

Country Assessment  
and the Roma Education Fund's  
Strategic Directions

## Advancing Education of Roma in Hungary



# **Advancing Education of Roma in Hungary**

Country Assessment  
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# Preface

*T*his document is part of a series of REF Country Studies. It seeks to provide an analysis of the education systems and the ongoing education reforms – from the perspective of the inclusion of Roma children – in the countries taking part in the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The document also reviews the different programmes and activities the Roma Education Fund (REF) has carried out since its establishment in 2005, and highlights the thematic and programme areas REF is planning to concentrate on during the coming three years. The REF hopes that this document will offer a useful instrument for:

- ⇒ Policy-makers seeking to improve education policies that address the education outcome gap between Roma and non-Roma.
- ⇒ Civil society representatives who wish to improve the effectiveness of their educational programmes by making them more relevant to the overall education reform of their country.
- ⇒ The overall development and donor community, who needs to better understand the situation that Roma children are facing, so they can identify niche areas where support and contributions would be most needed and valuable.
- ⇒ REF, which needs to define the areas of policy change upon which it will focus.

The information presented in the document has been discussed with representatives of governments and civil society, through various consultative meetings, in order to ensure that the document realistically reflects the actual situation and the recommendations made are viable. This document reflects a situation at the time when the document was produced. Many countries are experiencing relatively fast changes and REF plans to update these assessments on a regular basis.

# Acknowledgements

The editors of the series are Tünde Kovács-Cerović, Roger Grawe, and Alexandre Marc. They have developed the model for the studies, provided oversight during the process of preparation and ensured coherence throughout the documents in the series.

8 The main authors of this document are Judit Szira, senior advisor at the Roma Education Fund and Szilvia Németh, of the Hungarian National Institute of Public Education. They received contributions from Roger Grawe and Vivien Gyuris.

Tom Popper did the language editing.

# 1. Executive Summary

## Political, Economic, and Social Context

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Hungary is an upper-middle-income country with a population of 10 million and a gross national income per capita of \$10,050 in 2005 (as measured by the Atlas method).<sup>1</sup> The country entered the European Union in May 2004. Between 2000 and 2006, Hungary received approximately €2 billion in development support through the EU's pre-accession and transition facility funds.<sup>2</sup> These funds helped the country achieve solid economic growth with a relatively low level of unemployment. It is expected that, within the framework of the 2007-2013 budget period, Hungary will receive €23 billion<sup>3</sup> for development purposes through the regional development, social and cohesion funds. These funds will also help address many of the social development issues in Hungary, including the situation of the country's Roma.

Hungary has a favorable anti-discrimination legal framework, built around three legal provisions: the Act on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities, the Civil Code, and the Public Education Act.

Still, Roma are poorly represented within the national government, with only four Roma among the 386 members of the Hungarian Parliament. Hungary does have two Roma members, both of them women, in the European Parliament. Roma in Hungary also have a national network of elected minority self-governments that serve as advisory bodies for matters that affect their community. In the latest elections, in October 2006, voters formed 1,116 local self-governments, each of which has five Roma local politicians. There are also minority governments on the county and national level. The National Roma Government has 53 members.

Roma form the largest ethnic minority group in Hungary. There are an estimated 580,000 Roma in the country, which means they make up about 5.5 percent of the overall population. Overall, Hungary's population is shrinking and getting older, but the number of Roma in the country is growing, and their age composition is significantly younger than that of the general population. The income situation of the Roma has been steadily worsening since the change of the political and economic system in 1989. Between 1991 and 2001, the percentage of Roma considered to be poor doubled.

The risk of poverty in Hungary is determined primarily by four factors: education and labour market situation; demographic indicators; geographical location and type of dwelling; and ethnicity. Around one third of Hungary's Roma are affected by extreme poverty, and most of these live in Roma settlements.

<sup>1</sup> Source: World Bank Hungary Country Brief 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Hungary's EU website.

<sup>3</sup> Source: *EU Funding to Hit New Record*, UK Embassy Website.

## Education

There is a positive attitude toward inclusive education among all important stakeholders and political structures in Hungary. There is also a history of initiatives and systemic provisions addressing the needs of Roma in education. Furthermore, the country has a strong, active, and well-developed Roma nongovernmental sector, as well as non-Roma human rights civil society organisations. These groups have been helping improve the educational situation of Roma for some time now. Meanwhile, the number of Roma occupying key governmental and county-level positions has increased significantly during the past years.

10 In the last few years, there has been a serious transition in the field of education, which is becoming more and more of a public priority. Roma children in Hungary have full access to education. The participation rate of Roma is also high, and drop outs only represent a problem at the secondary school level. There is free textbook provision, several social benefits, and scholarship and mentorship assistance available for Roma students. Furthermore, affirmative action is institutionally incorporated in Hungary's tertiary education, and desegregation is financed from a budgetary provision that gives normative per-capita support for integration. Roma in Hungary are also assisted by EU social funds.

Nonetheless, there are still some systemic weaknesses of the Hungarian education system that need to be tackled, including:

- ⇒ Children coming from poor families face serious enrollment barriers that originate from the selective education system, in which schools are encouraged to favor children of good economic standing in making admittance decisions. This problem manifests itself in the following ways:
  - Roma children's enrollment in kindergartens and schools is hampered by many factors, such as a lack of available places in class, a lack of public transportation, non-welcoming school management and, in some cases, segregated schools and classes.
  - Poverty constitutes a major obstacle. Roma families in poor rural communities or settlements live far from the good schools. They cannot pay for public transportation to get to the best schools, books, or other education expenses, and scholarships are usually insufficient to cover all costs.
- ⇒ The quality of education provided for Roma children is inadequate and insufficient to ensure their successful completion of higher levels of education. Therefore, Roma children's educational achievement is low, and their class repetition and drop-out rates are high, especially at the secondary level. Many of them enroll in low-quality schools or vocational schools that do not give students the skills they need to have good prospects for employment.
- ⇒ Teachers' education, especially at the initial level, does not prepare teachers for working in heterogeneous multicultural classes. The teachers' education system is predominantly knowledge-oriented and not method-oriented. Although there is a wide range of in-service training available, teachers are free to choose which of these courses they will take. The most popular of these courses are English and information and communication technology, and fewer teachers take those courses that would enable them to work in multicultural environments.
- ⇒ Another systemic weakness is the tendency of the different professional committees for assessing learning abilities to place disadvantaged children, in particular Roma children, in special education institutions.

Segregation, in different forms, represents another major issue Roma children have to face in today's education system in Hungary. The problem can manifest itself in the following ways:

- ⇒ Segregation among schools can be caused by school maintainers who are in favor of keeping separate schools just for Roma children. Spontaneous migration of non-Roma out of an area results in the rise of the proportion of Roma students.
- ⇒ Segregation within schools can emerge due to the per-student financing system of education. School administrators are interested in having as many students as possible. Therefore, to prevent the "emigration" of non-Roma children which usually happens as a consequence of the rising proportion of Roma students, some schools set up segregated classes for Roma students. These segregated classes can, in most cases, be found in separate and lower quality buildings.
- ⇒ Segregation occurs in special schools. In practice, special schools and special classes mean students face low expectations, low-level teaching and lower curricula. The proportion of Roma students in special schools is extremely high.
- ⇒ Segregation through exemption from school attendance is a relatively new method of separating Roma children. Many Roma children get classified as study-at-home students who are only obliged to take exams at the end of each semester. This is a common alternative for many Roma children who are at risk of dropping out, but students in such programmes have reduced chances of finishing school.
- ⇒ *De facto* segregation takes place when Roma children are pushed into short-term vocational schools. Many Hungarian and international reports point out the weaknesses of short-term vocational education. These schools are the last resort for socially and academically excluded young people, many of whom are Roma. The system is disconnected from employers' needs, with few apprenticeship opportunities and high drop-out rates, i.e. around 20-25 percent in grades nine and 10.

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## Strategic Directions for Future REF Activities in Hungary

Within the overall strategic framework of REF for improving Roma education outcomes in Hungary, the REF's future activities will be grouped around the following themes:

- ⇒ Assistance and support to the Roma community.
- ⇒ Implementation support to education authorities.
- ⇒ Policy development advice to the government.

### 1. Assistance and support to the Roma community, through the following potential activities:

- ⇒ Supporting Roma parents and community leaders to recognize and engage in key education issues, by:
  - Motivating parents to participate in comprehensive desegregation processes to eliminate "gypsy" schools and de facto Roma segregation in special schools.
  - Involving parents in preschool enrolment and participation.
  - Building communication channels between Roma parents/community leaders and local government authorities on education issues.
- ⇒ Supporting Roma self-governments involved in educational activities to cooperate and strengthen their organisational, networking, and capacity building structures. The goal is

to make Roma self-governments better able to identify potential policy impacts and mitigate risks, strengthen project implementation, access and use EU and other funds more effectively, and ensure inclusion of smaller/isolated NGOs.

2. Implementation support to education authorities, through the following potential activities:
  - ⇒ Developing a sustainable model for desegregation that includes all “gypsy” schools.
  - ⇒ Increasing the enrolment of Roma children in quality education.
  - ⇒ Reducing drop outs in grades nine and 10.
3. Policy development with government, through the following potential activities:
  - ⇒ Reviewing and strengthening the policy framework and implementing mechanisms for desegregation as a key condition for accessing EU structural funds.
  - ⇒ Engaging in the decentralisation process to build local government capacities and commitment to Roma education.
  - ⇒ Improving education, training, and employment possibilities for low-skilled adolescents and adults.
  - ⇒ Allowing independent monitoring of school maintainers.
  - ⇒ Finding effective means for classroom monitoring and evaluation.
  - ⇒ Influencing the means of teacher training and in-service teacher-training practices.
  - ⇒ Supporting oversight of textbook-materials and teaching materials and revising the teaching materials used in postgraduate teacher-training.

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The REF’s short term strategic objectives in Hungary are to:

- ⇒ Promote actions that contribute to the reform of the special school system.
- ⇒ Promote actions that contribute to the reform of the vocational education system, shifting from a short to a long cycle of vocational and general education.
- ⇒ Promote the use of the lottery system in allocating places in schools.

The REF envisages conducting analysis and research on the following issues:

- ⇒ Vocational Education and Training system for 15-18-year-olds, to seek means for increasing graduate’s employability and relevance of the training.
- ⇒ Government’s support-system for Roma children, including mentoring, tutoring, after-school activities and materials linked to specific grades and needs.
- ⇒ Affirmative action, scholarships and additional support to secondary and tertiary Roma students coming from poor families.

## 2. Country Profile

In 2005, Hungary's population was estimated at 10,085,000.<sup>4</sup> The class cohort size at the age of 7 is currently about 96,000. In recent years, the size of this cohort has been declining by about 2,000 pupils each year.

Hungary's gross domestic product per capita in 2005 was \$15,948.<sup>5</sup> GDP growth was 4.1 percent in 2005,<sup>6</sup> 4.6 percent in 2004, and 3.4 percent in 2003.

The country is receiving a significant amount of European Union funds during the seven-year period of Hungary's first National Development Plan, which began after its EU accession in 2004. The amount of EU support will be as high as HUF 2 trillion (EUR 7.7 billion), and this funding is expected to increase Hungary's GDP by 10 percent between 2004 and 2010, according to government sources.<sup>7</sup>

Educational expenditure was about 5 percent of GDP between 1999-2001. Educational expenditure amounts to 10-11 percent of the total expenditures in the state budget. This ratio has only grown a little since the end of the 1990s. However, there have been significant changes in the way the money is shared between higher education and the public education sector, which includes pre-school education, primary education, and secondary education. Expenditures on higher education have increased due to the expansion of this sector, while the share of the public education sector decreased gradually from the mid 1990s, down to 3.5 percent of the GDP in 2001.<sup>8</sup> Between 2002 and 2004, the expenditures on public education increased by nearly 1 percent, to 4.2 percent of the GDP, which is about the average of other European countries with a similar income level. Therefore, further increases cannot be expected in Hungary's educational expenditures. According to experts, it is even questionable whether funding of the public education system can be maintained at the same level over the long term. Their analysis shows that, while the school population has been declining significantly, the number of teachers has remained almost unchanged. As a result, the average teacher-pupil ratio, as well as the average number of lessons per teacher, only comes to 75 percent of the average among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Source of data: Press release of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal): Vital events in the first 9 months of 2005 <http://www.nepinfo.hu/index.php?m=12&id=2504> (Checked April 4, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> [http://portal.ksh.hu/pls/ksh/docs/hun/xstadat/tabl4\\_01\\_17b.html](http://portal.ksh.hu/pls/ksh/docs/hun/xstadat/tabl4_01_17b.html).

<sup>6</sup> Newsletter of ECOSTAT Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Institute of Economic Analysis and Informatics, February 14, 2006, at: <http://www.ecostat.hu/gdp/060214.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Press conference of minister Etele Baráth, president of the National Development Office, February 4, 2006, at: <http://www.nfh.hu/xindex2.htm?t=3&ci=25&ci=115>.

<sup>8</sup> Source of data: National Institute for Public Education (2004): *Education in Hungary 2003*, Budapest, pp. 87-89.

<sup>9</sup> National Institute for Public Education, Centre for Educational Policy Analysis (2004): *Fenntartható-e a közoktatás?* Budapest.

## Roma Population in Hungary

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Roma form the largest ethnic minority group in Hungary. Well-informed estimates put the actual number of Hungarian Roma in the range of 550,000-600,000, or about 5.3-5.8 percent of the population of Hungary. Currently, this consolidated estimate is used by both the government and civil society, though some Roma leaders claim that the number of Roma in Hungary is as high as 800,000. According to the 2001 census, the latest available official data on the number of minorities living in Hungary, 190,046 people, or approximately 1.8 percent of the total population, identified themselves as Roma.<sup>10</sup> This is explained by the fact that Roma tend to hide their ethnic identity in official surveys of census. Overall demographic tendencies in Hungary are characterized by an ageing, decreasing population, but the Roma population is increasing, and its age composition is much younger than that of the entire population.

### *Poverty and Inequalities*

Roma live all over the country, with communities in approximately 2,000 of Hungary's 3,200 settlements. The highest concentrations of Roma are in the regions of Northern Hungary, Southern Trans-Danubia, and the Northern Great Plain. Most of the Roma live in two northern counties: Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, where nearly a quarter of the country's Roma live, and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, which is home to about 18 percent of Hungary's Roma. A total of 57 percent of the Hungarian Roma live in economically depressed counties.

Most of the Roma in the north speak Hungarian as a mother tongue. The majority of Romanes language speakers live in Southern Trans-Danubia, in Somogy and Baranya counties.

