

Bulgarian Helsinki Committee

# **ON THE ROAD TO MATURITY**

*Evaluation of the Non-Governmental  
Desegregation Process In Bulgaria*

Sofia  
March 2008



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## Executive Summary

This report presents the results from the progress survey of non-governmental projects for desegregation of Roma education in Bulgaria, conducted by a team of experts with the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee for the Roma Education Fund in the period September – December 2007. This report is the logical sequence of the earlier 2002 and 2005 reports on the same subject, namely *The First Steps: An Evaluation of the Non-governmental Desegregation Projects in Six Bulgarian Cities and Five Years Later*. The *Non-governmental Projects for Desegregation of Roma Education in Bulgaria*. The booklet comprises an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion, and five annexes.

**The Introduction** describes the survey and the conducting team, and underlines the continuity of the methodology with the two preceding reports.

**Chapter One**, “Overview of the developments in the official policy for Roma education in Bulgaria since 2005 and the degree of political commitments to desegregation”, presents an evaluation of government policies on this key issue for the overall integration process. Two main conclusions are drawn in this chapter.

Firstly, the desegregation process is undergoing a gradual and steady development which, to a large extent, is possible due to the commitment and enthusiasm of the non-governmental Roma organisations implementing the projects. In 2002, in six Bulgarian cities 1,263 children were included in the desegregation process; in 2005 the number grew to 2,124, and in the 2006-2007 school year, it reached 2,204. The number of projects, too, is growing. There are now projects also in Bulgaria’s two largest cities – Sofia and Plovdiv – with thousands of Roma living there. During the last years, the projects have demonstrated their sustainability; the Roma organisations have gathered extensive experience and have diversified their recruitment and retaining methods and techniques; four distinctive models of implementation of the desegregation process emerged which are applicable to the varied cultural and demographic circumstances of the Roma population in Bulgaria. It should be noted that, in the past years, the undisputed vanguard of these projects, the Vidin organisation DROM with its leader Ms. Donka Panayotova, have been successfully introducing a series of innovations which may, with a varied extent and approach, be applied by the other projects around Bulgaria. The underlying general characteristic of these basic innovations is the shift of focus from social services offered to parents – as an incentive to have their children enrolled with integrated schools – toward intensive educational work aiming at eliminating gaps and deficiencies in children’s preparation. The Vidin project is also the one placing a greatest emphasis on promoting natural multicultural communication between the children, which is probably the central factor in successful integration.

Secondly, although to an extent far from that required for overall desegregation, the Bulgarian government has maintained its commitment to the process and is, albeit slowly, expanding it. For the last two years, the most important step in this direction was the setting up of a dedicated state body – Centre for Educational Integration for the Children and Pupils of Ethnic Minorities, which is not only aimed at developing the state's policy in the field of desegregation but also supports the actual desegregation work by financing certain projects. Although it was established in 2005, the Centre's actual operation began in the spring of 2007, and has, as of the date of this report, only organised one financial support course for projects with relatively limited funding. This report stresses the need for this centre to raise the volume of funding provided to the selected projects, and to focus its activities mainly on support for projects directly implementing the desegregation process.

A further conclusion in this chapter reveals that, as a whole, local authorities, too, have retained and expanded their commitment to desegregation, and the incidence of negative attitude or hostility toward it has been sporadic and isolated rather than being regular at the local level. This has obviously resulted from the efforts of the project implementing organisations.

**Chapter Two** reviews the evaluation methodology. The methodology involves the following elements:

1. Gathering of information through observation and analysis of documents concerning the operation of the non-governmental Roma education desegregation projects in eight Bulgarian cities. Visits were made to all desegregation projects, and the whole documentation – national and local, as well as governmental and non-governmental – related to the process for the last two years was carefully studied. More than 200 interviews were conducted with project staff, local authority representatives, principals, teachers, and Roma children and their parents.
2. Collation and secondary analysis of marks of children from the cities with operational non-governmental desegregation projects compared to the nationwide external assessment for the fourth grades in Mathematics and Bulgarian Language and Literature (BLL) which took place in May 2007. Through this approach the team was able to use an independent external evaluation of the children's achievement.
3. Field survey using the method of direct interviews based on a questionnaire among Roma pupils and one of their parents who took part in the nationwide external assessment. The survey was conducted in the cities of Vidin, Pleven, Sliven, and Stara Zagora among 328 Roma children and the same number of parents, and it was the first of its kind in Bulgaria, not only in identifying the positive and negative factors affecting academic achievement but also in evaluating the extent of their influence.

