenges to the way in which the EU Framework is conceived.

Noting that “[t]he term Roma has not traditionally been used in Cyprus,” the eight-page document *Policy Measures of Cyprus for the Social Inclusion of Roma* uses the term ‘Cypriot Gypsies’ and points out that the country’s Constitution categorizes such persons as members of the Turkish community (Government of the Republic of Cyprus 2012: 1). More confrontational in tone are the submissions from France and Luxembourg. Both problematize not only the use of the term ‘Roma’ to cover disparate groups, but also targeting on the basis of ethnicity more broadly (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 2012: 1, 3; Government of the Republic of France 2012: 1). By way of contrast, Belgium’s *National Roma Integration Strategy* does not pose a conceptual challenge, but appears to locate responsibility for the situation of Roma outside of Belgium: “[I]n the first instance, the countries of origin, both within the EU and outside the EU, must respect the rights of the Roma community, and must comply with



European and international treaties in this regard” (Roma Working Group 2012: 3).

## *II.2. Targeted strategies versus integrated sets of policy measures*

Slightly more than half of EU Member States responded to the EU Framework with a targeted national strategy: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden. In light of the reservations expressed by the governments of Cyprus, France, and Luxembourg in relation to the overall conception of the EU Framework, it is perhaps not surprising that these three countries also forego the ethnically targeted approach recommended in the Framework in favor of policies ostensibly designed to address the needs of all (including but not limited to Roma), or what the European Commission (2012a; 2012b) calls “integrated sets of policy measures.” These three countries are not alone in this regard, however, as nine other EU Member States take a similar approach in their respective submissions: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Justifications for this departure from the recommendation of the EU Framework range from the size of the Romani population (see, for example, Department of Cultural Diversity 2012: 1-2; Ministry for Social Affairs and Integration 2011: 4) to the principle explicit in the submission from the Netherlands that “all policy should be equally effective for all groups in society” (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations 2011: 2).

Beyond differing in how they approach the issue of targeting on the basis of ethnicity, targeted strategies and integrated sets of policy measures diverge in the degree to which they

emphasize existing and new policies. More specifically, whereas National Roma Integration Strategies tend to foresee new measures in addition to existing ones, the emphasis in the submissions not incorporating a targeted approach is on describing existing policies. On the other hand, as will be discussed in the next section, although the policies described in the integrated sets tend not to be new, none of documents containing the descriptions existed prior to publication of the EU Framework.

## *II.3. Submitting new versus existing policy documents*

A third measure of the influence of the EU Framework on Member States’ policies toward Roma is the timeframe within which submissions in response to the EU Framework were prepared. Whereas all submissions from Member States which did not submit an ethnically targeted strategy were generated in explicit response to the Framework, there is more variation among the Romani-specific strategies. Of the 15 countries which submitted a national strategy focusing on Roma, four submitted strategies adopted before the EU Framework was published: the Czech Republic, Finland, Poland, and Slovenia. Thus, the 11 countries which adopted or further developed their targeted approach to Roma in response to the EU Framework amount together to less than half of all Member States. Moreover, the document submitted by Lithuania as an NRIS is in fact a two-year action plan rather than a strategy extending to 2020 (Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania 2012). On the other hand, a letter from Poland’s Minister of Administration and Digitization to the EC’s Directorate-General for Justice promises that the guidelines contained in the EU Framework are reflected already in the 2003 *Programme for the*





*Roma Community in Poland* submitted in lieu of a new document and will also be reflected in the country's next national strategy for Roma, to be implemented from 2014 (Boni 2011; also see Ministry of the Interior and Administration 2003). Finally, Sweden's NRIS spans the period 2012-2032, explaining its deviation from the norm of the EU Framework that "[t]he overall goal of the twenty-year strategy is for a Roma who turns 20 years old in 2032 to have the same opportunities in life as a non-Roma" (Ministry of Employment 2012: 1).

### III. EDUCATION IN THE NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION

#### III.1. Objectives and means in the EU Framework

The overall goal set by the EU Framework in the area of education is ensuring that all children complete at least primary school (European Commission 2011: 5). Toward realization of this goal, the Framework sets the following objectives:

- Combating and preventing discrimination in general and segregation in particular;
- Ensuring access to quality education;
- Widening access to quality early childhood education and care;
- Ensuring completion of primary education;
- Reducing the number of early school leavers from secondary education; and
- Encouraging participation in secondary and tertiary education (European Commission 2011: 5-6).

