

## Case name: From Cradle to Career – Experience from Slovakia

1. Subject/issue	Education of Roma youth living in segregated settlements/complex approach
2. Sector, Country	Regional Development, Slovak Republic
3. Background, antecedent	<p>Up to 60% of Roma households (approximately 240,000 people, total number of Roma people based in Atlas 2013 is 408,000) reside in shacks built on illegal land in segregated and separated ghettos, often without access to drinking water. The life expectancy of the Roma is 15 years less compared to their neighbours from adjacent areas. 50% of people living in MRCs have never had a proper job and live off social benefits (usual unemployment rate in MRCs is 90%). Some of them work in shadow economy, majority are a life-long social welfare beneficiaries.</p> <p>Every year, five thousand pupils born in segregated Slovak Roma ghettos start their elementary schooling, making up a total of 50,000 – 60,000 pupils (grades 0 – 9) in elementary schools. About half of them fail in their first years. The dropout rate is dramatic. In addition to the generally known reasons, including lack of command of the Slovak language, low parental education, high absenteeism and appalling housing environments, Slovak teachers are simply not well prepared to educate children from segregated Roma communities.</p> <p>In Slovakia, 76% of all students in special schools are Roma from marginalized communities (MRC), and in so called special classes more than 86 % of all pupils come from MRC. However, the enrolment of the vast majority of these children to special classes is not justified. Pre-school education in Slovakia is not compulsory. The fact that only roughly 4% of all kids attending pre-school education are Roma proves the clear link between the missing pre-school education and the chances of a child to succeed in the mainstream school. In some, rather exceptional, cases, primary schools offer ‘zero’ classes to compensate the missing pre-school education and socialisation of pupils. Children can be enrolled to ‘zero’ classes if they do not pass the enrolment exams to the ‘standard/mainstream’ first class. Zero classes are established by some primary schools in localities with a high ratio of disadvantaged children and it is not considered as pre-school education.</p>
4. Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the level of enrolment to ‘mainstream’ primary classes instead of special schools or special classes.</li> <li>• Increase the number of pupils who succeed in elementary schools so that they can continue their schooling in secondary schools and universities.</li> <li>• Assist in development of the national school curricula to make it suitable to enable Roma children from segregated communities to catch up with their peers.</li> <li>• Increase the number of people from segregated Roma communities in jobs and career.</li> <li>• Improve general health status of people living in appalling conditions of Roma ghettos.</li> <li>• Increase the number of families living in simple, decent and affordable homes legally built by self-help.</li> <li>• Raise the awareness of non-Roma professionals in social services to better understand generational poverty and its hidden rules, as well as day-to-day survival of people with address in the Roma ghetto.</li> <li>• Reduce tensions between Roma and non-Roma living in neighbouring communities.</li> <li>• Reduce hate-crimes against Roma.</li> </ul>
5. Current Status	<p>None of the pupils attending pre-school education offered by the Community Centres run by the project was enrolled to special schools.</p> <p>In order to overcome the barrier of a very low general cognitive readiness of children from MRCs, innovative learning methods were tested within the project. The EA is pilot testing the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment (FIE, Israel) and Grunnlaget (Norway) methods and it is applying also some elements of the Montessori method. In case of FIE it was stated that it is less applicable for children below the 3rd grade of the primary school. This was the reason why the EA looked for a</p>

	<p>more adequate method for young children and started to test the Grunnlaget method. At the moment the FIE method is being compared with other alternative methods in order to test whether it is more efficient than the other approaches.</p> <p>30% of children from segregated ghettos attending educational and low-threshold activities in CCs continue their education in secondary (vocational) schools. These vocational schools are often classes of VET schools allocated near the Roma settlements. The establishment of secondary schools in Roma communities further reduces potential of social interactions between Roma and non-Roma. According to the national statistical data – only 16% of Roma in Slovakia have secondary education, and this percentage includes also Roma who live integrally with the majority.</p> <p>A position of mediator of vocational integration was created within the project, as a part of the comprehensive approach. This activity is focused on finding at least a part time or seasonal job for those interested within the community. The role of the mediator is also to work with the potential employers and look for suitable measures available within the State active labour market policy.</p> <p>16 houses were built by proactive and motivated clients from segregated Roma community in Rankovce. Houses were constructed via self-help and self-financed model. At the end of 2015 9 out of 34 adults (homeowners) had jobs, while in 2012 (before the home construction project started) only 2 persons were employed.</p>
6. Key-Stakeholders and their Roles / Responsibilities	<p>Operation of CCs and other activities in the Municipalities with segregated Roma ghettos were run by an NGO in cooperation with the local governments, kindergartens and schools, grassroots organizations and small businesses.</p> <p>The CCs offered pre-school classes, after-school clubs and various activities, including Mentoring program and advisory services for the parents. Manuals for each educational activity provided in the CCs and primary schools are available in the Slovak language.</p> <p>Cooperation with non-Roma population was the key element of the Project. Close cooperation with municipalities and local schools was particularly important. It would be recommended that the CCs and local primary schools (eventually any other school) cooperate closely and share information about the kids visiting the CCs regularly. Such cooperation would make activities; namely, the after-school clubs, more effective, as the activities content would be more aligned with the school educational program.</p>
7. Capacity building and Sustainability	<p>The Executing Agency prepared publicly available manuals in the Slovak language for the CC workers and primary school teachers. Two manuals are available for pre-school clubs. Other available manuals are: Guidelines for Mentors; Guidelines for Trainers; Workbook for Financial Literacy Program; Manual for Health Education; New Horizons – program for individual development of children from MRCs. Moreover the following publications are available: From Shack to a 3E House – for mayors and social workers and other interested parties who want to build a house using self-help and self-financed model of a house for approximately 10,000 euros; Work Integration Program – for social field workers and mayors, who want to replicate the mediation of work integration program; Parental Education – for non-profit and community organizations, providing educational activities for children from MRCs.</p> <p>30% of the CCs continue their work as established within the project and continue with their activities in full extent. These are being financed through international funds. Overhead costs are normally covered by the municipalities. The other 70% of the CCs continue to be financed through EU Funds, staff was partly maintained, activities continue in a reduced/modified extent.</p>
8. Institutionalization (if any)	The activities introduced within the Project are on the list of activities which are eligible to be offered by CCs run by the State Implementing Agency for Employment and Social Inclusion. Each CC can autonomously decide which services are offered to the clients.