**Chapter Three** focuses on the current state of affairs of the eight desegregation projects. It has eight distinct parts – one dedicated to each project. The composition of each part is identical for the projects and is determined according to a unified research methodology. This allows for a comparison between the individual projects which operate in otherwise very different conditions. The Roma communities in the eight cities, too, are very different – they vary in numbers; in the prevailing composition of the various Roma subgroups; the degree of integration/marginalisation of the Roma inhabitants in the respective ghettos; as well as in social status, living conditions, and the communal infrastructure of the respective Roma areas. Since the main research tool for information gathering, namely the protocol for project data, was identical to the one used in the previous two reports, comparison was possible not only between the projects but also in a diachronic perspective since 2002.

Each part comprises the following elements:

- » **Outline of the project.** This is a description of the quantitative parameters of the project – number of children enrolled during the years; their distribution by age; original neighbourhoods; children’s academic achievement throughout the years and its dynamics; means and methods of children transportation to host schools; host school parameters, etc.
- » **Project team.** This is a description of the project team with a detailed list of the functions and responsibilities of each member; it also describes the dynamics in staff numbers and team qualifications during the years.
- » **Educational profile of the project.** This is the most important element of the review, as it evaluates the way educational work is carried out in each project, pinpointing the strengths and weaknesses of each project team. It contains the respective data from the nationwide external assessment which took place in the spring of 2007, and it tracks the dynamics of children’s academic achievement with the project during the years in question.
- » **Extra-curricular activities.** – This is a description of extra-curricular activities organised with the children and how these have developed during the past two years, as well as how they have contributed to the success of the projects.
- » **Social services.** – This is a description of the material support which children and their parents are provided, such as food, clothes, study aids, etc.
- » **Political, administrative, and community support for the project.** For each of the project, this section reviews the interaction between projects and the environment they operate in – political and cultural.

Overall, this review model allows for providing of a comprehensive picture of the projects’ activities and their outcomes.

As before, the Vidin project takes the lead according to all indicators and has also been setting new work models which could further be adopted by the other projects.

The Montana and Pleven projects have demonstrated sustainable operation and positive results; they will, however, need to intensify their activities, while the Pleven project especially will need to come up with such an improvement of the work as will allow cost reduction and increased number of children recruited.

The Sliven project continues to be working with the most marginalised population of what is possibly the poorest ghetto in Bulgaria in terms of living conditions, poverty, poor infrastructure, etc. - the "Nadezhda" neighbourhood. Despite this highly disadvantageous environment, this project has successfully managed to integrate and maintain its specific social function, and can be seen as an example of productive work in an extremely difficult social environment.

The Berkovitsa and Plovdiv projects are relatively recent. They have yet to gather experience and improve operations. Improvements in its mechanisms of internal control and reporting may be recommended particularly with respect to the project in Plovdiv, so that some of the mishaps related to recruitment, transportation, and preparation of children, as well as the expenditure involved may be avoided in the future.

The Stara Zagora project has demonstrated steady operation irrespective of the cardinal change which took place, namely the replacement of the implementing organisation in 2005.

The Sofia project needs to expand its host school network and improve the interaction of the implementing organisation, the Romani Baht Foundation, with the educational authorities in Sofia. The current practice of signing of agreements with these schools should, therefore, be encouraged and further developed.

As a whole, inclusion of Roma children in an integrated educational environment decreases absenteeism and school drop-out rates. In this respect, there is a considerable difference between the Roma children studying in segregated schools and those enrolled in schools outside the ghetto.

**Chapter Four** reviews the factors affecting academic achievement of Roma children with completed fourth grade. It presents the results from the questionnaire survey among 328 Roma pupils in the fourth grade (the grade which took part in the nationwide external assessment of educational achievement in the spring of 2007 by the Ministry of Education) and one of their parents (also totalling 328). Of all children, 99 are included in the projects, while the rest, being the control group, attend the segregated neighbourhood schools.