Since the 1970s, there has been a tendency for Roma to leave the high unemployment in Eastern Hungary and head for the more prosperous western regions and larger settlements, so that the proportion of Roma living in towns and cities increased considerably. Nonetheless, most of Hungary's Roma, 58-64 percent, still live in villages, and 40 percent of them live in locations with a population of less than 2,000 – the most disadvantaged rural settlements. The situation is different among the overall population, only one third lives in villages, and less than one fifth lives in small villages. Also unlike the overall population, less than 10 percent of Hungary's Roma live in the capital. It is a characteristic of the regional distribution of Roma in Hungary, that they are concentrated within certain settlements that have a much higher proportion of Roma than the rest of the surrounding county. In several villages, Roma form the majority of the local population, and there are also some places where their proportion is close to 100 percent, including Alsószentmárton in Baranya county and Csenyété in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén. Residential segregation of Roma is not only common in rural areas: Roma ghettos are a typical feature of bigger cities and towns as well. The proportion of Roma living segregated in ghettos is highest in Northern Hungary.

Most of the Roma in the country live below the poverty line, and many live in extremely destitute situations. The great majority of Roma families are situated primarily in the lowest strata of Hungarian society, or are even pushed to the margins of that society. The income situation of the Roma in Hungary has been steadily worsening since the end of communism

<sup>10</sup> Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (Hungarian Central Statistical Office)(2002): *Népszámlálás 2001* (Census 2001), Budapest, pp. 9-10.

brought about change in the political and economic systems. The independent social research group TÁRKI conducted surveys in 1991 that found 31.9 percent of the Roma were poor – which meant their income was less than half the median – while in 2001, as many as 61.5 Hungary’s Roma fell into the category of poor. According to surveys,<sup>11</sup> the risk of poverty in Hungary is determined primarily by four factors: education and labour market situation; demographic indicators;<sup>12</sup> geographical location and type of residence; and ethnicity. However, the Hungarian Roma community is more and more heterogeneous, and among Hungary’s Roma a significant percentage are now above the poverty line and a few are part of the middle class and are very well integrated in Hungarian society.

Hungary’s most serious post-communist employment crisis was in 1997, when the proportion of those employed was 26 percent lower than in the pre-transition period.<sup>13</sup> The labour market situation varies regionally, and it happens to be the worst in the three parts of Hungary where most of the Roma live. In the years after the political and economic transformation following the retreat of socialism, the labour market situation of Roma became disastrous. In 1993, nearly half of the working-age Roma were registered as unemployed, as compared to 13 percent of the total population. In the years before the regime change, 85 percent of working-age Roma men had a job, while in 1993, this number had dropped to less than one-third of Roma men aged 15-59. For Roma women, the situation was even worse: In 1993, only 15 percent of Roma women had permanent employment, while 66 percent of women in the total female population were employed.

A survey carried out in 2003 suggests that the employment situation for the Roma has not improved: It found that 28.1 percent of Roma men aged 15-74 had payment for employment as their primary source of income, and 28.6 percent of them had some kind of regular work – as compared to 56.5 percent of the overall male population in the country. Among Roma women in 2003, 15.1 percent received payment for employment as their primary source of income, as opposed to 43.7 percent of the total female population. Analyses suggest that four fundamental factors contribute the most to the mass scale of Roma unemployment:

- ⇒ Before the change of regime, Roma had primarily worked in sectors that went bankrupt in the 1990s: Mining, foundry work, and machine manufacturing almost totally collapsed, and agriculture has not overcome serious recession. Up until the mid 1990s, the construction industry was in a deep crisis, too.
- ⇒ Most Roma live in regions that are at a disadvantage from a labour market perspective.
- ⇒ Discrimination<sup>14</sup> in the labour market reduces Roma’s chances to secure a job.
- ⇒ The typical, lower-than-average education level of Roma significantly limits their career opportunities.

As for health, latest surveys indicate that the situation of Roma is much worse than that of the overall population. Roma are affected by chronic illnesses and diseases in greater numbers, and

<sup>11</sup> TÁRKI Hungarian Household Panel Surveys (<http://www.tarki.hu/en/>).

<sup>12</sup> András Gábos, Péter Szívós (2002): *A jövedelmi szegénység alakulása, a gyermekes családok helyzete* (Income poverty and the situation of families with children) In: Társadalmi Riport, TÁRKI, Budapest.

<sup>13</sup> Gyula Nagy (2000): *Munkanélküliség a kilencvenes években* (Unemployment in the 1990’s). In: Társadalmi riport, 2000. TÁRKI, Budapest.

<sup>14</sup> The Minority Ombudsman has noted that there have been many cases of discrimination in employment, but that Hungary’s legal regime provides no effective remedy. See: Reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner of Minority Rights at <http://www.obh.hu/nekh/en/reports/reports.htm>.

their infant mortality is also higher than the general population. The average life expectancy of Roma is 10 years shorter than that of the non-Roma population in Hungary.

However, the fact that an important portion of the Roma community does live above the poverty line raises questions about how best to collect data and design policies: Is it best to focus on Roma regardless of their income, or is it best to seek to support those with low incomes, regardless of their ethnicity?

### 3. Political, Economic and Social Situation

#### Government Structure, Mandate, and Finance

The current government has been in place since May 2006. It is a left-wing coalition, and this election was the first of the post-communist era in which the standing government was reelected. The ruling coalition, which consists of 190 Socialists parliamentarians and 20 parliamentarians from the Alliance of Free Democrats, has a small majority among the 386-member Parliament. The leader of the opposition is the Hungarian Civic Union (Fidesz), a centrist right-wing party that has 140 seats in Parliament. Fidesz's potential coalition partners are the Christian-Democratic People's Party, with 23 seats, and the smallest faction, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (right wing), with 11 seats.

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#### *Sub-National Political Structure*

Hungary's governance is highly decentralized. There are 20 regional governments, one for each of the 19 counties and one for the capital of Budapest. There are 3,153 local governments in the country, and 2,400 of them maintain educational institutions. Local governments are elected six months after parliamentary elections. Minority elections are organized at the same time as local government elections. Thirteen minorities, including Roma, have the right to campaign and elect their own local self-governments, which is a parallel system, independent of the local one. Local minority governments act as advisory bodies, and they are supposed to be consulted on matters considered relevant to the minority. There are also county-level and national-level minority governments, which perform a similar, advisory function.

#### *Government Finance*

The government just approved an austerity programme to reduce the budget deficit. Called the New Equilibrium Programme for 2006-2008, it is a package of prompt and decisive measures intended to reduce spending and increase revenues. The targets of the New Equilibrium Programme are to improve the balance of the budget by HUF 350 billion (EUR 1.3 billion) this year, and more than HUF 1 trillion (EUR 3.7 billion) in 2007, as compared to the deficits that were projected without the austerity measures. In terms of the budget deficit, the New Equilibrium Programme is intended to reduce the deficit to 8 percent of the GDP in 2006 and 5 percent of the GDP in 2007. By 2008, the budget deficit is supposed to be 3-3.5 percent of GDP.

Reforms in public administration, municipalities, health care, and education, and almost every area of state operation, are intended to help achieve sustainable equilibrium by 2008-2009. These reforms are meant to guarantee long-term budget stability and further reduction of the deficit and public debt, and they should even allow the reduced state to claim smaller and smaller contributions to the implementation of joint objectives each year.

As for public education, as part of budget rationalization, the government decided to dramatically reduce the number of teachers, by 20 percent. In undertaking these reforms, the government has reduced the number of ministries from 14 to 11, and the number of ministers from 17 to 12.<sup>15</sup>

### *Responsibility for Education*

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The administration of public education in Hungary is extensively decentralized, and responsibilities are shared between several actors. Horizontally at the national level, educational administration is shared by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which assumes direct responsibility for educational matters, and certain other ministries, such as the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. Vertically, the responsibility for education is shared between the various levels of government: central (national), regional, and local.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has one political secretary of state and five deputies. These deputy secretaries of state are each assigned to one of the following five areas: development and research, international relations, public education, higher education, and science and culture.

Under the authority of the deputy secretary for public education is the Minority and Equal Opportunity Department. Issues pertaining to Roma are addressed by this Minority and Equal Opportunity Department and by the political secretary of state in the newly established Roma Integration Office, which is part of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

At the regional (county) and local levels, educational administration is integrated into the general system of public administration. In other words, there is no organisationally separate educational administration. The county and local level of public and educational administration is based on the system of local governments. This means that administration is controlled by politically autonomous, elected bodies, and the central government cannot issue direct orders to the local governments. The authority of the regional level administrations is quite weak, while the scope of responsibilities at the local level is fairly wide. The number of local governments is very high and their average size is small.<sup>16</sup>

## **Roma Representation in Government/Parliament**

Roma are very poorly represented within national government, and only three Roma Members of Parliament (representing the main opposition party) were elected in 2006 to the 386-member Parliament. Since then, the governing coalition added one Roma member of Parliament, László Teleki, who was appointed by the Socialist Party in October 2006.

Even these few Roma Members of Parliament were elected as representatives of majority parties – and not as members of Roma political parties. A Roma political party, Roma Összefogás Párt, (Party for Roma Cooperation) ran its own candidates in the elections, but it only achieved 0.2 percent of the votes. In the European Parliament, Hungary has two Roma members, both women.

<sup>15</sup> [http://misc.meh.hu/binary/7867\\_56134c443387bed.rtf](http://misc.meh.hu/binary/7867_56134c443387bed.rtf), the New Equilibrium Programmeme.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.oki.hu/oldal.php?tipus=cikk&kod=Education2003-Administration>, Balázs et al., 2000, OKI, Budapest.

Roma also have the benefit of a national network of elected minority self-governments, which are advisory bodies that are supposed to consult with officials on matters affecting Roma. In the latest elections of October 2006, voters formed 1,116 local self-governments, each of which has five Roma local politicians. There are also minority governments on the county and national level. The National Roma Government has 53 members.

There are also some Roma politicians elected as members of local-self government municipal councils or as mayors. Roma are more and more often employed in public administration. For example, the Ministry of Education and Culture has 10 Roma employees. In 2002, the previous Socialist-Liberal government established a network of commissioners for Roma in the different ministries, but, unfortunately, this system was abolished after the new elections.

## Responsibility for Roma Affairs and the Decade

The national co-ordinator of the Decade of Roma Inclusion is the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. Within that ministry, the person responsible for coordination of Decade activities and policies is the head of the Department of Roma Integration.

Since the Decade Secretariat moved to other countries, there has been a serious lack of activity around the Decade movement in Hungary.

The government oversaw a social dialogue with a variety of stakeholders to discuss the National Action Plan for the Roma Decade. This dialogue involved about 400 organisations, including Roma NGOs, minority self-governments, municipalities, and educational and social care institutions. Based on the findings of these discussions, the National Action Plan was amended and submitted to the government. Initiatives outlined in the National Action Plan have been included in the Hungarian central government's budget plan. The draft of the National Development Plan for the next programming period of Structural Funds (2007-2013) is under discussion, and these talks involve Roma governmental experts and Roma NGOs, including the Roma Education Fund (REF).

## Status with Key International and Regional Partners

Since May 2005, Hungary has been a member of the European Union. In the process of EU membership negotiations, the government always tried to accommodate requests for changes by EU negotiators. The Council of Europe's European Youth Center has had an office in Budapest since 1995.

Hungary signed on to the OECD Convention on May 7, 1996,<sup>17</sup> and in so doing, pledged its full dedication to achieving the fundamental aims of the organisation. There are many benefits to OECD membership: Through its country surveys and comparable statistical data,<sup>18</sup> the OECD provides its member countries tools with which to analyze and monitor their economic, social and environmental policies. Hungary can draw on the OECD's reservoir of expertise, including peer

<sup>17</sup> See: [http://www.oecd.org/document/7/0,2340,en\\_33873108\\_33873438\\_1915847\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html#Article2](http://www.oecd.org/document/7/0,2340,en_33873108_33873438_1915847_1_1_1_1,00.html#Article2).

<sup>18</sup> See: [http://www.oecd.org/statsportal/0,2639,en\\_2825\\_293564\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/statsportal/0,2639,en_2825_293564_1_1_1_1,00.html).

reviews,<sup>19</sup> and they can access all of the research and analysis conducted by the OECD. One of the latest interesting peer reviews focused on equity in education, looking at disadvantaged groups, especially Roma children.

Hungary took part in all three of OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)<sup>20</sup> surveys, and their outcomes had a big influence on educational decision makers and policies.

## Political Opposition and Its Relationship to Roma Issues

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The political opposition always supported Roma education, and took part in the Decade of Roma Inclusion. When the current opposition, Fidesz, led the government coalition, in 1998-2002, the quantity of scholarships increased, and several legislative changes took place as well. The priority was more on improvement and development of Roma children, rather than on mainstreaming or inclusion. In this period, the Phare Program started the establishment and support of special dormitories for talented Roma children. Priority was given to the support of good practices in Roma education, and support for successful Roma programmes and schools. This period also saw the initiation of the French Zone Education Priority (ZEP) programme, and three locations were selected to try this method.

## Anti-Bias and Anti-Discrimination Legislation

Antidiscriminatory legislation is defined in three legal provisions: the Act on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities, the Civil Code, and the Public Education Act.

The Act on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities, passed by Parliament in 2003, acknowledges every person's right to equal dignity; provides legal aid to people who suffer from negative discrimination; and declares that it is the duty of the state to promote equal opportunities in accordance with the Constitution, the international obligations of the Republic, and the legal acts of the EU. According to the act, all forms of direct and indirect negative discrimination are against the principle of equal treatment. These citizens' rights and state obligations are reiterated in the Public Education Act of 2003. Aside from the Hungarian state, the institutions that monitor the principle of equal treatment also include local and minority self-governments, which are empowered to act against segregation and discrimination.

The Civil Code acknowledges that the right to equal treatment is a civil right, and victims of discrimination may sue in civil courts.<sup>21</sup> One example of using the court to enforce civil rights is a case against the city of Miskolc. In that case, the court ordered that a homogeneous Roma school be shut down and the children be transferred to the nearby elite school. This important decision ended a case of segregation of Roma children.

There are several agencies mandated to deal with discrimination:

<sup>19</sup> See: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/5/59/22350184.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> See: [http://www.oecd.org/department/0,2688,en\\_2649\\_35845621\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/department/0,2688,en_2649_35845621_1_1_1_1_1,00.html).

<sup>21</sup> Articles 75 and 76.

