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Integration of the Roma population in and through Education. European Educational Experiences

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Abstract

The analysis reports with regard to the education of the Roma population on 19th of May, 2011, at the Council of the European Union, on the establishment of a unitary European framework for national strategies for Roma integration by 2020, Member States were requested to improve the socio-economic situation of the population, by promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship, suggesting that education is a priority and they should prioritize inclusive education systems in Europe by ensuring that all students (including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, those with special needs and migrants) have access to it and to create the facility to be able to complete education programs for lifelong learning. In addition, Objective 3 is proposed to eliminate all types of discrimination and provide real solutions. We intend to analyze some aspects of the educational policy regarding the continuation of schooling through adulthood, in several European countries, as well as the attractive motivational components of the curriculum (Spain, Ireland, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania).

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1. Introduction

At European level, education and training have been enacted since 2009, according to the latest decisions of the Council of Education, Youth and Culture, by adopting new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training. This document provides for the conduct of educational activities by 2020 and sets out four

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new strategic objectives of cooperation at EU level. **Strategic objective 3** which defines **successful educational experiences and promotes the integration of Roma in and through education**, aims at a better Roma integration that can be achieved primarily through education and which can also bring socio-economic progress. These issues concern the access to the labour market, which directly depends on education, basic element to ensure the inclusion of Roma. Therefore, their participation in education must be permanently considered in all European and national policies. (2009) Council Conclusions of 12th of May 2009 on a Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (E & T 2020); (2009) Official Journal of the European Union C 119 of 28.5.2009, and (2009) The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion.

But the major challenge for this study started from the existing reality at “George Enescu” University of Arts in Iași where Roma students are always present in Music Major department, then descending numerically in Visual Arts and Theatre, which do not have reserved places for minorities. Since the Ministry of Education allocated only 1 university place a year, Roma candidates who wish to study at our university occupy the majority of places, and thus omit to declare their ethnicity.

2. Findings

The analysis that we intend to achieve with this study is based on the actual situation in **Romania** concerning access to and completion of university studies by Roma citizens. But to get to a Bachelor of Arts student programme, one must be a graduate of secondary education (high school) with baccalaureate degree. Note that the Roma minority has been acknowledged as a national minority in Romania after 1990. Analyzing the reports which identify Roma citizens' participation in education, according to a World Bank Report from 2009 a percentage of 0.6% of Roma aged 25-29 completed higher education. According to the 2002 census, 2.5% of the population was Roma, and in 2011 this figure was 3.2%. The presence of young Roma in pre-university education, according to information reported by the Ministry of National Education, the number enrolled in high schools in Romania increased by 44.3% from 2009/2010 until 2011/2012. (2013) Final Report on Romania's Liabilities in the European Higher Education Area – EHEA- and the Evaluation of their Implementation at the National Level in 2013, page 25

Even if there is a significant increase of the places applied for, 40.1% of the special places in high schools specifically designed for this category remain unfilled. With regard to participation in higher education, according to Government decisions for the years 2010, 2011 and 2012 on the number of graduates, the number of places allocated for Roma students have increased. There is no official information on the places occupied by the Roma youth in universities, since this aspect is not monitored by the Ministry of Education. Our concern is to compare these data with those of other European countries where the Roma population are declared and recorded, to analyze the efficiency of the existing educational system. Rauhvargers A., Deane C., & Pauwels W., *Bologna Process Stocktaking Report* (2009)

Roma population in **Bulgaria** is acknowledged as an ethnic minority and represent - according to data released - 4.8% of the population (according to 2001 census, experts confirmed that the percentage is actually two times higher), Bulgarian Roma children in the educational system representing a considerably smaller group of students, both in numbers and percentages. According to the Ministry of Education, there is a percentage of 13.53% of the students from the first grade to 13th grade. The situation in pre-school is 12% of Roma children and 46.2% of Roma have completed primary school. Roma secondary education represents a rate of only 7.8% of the total population. Information on higher education is rather approximate. Thus, 0.2-0.4 % of Roma students has graduated from universities. The percentage of those who did not complete the first grade of primary education is very high, about 20.5%, while most of the population is illiterate. (2007) Operational Programme Human Resources Development and (2007) Amalipe Centre, Annual Report on the Implementation of Policies for Roma Inclusion in Bulgaria – 2006, Veliko Tarnovo: Astarta, pages 79-80.

The Roma in **Greece** are not acknowledged as a national minority. For this reason, the Greek State was not required to have a special education policy for Roma in the country because access to education was considered to be equal for all Greek citizens. However, they are presented formally for the first time in official documents related to education in 1987, but there is a total absence of Roma children in pre-school education as well as a limited number of Roma in primary school enrollment. (2013) European Report I Successful Educational Experiences that Promote the Integration of Roma in / and Education, pages 41-43.

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