The two categories of factors affecting the academic achievement are internal (family) and external (social and physical) environment. The influence of each of these factors was studied by means of a customised questionnaire relayed by 23 field interviewers in four cities, conducting a total of 656 interviews with children and parents.

Some of the family factors have a relatively straightforward and clear-cut (either positive or negative) influence: family size; parents' education; language of communication with the children within the family; as well as the varying degrees of inclusion of children in family budget procurement; children having to work during school holidays; parents'



ability to help children in the preparation of homework and the acquisition of the study material; family capacity to provide children with access to books, computers, internet, and periodic press at home; children's access to libraries, language courses, excursions, and camps outside school.

The school and city environment factors have a more coherent and stronger influence over the academic achievement of Roma children. Among these, the most significant tend to be: attendance of pre-school group/class; attendance of a semi-boarding group; access to computers and internet at school; opportunity to do sports at school; opportunities to leave the neighbourhood for specific occasions, such as family holiday, excursions, visits to other places. This chapter provides a detailed review of the nature, strength, and direction of influence of each factor.

As a whole, inclusion of Roma children in integrated educational environment reduces absences and drop outs from school. In this respect, there is a significant difference between Roma children educated in segregated schools and those educated outside of the ghetto.

At the request of the donor, the Roma Educational Fund, and unlike the preceding two reports, this report contains a **Chapter Five** presenting a targeted estimate of the cost of a prospective nationwide Roma education desegregation project in Bulgaria. This estimate was arrived at following a special methodology agreed with, and approved in advance by, the Roma Education Fund. Both the research methodology and that concerning the implementation of the financial evaluation, have been consulted and approved by a large circle of recognised specialists – sociologists, educational experts, cultural researchers, and professionals of extensive experience in the integrated education.

The approach to the producing of this estimate involved three steps:

1. Determining of the cost for integration per Roma child participant in a non-governmental desegregation project of optimal operation.
2. Establishment of the number and location of the segregated Roma schools for which a political commitment for desegregation is at hand, as well as establishment of the number of Roma children attending them.
3. The utilisation of this methodology leads to the following basic conclusions:
  - » The cost for the integration per Roma child participating in a non-governmental desegregation project of optimal operation will vary between 130 and 250 euros per one year.
  - » The number of Roma children attending segregated schools and kindergartens for the desegregation of which political commitment in Bulgaria may be assumed is about 33,000.

- » A nationwide Roma education desegregation programme in Bulgaria including educational facilities with political will for desegregation at hand would cost between 4,290,000 and 8,250,000 euros for one year, 21,450,000 to 41,250,000 euros for five years, or between 42,900,000 and 82,500,000 euros for ten years, based on 2007 prices.

Thus, for the first time Bulgaria provides a specific costs estimate for long-term desegregation and this may prove useful for the state and the NGOs in the improvement of their strategies and approach to the desegregation process.

Finally, this chapter provides a brief outline of the four possible desegregation models applicable in various circumstances and environments in Bulgaria.

## Abbreviations

<b>ADK</b>	All-day kindergarten
<b>BHC</b>	Bulgarian Helsinki Committee
<b>BLL</b>	Bulgarian language and literature
<b>CCF</b>	Combined Children Facility
<b>CEI</b>	Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities
<b>CSS</b>	Comprehensive secondary school (primary+secondary)
<b>ES</b>	Elementary school (1-4 grade)
<b>GPA</b>	Grade Point Average
<b>MES</b>	Ministry of Education and Science
<b>MRF</b>	Movement of Rights and Freedoms
<b>NEA</b>	National External Assessment
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>PS</b>	Primary school (1-8 grade)
<b>PTMC</b>	Public Transport Municipal Company
<b>REF</b>	Roma Education Fund
<b>RIE</b>	Regional Inspectorate of Education
<b>SBG</b>	Semi-boarding groups



## Introduction

In August 2007, the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) undertook to perform an evaluation of currently operating desegregation projects for the education of Roma in Bulgaria implemented by non-governmental organizations and funded by the Roma Education Fund (REF). BHC became involved in the monitoring and evaluation of these projects with their launching in 2000.<sup>1</sup> The current evaluation is funded by the main project donor, REF, and is the third of its kind performed in a compatible, though not identical to the first two, methodology.