The EU Framework also lists a set of means by which the stated education objectives are to be realized. These include:

- Strengthening links between schools and Romani communities through cultural/school mediators, religious

associations or communities, and active parental participation;

- Improving the intercultural competences of teachers;
- Introducing second-chance programs for early school leavers;
- Reforming teacher training curricula;
- Elaborating innovative teaching methods;
- Instituting cross-sectoral cooperation and appropriate support programs for children with multiple disadvantages;
- Combating illiteracy among Romani children and adults; and
- Increasing the use of innovative approaches such as ICT-based access to education (European Commission 2011: 5-6).

Perhaps not surprisingly, there is nothing in the goal or objectives set in the area of education that is in overt tension with the EU Framework's fundamental premise that the social inclusion of Roma is desirable. At the level of the individual objectives, ensuring access to quality education is closely linked to taking measures against both segregation and discrimination more broadly, with the latter a prerequisite for the former. Access to early childhood education and care, on the other hand, is particularly important not only for preparing disadvantaged Romani children for subsequent levels of education, but also for its contribution to social abilities and to health and nutritional status needed for success in life more broadly (see Bennett 2012: 14). Finally, insofar as the remaining three objectives relate directly to retention and progress in education, their contribution to increasing levels of educational attainment and thus to social inclusion need not be discussed further. Missing from the objectives, however, is addressing the disadvantages frequently faced by Romani girls relative to Romani boys in accessing and completing education. Moreover, given the role of educational attainment in securing the economic integration which the EU Framework



links explicitly to social cohesion and respect for fundamental rights (European Commission 2011: 3), completion of primary education is not enough; as documented by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (2013: 79), completion of levels of education beyond primary markedly improves employment prospects.

Whereas the goal and objectives included in the EU Framework in the area of education are worthy of realization if perhaps insufficient, some of the means proposed in the EU Framework for their realization are more problematic in their own right. Although the need to bridge gaps between official institutions (including but not limited to schools) on the one hand and Romani communities on the other is clear, the lack of specification in the EU Framework concerning the role of mediators and religious groups carries with it the risk that Member States' obligation to ensure access to quality education will be delegated to actors in the non-governmental sector who may lack qualification, scruples concerning the beliefs of their target group, or both. In similar fashion, the elaboration of innovative teaching methods has potential to make education more accessible and attractive and thereby to contribute to improving educational outcomes among Roma, but, as will be discussed in more concrete terms in Section 3.4, the lack of specification in the EU Framework leaves room for methods which focus Romani pupils' attention on art and music, possibly at the expense of learning in more academic subjects. Finally, the lack of specification in relation to the use of innovative approaches such as ICT-based access to education fails to take into account that an ostensibly innovative provision allowing students in Hungary to study from home effectively deprived many Romani children of the opportunity to learn from positive adult

educational role models as well as from their peers in a school environment (Friedman et al. 2009: 29).

Less risky but still problematic from the standpoint of realizing the goal and objectives set in the area of education are some gaps in the means proposed. Improving teachers' intercultural competences and reforming teacher training curricula can be expected to contribute to reducing discrimination, raise the quality of education, and thus to higher levels of educational attainment, but so can reforming curricula in primary education in such a way as to ensure that all pupils (and thus not only Roma) learn about Romani culture, as can promoting an increase in the number of Roma with a teaching qualification. By way of contrast, the recommendation of cross-sectoral cooperation appears to reflect learning from initiatives piloted over the several years immediately preceding publication of the EU Framework (European Commission 2011: 4 fn 14).

### *III.2. Prioritizing education*

In the documents submitted in response to the EU Framework, statements concerning the priority of education relative to other fields are exceptional, appearing only in submissions from Greece, Poland, and Sweden. Of the three, the clearest prioritization of education comes in the *Programme for the Roma Community in Poland*, which contains the assertion that “education is the most important element of the *Programme*, since the state of this field conditions the possibility of improvement of situation of the Roma community in other spheres” (Ministry of the Interior and Administration 2003: 20). Similar in vein if less explicit about the relative emphasis to be placed on education is the Swedish *Coordinated Long-Term Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2012-2032*: “Education is one of





the most important factors in achieving improved living conditions for the Roma population in the longer term” (Ministry of Employment 2012: 24). By way of contrast, Greece’s *National Strategic Framework for Roma* subordinates education to housing, which it presents as “the Roma population’s main problem” (Ministry of Labour and Social Security 2011: 3).

Some indication of the level of priority accorded education in the documents submitted in response to the EU Framework can be gleaned also from the amount of space devoted to education in the respective documents.<sup>5</sup> The range in absolute number of pages is from one (as in the submissions from Estonia, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) to 13 (Croatia and Lithuania). The proportion of space devoted to education in submissions in responses to the EU Framework, on the other hand, varies from less than five percent (Spain) to nearly 40 percent (Cyprus).<sup>6</sup> In comparison with the amount of space devoted to the other three areas of the EU Framework (i.e., employment, healthcare, and housing), education accounts for at least as much as any of these other three areas in submissions from all countries except Ireland, Luxembourg, and Sweden (but including Greece, despite the explicit priority assigned to housing in the Greek NRIS).

