



# Roma

## Rights to Education: Implementing Situation in Latvia



## Summary

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### Description of the Research

The research aims to prevent segregation of Roma children and youth in education institutions and to promote ensuring of high quality, in the Roma education needs based educational and support services, as well as to raise awareness of policy makers about Roma educational problems and development opportunities with a focus on the identification of barriers and constructive solutions to problems.

Objectives of the research:

- Analyze the real situation and its impact factors determining the acquisition of basic education, and specificity and possibilities of the Roma integration process in Latvia.
- Develop recommendations for monitoring and evaluation of the education and integration policies.
- Develop recommendations for improving and monitoring of the educational support systems for Roma community.

The research is targeted at the Roma children and youth in the age of compulsory education - from 5 to 18 years. As another important target group are the Roma families - particularly parents, grandparents and other family members.

The research idea is based on the assumption that the self-isolation and segregation of Roma minority determine analyzable features of both - the Roma community's value system in the learning context, and the features of inclusion and integration of Roma pupils in education.

### Basis of the Research and Methodology

Research base: educational institutions, municipal institutions (educational boards, social services, etc.), Roma NGOs, Roma parents, the Roma children and youth, etc.

Total number of respondents is 371, including:

- 183 educational institutions (preschool and school)
- 2 universities;
- 31 municipal Education Boards
- 46 Roma adults
- 50 Roma children and youth
- 59 teachers, educational experts, social pedagogues, psychologists, teachers' assistants.

The geographic area of the research covers all regions of Latvia.

### Description of the methodology

Quantitative and qualitative research methods are used in the research:

- Qualitative research methods: surveys, the analysis of the Latvian and international laws and regulations, interviews, focus group interviews, observations of the learning process, and studies of teachers' and Roma students' portfolio.
- Quantitative research methods: The statistical data processing, questionnaire data analysis by program SPSS 12.0.1 and Excel data processing program.

## Chapter 1

### Protection of the Minority Rights and the Right to Education - Policy Monitoring

**Author: Kristine Liepina**

The first part of the research reflects to Roma rights to education in the context of international and national minority rights and rights to education.

The chapter first analyzes international laws and regulations governing the rights of minorities to education, paying special attention to EU political initiatives in the field of Roma education and national minorities' education policy of Latvia. The second part of the chapter analyzes protection of the Roma rights to education in Latvia, describing objectives and activities of national policy in this area, monitoring the situation of Roma education and activities of the Roma and other non-governmental organizations for the promotion of Roma education.

Based on the collected information and data analysis, it is possible to determine the weight factors and draw conclusions on the specifics of the Roma education and integration process in Latvia. It is concluded, that:

- Latvian Roma has equal rights and obligations regarding to education as other residents of Latvia;
- The Roma education policy implemented in Latvia and its impact is not fully assessed due to the lack of statistical data on Roma student educational process. The lack of data impedes national integration policies sound more effective, accordingly to the Roma community needs and opportunities;
- There is lack of political will and awareness of the need to identify and address Roma education issues in the state and municipal levels. Therefore not enough resources are directed to development of political strategy of Roma integration and its full implementation.
- Policy - makers do not have regular cooperation with the representatives of Roma community, including Roma children, parents, and representatives of Roma associations, community activists on both - regional and national level. Without the involvement of the target group is not possible to successfully establish and implement sustainable and effective policies.
- Over the past five years, EU efforts to ensure the social inclusion of Roma at the EU level are aimed to the development of such Roma integration policy and implementation of EU Member States, in which the common policy guidelines would be established, as well as the individual situation of the Member States would be respected.

In addition, the recommendations for monitoring and evaluating of the education and integration policies are provided, such as necessity to develop and implement positive measures in order to take preventive and educational measures to improve the situation of Roma in education.



## Chapter 2

### The Role and Importance of Education in the Roma Community of Latvia - Description of the Situation and Trends of Development

**Author: Andris Tertats**

The second part of the research reflects to the role of education in the Roma community of Latvia, providing a description of the situation and development trends.

The description of the research respondents - Roma families, the research base and the context is provided at the beginning of the chapter. It is further analyzed the collected data on the Roma parents attitude to education and importance of children educating for the Roma community, comparing their own learning experiences with their children's attitudes to school today. Analyzing the ethno-psychological and ethno-social features of the Roma community the most important factors affecting the Roma children and youth inclusion in education today are highlighted.