Currently, there are eight non-governmental desegregation projects for Roma education operational in Bulgaria in the towns of Berkovitsa, Vidin, Montana, Pleven, Plovdiv, Sliven, Sofia, and Stara Zagora. The overall objective of these projects is to transfer children from Roma ghettos into the mixed city schools where they will study in an integrated environment along with their peers in full consideration of their ethnic and cultural identity. Thus the projects aim to provide better education for Roma children and ensure their socialization in a multicultural environment from an early age. As part of fulfilling this objective, each of the projects provides Roma children from isolated Roma districts in the respective cities with various services to facilitate this process, such as transportation of children to the host schools; ensuring their safety; providing of additional educational support; providing textbooks and other study aids, and food; organization of extra-curricular activities; work with the parents; procuring the support of the local community for the desegregation process; support for relevant training of teachers at host schools.

The methodology of the previous two BHC evaluations involved both general and specific elements depending of the dynamics of the desegregation process and the donor's preferences. The current evaluation has retained this approach. It employs the same indicators allowing for tracing of the time dynamics and comparison of projects but also contains some new elements. Following the donor's request, the objective is to estimate the costs for a nationwide programme for Roma education desegregation. Another new element is the attempt to perform a more systematic study of the factors influencing the academic achievement of Roma children. To this end, the research team developed new methodologies in consultation with a large representation of specialists in the field.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf.: Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *The First Steps: An Evaluation of the Nongovernmental Desegregation Projects in Six Bulgarian Cities*, Sofia, 2002 (in Bulgarian), available also at [www.bghelsinki.org](http://www.bghelsinki.org) (available also in English: Krassimir Kanev, *The First Steps: An Evaluation of the Nongovernmental Desegregation Projects in Six Bulgarian Cities*, Budapest, OSI, 2003; Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *Five Years Later: The Nongovernmental Projects for Desegregation of Roma Education in Bulgaria*, Sofia, 2005 (in Bulgarian), also available at [www.bghelsinki.org](http://www.bghelsinki.org)).

<sup>2</sup> For details on the methodology, see Chapter I.

In order to perform this evaluation, BHC recruited a research team composed of the following experts: Svetlana Tacheva, Luba Batembergska, Emil Cohen, and Krassimir Kanev. All members of the team have considerable experience in the monitoring and evaluation of projects related to Roma education and other issues of Roma integration. Emil Cohen and Krassimir Kanev took part in the first two evaluations of projects for Roma desegregation implemented by BHC.

In addition, the research team recruited a large number of associates on project sites. Authorship of the individual section of this publication is as follows:

- » **Krassimir Kanev:** Introduction and Chapters I, II, and IV, as well as the review of the project in Stara Zagora.
- » **Svetlana Tacheva:** Chapter V and the review of the projects in Vidin and Plovdiv.
- » **Luba Batembergska:** Review of the projects in Montana, Sofia, and Berkovitsa.
- » **Emil Cohen:** Executive summary and the review of the projects in Sliven and Pleven.

The research team would like to extend thanks to all who helped in the completion of this evaluation with their work and expertise. We owe special thanks to all individuals and institutions for their assistance with the visits to the cities where the desegregation projects take place, namely the desegregation project teams, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), representatives of the Regional Inspectorates of Education (RIE), school principals, local authorities, parents, and students.

All views in this publication are the sole responsibility of the evaluation team.

## Overview of the Developments in the Official Policy for Roma Education in Bulgaria since 2005 and the Degree of Political Commitments to Desegregation

### 1. Basic Landmarks

The official policy of the Bulgarian government on the desegregation of Roma education in the years following the adoption of the Framework Programme for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society in April 1999 has roved between political commitments and practices, between words and actions. Prior to its EU accession, Bulgaria's central goal was to demonstrate to its European partners the country's readiness to take action in response to criticisms and recommendations on Roma integration in the EC pre-accession reports.<sup>3</sup> For a long period of time, until 2007 when the government started to fund projects for integration of Roma education, these demonstrations remained to a large extent only on paper.