Another indication of the level of priority accorded to education in the documents submitted in response to the EU Framework is the extent to which the documents include provisions for gathering data on how the implementation of planned measures affects the educational situation of Roma. Particularly among Member States which submitted an integrated set of policy measures rather than a targeted strategy, monitoring and evaluation

arrangements are weak, with the submission from Cyprus explicit in its justification of the absence of Roma-focused monitoring mechanisms in terms of the country’s overall integrated approach (Government of the Republic of Cyprus 2012: 2). As noted repeatedly by the EC in relation to the integrated sets of policy measures submitted in response to the EU Framework, however, “Measuring the impact of the equal treatment approach on the situation of Roma is necessary” (European Commission 2012a: 17). At the same time, critical comments from the EC concerning monitoring and evaluation arrangements are also directed at the targeted strategies submitted by Bulgaria, Italy, Romania, and Spain (European Commission 2012a: 7, 23, 28, 51). The more detailed analyses undertaken by the European Policy Coalition (2012) and the Open Society Foundations (Rorke 2012) are more critical still, pointing to shortcomings in monitoring and evaluation arrangements also in the submissions from the Czech Republic, Finland, and Slovakia. By way of contrast, Spain’s NRIS contains both baselines and targets, while Croatia’s devotes a separate chapter to monitoring and evaluation arrangements. Taking into account that Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia have participated in the Decade of Roma Inclusion since 2005 whereas Spain joined only in 2009, it appears that the benefits of Decade participation on the monitoring and evaluation concerning Roma are at best uneven. Among Member States not participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion, on the other hand, the Greek *National Strategic Framework for Roma* stands out for incorporating quantified targets, but the frequent absence of baseline values for the relevant indicators makes many of the targets difficult to assess.



### ***III.3. Education-related objectives in submissions under the EU Framework***

#### ***III.3.1. Combating and preventing discrimination and segregation***

Discrimination and/or segregation in education receive explicit attention in the submissions from Croatia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, with a specific focus on (de)segregation apparent in the submissions from Ireland, Poland, Slovakia, and Spain. In this context, Slovakia's NRIS receives praise from the European Roma Policy Coalition (2012: 19) for its "strikingly honest and critical tone," as well as for "a strong recognition of systemic segregation and discrimination." Additionally, although the *National Roma Integration Strategy in Spain* does not mention discrimination or segregation in education explicitly, it refers to high concentrations of Roma in some neighborhoods and educational facilities as "real obstacles to intercultural exchange" and calls for measures "to avoid the concentration of Roma pupils in certain schools or classrooms" (Government of Spain 2012: 8, 22).

Among Member States which mention neither discrimination nor segregation in their submissions under the EU Framework, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Estonia nonetheless make note of the overrepresentation of Roma in special education as a problem. Thus, the Czech *Roma Integration Concept for 2010-2013* calls for changes to the operation of the advisory centers tasked with the diagnosis of special educational needs where pupils from disadvantaged background are concerned (Minister for Human Rights 2009: 20). In similar fashion, Hungary's *National Social*

*Inclusion Strategy* notes the need for educational assessment tools to distinguish between disability on the one hand and environmental deficiencies on the other in order to avoid diagnosing mental disability on the basis of social disadvantage (Ministry of Public Administration and Justice 2011: 77). The *National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria* is more ambivalent in this regard, including as a key task the improvement of the quality of education delivered in Romani-majority kindergartens and schools without treating the existence of *de facto* segregated educational facilities for Roma as a problem (National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues 2012: 12). Similar ambivalence is apparent in Greece's *National Strategic Framework for Roma*, which calls for an assessment of the feasibility of providing special financial and occupational benefits to teachers who work in schools in which Roma account for more than 30 percent of all students (Ministry of Labour and Social Security 2011: 17). Overall, the fact that fewer than half of EU Member States address issues of discrimination or segregation in their submissions in response to the EU Framework suggests that the EU's promotion of this objective has not been particularly successful.

#### ***III.3.2. Quality education***

As is the case with discrimination and segregation, access to quality education receives explicit attention in only a minority of submissions in response to the EU Framework. Member States devoting space to discussion of this theme are Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Sweden. As noted in Section 3.3.1, however, Bulgaria's NRIS emphasizes improving the quality of education in Romani-majority educational facilities, with the lack of a clear commitment to



desegregation calling into question the depth of the declared commitment to quality education as well as ignoring decisions of the European Court of Human Rights on cases of school segregation involving Roma in three other Member States (see European Court of Human Rights 2007; 2008; 2010). Like combating and preventing discrimination and segregation, then, ensuring access to quality education has not proven popular among EU Member States as an explicit objective of policy for Roma.