- ⇒ The Equal Treatment Authority, established through the Act on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities, is entitled to act against any discriminatory act, regardless of its grounds – race, social status, religion, etc. – and regardless of the area impacted, which means this authority also covers discrimination in education.
- ⇒ According to Article 80 of the Public Education Act, notaries at the local or county level are in charge of ensuring that private schools are operated in a legal manner. If there are serious complaints made by parents or NGOs, a notary can suspend the transfer of normative budgetary support or take the school to court. If the school continues illegal practices, notaries have the right to revoke the license of the school and strike it out of the registry.
- ⇒ The Center of Monitoring and Examination in Public Education (OKÉV) also has the right to investigate discrimination in schools and impose a fine suitable to the offence.
- ⇒ Ombudsmen, also called parliamentary commissioners, are chosen by Parliament under Article 32/B of the Constitution. They investigate violations of constitutional rights and initiate remedies for such violations. At present there are four ombudsmen in Hungary: the Ombudsman for Civil Rights (General Ombudsman), the Deputy Ombudsman for Civil Rights, the Ombudsman for the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities and the Ombudsman for Data Protection. The ombudsmen recommended actions against discrimination and violators, must act upon these recommendations within 30 days.

## Civil Society

The divisions of Hungary's Roma population developed in the early 20th century. The country's Roma can be grouped into three categories, based on their history – where they came from and when they arrived in Hungary – and the language they speak: The largest group is the “Romungro,” who arrived earliest and lost their language, so they speak only Hungarian. The majority of the second group, the “Olah Gypsies” arrived from Romania and the Balkan region in the second half of the 19th century. They speak Romanes (Lovári) language. The third group of Roma, which is the most recent to arrive, is settled mainly in South-West Hungary, and speaks an archaic Romanian language dialect (Beás). Among Roma living in Hungary 71 percent speak Hungarian as a mother tongue, 21.2 percent speak Romanes (Lovári) language, and 7.8 percent speak beás. However, according to the latest surveys, the number of lovári and beás speakers are gradually decreasing in the younger generation, and without institutionalized defense and education, the future of these languages is uncertain.

### *Roma Initiative*

The first Roma NGOs started to work before the political changes, and the first Roma Cultural Association was established in the 1970s.

Currently, the most important civil society organisations include: the Roma Civil Liberty Union (president: Horváth Aladár), the Roma Press Center (Bernáth Gábor), Phralipe (Osztolykán Béla), the Forum of Hungarian Roma Organisations (Kolompár Orbán), Lungo Drom (Farkas Florián), the Alliance of Roma Organisations (Dogi János), the Roma Parliament (Zsigó Jenő), Romaversitas (Sárközi Gábor), Chance for Children Foundation (Mohácsi Erzsébet), Faag Roma Students Organisation (Orsos György), and the Amrita Association (Orsos Anikó).

Roma support networks maintained by the state budget include: the network of Roma coordinators in county employment centers (20); Roma coordinators in the National Educational Integration Network (18); Roma Anti-discrimination Customer Service, in each of the counties and the capital (20); the Roma Settlement Program network of mentors (20). Roma organisations have developed many informative web sites.<sup>22</sup>

### *Other Key Actors in Civil Society and International Organisations*

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There are several public and private foundations dealing with Roma issues: The Public Foundation for Hungarian Roma (MACIKA) runs a big scholarship programme for children from elementary school until tertiary education. Tempus Public Foundation has a scholarship programme for disadvantaged high-school students, supporting them not only with scholarships but also tutorial help. The Council of Europe's European Youth Center is an international organisation and training center focused on intercultural and human rights training and programmes for youth. The Open Society Institute (OSI) and Soros Foundation – Hungary has been the biggest donor organisation in Roma human rights and education for 20 years. UNICEF Hungary, Partners Hungary, the Minority Foundation, the Mobilitas Foundation, and the Ec-Pec Foundation all provide research, studies, and programmes for the disadvantaged, including Roma. The Chance for Children Foundation initiates legal actions in civil rights matters and follows the case through all legal proceedings, so the lessons learnt can empower communities for independent future action.

<sup>22</sup> Important Roma web sites include: [www.romapage.hu](http://www.romapage.hu); [www.romnet.hu](http://www.romnet.hu); [www.romapont.hu](http://www.romapont.hu); [www.romacentrum.hu](http://www.romacentrum.hu); [www.romaweb.hu](http://www.romaweb.hu); [www.roaart.hu](http://www.roaart.hu); [www.romadecade.hu](http://www.romadecade.hu); <http://nti.btk.pte.hu/rom/index.php>; [www.romaversitas.hu](http://www.romaversitas.hu); [www.romanokher.hu](http://www.romanokher.hu).

## 4. Education system

### Governance Structure

Decisions regarding education are taken by the minister of education, in cooperation with other ministries, county governments, bodies responsible for maintaining schools – such as local governments, churches, public and private foundations – and, on the institutional level, by headmasters and teachers' communities.

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The minister of education oversees the pedagogical, professional, and educational work of public, vocational, and higher educational institutions. The ministry prepares and issues legislative acts in the field of education, creates development plans, and makes sure that these plans adhere to quality standards. In order to ensure quality instruction, the ministry, through its background institution, Educational Office, organises pedagogical, professional assessments, examinations, and surveys in the fields of public and vocational education. The ministry supplies children with textbooks by setting the order and conditions of registered schoolbooks. It is also responsible for the publication of the National Qualification Registry, the list of professions recognized by the state. Though the minister regulates every detail of public education, in ministerial decrees and by way of his capacities to propose legislation to Parliament, he plays an extremely limited part in implementation, mostly controlling and sanctioning breaches of educational law.

Maintainers of schools, be they county or local governments, or private schools with some sort of school boards, enjoy a high level of freedom in governing schools. Local and county governments also have a great deal of leeway in controlling the quality of schools. Given that they have the right to appoint headmasters, schools can easily secure substantive control over the local curriculum, human resources, investment, and financing policy. Parents can raise complaints about a school. In both public and private schools, parents' complaints eventually proceed to the local or county notary and, beyond that, to either the Office of Public Administration or to court. However, in reality, this practice fails to ensure that students and their parents effectively exercise their rights as laid down in the Public Education Act and elsewhere.

The act on self-governments recognizes the responsibilities and network of organs spelled out in Table 1.

Table 1: Governance of the Education System

State Administration	Self-Administration
<p><b>Principal of school or school facility:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Responsible for first degree of state administration (student enrolment, recruitment of school staff, financial management, postponement of school attendance, data collection and transfer to the local municipality, school management and administration).</li> </ul> <p><b>Teachers' Council:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Decides on school curriculum, failure, class repetition, and choice of textbooks.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Council of school or school facility:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Council of students (elected by the students for 1 year).</li> <li>⇒ Council of parents (elected by the parents elected for 1 year).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Local municipality:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Establishes and oversees kindergarten and primary schools, afternoon activities, and other school facilities.</li> <li>⇒ Exercises self-government authority.</li> <li>⇒ First degree of state administration in matters of mandatory school attendance.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Municipal (school) council (elected for 4 years):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Small municipalities do not have a separate school council.</li> </ul> <p><b>Minority self government (elected for 4 years):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Right to agree on matters pertaining to minority education.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Self-governing county administration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Establishes secondary schools, vocational schools and centers of practical education, primary art schools, secondary school dormitories, orphanages and other state care institutions.</li> <li>⇒ Provides pedagogical service for schools;</li> <li>⇒ Organizes evaluations and data collection.</li> <li>⇒ Provides a second degree of state administration on matters where directors of schools established by the region carry out the first degree of administration.</li> <li>⇒ Establishes professional committees.</li> </ul>	<p><b>County self government (elected every 4 years):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ In each self-governing region plus Budapest.</li> <li>⇒ School board is responsible for the institutions.</li> <li>⇒ Hiring principals, accepting pedagogical plans, approving school curricula, designing policies for the school network, designing a quality assurance policy, deciding about the budget, deciding disciplinary procedures and punishment of principals.</li> </ul> <p><b>County minority self government (elected for 4 years):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Right to agree on matters pertaining to minority education.</li> <li>⇒ Right to give an opinion about strategies and policies.</li> <li>⇒ Right to give an opinion and veto choices of the principal of a minority school.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Regional administration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Oversees state examinations and evaluations.</li> <li>⇒ Monitors teachers, schools, administrative and professional work.</li> <li>⇒ Oversees school inspection.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Ministry of Education:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Designs strategies, and issues mandatory regulations, bylaws and directives.</li> <li>⇒ Issues legislation.</li> <li>⇒ Administers EU funds.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Other central organs</b> (such as Ministry of Agriculture, Interior, Defense, etc., as defined by separate legal acts):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Establish and manage selected departmental schools.</li> </ul>	

## Financing

Financial support for public education is provided primarily from the central budget, with contributions from the revenues of school maintainers. School budgets can also be augmented by contributions and tuition fees paid by students, and additional revenues of the schools. The amount of financial support for public education provided by the state is defined by the annual budget. The position of education in the national budget seems to be quite stable, and it has even shown a tendency to grow in percentage of GDP. (See Table 2) As a part of the new Convergence Programme<sup>23</sup> of the Hungarian government, the financing of major portions of the public sector, including education and health, will be changed.

Currently, however, there are two types of state support for the system of public education: earmarked subsidies and per-student grants. Earmarked subsidies cover funds for libraries, computer labs, minority students, emigrant students, etc.

Per-student school funding is different for each level of schooling, but it is universal for all ethnic groups and all types of settlement. Local governments automatically receive per-student grants, but they have to apply individually for earmarked subsidies. Per-student funding is generally calculated according to the number of students and type of tasks undertaken, and the local governments are free to spend the per-student grant as they see fit. On a national average, central budget support covers only 60-70 percent of educational expenditures the remaining 30-40 percent comes from the local administrations budget. This, of course, creates disparities, and means that more affluent maintainers of schools can add more to the education budget than poor self governments. Local governments that maintain schools are free to decide on their school budgets, with the only restriction being that the budget must cover the expenses of compulsory tasks of the school, defined in the Public

<sup>23</sup> Accepted by the EU in October 2006.

Education Act and its amendments, and that the budget may not be less than the amount provided to local governments from the central educational budget. Furthermore, an educational institution must have sufficient resources to pay for the minimum number of lessons while providing students with services that they are entitled to free of charge.

Denominational institutions are further entitled to both per capita funding from the state budget and additional support on the basis of their agreement with the state. Other school maintainers, such as private foundations, are also entitled to both per capita normative and additional support, if they have an agreement with the local government to provide for compulsory public education. In most cases, denominational and private schools cater to children of well-to-do families, so funding for these schools can increase inequities.

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Vocational training contributions are an important independent source of school funding, which is paid by economic organisations. Part of this funding is used directly by these organisations, to finance their own practical training, and part of it is transferred to the national Labour Market Fund. The various training institutions may apply to this Fund for support.<sup>24</sup>

Table 2: Hungary's Educational Expenditure by Level of Education as a Percentage of GDP, 1998-2001

Description	1998	1999	2000	2001 <sup>a</sup>
Pre-school education	0.75	0.77	0.71	0.71
Primary, lower and upper secondary education combined	2.93	2.91	2.71	2.77
Total expenditure on public education (incl. pre-school education)	3.68	3.68	3.42	3.49
Higher education	0.91	0.97	1.09	1.04
Other education <sup>b</sup>	0.19	0.20	0.21	0.20
Other expenditure related to education <sup>c</sup>	0.11	0.33	0.40	0.47
Total educational expenditure	4.89	5.18	5.12	5.20
Public expenditure on education as a percentage of state budget	9.75	11.02	11.13	N/A

Source: Educational Yearbook 2001/2002, OM, 2002

a. Preliminary data.

b. Post-graduate courses, other further training courses, etc.

c. Professional educational and counselling services are shown in this category.

<sup>24</sup> This section based on *Education in Hungary 2003*, (ed. Halász, Gábor and Judit Lannert), "Characteristics of the financing system of public education," OKI, 2004, Budapest, p. 42-43. (<http://www.oki.hu/oldal.php?tipus=cikk&kod=Education2003-Financing>).

In the last 15 years, Hungary has tried to deal with the issue of supporting equity in education through financial incentives. There were some initiatives that later proved to be counterproductive and had to be changed. These include:

- ⇒ Increased per-student financing for special education: The number of Roma in special education increased due to this mechanism.
- ⇒ Support for underdeveloped small settlements: This measure meant that small village schools with low-quality education were maintained, so that children were not integrated into bigger, higher-quality schools.
- ⇒ Per capita support for traveling students: Non-Roma parents used this opportunity more often than Roma.
- ⇒ A catch-up programme for Roma children: This resulted in segregated catch-up classes for Roma.

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## Facilities

The schools are relatively well resourced, but buildings used for education in Hungary are extremely heterogeneous. Most of the buildings require renovation, and barely more than half of the nearly 14,000 buildings used in public education are in a satisfactory technical state. Forty percent of these buildings were constructed before World War II, and another 42 percent were built between 1946 and 1979. A total of 9.2 percent of pre-school and school buildings require urgent renovation, while 40 percent require modernization in the near future. Based on the results of the OECD's Program on Educational Building, the ministry announced a large-scale loan programme, for the reconstruction of school buildings and modernization, called "Schools of the 21st century." Simultaneously, an EU-funded Phare program, called "Information technology in general schools" was launched with a budget of HUF 6.5 billion (EUR 25.3 million). The framework of the programme allows for the renovation of approximately one hundred educational buildings.<sup>25</sup>

There are too many schools in Hungary. As a result, most of the school buildings have 25-30 percent unused places for students. Unfortunately, the situation is the opposite when it comes to kindergartens, and places for children are especially needed in small villages. Local mayors do not like to apply for EU or government funds to build new kindergarten rooms or buildings, because maintenance is very expensive. Furthermore, the mechanism of per-student funding in Hungary does not allow for fair maintenance of very small village schools. In this situation, small settlements should network with one another in order to create higher quality joint school systems.

The school enrollment principle in Hungary is primarily based on school districts – schools are obliged to enroll all children from their neighborhood. For the empty places, which are often 25-30 percent of a school's total places, children used to be able to apply on the basis of a free choice principle. But, in order to reduce disparities and inequities, a lottery mechanism was introduced in Autumn 2006. Under this mechanism, decisions about which students get to fill empty spaces in a school will be made on the basis of drawing lots, transparently, in front of the applicants.

<sup>25</sup> See: <http://www.oki.hu/oldal.php?tipus=cikk&kod=Education2003-Content>.

## Language of Instruction

The official language of instruction is Hungarian, but a number of ethnic and national minorities, including Germans, Slovaks, Romanians, Slovenians, Serbs, Roma, and Croatians, have minority educational institutions with their own languages as the first language of instruction or as an additional second language. These types of schools serve all levels of public education. The provision of minority education – as with mainstream education – is the task of the school maintainer, which, in most cases, is the local government.