Two were the basic landmarks of the official policy on Roma education in Bulgaria following 2005: the adoption, in June 2006, of the *National Program for the Development of School Education and Pre-School Upbringing and Instruction* (hereinafter referred to as the National Programme, or NP)<sup>4</sup> by the National Assembly, and the foundation and first steps in the operation of the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities. The NP was essentially a step backwards with regard to existing commitments of the Bulgarian government toward the desegregation of Roma education.<sup>5</sup> The document is quite soft on statement of facts and too vague on recommendations. The NP does not even mention segregation and the need for desegregation. It states a requirement for providing all children with an "equal start" leading to "special care" for "children who do not speak Bulgarian well", as well as for "children with special educational needs". The NP views transportation of students solely in the context of "optimisation of the school network and development of the system of hub schools", while a number of what were seen as strategic goals in the Framework Programme (such as protection against racism and mother tongue education) are missing in the NP.

Despite these shortcomings of the National Programme, other official documents reaffirm the government's previous commitments towards desegregation of Roma educa-

<sup>3</sup> See BHC, *Five Years Later: Nongovernmental Projects for Desegregation of Roma Education in Bulgaria*, Sofia, 2005, pp.11-15 (in Bulgarian, hereafter BHC, *Five Years Later*).

<sup>4</sup> Available at [http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/documents/frontpage/MON\\_Programa\\_obrazovanie.pdf](http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/documents/frontpage/MON_Programa_obrazovanie.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> See OSI-EUMAP/ESP/RPP, *Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma*, vol. 1, Budapest, OSI, 2007, p.54.

tion. In February 2005, the government adopted an Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion where a number of goals aiming at desegregation were formulated, such as desegregation of children from geographically segregated regions, as well as activities aiming at the educational integration of children with developmental disabilities.<sup>6</sup> The other official documents are those for the creation and activities of the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities.

The Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (hereinafter referred to as the Centre for Educational Integration, or CEI) was founded by Council of Ministers Ordinance No. 4 of 11 January 2005.<sup>7</sup> This was followed by an extended period of inaction and governmental havoc. Only with the Council of Ministers Resolution No. 256 of 23 April 2006 did the programme for the operation of the CEI for 2007-2009 come into place. It was followed by the adoption on 15 May 2007 by its Managing Board of the 2007 Action Plan.

According to Ordinance No. 4, the CEI was established to develop, fund and support projects aimed at promotion of equal access to quality education of children and students from ethnic minorities in Bulgaria. To this end, it is supposed to utilise funds from the state budget but only by way of "co-funding" of projects funded by external donors.

The CEI three-year action plan adopted by Council of Ministers Resolution No. 256 set out five strategic goals:<sup>8</sup>

1. To guarantee the right to equal access to quality education of children and students from ethnic minorities.
2. To preserve and further develop the cultural identity of children and students from ethnic minorities.
3. To secure conditions for successful socialisation of children and young people from ethnic minorities.
4. To turn cultural diversity into a source and a factor for mutual knowledge and cultural development of the coming generation, and for the establishment of an environment of mutual respect, tolerance, and understanding.
5. To forge a social and psychological environment facilitating the implementation of the strategy.

<sup>6</sup> Republic of Bulgaria, National Plan of Action for the Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005-2015, goals 1.1.1 to 1.2.4, available together with those of eight other countries at the Internet site of the Decade: <http://www.romadecade.org/action.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed account of difficulties encountered in its foundation and operation see: BHC, Five Years Later, pp.13-14.

<sup>8</sup> See the action plan at <http://coiduem.mon.bg/index2.php?m=4&p=3>, last visited on 03/12/2007.



Roma education desegregation is supposed to form part of strategic goal number 1 and the CEI is supposed to spend 50 percent of its resources on programmes for funding of of this strategic goal. Again, according to the 3-year programme, these projects include:

1. Projects aimed at supporting the desegregation and subsequent integration process.
2. Projects related to the optimisation of the school network in municipalities with few or strongly dispersed locations, including support of hub schools to ensure quality education.
3. Projects aimed to support the educational environment in host kindergartens and schools.
4. Programmes and projects aimed at moving of children without disabilities out of remedial schools.
5. Projects aimed at the adaptation of children with mother tongue other than Bulgarian in kindergartens and basic schools.
6. Projects related to research on the educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities.
7. Projects for monitoring and evaluation, and for ensuring the right of equal access to quality education for children and students from ethnic minorities.