### *III.3.3. Early childhood education and care*

Different in kind from addressing discrimination and segregation as well as from ensuring access to quality education insofar as it focuses on a specific level of education, the EU Framework's objective of widening access to quality early childhood education and care appears to resonate better with EU Member States than do the previous two objectives. Attention to educational issues associated with the years before children start primary school is apparent in a majority of submissions in response to the EU Framework, including those from Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

### *III.3.4. Primary education*

The submissions made in response to the EU Framework also suggest that most EU Member States endorse the overall goal of ensuring that all Roma complete primary education, as most submissions cover this level. Exceptions in this regard are Austria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. In the absence of data on Roma's rates of completing primary education in any of these countries with the exception of Lithuania, where only 17.3 percent of Roma surveyed had

completed nine or more grades of school (Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania 2012: 2), there are no grounds for a conclusion that the lack of attention to this level of education stems from the absence of a widespread problem in those countries.

### *III.3.5. Reducing dropout*

Closely related to the objectives which immediately precede and follow it (i.e., ensuring completion of primary education and encouraging participation in secondary and tertiary education, respectively), attention to issues of attendance and early school leaving (in secondary and/or other levels of education) is apparent in slightly fewer than half of submissions in response to the EU Framework, including those from Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain.

### *III.3.6. Secondary and tertiary education*

Taking into account that considerable proportions of Roma in some EU Member States do not complete primary school, it is perhaps surprising neither that the EU Framework's objective of encouraging participation in secondary and tertiary education secures narrower assent from Member States than do objectives which contribute more directly to the Framework's overall goal in the area of education (i.e., ensuring completion of at least primary school), nor that fewer submissions in response to the EU Framework address tertiary education than address secondary education. More specifically, secondary education receives attention in 16 submissions, whereas tertiary education is addressed in 11.<sup>7</sup>



### ***III.3.7. An objective beyond the EU Framework: Gender equity***

Although not included in the EU Framework, nearly half of Member States (13) note in their submissions under the Framework the need to ensure that Romani girls are able to access and complete education with the same frequency as their male counterparts: Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, and Sweden. Another three submissions (from Bulgaria, Poland, and Romania) mention early school leaving among Romani girls but do not make an objective of addressing this phenomenon.

## ***III.4. Means to education-related objectives in submissions under the EU Framework***

### ***III.4.1. Strengthening links between schools and Romani communities***

Out of all the means proposed for realizing the educational objectives including in Member States' submissions in response to the EU Framework, the one receiving most frequent mention is the strengthening of relations between schools and Romani communities by mediators and/or teaching assistants. Approaches of this type are included in 18 Member States' submissions, with active parental participation only slightly less popular insofar as it appears in 17 submissions.<sup>8</sup> By way of contrast, a role for religious associations or communities in strengthening links between schools and Romani communities is foreseen only in the Hungarian and Slovak NRIS.

### ***III.4.2. Improving teachers' intercultural competences***

Second in popularity only to school mediation and assistance schemes, measures to enable teaching staff to cope more effectively with classrooms composed of students from diverse cultural backgrounds are included in the submissions of 17 Member States in response to the EU Framework, with most of the exceptions members since before the 2004 enlargement: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Romania, and the United Kingdom. As will become apparent in Sections 3.4.4 and 3.4.5, support for the proposition that teachers' intercultural competences should be improved does not necessarily imply similar support for changing the ways in which future teachers are prepared or for a departure from traditional teaching methods.

### ***III.4.3. Second-chance programs***

If the popularity of school mediation and assistance schemes suggests that most EU Member States are prepared to support measures to ensure that Roma enroll and stay in school, the fact that second-chance programs for early school leavers are mentioned in only seven countries' submissions in response to the EU Framework seems to indicate less willingness to allocate resources to remedying past failures. Submissions which include discussion of such programs come from Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

### ***III.4.4. Reforming teacher training***

The only EU Member States to include in their submissions in response to the EU Framework provisions for adjustments to the curricula used for training teachers are the Czech Republic,



Finland, Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Spain. The fact that this approach features in only six submissions makes it the least popular of all categories of means proposed in the EU Framework. More significantly, although teacher training curricula are not the only available basis for improving teachers' intercultural competences, the neglect of this means by most countries which seek to bring about such improvement raises questions as to how these countries intend to effect the desired changes.