Minority education in primary and secondary schools can take the following forms:

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- ⇒ Instruction in the mother tongue.
- ⇒ Instruction in the majority and minority languages, including also Romanes, in the same school.
- ⇒ Minority language teaching as an additional subject – if requested by at least eight parents;
- ⇒ Roma minority education, including tradition, culture, and common history, as additional subject – if requested by at least eight parents.
- ⇒ Supplementary minority education, which includes instruction of minority literature, culture and language in villages and towns where the number of students does not necessitate minority education – i.e. when less than eight parents request minority education.<sup>26</sup>

Currently there are several schools in which a substantial part of the instruction is in Romanes, including the Kalyi Jag and Ghandi schools. In general, Roma minority education is quite widespread. In the 2005/06 academic year, Roma education was organized in 406 schools, out of a total of about 3,350 schools in Hungary.

## Education Cycles, Progression Criteria, and Examination System

As of 2004, education is compulsory up to the age of 18, in Hungary, and enrollment is more or less universal.

The structure of education cycles has been through a variety of changes recently. After 1985, the previous “8+4” system of eight years of primary school and four years of secondary school started to be liberalized. A variety of parallel systems started to appear, including 6+6 and 4+8. In the 2003 Amendment to the Public Education Act, the 8+4 year model was supported as a priority, and educational cycles were partially adjusted according to this model. The completion of basic education is certified at the end of the eighth year, and after the 10th grade, students can apply for a basic examination. Secondary education starts in the ninth grade. Vocational studies may not begin before the age of 16, and before that, students are to acquire fundamental education.

The structure of the education system is currently as follows:

<sup>26</sup> Farkas, Lilla and Szilvia Németh (2006): *EU Map Monitoring and Advocacy Program, Desk Review and Case Studies*, OSI, Budapest, manuscript.

<b>Pre-primary – one preparatory year, compulsory (ISCED 0-1)</b>	Age 5-6/7
<b>Primary – single structure (ISCED 1 + 2)</b>	Age 6/7-14 (1st cycle: age 6-10; 2nd: age 10-14)
<b>Secondary school (general lower and upper secondary) (ISCED 2 + 3)</b>	Age 10/12/14 - 18/19
<b>Vocational secondary school (ISCED 3)</b>	Age 14-18/19/20 (generally: 4 years)
<b>Vocational training school (ISCED 3)</b>	Age 14-18 years (2+2 years)
<b>Remedial (ISCED 2) + vocational training school (ISCED 3)</b>	Age 15/16-18/19 (1-2 + 2 years)
<b>Post-secondary vocational course (ISCED 4)</b>	Age 18-19/20 (1-2 years)

ISCED: International Standard Classification of Education.

Selection mechanisms are deeply rooted in the Hungarian education system. There are several kinds of selection mechanisms at all levels of schooling, and they add up to a system that strongly disadvantages the poor, visible minorities, and special education students.

In the Soviet era, public education in Hungary was characterized by a high degree of centralization and homogeneity. With reforms in 1985, education legislation declared students' freedom to choose a school and established a kind of a professional autonomy of schools. After the political changes, Hungary established a market place of educational options. And due to a continuing demographic trend, the number of school children has dropped by 30-40 percent in pre-schools and in what are termed "basic" schools, which are schools providing education for the first eight grades, up to about the age of 14. Thus, a wide array of educational institutions are competing to attract children and retain or increase their per-pupil financing. The result is a system out of balance: High performance schools with excellent reputations select students by exams and grades, because they can fill more places than they have available. Meanwhile, middling schools take the next tier, and isolated, or weak, schools have small classes of children who are "leftovers," with few options. Usually these are the children of the poor and disadvantaged. Thus, the very children who need the additional resources, gifted teachers, and special assistance, are the least likely to receive this support.<sup>27</sup>

Pupils are assessed by the teachers throughout the school year, on the basis of written and oral tests. As of September 2004, the revised Act on Public Education stipulates that all pupils must be assessed with a written, individual analysis, that expands on the traditional marking framework, which uses a scale of 1-5. It is possible to make the pupil repeat a year at each grade. However, during the first three years of school, in which there is no numeric marking, it is only possible to make a student repeat a year of school with the consent of the parents. All schools are required to elaborate a comprehensive evaluation and assessment regulation based on the consensus of teachers, the school's maintainers and parents.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> OECD Equity report.

<sup>28</sup> See: <http://www.okm.gov.hu/main.php?folderID=137&articleID=2208&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>.

Examinations in Hungary either conclude an educational/training phase, as is the case with a secondary school-leaving exam or a vocational examination, or they form the basis of admission to the next educational level, as with entrance exams for secondary school and higher. There is no school leaving examination after grade eight, but there is a secondary school entrance exam. The role of this examination gained particular importance in the case of six- and eight-year general secondary schools, which are forced to adopt a selective procedure after grade four or six, due to the large number of applicants.

In 2000, a central entrance examination was introduced in general secondary education, in order to prevent students from having to sit for several entrance exams at different locations, even if they are applying for entrance to more than one school.

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There is also an optional examination of general knowledge after 10th grade, which is mostly used by students who are continuing in vocational training schools.

The secondary school-leaving examination (*matura*) is the most important exam in the Hungarian system. It concludes the secondary school studies of students and provides the right to admission into higher education. The requirements of the examination were reviewed and amended in 2003, together with the framework curricula. These changes meant that the level of requirements has been reduced, and skills development has received greater emphasis. In all exam subjects, there is two-level specification of requirements (intermediate and advanced). From 2005, the secondary school-leaving examination replaced entrance examinations. The students themselves have the right to choose the subject and the level of the exam to be taken.<sup>29</sup> It was not until 2005 that the written and oral *matura* examination included questions about Roma.

## Special Schools

In Hungary, there is a network of special schools, and special remedial classes organized in regular schools, both at primary and secondary level. The number of primary special schools has somewhat decreased in recent years, as Table 3 shows.

Table 3: Trend in Special Primary Schools

	Number of Special Primary schools
2001/02	665
2002/03	648
2003/04	633
2004/05	612
2005/06	583

Ministry of Education and Culture, Statistical Yearbook of Education, 2005.

Special schools in Hungary are administered by all categories of school maintainers. These schools offer a curriculum that is parallel to the national curriculum, but has fewer requirements

<sup>29</sup> See: <http://www.oki.hu/oldal.php?tipus=cikk&kod=Education2003-Quality>.

and includes fewer subjects. Due to entrance exam requirements, it is unusual for children who finish basic special education to access regular secondary education. Therefore, children who have had basic special education usually continue on to special vocational education, which offers low-skill vocational training – or these students simply drop out from further education. (See Table 4)

Table 4: Special School Graduates' Further Education Directions

	2001-02	2002-03
<b>High School</b>	2 (0,2%)	4 (0,4%)
<b>Vocational High</b>	4 (0,5%)	35 (3,6%)
<b>Short-term vocational Training</b>	300 (34,4%)	305 (31,7)
<b>Special Vocational</b>	442 (50,7%)	456 (47,4%)
<b>Did not continue</b>	124 (14,2%)	162 (16,8%)

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Havas Gábor, 2004.<sup>30</sup>

Teachers in special schools are special pedagogues. They are educated at faculties for special pedagogy, and they create a unique interest group of professionals who are keen to maintain the special education system.

Financing special education is more expensive than financing regular education. However, from 2003, an even higher coefficient has been introduced for special needs children integrated into regular classes. Financing of special education in 2005 and 2006 is outlined in Table 5.

Table 5: Financing of Education in Different Types of Primary Schools in 2005 and 2006

School type	Per capital grant
<b>Primary grade 1-4</b>	HUF 204,000
<b>Primary grade 5-8</b>	HUF 212,000
<b>Special school grade 1-8</b>	HUF 464,000
<b>Additional sum per-student in primary if integrated</b>	HUF 324,000 (in addition to HUF 204,000 or HUF 212,000)

State Budget (2004; 2005).

The proportion of Roma children in special schools is much greater than their overall proportion in the population of school-aged children. Between 1974-75 and 1992, the percentage of Roma children

<sup>30</sup> Havas Gábor: Beszámoló az Utolsó Padból Program keretében végzett kutatás egyes eredményeiről. Kézirat, 2004. Report from research outcomes in 2004 called From the Last Row Program, Manuscript.

in special schools increased from about 25 percent to about 42 percent, according to 1993 data from the Ministry of Culture and Education. Due to rules on data protection, no official statistics are available after this date, but numerous sociological studies have dealt with the issue. A 1997 survey involving 309 special schools estimated that more than 40 percent of the students are Roma (Radó, 1997),<sup>31</sup> and a 1998 survey in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county showed more than 90 percent of the students attending schools with special curricula are Roma (Loss, 2001).<sup>32</sup> According to Havas, Kemény, and Liskó (2002), about every fifth Roma child is declared to be mildly mentally disabled. Most experts agree that a good number of Roma children attending special schools are not even slightly mentally disabled. These children are relegated to special schools due to a failure to consider their specific socio-cultural characteristics and due to discrimination – whether conscious or unconscious.

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There are different procedures for diagnosing and assessing a child's intellectual disability for educational purposes. Children are assessed by the county-level Professional Committees for Assessing Learning Abilities. The children are diagnosed with one of four levels of intellectual disabilities – mild, moderate, severe or profound – in accordance with the ICD-10 definitions of the World Health Organization.<sup>33</sup>

Children are sent to special schools based on the decision of a selection committee, an “expert panel” that assesses students at the request of local schools and kindergartens. Because the staffs of the schools and kindergartens have a key role in requesting assessments, their stereotypes and biases easily lead to Roma children being sent to the committee. Where doubts emerge about the ability of students to cope with mainstream school, the expert panel examines the child to determine whether they should go to a special school for children with physical or mental disabilities. Children remain in these schools, which have lower academic requirements, until their abilities are considered to be sufficient for elementary education. It is possible for children to stay in the auxiliary system throughout their primary education, with practically no chance of continuing to secondary schools afterwards. Roma are disproportionately represented at both the testing and selection stages (Interview, November 2000). ECRI<sup>34</sup> reports that “such channeling, which in principle is carried out by an independent board, is often quasi-automatic in the case of Roma children.” Every child who did not go to kindergarten has to be examined.

The other reason for Roma children ending up in special schools is that experts examining children still use measures that are inadequate for judging the abilities of children socialized in poor and/or minority families.

In the case of students with slight mental disabilities, the expert panel reviews its opinion one year after its initial decision, and then in every second year until the child reaches the age of 12. After this time, the review is carried out every three years.

Parental consent is required for all decisions regarding the placement of children. But, Roma parents find it difficult to utilize their legal safeguards – due to their lack of information about the characteristics of different schools and educational progression, and their own educational disadvantages.

Supervision of the process can be initiated by the local government or the local minority self-government. The owner of the educational institution – usually the county or local government – also

<sup>31</sup> National Institute of Public Education (1997): *Jelentés a Magyar közoktatásról*. OKI, Bp. Report on education in Hungary.

<sup>32</sup> Loss Sándor (1998): *Szakértői es rehabilitációs bizottságok hatáselemzése BAZ megyében*. OM kézirat; Report on the selection committees in BAZ county, for the Ministry of Education.

<sup>33</sup> See: <http://www.eumap.org/topics/inteldis/reports/national/hungary>.

<sup>34</sup> European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)(2000): *Second Report on Hungary*, Council of Europe.

has the right to initiate supervision at the institutional level. It is important that the local minority self-government may request supervision of the process, because, as the minorities ombudsman points out, “The local government is often counter-interested in a professional supervisory procedure.” (Ombudsman 2000, p.54.) The local government is often behind discriminatory educational practices, so the right to initiate professional supervision could provide minority self-governments with another useful instrument in acting against segregation.<sup>35</sup>

## Social Support for Students

As of 2002, social support is provided only on the basis of poverty and other social needs. As part of the reform of public services, social support is increasingly targeted to those in real need. Starting from the 2005/06 school year, the following state support was available:<sup>36</sup>

- ⇒ **School books:** Schools receive subsidies for school books for certain categories of children. For children who are disadvantaged because they come from a poor family, the subsidy only covers the basic schoolbooks. Multiply disadvantaged children, such as students with special educational needs, permanently ill students, students living in families with three or more children, and students receiving regular child protection allowance,<sup>37</sup> are eligible for a higher subsidy, which is usually intended to cover additional school supplies. In Hungary, the idea of universal free textbook provision is a subject of political debate. Although major parties promote the provision of universal free textbooks, a sound targeting policy, which only offers free textbooks to those in need, has prevailed until now.
- ⇒ **Double family allowance:** As of 2005, every socially disadvantaged family receiving a family allowance is given double the allowance in August, to cover education-related expenses. For a family with one child, this payment amounted to HUF 10,200; with two children, it was HUF 12,400; and with three or more children, it was HUF 15,600. For children who have special educational needs or are permanently ill, the payment comes to HUF 27,800 per child. Additional sums are available for single parents.
- ⇒ **School meal contribution:** Kindergarteners from socially disadvantaged families receiving a regular child support allowance are eligible for free meals, usually three times a day. Students in grades one through four with special educational needs, permanently ill children, students living in families with three or more children, and students receiving a regular child protection allowance are eligible for a 50 percent discount.
- ⇒ **Tempus Foundation:** In 2005, the government initiated a series of programmes to support disadvantaged youth during their studies: the “Way to secondary school programme,” “Way to a profession (vocational training) programme,” and the “Way to science programme.” Schools apply for funds through these programmes, which provide allowances for disadvantaged

<sup>35</sup> Németh Szilvia et al. (2004): *Guidelines for Abolishing Segregated Education of Roma Pupils*. Policy Note. OKI, Budapest, pp. 173-176.

<sup>36</sup> Dóra Varga (2005): *Segítség az iskolakezdéshez* (Help to start school), in *Népszabadság*, available at <http://www.nol.hu/cikk/374765/>.

<sup>37</sup> Note that, since January 1, 2006, this allowance has been built into the family allowance. A regular child protection benefit, as a new form of supplementary support, can be requested to cover various school-related expenses.

students and their mentors. Thus the programmes promote children's success in school with financial and professional assistance. The level of funding ensures a nationwide mechanism, covering all applicants: In 2005, the programme's budget was HUF 750 million (EUR 2.7 million). In 2006, the budget was HUF 1.9 billion (EUR 7.2 million).