So far the CEI has organised a single tender by which 550,000 leva (approximately 281,190 euros) were allocated to the programme for guarantee of equal access to quality education of children and students from ethnic minorities. The final evaluation of project offers was completed on 3 October 2007. The list of approved projects,<sup>9</sup> more than half of which are aimed at kindergartens, provides little information toward the extent of support for Roma education desegregation.

Despite the fact that so far the commitment of the Bulgarian government to the financial support of Roma educational integration is weak, there is no doubt that the operational desegregation projects encouraged this process in several ways demonstrating:

- » That taking Roma children out from segregated neighbourhood schools is possible and can be sustainable.
- » That this process has the support of Roma parents.
- » That, when it is carefully designed and implemented, the process can overcome the resistance of the Bulgarian parents.

<sup>9</sup> See the list on: <http://coiduem.mon.bg/docs/klasirani1.doc>, last visited on 03/12/2007.

- » That desegregation can enjoy the support, or at least not mobilize active resistance, of political and societal forces at the local level.

The historical significance of the operating desegregation projects is in demonstrating the possibility and the sustainability of the desegregation process, in countering arguments that seek excuse in the “un-preparedness” of the Roma community and the society as a whole.

## 2. Degree of political commitment to desegregation

The Bulgarian government’s commitment to the desegregation of Roma education, at least on paper, has remained sustainable throughout all the years following the adoption of the *Framework Programme for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society*. The Framework Programme itself speaks of the need for “full elimination of segregated schools in Roma neighbourhoods”.<sup>10</sup> It does not, however, mention the desegregation of de facto segregated Roma schools in Bulgarian villages due to migration or other factors.

The approach of the *Strategy for the Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities* passed in June 2004 is very similar. In its part concerning specific strategic goals in the education of the Roma minority, again, there is mention of “complete integration of Roma children into ethnically diverse kindergarten groups, and that of pupils from Roma background into mixed ethnicity classes in (host) schools outside the Roma neighbourhoods”.<sup>11</sup> The Strategy envisaged the building of a network of hub schools in municipalities with small or sparsely populated localities.<sup>12</sup> However, the building of such a network seems to be in no way related to the desegregation of Roma education.

Another central document demonstrating the scope of the political commitment of the Bulgarian government to the desegregation of Roma education is the above-mentioned *National Action Plan* developed for the Decade of Roma Inclusion. In it, the desegregation of Roma education involves “moving children out of Roma neighbourhoods and closing the ethnically segregated kindergartens and schools, with steps to secure the necessary transport while taking the parents’ preferences into account”.<sup>13</sup> Again, there seems to be no mention of desegregation of the de facto segregated Roma schools in rural localities.

Limiting the process of desegregation solely to the urban neighbourhood schools is seen as the only possibility in the literature describing and analysing desegregation policy

<sup>10</sup> Framework Programme for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society, Section 5.1, available in Bulgarian at: <http://www.bghelsinki.org/index.php?module=pages&lg=bg&page=lawfp>, посетен на 4.12.2007 г.

<sup>11</sup> Strategy for the Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities approved by the Minister of Education and Science on 11 June 2004, Section IV.1.1.1, available in Bulgarian at: [http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left\\_menu/documents/strategies/strategy\\_integration.pdf](http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/documents/strategies/strategy_integration.pdf), last visited on 04/12/2007.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Section III, Directive 4.

<sup>13</sup> National Action Plan for the Decade for Roma Inclusion, 2005-2015.

in Bulgaria in recent years. Thus, for instance, in one of his latest studies, Yosif Nunev, a State Expert at the MES, maintains that desegregation “can only be applied in as many as 90 kindergartens and schools” in the cities. He believes that “the remaining educational institutions are in small localities where they are the only option and there are basically zero possibilities for desegregation through mixing up with other children”.<sup>14</sup>

**Conclusion:** The demonstrated political will for the desegregation of Roma education in Bulgaria seems to be limited so far to closing segregated schools and kindergartens in urban areas and enrolling the children from them into the remaining urban schools.

<sup>14</sup> Yosif Nunev, *Roma and the Desegregation Process in Education*, Sofia, Kuna Publishing House, 2006, p. 67 (in Bulgarian).



## Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation of the desegregation projects took place in the period of September – December 2007. It coincided with the national strike of the Bulgarian teachers – the largest trade union action of this professional group in Bulgaria’s history, which lasted nearly one and a half months starting from the second half of September. The evaluation comprised of the following activities:

1. Collecting information and study of documentation and literature concerning the legislation, policy, and research on the desegregation of the Roma education in Bulgaria in the last two years.
2. Collecting information through observation and analysis of documents related to the work of non-governmental projects for desegregation of the Roma education in eight Bulgarian cities.
3. Analysis of the results from the tests of mathematics and Bulgarian language and literature (BLL), conducted in the framework of the National External Assessment (NEA) for the 4th school grade, which took place in May 2007 in the cities with operational non-governmental desegregation projects.
4. A survey through direct interviews amongst the Roma students who took part in the National External Assessment in BLL and mathematics and one of their parents.

A special focus of the present evaluation was the cost estimation of a future nationwide programme for desegregation of the Roma education in Bulgaria. It was conducted according to a methodology agreed with and approved by the Roma Education Fund (REF).<sup>15</sup>

Prior to conducting local visits, the evaluation team consulted elements of the evaluation methodology with a panel of experts comprising of teachers and academics, sociologists, ethnologists, and administrators in the field of education.

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter V.

## **1. Collecting Information through Observation and Analysis of Documents Related to the work of Non-Governmental Projects for Desegregation of the Roma Education in Eight Bulgarian Cities**

In the period of September 2007 – December 2007, the evaluation team made several visits to all cities with operational Roma education desegregation projects funded by REF. The purpose of the visits was to obtain first-hand information concerning the structure, the modus operandi, and local support to the projects. The observations were structured in a special protocol with indicators largely compatible with those from the previous evaluations (see Annex 4). In accordance with these indicators, the team proceeded with:

- » Reviewing of all documents relating to the projects (assessments, project descriptions, reports to donors, interim reports of project team members, reports of the Regional Inspectorates of Education (RIE) of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), research publications, information leaflets, mass media publications, etc.).
- » Conducting more than 200 interviews with:
  - Project managers and project team members.
  - RIE representatives and local education management authorities.
  - Parents of Roma children included in the programme.
  - Roma children included in the programme.
  - Roma children not included in the programme.
  - School principals and teachers from host schools.
  - NGOs working in the field of Roma education.
  - Roma activists and Roma officials in the state and municipal administrations.
  - Other experts.
- » Visits for observation purposes in the Roma neighbourhoods and segregated schools.

Despite the internal allocation of responsibilities for individual projects, various research team members visited other projects, too, in order to obtain an overall idea of the situation and assist their colleagues in the process of information gathering. The visits cycle was completed by a focus group interview of several academic advisors to the desegregation projects (see Annex 3).

## **2. Analysis of the Results from the Tests of Mathematics and Bulgarian Language and Literature (BLL), Conducted in the Framework of the National External Assessment for the 4th School Grade which took Place in May 2007 in the Cities with Operational Non-Governmental Desegregation Projects**

Around the middle of May 2007, the MES conducted a National External Assessment (NEA) of the academic achievement of 4th grade students. The assessment was effected by means of tests in the following subjects: mathematics, BLL, "Man and Society", and "Man and Nature". The tests consisted of multiple-choice questions with three possible answers of which one was correct. Additionally, the BLL test included dictation.<sup>16</sup> For the purposes of the external assessment MES adopted an ad hoc instruction. The assessment was carried out by commissions appointed by school principals, the constitution of which was not to include teachers teaching in the tested classes. The tests were marked with points scoring from 0 (lowest grade) to 20 (highest grade). A special methodology was put in place for the conversion from point scoring system to the six-point mark system used in the Bulgarian education system. Expectations were for the NEA to provide an impartial picture of the achievements of 4th graders. However, in some cities the tests were not conducted with the necessary impartiality, which, in turn, rendered some of the results extremely doubtful.<sup>17</sup>

The evaluation team analysed only the results for the mathematics and the BLL tests from the cities with operational desegregation projects subject to evaluation. The aim was to compare the results of Roma children attending segregated schools with those of Roma children in integrated educational environment at the 4th grade level. The analysis also enabled the comparison with the results of the rest of the 4th grade students who took the tests in the respective settlements. The evaluation team received full support by the MES, whereas the co-operation of the RIE was not always at the appropriate level.