### ***III.4.5. Teaching methods***

While explicit provisions concerning the elaboration of innovative teaching methods appear more frequently than does mention of modifying teacher training curricula in the submissions made in response to the EU Framework, this means is nonetheless relatively unpopular, featuring in the submissions of eleven Member Countries: Belgium, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, and Sweden. Here again, particularly in light of the rarity with which Member States include provisions for reforms in the training of teachers, the unpopularity of this means makes for a lack of clarity on how teachers' intercultural competences will be improved.

Even if not explicitly aimed at innovation in all cases (and not mentioned in the EU Framework), attempts to integrate Romani culture in formal educational activities are described in submissions in response to the EU Framework from 13 Member States: Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden. Approaches to Romani culture taken in the submissions vary from explicitly intercultural to potentially segregatory.

At the intercultural end of the spectrum are the approaches taken in the submissions from Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden, with the latter including a section entitled "Increased knowledge of national minorities among all pupils," as well as a discussion of the need to increase the availability of instruction in Romani for children who speak that language as their mother tongue (Ministry of Employment 2012: 31, 33).<sup>9</sup> In taking steps to ensure that pupils from the general population as well as Roma learn about Romani culture in school, these submissions fill an important gap in the EU Framework. By way of contrast, the emphasis placed on art for Roma in the *Programme for the Roma Community in Poland* (e.g., "aesthetic upbringing [...] through a direct contact with art," "helping the youth in developing their artistic abilities," and scholarships "for artistically gifted Roma children and youth") seems to risk contributing to a self-fulfilling prophecy that Roma are talented artists but lack potential to achieve in more theoretical fields (see Ministry of the Interior and Administration 2003: 21-23).

### ***III.4.6. Cross-sectoral cooperation and support***

Ten Member States include in their responses to the EU Framework calls for or descriptions of existing cross-sectoral cooperation and support programs for children with multiple disadvantages: the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, and Spain. In the *Czech Roma Integration Concept for 2010-2013*, the emphasis is on early childhood in the form of an "interlinking of early care services" (Minister for Human Rights 2009: 19). At a more general level, Greece's *National Strategic Framework for Roma* groups education, employment, health, and social integration together under the common heading "social intervention support





services” (Ministry of Labour and Social Security 2011: 7). Finally, Italy’s NRIS notes a need for holistic policies which link education, housing, and health, asserting that “the success of any school intervention is closely related to wider social inclusion of families” including sufficient parental income and housing conditions conducive to study (National Office on Anti-Racial Discriminations National Focal Point 2012: 52-53). Diverging from the trend among Member States of focusing cross-sectoral cooperation on children, Croatia’s NRIS calls for increasing the number of adult Roma who complete training programs aligned with the demands of the labor market (Vlada Republike Hrvatske 2012: 49).

### ***III.4.7. Combating illiteracy***

Focusing largely on adults, measures for reducing or eliminating illiteracy among Roma are described or proposed in responses to the EU Framework from ten Member States: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, and Sweden.

### ***III.4.8. Innovative approaches to education***

Notwithstanding the mention of ICT-based access to education in the EU Framework, not a single EU Member State includes such an approach in its response to the Framework. In fact, the only two Member States to outline ostensibly innovative approaches to education in their responses to the EU Framework are France and Hungary, with both proposing boarding schools and Hungary also proposing colleges for Roma.

With regard to boarding schools, Hungary’s *National Social Inclusion Strategy* is careful to specify that Romani children should not be removed from their families or placed in foster

care or children’s homes on a permanent basis, but recommends that boarding schools be considered for children in difficult family circumstances on the grounds that “[i]t is more beneficial for the integration and personality development of these children if they do not live at home during the week” (Ministry of Public Administration and Justice 2011: 76).<sup>10</sup> In broadly similar fashion, France’s submission in response to the EU Framework describes “residential schools for excellence” as “educational institutions aiming to encourage the school success of motivated students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including Roma” (Government of the Republic of France 2012: 6). Hungary’s additional proposal to create “a network of special colleges for Roma” is explained in terms of cultivating talent and promoting educational success (Ministry of Public Administration and Justice 2011: 80).

Unless measures are in place to regulate the ethnic composition of the boarding schools and colleges proposed by France and Hungary as innovative approaches to the education of Roma, both types of measures risk reinforcing divisions between Roma and non-Roma. Particularly problematic in this regard is the proposed network of special colleges, which appear to target Roma exclusively. Moreover, educational institutions which considerably reduce the time Romani children spend in their communities of origin have potential to serve as instruments of assimilation rather than integration.

### ***III.4.9. Means not included in the EU Framework***

As mentioned in Section 3.1, the EU Framework leaves some significant gaps in the means proposed for realizing the goal and objectives set in the area of education. One of these, promoting teaching on Romani culture among non-Roma as





well as Roma, was addressed in Section 3.4.5, in the context of an examination of innovative teaching methods proposed by Member States in their responses to the Framework. A second, promoting an increase in the number of Roma with a teaching qualification, receives attention only in Hungary's *National Social Inclusion Strategy* (Ministry of Public Administration and Justice 2011: 75). Insofar as qualified Romani teachers have potential to serve as role models for Roma while contributing to dispelling stereotypes about Roma in the general population, it is unfortunate that similar measures are not foreseen in a larger number of responses to the EU Framework.