- ⇒ MACIKA: The MACIKA Public Foundation for Hungarian Roma provides scholarships for Roma children who are between the ages of 10 and 18 and are in public education. It also provides scholarships for students in tertiary education who are talented in the arts (mostly music). The annual budget is HUF 850 million (EUR 3.1 million).

## Key Legislation and Other National Documents

In the last few years, there were considerable changes in the legal provisions of education. In 1999, 2002, 2003, and 2005, there were significant amendments of the Public Education Act of 1993. Furthermore, various newly established acts had direct effects on the system of public education. These acts included regulations covering the textbook market, adult training, the payment of a compulsory vocational training contribution, the development of the training system, enrolment, etc.

From the point of view of education of Roma in Hungary, the most important legislative developments in recent year were the following:

In 2002,<sup>38</sup> several legislative changes were approved by the Parliament. Legislation on giving certain types of assistance was changed so that eligibility was based on being socially disadvantaged. This change abolished a debate about the definition and registration of Roma. In the legislation on education, students are considered socially disadvantaged under any of the following conditions: (i) their parents attended only elementary school; (ii) their family is eligible for a supplementary family allowance, indicating that they come from an economically disadvantaged environment; or (iii) they are an orphan.

As of September 1, 2003, certain alterations in the kindergarten regulations went into force.<sup>39</sup> According to the new law, it is obligatory to set aside places in kindergartens for disadvantaged children from the age of three if their parents request it.

From September 2004 onward, primary school students in their first through fourth year can only be made to repeat the same year in school if they were frequently absent from class. The relevance of this measure is that disadvantaged students have frequently been forced to repeat a year of education because of their failure in school. This approach has not proven effective in promoting students' educational careers. Instead, experience shows that these students can make up their arrears if more time is dedicated to the acquisition of key competencies, such as literacy and numeracy. Moreover, the practice of holding students back a year causes psychological harm by stigmatizing the children, and it enhances the risk that students will drop out because they lack motivation or are over-aged.

Ministerial Decree (11/1994.MKM) was changed to give legal and financial support for efforts to improve the integration of Roma children in public education, with provision 39/E: per capita

<sup>38</sup> These changes were designed by the ministerial commissioner for the Integration of Roma Children's Office.

<sup>39</sup> Section 65 of the Public Education Act.

allowance for integrated education. This change can pave the way for many disadvantaged children to reach the level of education desired in Hungarian society. The regulation introduces the concept of preparatory training to help students realize their potential and integrate into mainstream schools. New forms of assistance have been created with the goal of making it possible for children with different social and cultural backgrounds to be taught together and receive the same level of education. The decree does not order schools to implement integration, but it does provide guidance to schools that choose to integrate. The new integration programme was introduced in the 2003/2004 school year. Institutions undertaking to implement the new approaches launched integration programmes in a concerted manner for children in their first, fifth, and ninth year of education.

Measures to address the problems caused by allowing free choice of schools took effect in September 2006, after changes to Act LXXIX of 1993, Article 66(2). Parents can ask to send their children to a school that is not in their district, and primary schools can accept additional transfer students, but they must give preference to requests from students whose place of permanent residence, or temporary residence, is in the municipality where the school is located. Schools may only deny admission to pupils with multiple disadvantages if they can site a lack of space. If, after complying with its mandatory admission obligation, a primary school has room to accept some additional requests for transfer students, but not all of them, there will be a lottery for the available spaces. Applicants for admission will be invited to watch the drawing for spaces. Students who have multiple disadvantages, special educational needs, or other special circumstances, can gain admission without being in the lottery.

According to the 2003 modification of section 95 of the Public Education Act, the programme of extracurricular study-groups is recognized as a successful means of fostering academic success among disadvantaged children. Extracurricular study groups are widely used in the EU, mainly for the support of migrant students. A few programmes have been successfully run by NGOs in Hungary, but they did not receive government support until EU funding became available. EU support will hopefully help these programmes disseminate their good practices in Hungary and ensure long-term state funding. Currently, there are about 50 such afternoon schools in the country.

Following intense public debate, affirmative action programmes have been initiated in tertiary education as of September 2005.<sup>40</sup> Disadvantaged students will be provided with the opportunity to be enrolled into free, state-funded courses in universities or colleges. When they are considered for admission, disadvantaged students only need to comply with the requirements set for students who are paying full tuition. They don't need to meet the higher requirements set for students receiving academic scholarships. Disadvantaged students who are receiving a free tertiary education, will also have the opportunity to choose a mentor (tutor), who assists them during their university studies.

More changes are expected in terms of financing and higher education enrolment.

<sup>40</sup> According to the modification of the 269/2000. (XII. 26) Governmental Decree.

## Status of the Education System: Key Indicators

Table 6: Key Indicators for the 2005/06 School Year

2005/06 <sup>41</sup>	Kindergartens	Primary (general) schools [a]	Short-term vocational schools [b]	Special vocational schools	Secondary general schools 1	Secondary vocational schools 1	Tertiary education
Number of students	326,605	861,858	126,211	8,797	243,878	287,290	424,161
Students in 1 <sup>st</sup> grade of programmes	–	101,192	33,615	2,684	55,926	51,821	122,901
Graduates	–	120,269	25,152	–	45,151	43,387	62,361
Number of teaching staff	30,531	85,469	8,938	1,239	18,213	20,871	23,188
No. of institutions	3 294	3 141	496	131	620	797	71
Pupil/teacher ratio <sup>42</sup>	10.7	10.1	14.1	71	13.4	13.8	–
Number of students in groups <sup>43</sup>	22.5	19.7	24.5	11.7	28.9	26.1	–
Net enrollment ratios % <sup>44</sup>	56.3%	around 100%	–	–	–	–	–
Percent of Public expenditure on education	All together	74%	–	–	–	–	20%
Roma minority education	16,780	38,304	–	–	405	402	–
Of which teaching language too	237	1,640	–	–	317	–	–

<sup>41</sup> Statistical Yearbook of Education, Ministry of Culture and Education, 2006.

<sup>42</sup> Number of pupils/students per teacher in full time and part time education.

<sup>43</sup> Number of pupils/students per children-group/classes in full time and part time education.

<sup>44</sup> Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Bp, 2006.

## Student Performance Based on International Assessments

Hungary has participated in both the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS),<sup>45</sup> the two most comprehensive international programmes to assess performance of students approaching the end of compulsory schooling. The PISA assessment was conducted in 2000 and 2003, and the TIMSS assessment was conducted in 1995, 1999, and 2003.

The Hungarian students' performance is summarized in the three tables below (tables 7, 8, and 9):

Table 7: PISA 2003 Results

37

Area	Hungary		OECD		Diff. Hungary – OECD
	Mean <sup>46</sup>	Mean stand. error	Mean	Mean stand. error	
Mathematics	490	2.8	500	0.6	- 10
Reading	482	2.5	494	0.6	- 12
Science	503	2.8	500	0.6	+ 3

Table 8: Trends in Performance Over Three Years: PISA 2000 and 2003

Area	2000		2003		Diff. 2003-2000
	Mean	Mean stand. error	Mean	Mean stand. error	
Mathematics	488	4.0	490	2.8	+ 2
Reading	480	4.0	482	2.5	+ 2
Science	496	4.1	503	2.8	+7

<sup>45</sup> OECD (2004): *Learning for Tomorrow's World: First Results From PISA 2003*, Paris: OECD Publications ([www.pisa.oecd.org](http://www.pisa.oecd.org)).

Mullis, I.V.S., Martin, M.O., Gonzales, E.J. and Chrostowski, S.J. (2004): *TIMSS 2003 International Mathematics Report*, Boston: Lynch School of Education, Boston College (<http://timss.bc.edu>).

Martin, M.O., Mullis, I.V.S., Gonzales, E.J. and Chrostowski, S.J. (2004): *TIMSS 2003 International Science Report*, Boston: Lynch School of Education, Boston College (<http://timss.bc.edu>).

<sup>46</sup> The way results are reported in both the PISA and TIMSS is as follows: In each assessment area, each student is awarded a score based on the difficulty of the tasks that she or he could perform reliably. The scales are constructed so that the average student score is 500 points and about two-thirds of the students score between 400 and 600 points – so there is a standard deviation of 100 points).

Hungarian students perform at OECD average level on science, and slightly below on reading and mathematics. Although the performance statistically remains at the same level over 3 years, it is important to note that the progress on science is due to the increased performance of low-performing students.

Table 9: Trends in Performance Over Eight Years: TIMSS 1995, 1999 and 2003

Area	1995		1999		2003		Diff. 2003-1999
	Mean	Mean stand. error	Mean	Mean stand. error	Mean	Mean stand. error	
Mathematics	527	3.2	532	3.7	529	3.2	- 3
Science	537	3.1	552	3.7	543	2.8	- 9

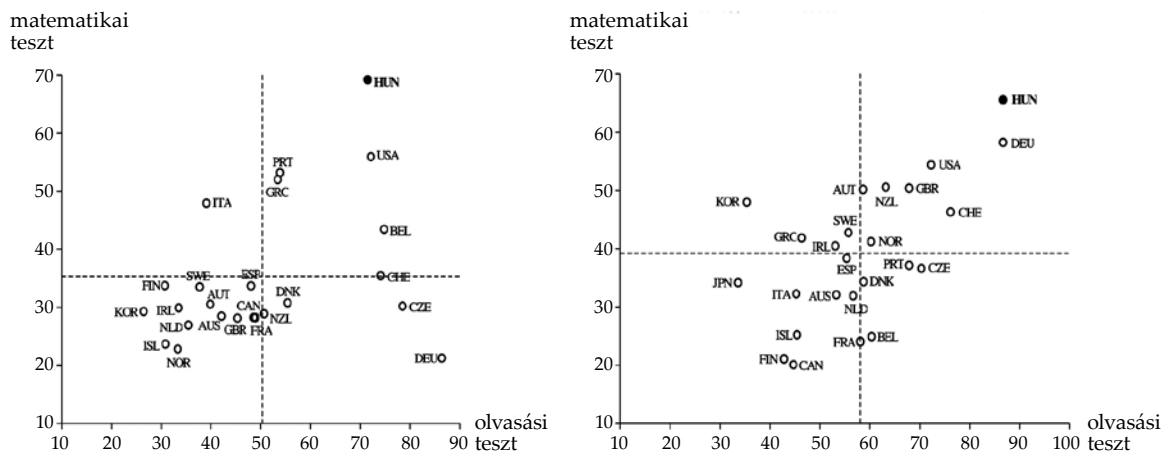
As in many countries, students in Hungary perform better on the TIMSS than on the PISA.<sup>47</sup> Average performance on both TIMSS scales and in every cycle is above international average. Over eight years there is no statistically significant difference in average performance.

The impact of students' socio-economic status<sup>48</sup> on performance is very high, the highest among the 41 participating countries. The Index of SES explains 25.7% of variance in performance in mathematics which is an above-average impact on student performance. The difference in performance between the bottom and the top quarter of students grouped by index of SES is 127 points which is the biggest difference among all participating countries. The strength of the relationship between performance and socio-economic background in Hungary shows that the Hungarian educational system does not yet have effective strategies in overcoming the effects of disadvantaged home backgrounds and does not fully capitalise on the potentials of low-SES students.

<sup>47</sup> The lower international mean on TIMSS than on PISA is partially a wider range of less developed countries participate in the TIMSS. Another reason for the lower mean of TIMSS is that the sampling for the two studies is different: TIMSS targets students at the end of primary school, usually when they are preparing for their final exams, while PISA targets 15-year-olds, who are often already in the first grade of secondary school, and are somewhat detached from the curriculum areas assessed.

<sup>48</sup> The index of socio-economic status composed of variables that indicate economic, social, and cultural status of the student's family. It is expressed on a scale constructed such that the OECD average is 0.0 and the standard deviation is 1 (two-thirds of students are distributed between -1 and 1).

Table 10: The Effect of Social Differences on Reading and Maths Test Results in the Participating Countries  
Based on the PISA-Test (year 2000 reading test) and on One of the 1995/99 TIMSS Tests (maths test)



NOTES:

Left panel: average test score difference between students whose mother completed high school and those whose mother did not complete high school.

Right panel: Average test score difference between students whose family has more than 100 books and those with less than 100 books.

Horizontal axes: Math test. Vertical axes: Reading test.

Dashed lines show the average differences in test scores in all participating countries (unweighted).

Source: Kertesi, Gábor and Gábor Kézdi: *Általános iskolai szegregáció I-II* (Segregation in primary schools, parts I and II), *Közgazdasági Szemle*, 52. évfolyam, (4. és 5. szám), 317-356 and 462-480, 2005.

Additionally, Hungary has very small performance differences within schools and great differences between schools. PISA 2003 results place Hungary just one rank above the bottom with regard to one of the study's key equity indicators: variation in performance within schools versus variation in performance between schools.<sup>49</sup>

### Education Indicators of Roma

According to the law in the 1990s, when education was compulsory until age 16, most of the students who finished primary education were enrolled in the secondary level. But the difference between the school careers of Roma and non-Roma children is clear. Table 11 shows a tendency for non-Roma to go to vocational high school, short-term vocational school, and high school, while for the Roma students the priority was short-term vocational school, vocational high school and special vocational school. The enrolment barriers are visible from Table 11:

<sup>49</sup> OECD Equity report, 2005.

Table 11/a: School Career After Primary Education (all students)

<b>Secondary</b>	<b>2000/2001</b>	<b>2001/2002</b>	<b>2002/2003</b>
	%	%	%
<b>Did not continue</b>	1.0	1.0	1.1
<b>Special vocational</b>	1.1	1.1	1.3
<b>Short-term vocational</b>	32.8	32.9	33.1
<b>Vocational High</b>	40.0	38.9	39.0
<b>High School (4 y)</b>	22.5	23.6	23.1
<b>High School (6 y)</b>	.7	1.0	1.1
<b>High School (8 y)</b>	1.0	1.1	0.9
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Number of schools</b>	465	472	497

40

Table 11/b: Roma Students' School Career After Primary Education

<b>Secondary</b>	<b>2000/2001</b>	<b>2001/2002</b>	<b>2002/2003</b>
	%	%	%
<b>Did not continue</b>	9.9	10.1	8.1
<b>Special vocational</b>	5.5	5.4	6.1
<b>Short-term vocational</b>	62.7	63.5	63.8
<b>Vocational High</b>	16.1	16.2	15.8
<b>High School (4 y)</b>	5.1	4.4	5.6
<b>High School (6 y)</b>	.2		.1
<b>High School (8 y)</b>	.1		.1
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Number of schools</b>	419	430	452

Research on segregation 2004. Lisko-Havas.