In drawing conclusions, Roma families' ethno-psychological conditions and their attitudes, traditions and needs of their children's education are detected. It is concluded that:

- Roma traditional social order in families is one of the key factors of the school leaving, and it points to the position of education in the values system of Roma communities, where family formation has higher priority than education;
- Roma children living in Latvia bear disproportional burden of poverty, however, the setting of the life goals and targets and their achievement are more hopeful for modern Roma children and young people compared with their parents
- The symptoms of depression are observed to Roma pupils as well as "stigmatization" of Roma children, which enhance the pupils' desire to avoid the schools;
- Roma pupils have adaptation difficulties in school and learning environment, as the basic elements of the learning process does not meet the Roma mentality, temperament and lifestyle, which does not promote the formation of cognitive interest;
- One of the major factors why Roma children attend school irregularly or often drop out of the education process is parents' little motivation, pessimism, and inability to organize themselves;
- Many of the Roma community is aware of the need for education to survive in today's society, but also part of the Roma representatives still does not understand the importance of the education in social-economic stability and prosperity.

In addition, the recommendations are provided about possibilities to use the ethno-psychological features of Roma students in the process of inclusion and integration, acknowledging the values of their cultural and family traditions and respecting their needs.

The described data are reflected also by data analysis scheme and photo material created during research.



## Chapter 3

### The Substance, Components and Options of the Roma Education Process

**Authors: Sandra Kraukle and Daiga Zake**

The third part of the research reflects to the substance, components and options of the process of obtaining basic education for Roma in Latvia.

The chapter first analyzes the preschool and basic education programs and curricula, trends of their development in Latvia, the content and training opportunities for teacher training for the implementation of intercultural education and international initiatives on Roma education.

Although legislation of Latvia provides equal rights to education for all children, regardless of their ethnicity, it was important to examine whether the Roma children have a full opportunity to exercise these rights, taking into account the social-economic situation of the Roma community. For assessment of Roma education process and infrastructure in Latvia, the evaluation of the learning environment, teaching strategies and attitudes is provided. The main obstacles and problems which arise in the work with Roma students is highlighted by summarizing the data collected during the study, for example:

- Unpreparedness of Roma children for starting primary school compared with other children (very little of Roma children attends pre-school),
- Language difficulties in the beginning of the studies at school - Roma children are able to communicate only in their own - Roma language;
- Teachers are not professionally prepared to work with Roma students, and know little about the Roma culture and family values;
- Lack of adequate training materials and summaries of the best practices/ experiences;
- The administration of many schools don't understand the need for supporting systems for Roma children;
- The schools', other parents', local community's biased attitudes against the Roma people.

It is concluded that the barriers mentioned above leads to many negative consequences in Roma education, such as:

- Roma children are not starting schooling at compulsory school age (5 years);
- An unequal situation of Roma children - their training in separate classes with correction status, or the artificial creation of conditions for moving Roma children to the special classes or schools;
- Roma students are studying two or even more years in the same class;
- In the majority of cases the Roma pupils age is not meeting the specific age of class (such as 9-year-old Roma pupils are attending the first class);
- Large number of Roma students leave school at different stages and they have little opportunity to resume the interrupted educational process (as evening schools are mostly only from the sixth grade);
- Frequent school absences, low learning motivation;
- There is not precise data available how many Roma children do not attend school;
- Segregation of educational institutions from Roma children and youth.

Analyzing opportunities to overcome barriers and prevent negative consequences of inclusion of Roma pupils in education, educational experts and practitioners highlight the factors that are essential in working with Roma pupils: ethnic phenomena can not be explained by a single scheme, since each culture has their own logic of development, and the nations has a different reaction to the change. Education, where everyone is valued and equal rights for future development are provided for

each member of society, could become the cornerstone of building a tolerant society. However, attitude to Roma people has been isolating, if not very negative, for too long. To overcome this "tradition" in Latvia will not be easy, especially because in the rest of Europe Roma also are seen as "disturbing".

In addition, the chapter provides recommendations for educators, teachers' further educators and experts of the field, as well as recommendations for education policy makers.

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