Another type of measure not included in the EU Framework but appearing in several submissions in response to the Framework is cooperation between government institutions and non-governmental organizations. Mentioned in the submissions from Austria, Greece, Latvia, Romania, and Slovakia, such cooperation is a double-edged sword: While NGOs often have better access to local Romani communities than do official institutions, government reliance on NGOs for realizing official policy objectives carries with it the risks that NGOs lose their independence and that the state effectively frees itself of obligations to some of its most disadvantaged citizens.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION: THE EU FRAMEWORK'S PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVING THE EDUCATIONAL SITUATION OF ROMA**

##### ***IV.1. The EU Framework***

At the level of design, a key weakness of the EU Framework is that some of the means proposed

in the area of education risk compromising realization of the corresponding objectives and in turn the overall goal of ensuring that all children complete at least primary school. Moreover, although the education objectives included in the EU Framework can be expected to contribute to realization of the overall goal and to improving the situation of Roma in the area of education more broadly, a neglect of Romani girls' disadvantage in this area relative to their male counterparts constitutes a missed opportunity to promote attention to a set of particularly pressing issues for both overall goal and general situation. Additionally, while completion of primary school may well be a necessary condition for the social inclusion of Roma, it cannot be expected to effect the changes in Roma's employment situation needed to secure a level of economic integration conducive to greater social cohesion.

The findings of a regional study conducted by the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, and the European Commission in 2011 further suggest that completion of primary school is not ambitious enough from the standpoint of Roma's current levels of educational attainment (United Nations Development Programme 2011). Data from this study, which covered several of the EU Member States with the largest Romani populations, portray a steep drop in Roma's completion rates from primary to secondary education. Thus, as shown in Table 1, whereas completion of primary education no longer poses a major problem for Roma in the Czech Republic, Hungary, or Slovakia, fewer than one in three Roma completes secondary education in any of the six EU Member States for which the relevant data are available. Taken in combination with considerations of employability, these survey findings provide support for the contention that a



more appropriate goal would be ensuring that all children complete at least *secondary* school.

**Table 1. Educational attainment among Roma in selected EU Member States**

Countries	<i>Percentage of Roma who have completed at least</i>	
	Primary education <sup>11</sup>	Secondary education <sup>12</sup>
Bulgaria	56	18
Croatia	49	18
Czech Republic	94	30
Hungary	87	22
Romania	46	11
Slovakia	90	18

*Source:* UNDP/WB/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011 (United Nations Development Programme 2011)

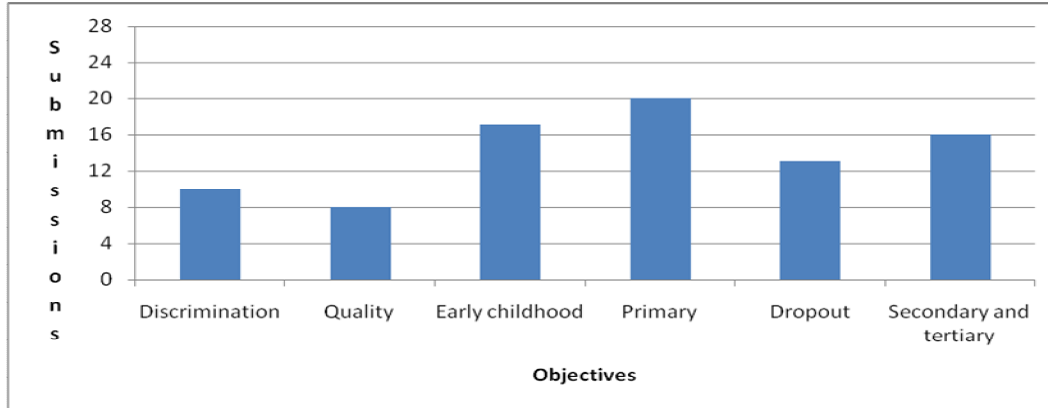
Another issue related to the EU Framework’s potential to contribute to improving the situation of Roma in the area of education (as well as in the other three areas covered by the Framework) is its open-endedness. Rather than provide a common template on the basis of which Member States are to develop National Roma Integration Strategies, the Framework offers a minimal set of general guidelines while calling broadly for a comprehensive and targeted approach to realize the objectives and general goal in each of the four areas. While this aspect of the design of the EU Framework need not prevent it from contributing to improvements in the situation of Roma, it has at the very least left room for an extremely wide range of variation in EU

Member States’ submissions in response to the Framework. This variation is the focus of Section 4.2.