Table 11/c: Roma Students' School Career After Primary Education: Long Term

Secondary	1993/94	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Did not continue	49.8	16.5	16.1	14.9	9.9	10.2	8.1
Special vocational	9.4	8.6	10.4	9.4	5.5	5.4	6.2
Short-term vocational	30.2	61.6	57.5	56.5	62.8	63.6	63.8
Vocational High	10.0	9.3	12.0	15.4	16.2	16.3	15.9
High School (4 <sup>th</sup> y)	0.6	3.7	3.8	3.6	5.6	4.4	5.9
High School (6 <sup>th</sup> y)	0.6	3.7	3.8	3.6	5.6	4.4	5.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of schools		168	176	182	419	430	452

41

Kemény, 1994, Roma segregation, school data, 2000.

Most of the Roma students were enrolled in short-term vocational training. It is interesting to note that, according to research, schools where the ratio of the Roma students is higher seem to be more effective than schools with fewer Roma students.

Table 12: Ratio of Roma Students' Failure in Schools With Different Ethnic Compositions

Percentage of Roma students in school	Percent of students who re-take exam		Percent of students who repeat the school year	
	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 9	Grade 10
Under 10%	15,811	13,178	10,429	4,033
11-20%	15,013	13,736	7,211	4,264
Above 20%	14,565	13,242	5,059	4,261
Average	15,129	13,276	7,566	4,186
Number of schools	159,000	157,000	158,000	153,000

Roma in short-term vocational education, Lisko, 2001.

In secondary education, the worst failure is dropping out, because a student who drops out will have a hard time becoming employed. From the data, it is clear that the biggest drop-out rate is in those schools where the percentage of disadvantaged students is high.

Table 13: Drop Out Rate in 2000/2001 for Schools With Different Ethnic Compositions

Percentage of Roma students in the school	Drop out rate (%)		Ratio related to the 9 <sup>th</sup> grade (%)
	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 10
Under 10%	12,650	9,923	87,160
11-20%	13,502	8,311	74,558
Above 20%	17,363	12,044	72,591
Summa	13,204	9,821	83,959
Number of schools	149,000	145,000	170,000

Roma in short-term vocational education, Lisko, 2001.

In a very innovative study, Kertesi and Kézdi have tried to measure level of segregations at the national level for Hungary showing that children with unfavorable family background and Roma children tend to be increasingly segregated and isolated in same schools. They calculated a dissimilarity index and isolation index for endangered students, students with difficult family background and socio-economic backgrounds and for Roma children when they were available. The dissimilarity index of schools shows the percentage of students (Roma or endangered) who should change places with majority students in order to achieve a completely even distribution. The isolation index describes the chances for a Roma or endangered student to meet a majority student.

Table 14: The Segregation of Elementary School Children Between Schools in Hungary According to Social Background Composition (endangered children<sup>50</sup>) and Ethnicity Composition (fraction of Roma children), 1980-1999 (dissimilarity index)

*Dissimilarity Indices*

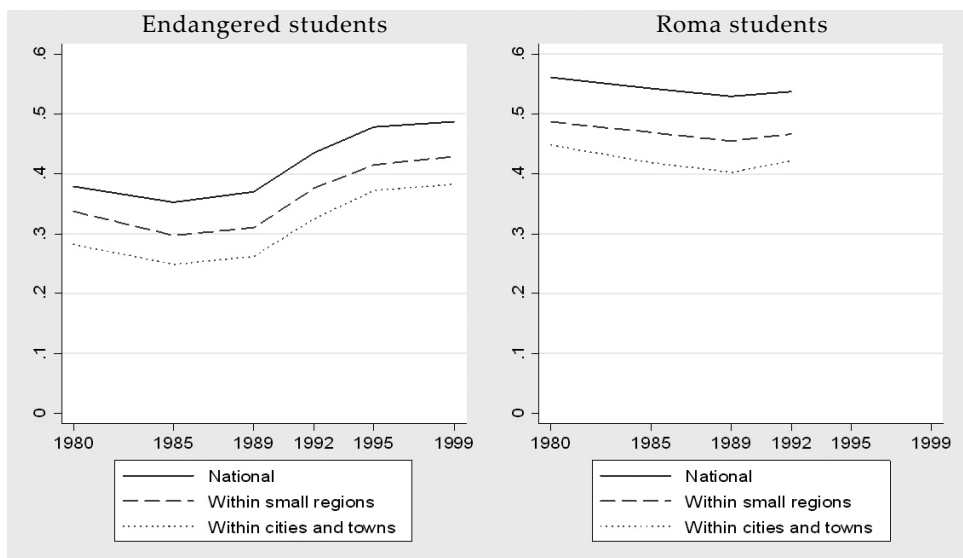
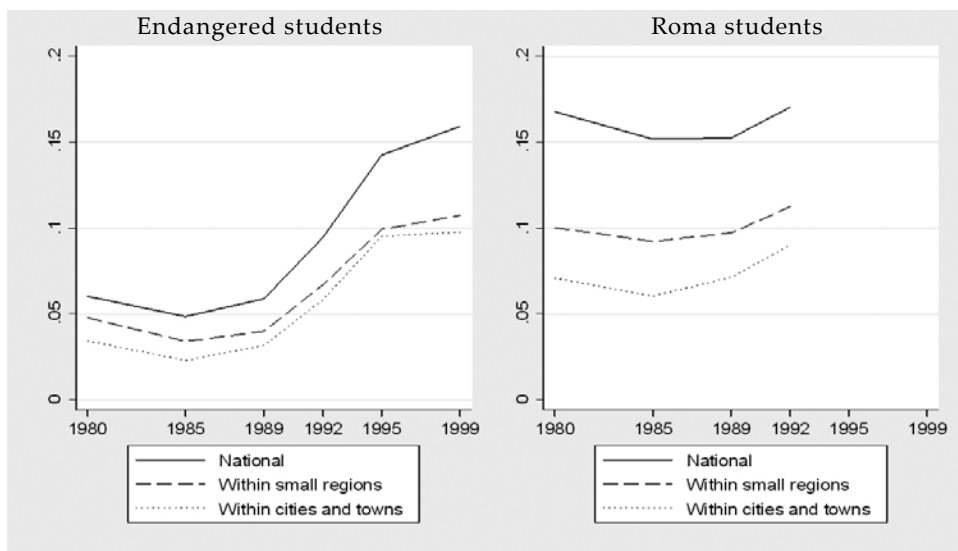


Table 15: The Segregation of Elementary School Children Between School in Hungary According to Social Background (fraction of endangered children) and Ethnicity (fraction of Roma children), 1980-1999 (isolation index)

*Isolation Indices*



<sup>50</sup> Disadvantaged students from poor families or/and families in crises.

The study shows that following a long stagnation, segregation in terms of endangered children started a sharp rise in 1989. The national dissimilarity index of school rose from 37 to 49 between 1989 and 1995. The isolation index also started to increase at the same time and rose above 15%. This indicates that the segregation processes took place mostly between 1989 and 1995, and segregation seems to have slowed down by the end of the decade.

These findings corroborate the results on PISA showing the strong impact of social background on school performance in Hungary and the very high differences between schools all contributing to very large differences of student performances due to socio-economic background across the country.

There are many factors that affect the stratification and sorting of students in Hungary, including: overcapacity of school places with unlimited school choice; lack of proper monitoring of teachers; prevailing traditional teaching style combined with elitist expectations; lack of quality assurance mechanisms in terms of external and self-evaluation of schools, teacher's low expectations from Roma students; the ability for any self-defined minority group to set up and own its own school with government support; state supported transportation to schools of choice; grade retention throughout schooling; selection for special programmes within schools and within classes; selection into secondary education with variable ages of entry; state support for private education. All these measures have been introduced with very little attention given to how Roma children and more generally low income groups would be impacted.

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## Extent and Nature of Roma Segregation and Enrolment Barriers

The highly selective education system in Hungary affects the Roma in many ways:

- ⇒ In many cases, there are either no kindergartens in the vicinity of Roma settlements, or there is a lack of places, so that Roma children cannot enroll in the kindergarten.
- ⇒ Enrolment in primary education is universal, but Roma children usually get enrolled in the nearest low-quality school.
- ⇒ After completing primary education, Roma children most often enroll in lower-quality, short-term vocational schools.
- ⇒ Drop out rates of Roma students in secondary school are much higher than those of non-Roma.
- ⇒ Roma children often face problems in accessing dormitories for secondary school students – because there are no spaces or the fees are too high – and these problems further limit their chances of accessing higher-quality secondary education institutions.
- ⇒ After high school, Roma face additional barriers to enrolling in higher education, including the economic needs of their family, the costs of dormitories and books, and the expenses attached to living in the city.
- ⇒ In many cases, Roma children have to face the prejudiced and xenophobic attitude of teachers. There are five common types of segregation in the present education system in Hungary:<sup>51</sup>
- ⇒ Segregation between schools caused by spontaneous migration occurs when non-Roma move out of an area so that the number of Roma students in a school starts rising. Sometimes non-Roma families who do not move out of a neighborhood that is becoming increasingly Roma still take their children out of the local school.

<sup>51</sup> Országos Közoktatási Intézet (2004): *Chance for Integration*, (ed. Németh Szilvia), Budapest.

- ⇒ Segregation within schools due to the per-student support system of education. School administrators (and local governments as their owners) are interested in having as many students as possible.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, to prevent the “emigration” of non-Roma children due to a rising proportion of Roma students, some schools set up a class system to segregate Roma. There are three basic forms of class segregation:
- special remedial classes, usually with a lower requirement level, poorer educational work and a disproportionate number of Roma pupils;
  - special faculty classes offering extracurricular education (e.g. language teaching, advanced mathematics, etc.), usually reserved for non-Roma children;
  - classes set up by misusing the institution of “Roma minority education.”<sup>53</sup>
- ⇒ Segregation in special schools to which Roma children are assigned in a proportion that is much higher than their proportion in school-aged population. The reasons for sending these children to special schools are usually explained as follows: “due to socialization defects in the family and to insufficient kindergarten attendance, Roma children are socio-culturally disadvantaged, and, as a consequence, they are unable to study at the same speed as other children, so they require the use of special pedagogical tools and methods, within the walls of a special school or a remedial class.” In practice, special schools and special classes generally mean low expectations, low-level teaching, and segregation – all of which makes catching up with the others impossible.
- ⇒ Segregation by exemption from attendance is a relatively new method of separating Roma children by declaring them study-at-home students. Students can be exempted from all class attendance if they are officially permitted home study. Such students fulfill their educational obligation by taking exams at the end of each semester, before an independent panel. Parents consent is required for this decision, but parents rather opt for this type of education than to leave the child dropping out entirely.
- ⇒ *De facto* segregation of Roma into short-term vocational schools. Many Hungarian and international reports point out the weaknesses of abbreviated vocational education: These schools are the last resort for socially and academically excluded young people, including many Roma. The system is disconnected from employers’ needs, with few apprenticeship opportunities, the drop-out rate is high, estimated at 20-25 percent in grades nine and 10; and there is low labour market demand for the skills taught.

## Qualitative Assessment of the Education System<sup>54</sup>

### *School Management*

Hungarian schools are fairly autonomous. The role of school heads is important in the internal relations of the institution. Most of school managers’ time is spent on financial matters, documentation,

<sup>52</sup> Per Annex 3 Point 20 of Act LXII of 2002, per-student state support for public school education is HUF 187,000 (\$813) for grades one-four; HUF 194,000 (\$843) for grades five-eight; and HUF 240,000 (\$1,043) for grades nine-13.

<sup>53</sup> The children enrolled to the “Roma minority classes” are learning separately not just the minority curricula, but all school curricula.

<sup>54</sup> This section is based on *Education in Hungary*, (ed. Halász Gábor and Lannert Judit) OKI, Budapest, 2004. [www.oki.hu](http://www.oki.hu). For a detailed qualitative assessment see table in Annex.

the daily routine tasks of school management, strategic planning, human resource development, monitoring activities at the institutional and individual level, or evaluation. Heads of institutions in public education are required to have a post-graduate professional qualification. According to the 2003 Amendment to the Public Education Act, the head of a school may be appointed for a second term on the condition that they are fully qualified as institutional administrators. This qualification can be obtained by taking a post-graduate professional qualification.<sup>55</sup>

### *Teachers*

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In comparison with other countries, teachers represent a significant proportion of the total workforce in Hungary. In 1999, the total number of school teachers in public education amounted to 3.6 percent of the total number of employees. Part-time employment of teachers is far below the level found in OECD countries. In spite of the decline of student numbers, the number of teachers basically remained the same between 1990 and 2001. This is why, in relation to international standards, Hungary's student-teacher ratio is relatively low. In primary and lower secondary education (International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 1 and 2), Hungary has the second-lowest student-teacher ratio, followed only by Denmark. In 2000, the number of students per teacher in Hungary was 10.9, while the OECD average was 17.7. Hungary's student-teacher ratio of 11.4 in secondary education (ISCED 3) is somewhat closer to the OECD average of 13.9. On the other hand, Hungary has an average position as far as the typical size of classes is concerned. In the first four grades of single structure school education, teachers on the average have 21 students per class, which approximates the OECD average of 21.9 students per class.

The low number of students per teacher in principle allows teachers to tailor their lessons to individual student needs, but unfortunately no such pedagogical attitude is visible.

In 1990/1991, 35 percent of all higher education students were teacher trainees. In 2002/2003, fewer than one fifth (19 percent) of the total number of students were enrolled in such programmes. The ratio of teacher trainees is still exceedingly high by international comparison. In 2000, 18.2 percent of all higher education students were teacher trainees in OECD countries, with a higher ratio of 24.4 percent in Hungary.<sup>56</sup>

Until 2005, teachers who were working in primary schools obtained their qualifications through a non-university higher education course lasting four-five years. Teachers in the lower secondary level followed a four- or five-year university training course. Teachers in the upper secondary level obtained their qualifications through a general university course lasting four-five years, plus an additional year of general and professional training. Since 2005, the teacher training course follows the rules agreed in the Bologna Declaration.

### *Curriculum*

A three-level structure, comprised of the National Core Curriculum (1995), the Frame Curricula (2000) and locally determined curricula, provide a regulatory framework for teachers to develop syllabi. Based on a central definition of each discipline, the schools and the local teaching staff can define and adopt local curricula and syllabi for each class and each subject. The revised National Core Curriculum gives priority to the improvement of skills and abilities.

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.oki.hu/oldal.php?tipus=cikk&kod=Education2003-Inner>.

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.oki.hu/oldal.php?tipus=cikk&kod=Education2003-Teachers>.