9. Interfaces / Need for coordination with other key issues	The Steering Committee established within the framework of the Project created a forum consisting of relevant stakeholders who have influence on the creation of policy for Roma integration. Besides the Government Office (acting as the National Coordination Unit) and the Swiss Embassy (SCO), the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma, two Higher Territorial Units (Košice and Prešov region), and two representatives of Municipalities (one village and one city) were all represented.
10. Recommendations	The project duration is an important factor. The intervention financed by Switzerland lasted only for 44 months. This time-frame is insufficient for reaching a real impact and can only contribute to tendencies and pilot testing of activities.
11. Why is this a good practice? Reflection and learning	ETP applies so called “from cradle to career” approach. It means that the CC in a given Roma community has to work on a long-term basis (minimum one generation) and has to offer comprehensive services (housing, financial literacy, social work, education from early childhood up to adulthood; especially, supporting teenagers and secondary/university students via Mentoring program). Social interventions at family level, education of parents, intensive cooperation with the local schools, trained non-biased professionals at the local level and well-trained CC staff seem to be necessary prerequisites for increasing the chance of an individual from segregated ghetto to genuinely integrate into majority population.
12. Contact and website/link	ETP Slovakia – Center for Sustainable Development Slávka Mačáková, PhD., Director Zemplínska 15/A, 040 01 Košice, Slovak Republic tel/fax: 00421 917 179 639 or 00421 907 778 645 <a href="http://www.etp.sk">www.etp.sk</a>

**Outreach, engaging local Roma communities/local Roma action groups, leaders and their participation** (please describe any strategies, plans, methods and specific tools for engaging Roma as a guarantee that they are included in a consistent and strategic way)

- The employees of the CC are frequently Roma. A secondary function of the low threshold CCs is to be a community building tool through various activities and services (music groups, amateur theatres, social counselling, etc.).

**Governance/Leadership** (please explain leadership/management practices and results – meaning any interesting initiatives demonstrating good leadership, innovation, individual or institutional good examples of new approaches and leadership; these could be both Roma and non-Roma)

**Mobilization and management of funds** (how are funds ensured and managed so that they reach Roma consistency and sufficiency of funding)

- Funding is channelled to the level of the CCs. Several programmes offered by the CC need additional co-financing from the Roma families and/or other donors. The other donors are frequently international organisations or private enterprises. Some activities (e.g. operation of the CCs) became standardly financed through the state budget (EU funds).

**Sustainability of interventions and programs** (how, by what agents and with what kinds of funds will sustainability be ensured; institutional sustainability)

- EU funds continue to finance the functioning of the CCs. In some cases a private fund, the Velux Fundation, became an important donor. The above mentioned NGO has long-term experiences with multi-source financing.

**Transferability of the practice** (please describe whether any specific tools, methods or innovations could be adapted and used in other contexts)

- All elements of the project can be transferred (health education, etc.) or adjusted (social counselling) to the realities of other Roma communities even in other countries. Besides the more or less standard elements of Roma programmes (preschool education, health/social counselling, housing, etc.) the project tested innovative methods with the aim to boost the cognitive readiness of children at pre-school and early-school age. The gold Civil Society Prize of the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels (EESC) was awarded to ETP

Slovakia – Centre for Sustainable Development's project 'Building Hope' which helps motivated young families from segregated Slovak Roma communities to build their homes legally and from their own savings and microloans.