#### *IV.2. Submissions under the EU Framework*

Beyond weaknesses at the level of design, the EU Framework has not effectively disseminated its package of education objectives among the Member States. As shown in Graph 1, none of the education objectives secured the assent of all EU Member States which submitted a document in response to the Framework, with only three of the six objectives meeting with explicit support in more than half of submissions. Moreover, only five submissions (i.e., the Croatian, Hungarian, Italian, Romanian, and Slovak) address all six of the education objectives included in the EU Framework, such that fewer than one Member State in five produced a document conforming to the Framework’s basic parameters in the area of education. With regard to the frequency with which the individual education objectives of the EU Framework appear in submissions, the lower numbers of submissions taking into account issues of discrimination, access to quality education, and early school leaving relative to the numbers of submissions incorporating specific levels of education suggests low levels of awareness of the barriers faced by Roma in the area of education.

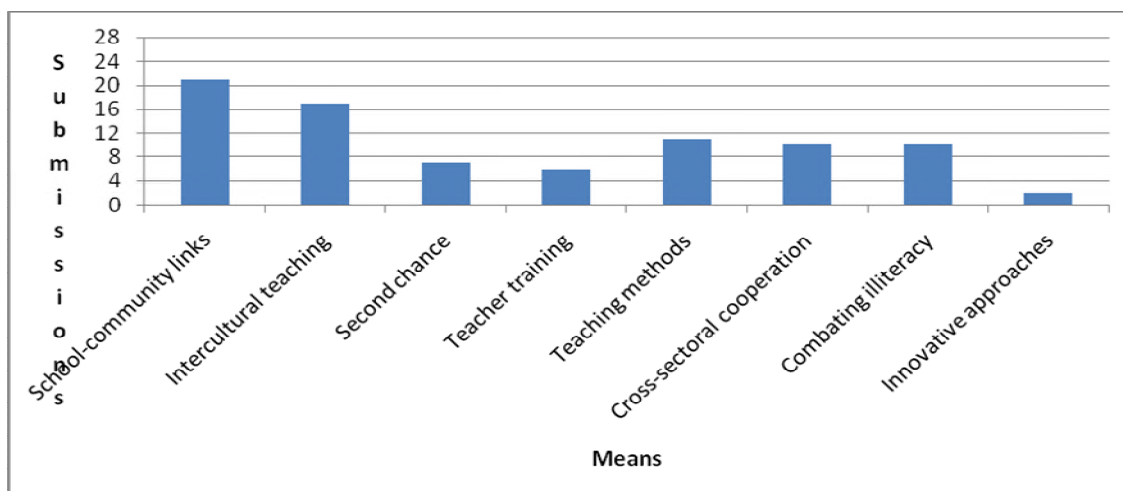
**Graph 1. Incorporation of education objectives from the EU Framework**



With regard to the eight means proposed in the EU Framework in relation to education, no Member State explicitly incorporates all and none of the proposed means features in all submissions. Insofar as a given objective may be met by various means, this variation among submissions is perhaps less problematic than is the incomplete transmission of education objectives from the EU to the Member States. On the other hand, the relative popularity of strengthening links between schools and Romani

communities (see Graph 2 below) suggests a reliance on non-state actors for the realization of education objectives, while the higher degree of support for improving teachers' intercultural competences over more concrete changes to teacher training and teaching methods leaves questions as to how Member States plan to prepare teaching staff to cope more effectively with classrooms composed of students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

**Graph 2. Incorporation of education-related means proposed in the EU Framework**





The shortcomings in the area of education apparent in submissions under the EU Framework should also be considered in the broader context of the Framework's limited success in eliciting the desired target approach from the Member States. Of the 28 Member States of the European Union as of November 2013, eleven had produced a targeted NRIS in response to the EU Framework, four had submitted targeted strategies adopted prior to the EU's call for such strategies, and 12 had submitted a document describing relevant general policies. Out of all submissions, the one assessed most favorably by the EC was produced before the EU Framework itself.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, as participants in the Decade of Roma Inclusion, six of the 11 Member States which elaborated an NRIS in response to the EU Framework (Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain) had previously adopted a targeted strategy for Roma covering the four areas included in the EU Framework, with Spain's first such strategy launched in 1989. Given the absence of analysis of previously implemented measures in these countries and the weaknesses in provisions for monitoring and evaluating NRIS implementation in the submissions from Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain (European Commission 2012a; European Roma Policy Coalition 2012;

Rorke 2012; 2013), however, it is likely to remain largely a matter of conjecture whether the resources devoted to the development of new targeted strategies in response to the EU Framework can be justified in terms of improvements to the situation of Roma not already underway before the Framework was issued.