The recent, rapid changes in the curricular system have not yet been fully implemented. At this moment, Hungary has three curricular systems, which exist in parallel for different levels and types of education: the old central curriculum system of 1978, amended several times until 1995; the system based only on the National Core Curriculum; and the system of Frame Curricula.<sup>57</sup>

The last revision of the curricula happened in 2003. At that time, more instruction was added on the topic of human rights, minorities, minority history, and other related issues.

According to the new curriculum, multicultural material will be integrated into cultural and history studies, thereby ensuring that each student learn about Roma culture and history, and other matters pertaining to Roma.

### *Textbooks*

The Ministry of Education provides an annual registry of public education textbooks that do not exceed the prescribed price limit and that have undergone accreditation procedures for quality assurance. Yet publishers are allowed to freely distribute and recommend to schools textbooks that are not included in the registry, and teachers are allowed to make use of such teaching aids. Teachers have nearly unlimited rights in the choice of textbooks. The 2003 Amendment to the Public Education Act partly limits this right, by requiring teachers to carefully consider the financial background of families and forbidding teachers from changing textbooks in the course of the school year. The amendment also allows for school boards to impose restrictions on the costs of textbooks, school equipment, clothing and other equipment. State subsidies help keep the prices of Hungarian textbooks fairly low by international standards.<sup>58</sup>

### *Assessment and Evaluation*

With reforms in 1985, the official inspection of schools and teachers was reduced. Administrative and professional evaluation still exists, but there is no obligation for an evaluator to visit a school, and class-work inspection rarely exists.

There are assessments on the regional, county and local level, but there are no consequences for the results of these evaluations.

Competition is threaded through Hungarian society, and this is particularly evident in the education sector. Exams and other selection processes sort children into elite schools, and academic competition identifies those young people who are academically the most promising.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.okm.gov.hu/main.php?folderID=137&articleID=2208&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>.

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.oki.hu/oldal.php?tipus=cikk&kod=Education2003-Content>.

<sup>59</sup> OECD report on Equity 2005.

## Summary of Systemic Strengths and Weaknesses with Regard to Roma Education

### *Strengths*

In Hungary, there is a widely accepted positive attitude towards integration among all important stakeholders and political structures. There is also a history of initiatives and systemic provisions addressing the needs of Roma in education. Furthermore, a strong and well-developed civil society of Roma NGOs and non-Roma human rights organisations has been addressing Roma education issues for a longer period, and more and more Roma are working at key governmental or county-level positions.

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As a result of this, Roma children in Hungary have full access to education. The participation rate of Roma is also high, and the tendency to drop out of the education system starts to surface as a problem only at the secondary school level. There is free textbook provision, several social benefits, and scholarship and mentorship assistance that can be used by Roma students. Furthermore, affirmative action is institutionally set in tertiary education in Hungary and desegregation is financed from a budgetary provision that gives normative per-capita support for integration. Roma in Hungary are also assisted by EU social funds.

### *Weaknesses*

Despite the positive aspects mentioned above, the education of Roma in Hungary still faces many systemic weaknesses. The major issues in Roma education in this respect can be summarized as follows:

- ⇒ There are still enrollment barriers for the Roma in Hungary:
  - Roma children’s enrollment in kindergarten faces serious barriers, including a lack of places, a lack of public transportation, etc.;
  - school enrollment is not fair due to a system supposedly giving parents free choice of schools, segregation in schools and classes, big differences in the quality of schools, discrimination in categorizing students, and other incidents of discrimination;
  - parents and local Roma authorities are not well informed about their options, the existence of better schools, new policies, fellowships, and other vital information;
  - poverty can be a barrier in many ways: Roma families often live far from secondary schools; public transportation, books, and other materials are expensive; scholarships are not enough to cover all of the costs; and the targeting of scholarships is not focused enough.
- ⇒ Many indicators show that the quality of education provided for Roma children is less than adequate – so it cannot ensure their sustained attainment and successful completion of higher levels of education. Factors affecting quality include:
  - teachers with low pedagogical-methodological knowledge;
  - low expectations;
  - a high class repetition rate;
  - a high drop-out rate in the secondary level;
  - enrolment in poor performing, disadvantaged schools;
  - enrolment in vocational schools that train for unattractive vocations for which there is no demand;
  - inadequate coverage of after-school support for all students in need.
- ⇒ Most of the active teachers are not trained to teach in a culturally diverse setting, and they cannot overcome their prejudices and stereotypes toward Roma and migrant children.

Initial training does not prepare teachers for teaching in heterogeneous classes. The teacher education system is predominantly knowledge-oriented and not method-oriented. This is not compensated by in-service training. Although there is a wide offer of in-service training for practicing teachers, the actual choice among training options is completely free; hence teachers most often choose English and information technology courses.

- ⇒ There are several incompatibilities in the system that hamper the education of Roma:
- Special schools and professional committees for assessing learning abilities, which together decide on placement of children in special education, are often at the same (county) level, thus combining incentives to place Roma children in special education. It is extremely difficult to get from special schools back to mainstream education.
  - Evaluation of key elements of the system, such as the schools under the municipal and county education authorities, is undertaken at the municipal or county level. Often, the evaluating agency is paid by the entity being evaluated. Fair evaluation results are therefore hard to find, especially regarding treatment of marginalized groups. There is an urgent need for review of the work of school maintainers (like local government, county government, church, private, foundation, etc.) and evaluation of in-class activity of teachers.

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## Knowledge, Data and Capacity Concerns Affecting Roma Education

### *Decentralised System*

The Hungarian education system is highly decentralized, giving autonomy to counties, municipalities, and institutions. This means that implementation of policies is never ensured as there is little central monitoring. Elected local education authorities can and do develop local policies that are not always synergetic with the national policy or the local school practice.

### *Too Many Reforms, Not Enough Evaluation*

Different governments developed a range of initiatives described above. These efforts are currently overwhelming the system, so local actors feel less inclined to implement fully many of the new measures. The changes are also not sufficiently evaluated, because reforms follow each other too quickly, so there is insufficient time for assessment. Most initiatives are moving in the right direction, but there are no clear measures of their effectiveness. Initiatives, legislation, and programmes should be evaluated, so that further reforms can build on this experience.

Even though the education system in Hungary is well supplied with data collection mechanisms, a key shortfall is data on individual students' career progression. This gap in information impedes the creation of an accurate statistical portrait of the education of Roma, and it limits educators' abilities to fully document and address discrimination.

### *Student and Parent Participation and Decision-Making Capacity is Not Yet Developed*

Although their formal role as stakeholders is ensured, students and parents have very weak capacity to express and ensure their interests in comparison to the teachers' unions and teachers' associations. Roma students and parents are especially disempowered.

*Lack of Civic Education and Career Assistance*

The education system has not fully embraced civic education – covering topics like active and responsible citizenship and tolerance – and it does not foster students' individual career planning. Both are essential for development of an inclusive education system.

*EU Funds and Other Funds Are Not Equally Distributed*

The division of funds is based on competition between participants. This involves finding professional partners, organizing effective consortia, and developing good project plans. These tasks are mostly impossible for disadvantaged villages, Roma NGOs, or poor schools. Professional project managers are too expensive and not focused on disadvantaged groups.

## 5. Overview of Government and Partner Activities

### Commitment to Roma Decade, Actions/Progress to Date

The Hungarian Government has a clear political commitment to the Decade of Roma Inclusion. This is indicated by the creation and support of a structure that ensures the mechanism for implementing and monitoring Decade goals. All Decade-related policies and activities are coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, specifically by the head of the Department of Roma Integration within that ministry. However, after the Decade Secretariat moved to Romania, there has been a lack of activity around the Decade movement in Hungary.

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The government involved about 400 organisations – Roma NGOs, minority self-governments, municipalities, and educational and social care institutions – in discussions about the proposed National Action Plan. Based on these discussions, the National Action Plan has been amended and submitted to the government. Initiatives in the National Action Plan are included in the Hungarian central government budget plan. The draft of the National Development Plan for the next programming period of EU Structural Funds (2007-2013) is under negotiation, and these talks involve Roma governmental experts and Roma NGOs, including REF.

### Donor Funding: In-country Programmes

In Hungary, the Roma issue has been addressed by a variety of donors since 1980. Some donors have developed coherent and consistent programmes of considerable length for the development of Roma communities.

A wide variety of projects have been implemented in the field of education. Some of the main donors include: Soros Foundation – Hungary and the Open Society Institute; the EU, through Phare, and the EU Social Fund; the Council of Europe; the MATRA programme and the Dutch Government; the World Bank; UN agencies in Hungary (UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR); the British Council; Save the Children; the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation; USAID, Austria, the United Kingdom, Holland, Norway and others.

Since 1994, Governments paid particular attention to promoting the integration of Roma, and enhancing the educational opportunities for Roma and directed a non negligible amount of EU funds for Roma integration. Officials elaborated mid-term actions and long-term strategies, and spent large amount of financing from the central budget and several million euro from Phare. Nonetheless, surveys show that the results have not been up to expectation, and that the situation has not changed drastically in the last 10 years.

The largest initiative in terms of amount of funding aimed at the social integration of disadvantaged youth, and Roma in particular, was a Phare programme (HU9904-01), which started in 1999. The total budget of the programme was EUR 12.52 million, co-financed by the Ministry of Education and Phare. The programme concentrated on three areas: (1) the reduction of the dropout rate of Roma children; (2) the development of training programmes and student support systems for secondary education; (3) the development of a talent promotion programme, in order to enhance

the opportunities of disadvantaged children to continue their studies at tertiary level. Although the total budget available has been spent, according to the follow-up monitoring report<sup>60</sup> the programme has not been effective and successful. The report suggested that the beneficiary schools continued the same inefficient and, in several cases segregated, educational practices. Out of the 19 schools examined, the following findings were reported: only two schools did not have segregated Roma classes; only one school managed to assure an opportunity for Roma children to continue on to the secondary level on equal footing; four schools had explicitly positive attitudes towards Roma; five schools indicated serious ethnic conflicts in the schools, and according to the opinion of teachers, such problems existed in seven more schools. The report also found that the majority of the parents had little or no information about the programme, and in the case of nine schools, the parents were particularly discontented. According to the report, the Phare support was rarely a catalyst for any kind of reforms, and schools that applied were not really sensitive to the goals of the programme but instead were only interested in gaining extra funding. Without efficient evaluation and monitoring of the application of these funds, the schools and local authorities, which are in constant financial trouble, did not use the funds in line with the purpose of these programmes.

Another very important joint programme with EU financing and Government financing is the activities under Measure 2.1 of the Human Resources Development Operational Program. This measure has been elaborated under the National Development Plan, which is Hungary's first development plan following EU accession. Due to the timing of the country's accession, the HRDOP covers a shortened three-year period. In the HRDOP, under the priority "Fighting Social Exclusion by Promoting Access to the Labour Market," Measure 2.1 has been designed "to ensure equal opportunities in education for disadvantaged pupils." Accordingly, the target groups of measure are the disadvantaged, especially Roma children and youth, as well as children and youth with special educational needs. The intermediary target group of the measure consists of those who are involved in the education of these students: teachers, educational experts, students in teacher training, local decision-makers, and professionals working in related fields.

30,356,701 euro was made available for the implementation of activities under measure 2.1 between 2004 and 2007. This is far more money than has ever been spent on development programmes for the promotion of equal opportunities in education in Hungary. The measure is very ambitious in that it tries to address the most compelling issues in the area in a relatively short period of time, and it covers a wide range of complex programmes. For example, in the area of training for educational professionals, the measure includes funding for the development of: an innovative methodology for integrated education; model programmes and employment of good practices; anti-discrimination elements in the curricula of teacher training colleges and in-service teacher training programmes; and horizontal cooperation of schools providing integrated education, on the model of the National Educational Integration Network. The measure also provides funding for support for extracurricular study groups, in order to spread good practices and reach new areas and communities.

The aims of the programmes developed under the HRDOP measure are the following:

- ⇒ To prevent school failure and dropout of disadvantaged students, especially Roma and students with special educational needs.
- ⇒ To promote the educational success of disadvantaged youth, especially Roma, and youth with special educational needs, thereby improving their labour-market prospects and social integration.

<sup>60</sup> OMAI (2003): *Monitoring Report About the HU9904-01 Phare-Program*. Budapest.

- ⇒ To eliminate segregation in the public education system, and to promote non-discriminatory, inclusive educational practices.

Measure 2.1 includes two components, the first implemented through a central programme and the second through tendering procedures:

- ⇒ Training of educational professionals involved in the education of disadvantaged students, especially Roma, and students with special educational needs; development of related curricula and methodology to promote inclusive education. (This component is implemented through a central programme.)
- development and introduction of teacher training programmes and modules;
  - development and implementation of in-service teacher training programmes and training programmes for educational experts;
  - development and implementation of training programmes for local decision-makers and non-teacher groups, to increase social awareness and a positive attitude towards inclusive education;
  - development of the know-how of inclusive education, elaboration of a methodological databank and service programme packages;
  - development of new ways to prevent early school leaving and to identify students at risk of dropping out.
- ⇒ Supporting the adaptation of inclusive educational programmes at the level of individual institutions; disseminating good practices in the framework of horizontal institutional cooperation. (This component is implemented through tendering procedures.)
- adaptation of educational programmes, methodologies, and institutional development programmes;
  - development and dissemination of extracurricular activities to prevent drop out and foster the educational success of disadvantaged children (including extracurricular study-groups, talent promotion programmes);
  - setting up horizontal institutional cooperation models and promoting institutional development.<sup>61</sup>

It is still too early to say any thing about the implementation of this programme but any schools have benefited from this financing.

<sup>61</sup> Study by Orsolya Szendrey, advisor to the ministerial commissioner for the Integration of Disadvantaged and Roma Children, in 2004.

## 6. REF Programme in Hungary

By August 2006, the REF had received 15 project proposals from Hungary, out of which, it approved four projects and committed about €850,000.

54 First, the REF is supporting a project to strengthen the capacity of Roma self-governments and civil society organisations to apply for grant financing. The “Roma Program Assistance Network” has provided advisory services for 470 Roma organisations, increasing their potential for financial and institutional sustainability. Thus far, around 111 successful project applications were produced as a result of the programme, which helped mobilize around €3.5 million.

Second, the REF provides support for the Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity for its Roma settlement upgrading effort. This programme, “Integration of children living in Roma settlements in Public Education,” co-sponsored by the Hungarian Government, the Development Bank of the Council of Europe, and the Cities of Alliance, aims to improve the living conditions of Roma in some of the worst Roma settlements. The REF supports local Roma NGOs and Roma minority self governments to develop action plans to: improve education of Roma children in integrated schools in targeted Roma settlements; train teachers’ assistants and tutors; and assist in the after-school mentoring of Roma children.