Taking into account the prior participation of six Member States in the Decade of Roma Inclusion, there are only five EU Member States which appear to have changed their overall approach in policy for Roma as a result of the EU Framework: Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, and Sweden. Making use of the Council of Europe's estimates of the maximum size of the respective Romani populations, the total number of Roma in these five Member States whom might be expected to benefit from the adoption of an NRIS where there was none before is 644 000.<sup>14</sup> While this is a considerable number of people, it is also only around ten percent of the total estimated number of Roma in the EU and less than the estimated size of the Romani population of at least three individual Member States alone.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, the likely contribution of the EU Framework to changes in the situation of Roma in education – and in other fields – through a fundamental change in policy approach is relatively small.



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### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Whereas usage of ‘national Roma integration strategy’ in the EU Framework is consistent in its reference to a comprehensive and targeted approach focused explicitly on Roma, the Communication and Working Document assessing submissions under the EU Framework introduce a distinction between “National Roma Integration Strategies” and “integrated sets of policy measures” while sometimes using the former to refer also to the latter (European Commission 2012b: 3 fn 6; cf. 2012a; 2011). For the sake of clarity, the generic term used in this paper is ‘submission’, with ‘National Roma Integration Strategy’ and the abbreviation ‘NRIS’ referring only to submissions incorporating the approach recommended in the EU Framework.

<sup>2</sup> The EU Member States in question are Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. Spain, on the other hand, joined the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2009. Since publication of the EU Framework, the EU expanded to include Croatia, which has participated in the Decade of Roma Inclusion since it began in 2005. As of November 2013, the countries participating in the Decade are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Spain. Additionally, Norway, Slovenia, and the US participate as observers. More information on the Decade of Roma Inclusion is available at [www.romadecade.org](http://www.romadecade.org).

<sup>3</sup> As Bernard Rorke (2012; 2013) has observed, however, the quality of the Bulgarian, Czech, Hungarian, Romanian, and Slovak submissions in response to the EU Framework suggests a lack of learning from the successes and failures of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, including but not limited to the area of education.

<sup>4</sup> Croatia, which became the EU’s twenty-eighth Member State on 1 July 2013, adopted its NRIS in November 2012 (Vlada Republike Hrvatske 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Malta is excluded from the analysis that follows.

<sup>6</sup> If targeted national strategies and integrated sets of policy measures are treated as separate categories, then the range in number of pages devoted to education is from 1.5 to 13 pages for the former and one to ten pages for the latter, with relative space varying between four and 30 percent and seven and 38 percent, respectively.

<sup>7</sup> The EU Member States which address in their submissions under the EU Framework issues of participation in secondary education are Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden. Issues of participation in tertiary education are addressed in the submissions from Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain.

<sup>8</sup> EU Member States (other than Malta) *not* including provisions for school mediation and/or assistance in their submissions in response to the EU Framework are Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Active parental participation receives mention in the submissions from Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, and Sweden.

<sup>9</sup> The emphasis on mother tongue-based education for Roma in the Swedish NRIS is consistent with the recommendation of UNESCO and the Council of Europe (2007) that Romani be used for bilingual and bicultural/intercultural education in early childhood in order to provide a bridge between languages and cultures, as well as with the findings of research on the experiences of other linguistic minorities in other parts of the world (see, for example, Benson 2004; Ball 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Although France and Hungary are the only EU Member States to mention boarding schools for Roma in their (respective) responses to the EU Framework, calls for boarding schools to be established for Romani children have also come from various quarters in Slovakia, including perhaps most notably the prime minister (see, for example, European Roma Rights Centre 2013b: 29).

<sup>11</sup> More specifically, the figures in this column refer to the share of Roma aged 17-23 who have completed at least lower secondary education (ISCED 2).

<sup>12</sup> The figures in this column refer to the share of Roma aged 20-26 who have completed at least upper secondary education (ISCED 3).

<sup>13</sup> The only submission of the initial 27 under the EU Framework in which the EC did not make note of gaps in the area of education (or employment, health, or housing), Finland’s *Proposal of the Working Group for a National*



*Policy on Roma* was published in 2009 (European Commission 2012a: 59-61; Working Group for National Policy on Roma 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Figures taken from the table provided in the Annex to the EU Framework (European Commission 2011: 15-18)

<sup>15</sup> The Member States in question are Bulgaria, Romania, and Spain, with minimum estimated Romani populations of 700 000, 1.2 million, and 650 000, respectively. Hungary may also belong in this category, depending on whether the minimum estimate of 4 000 or the maximum estimate of one million is more accurate. See European Commission (2011: 15-18).

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