Third, the REF supports a successful programme for Roma in universities, the Romaversitas Foundation programme. This programme of scholarships and tutorials supports about 100 Roma in pursuing higher education and university studies, some of them at PhD level. The programme also helps students preserve their Roma identity, interact among themselves, acquire skills not taught in university, and find employment after graduation.

REF supports an assessment of the controversial and rather ineffective vocational school programmes, where a large number of Roma students study. The programme, “Assessment of the reasons for high drop outs from vocational education,” includes the Integrator Foundation, the National Public Education Institute, five Roma NGOs, and two Local Roma self-governments. The programme seeks to assess vocational schools in Budapest and three poor regions of Hungary, in order to identify the reasons for the high drop-out rates in vocational education. The project also aims to strengthen the capacities of the involved institutions, enabling them to more professionally assess education programmes.

The REF has provided support for four Hungarian NGOs in accessing European structural funds under the new pilot reimbursable grant programme. This mechanism has been designed to help Roma organisations and local governments access EU structural funds, by providing the 20 percent advance for starting up the programmes until the EU funding becomes available. These advances will later be reimbursed by the NGOs.

REF has also agreed to provide technical advice to the agency managing structural funds through financing a Roma expert for 6 months with the following tasks: comment on the documents required to access EU Structural Funds (in particular the National Strategic Reference Framework, operative programmes and action plans), Comments on other national documents and strategies influencing the use of structural funds, prepare an outreach campaign to Roma communities, Roma NGOs and local governments to explain the benefits of using structural funds and to explain how to apply. The Agency also agrees that if the experience is satisfactory they will hire the consultant at

the end of the six months under their own funding. REF will also provide training and mentorship to the consultants and exchange with other countries with a similar experience.

In Hungary, the REF has also launched a pilot partnership project with private companies, called “Transition from education to private sector employment for Roma students.” The programme offers mentoring for selected Roma university students who are in their last year of studies in economy, finance, and business management, and who are offered a one year contract in private companies if they complete their studies. The mentoring and support takes place during the last year of university and first year of employment with the objective to prepare well Roma students for a fast track carrier in the large private sector firms in Hungary. The project was a common initiative of the Hungarian Business Leaders Forum and the REF.

## Overall Strategic Framework and Levels of Engagement

Based on the issues outlined in this document, it is possible to formulate an overall strategic framework for improving Roma education outcomes through three relevant levels of engagement: i) Roma parents, community and NGOs; ii) education authorities at the national and local levels; and iii) state and government policies. Table 16 presents this framework.

## Strategic Directions for Future REF Activities

The REF uses a range of instruments to promote its programme objectives. These include project finance and support, technical assistance, analytical work, and policy dialogue. On the basis of the overall strategic framework for Roma education in Hungary, and the background analysis carried out for the preparation of this document, the REF would allocate its resources for Hungary in line with the following priorities:

### *Project Activities*

- ⇒ Reducing the number of Roma children in special schools. Serious change is needed in the special school system: Schools must discontinue the use of the catch-all category “mild degree of mental disability.” All children, except the severely mentally retarded, should be placed in mainstream classes and schools.
- ⇒ The possibility of using effectively a Lottery system:<sup>62</sup> Schools have to enroll all children who applies from the school district. There are more school places than children in Hungary. A lottery system can allocate places for disadvantaged children into elite schools with an absorptive capacity.
- ⇒ Upgrade short-cycle vocational education and fold it into ordinary long-cycle vocational education and general education.

<sup>62</sup> Public Education Law, par. 66.

*Analytic and Advisory Activities*

- ⇒ Monitor and evaluate the government's support-system for Roma children – through mentoring, tutoring, after-school activities, and provision of materials linked to specific grades and needs.
- ⇒ Monitor affirmative action, scholarships and additional support to secondary and tertiary education of Roma students coming from poor families.

*Strategic Research/Technical Assistance*

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Research on education in Hungary suffers from specific missing links. The areas where analysis and resulting policy recommendation are needed are the following:

- ⇒ Improving schools accountability to the equity goal: While many aspects of school autonomy are welcome, this autonomy needs to be balanced by measures that hold schools accountable to equity goals, which contribute to the common good.
- ⇒ A balance between local control of schooling and county and central government authority is necessary in order to reduce the lower educational outcomes of disadvantaged students.
- ⇒ Improving monitoring of the equity, inclusion and desegregation: All of the policies and programmes include equity, inclusion, and desegregation as horizontal goals. But somehow these stipulations seem less meaningful. Monitoring the effectiveness of these horizontal priorities is lacking.
- ⇒ Improving data gathering on Roma inclusion. "Personal data may only be collected and processed with the consent of the individual or if it is required by law."<sup>63</sup> This provision protects privacy, but it means officials are no longer permitted to identify individuals by ethnicity in the process of collecting data on education. Usually, researchers ask teachers to estimate, on the basis of their personal knowledge, which students are Roma. Using samples from schools and districts, researchers extrapolate figures for the general population but this clearly leads to limitations with the data. Other opportunities to collect data (such as the scholarship programmes) need investigation.
- ⇒ There is a lack of minimum achievement requirements (standards) at lower levels of mandatory education. The schools which are not able to meet this criteria should be identified, supported and evaluated regularly.

<sup>63</sup> The 1992 Act on the Protection of Personal Data and Disclosure of Data of Public Interest.

Table 16: Levels of Engagement for Improving Roma Education Outcomes in Hungary

Assistance and Support to the Roma Community	Implementation Support to Education Authorities	Policy Development with the Government
<p>1. Support Roma parents and community leaders to recognize and engage in key education issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Motivate parents to use the legal possibilities, like the lottery, enrollment laws, school boards, etc.</li> <li>⇒ Involve parents in preschool enrolment and participation.</li> <li>⇒ Build communication channels between Roma parents/community leaders and local government authorities on education issues.</li> <li>⇒ Involve parents in school-matters.</li> <li>⇒ Support parent-learning.</li> </ul>	<p>1. Develop a sustainable model for desegregation, including all Roma-dominated or special schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Lobby at the National Development Planning Office to support forming of horizontal and vertical efforts, like desegregation or second chance schools, etc.</li> <li>⇒ Develop strategies for scaling up and dissemination.</li> <li>⇒ Improve implementation of existing legal and administrative initiatives, and improve dissemination of good practices.</li> <li>⇒ Improve effective use of government and EU funds (to normalize the school/teacher ratio, use empty buildings, etc)</li> </ul>	<p>1. Ensure Roma desegregation as a priority in EU Structural Funds planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Focus on planning and implementation.</li> </ul> <p>2. Engage in the decentralisation process to build local government capacities and commitment to Roma education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Focus on municipal/county educational authorities.</li> </ul> <p>3. Improve education, training, and employment possibilities for low-skilled adolescents and adults.</p>
<p>2. Support Roma NGOs, and local Roma authorities involved in educational activities, to strengthen their organisational, networking, and capacity building structures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Identify policy impacts.</li> <li>⇒ Strengthen implementation.</li> <li>⇒ Access and use EU funds effectively.</li> <li>⇒ Ensure inclusion of smaller/isolated NGOs.</li> </ul>	<p>2. Increase the enrolment of Roma children in quality education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Increase preschool enrolment to cover all Roma children.</li> <li>⇒ Support new regulations: preparation of Roma for the school lottery; empowering the Roma Minority Self-Governments.</li> <li>⇒ Increase enrolment in quality primary schools.</li> <li>⇒ Increase high school enrollment.</li> </ul> <p>3. Reduce drop outs in grades nine-10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Prepare a study on short-term vocational training.</li> </ul>	<p>4. Allow independent monitoring of school governance.</p> <p>5. Find effective means for classroom-monitoring and evaluation.</p> <p>6. Influence the means of teacher training and in-service teacher-training practices.</p> <p>7. Support oversight of textbook-materials and teaching materials – and revise the teaching materials used in postgraduate teacher-training.</p>

## Results Framework Anticipated by REF Activities

Based on the identification of REF strategic priorities, and on REF's current projects and project pipeline, the set of expected results of REF activities should be visible in the next two-to-three years in the following way:

Legal, financial and administrative changes:

- ⇒ Enforceable legislative framework for a national desegregation programme consistent with the decentralisation process.
- ⇒ Appropriate financial mechanisms linked to the decentralisation process to ensure incentives for schools to support enrolment and participation of Roma students – through a weighted per-student formula or other measures.

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Education indicators (results are expected over the medium-term):

- ⇒ Near universal preschool enrolment from poor Roma communities.
- ⇒ Lower drop-out rate in grades nine-10 and an higher completion rate in primary education.
- ⇒ Greater number of Roma children attending integrated primary schools.
- ⇒ Higher Roma enrolment in high school and tertiary education, with a commensurate increase in the volume and amount of scholarship support.

Improved social cohesion:

- ⇒ Greater acceptance of integrated schooling by non-Roma parents.
- ⇒ Improved cooperation between schools and Roma community/NGOs in the education activities of schools – monitored through project reporting.

## Country Monitoring Framework

Monitoring of these results will need to be conducted using information from a matrix of organisations and data sources. These include:

- ⇒ Network of Roma NGOs engaged in education.
- ⇒ State Statistical Office.
- ⇒ National Institute for Public Education.
- ⇒ Hungarian Institute for Educational Research.
- ⇒ Sulinova Kht.
- ⇒ Databases of the Ministry of Education and Research, other government agencies, and other donors.

Specific arrangements will be articulated in cooperation with all partners. Given knowledge and data gaps, and the need to develop a well functioning and efficient monitoring system, REF may also consider contracting a professional agency for data collection in missing areas. REF may also want to convene all actors listed, to develop a joint comprehensive monitoring system.

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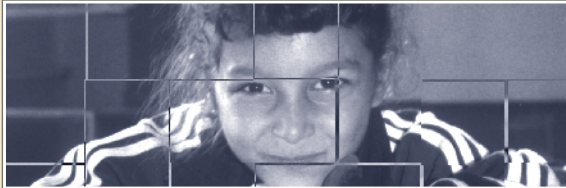


BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN HUNGARY					
AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
<p><b>TEACHERS</b></p> <p>Until 2005, primary-school teachers obtained their degree in a four-year bachelor's-degree course. Teachers at the secondary level had to have a master's degree. Since 2005, teachers' training follows the rules of the Bologna Declaration.</p> <p>Teachers have to participate in 120-hour non-degree postgraduate courses every four years.</p>	<p>The teaching profession does not have high prestige, and negative selection takes place.</p> <p>Implementation of the Bologna process is not easy. Curricula of teachers' training courses are dominated by theoretical issues. School visits are optional and rare. Child-centered methodology is usually not provided. Teachers are not exposed to knowledge about teaching socially disadvantaged Roma children.</p> <p>Teacher trainees are not equipped with methods for supporting children with special needs. Good practices developed by nongovernmental organizations are not presented in teacher training.</p>	<p>Classroom visits are rare, and evaluation of teachers' activity is only the responsibility of a school's principal. There is no school inspectorate.</p>	<p>Most teacher training courses address competencies that are important for teaching in multicultural, diverse classrooms, or courses on anti-discrimination, are provided by NGOs.</p> <p>In-service teacher training courses developed by NGOs for diversity issues are accredited, and a good selection is offered, but low income municipalities cannot pay for them.</p>	<p>Most subject teachers lack basic teaching/learning and assessment skills. Teaching is not efficient and not motivated.</p>	<p>The Act of Equal Treatment (aiming to prevent discrimination) was accepted.</p>

BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN HUNGARY					
AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
<p><b>CURRICULUM</b></p> <p>The National Core Curriculum, the countrywide Frame Curriculum, and local curricula provide the framework for syllabi.</p>	<p>The revised National Core Curriculum gives priority to the improvement of skills and abilities. It defines major themes instead of specific subject matter.</p>		<p>There is an effort to integrate multicultural material into cultural and history studies. Roma issues should be introduced in the curricula, but teachers are usually not well prepared to teach about multicultural matters.</p>		

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AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
<p><b>TEXTBOOKS</b></p> <p>Registry of public education textbooks is provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture every year. But other textbooks can be distributed and used.</p>	<p>Teachers have nearly unlimited rights in the choice of textbooks.</p>	<p>Teaching materials used in compulsory postgraduate courses for teachers are not reviewed, so xenophobic features can be found in some of them.</p>	<p>Some history textbooks contain stereotypes about Roma. This caused several scandals in the last two-three years.</p> <p>Only a few literature textbooks try to present the works of Roma authors. These are generally books that are not in the official registry.</p>	<p>There are “textbook-packages” offered by various publishing houses, and these can be ordered at a good price, but their quality is not of a high value.</p>	<p>The 2003 Amendment of the Public Education Act requires teachers to consider the social background of families. Free textbooks are offered for disadvantaged children.</p> <p>Changing textbooks during the course of the school year is forbidden.</p>
<p><b>ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION</b></p> <p>Official inspection of schools and teachers has been reduced since 1985.</p>		<p>There is a working external examination system, and national and international research studies are available.</p>	<p>Private tutoring is often used, and this situation is discriminatory against low socio-economic students.</p> <p>Entrance exams and other selection processes sort children into elite schools.</p> <p>There are also academic competitions to identify “promising” young people.</p>		

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Openness	Measurability
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Regulation	
<p>There are two types of state support: per-student grants and earmarked subsidies. Per-student support is calculated according to the number of students and the type of tasks undertaken.</p>	<p>Local governments are free to spend the per-student grant as they see fit. There is no central control and no direct financial link between educational institutions and the central budget.</p>
<p>There are two types of state support: per-student grants and earmarked subsidies. Per-student support is calculated according to the number of students and the type of tasks undertaken.</p>	<p>Schools in low-income municipalities are struggling with basic problems. Per-student grants were introduced to support integration of disadvantaged and Roma pupils. Normative support is offered for integration of children with special educational needs.</p>
<p>There are two types of state support: per-student grants and earmarked subsidies. Per-student support is calculated according to the number of students and the type of tasks undertaken.</p>	<p>Municipalities/local self-governments play an essential role, sometimes causing serious anomalies. Local Roma self-governments are, practically speaking, not involved in problem-solving.</p>
<p>There are two types of state support: per-student grants and earmarked subsidies. Per-student support is calculated according to the number of students and the type of tasks undertaken.</p>	<p>The amount of financial support for education provided by the state is defined by the annual budget.</p>



## ROMA EDUCATION FUND (REF)

*T*he goal of the Roma Education Fund is to contribute to closing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma, through policies and programs to support quality education for Roma including desegregation of educational systems. The Roma Education Fund was created in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Therefore, it also shares the goals of the Decade.

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