<sup>16</sup> The test and the answer keys are available at [http://www.mon.bg/opencms/opencms/top\\_menu/news/archiv2007-1/07-05-14\\_tests.html](http://www.mon.bg/opencms/opencms/top_menu/news/archiv2007-1/07-05-14_tests.html), last visited on 04/12/2007.

<sup>17</sup> See the section on Vidin below.

### **3. A Survey of the Roma Students who took Part in the NEA in BLL and Mathematics, and one of their Parents**

Utilising the data from the external assessment, the evaluation team conducted a field survey in the cities of Vidin, Pleven, Sliven and Stara Zagora by means of direct interviews with Roma students who took the NEA test in BLL and Mathematics, as well as with one of their parents. The purpose of the survey was to assess the influence of a series of factors on the educational achievement of the Roma students who had successfully completed the 4th grade in the 2006/2007 academic year. With the help of local researchers, interviews were conducted with 328 children in the 4th grade attending segregated and integrated environments, and 328 parents. The fieldwork took place between 10 October and 20 November 2007.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See details on the methodology of the survey in Chapter IV below.



## Overview of the Desegregation Projects

### A. VIDIN

#### 1. Main Problems with the Educational Integration of Roma Children in the City

##### *1.1 The Neighbourhood PS "Episkop Sofroniy Vrachanski "*

Vidin has one segregated Roma neighbourhood – "Nov Pat". It encompasses various Roma groups, including "tinkers", "tsutsumani", "laeshi", rope-makers and basket-makers. According to the DROM organization, currently the population in the neighbourhood is about 10,000. The segregated PS "Episkop Sofroniy Vrachanski" still operates in the neighbourhood.

According to data provided by RIE Vidin, based on information from Form 1, presented to the inspectorate in the beginning of October by the school principles every school year, 469 students were enrolled in the PS "Episkop Sofroniy Vrachanski" during the 2007/2008 academic year.

The Director of RIE Vidin and the RIE experts interviewed by the evaluation team are against the closure of the neighbourhood school.

For the last academic year, the neighbourhood school had 3 classes in the 4th grade, with 4b class falling into the national sample for the pilot NEA, while the remaining two classes took the tests in BLL and mathematics on 15 and 16 May 2007 respectively.

The results from the NEA tests in BLL and mathematics are presented in Table 1 below.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Source: Data provided by RIE Vidin on the class, which was selected for the national sample, and data on the reports from ES "Ep. Sofroniy Vrachanski" for the remaining two classes.

Table 1: Results from the BLL and mathematics tests in PS "Sofroniy Vrachanski"<sup>202122</sup>

	No. Students in Class	No. Students who took the Test	Results in BLL	Results from the Dictation	Results in Mathematics
4 "a"	23	18 <sup>20</sup>	11,83	2,39	15,56
			9,26	1,87	12,17
4 "b"	21	21	11,10 <sup>21</sup>		11,38
4 "c"	22	17 <sup>22</sup>	11,41	3,29	18,18
			8,82	2,55	14,05
Total/ Average	65	56	11,45	2,84	15,04
			9,73	2,21	12,53

Taking into account the number of absent students, which is the same in both classes for the BLL and the mathematics test, we may assume that:

- » Since the dates for the tests were announced in advance, the students did not attend because they have poor achievement and would have lowered the overall achievement of the class and school;
- » They did not attend, as the BLL and mathematics tests took place in two consecutive days, and they might have been sick or absent for other justified reason.

Since we are unable to determine which of the two assumptions is true, the table also shows the results of students from the two classes after marking those absent with 0 (highlighted rows). Figures of the results calculated including 0 for those who did not take the test will be then considered as more reliable for the purposes of the national standardized external assessment of students at the same educational level, marked according to a unified methodology and tools nationwide.

Thus average students' results (with 0 for those who did not take it) for the school are 11.94 in BLL out of maximum 25, or within the range of the equivalent good mark of 4 in the 6-point system. The average results in mathematics for the school (again, with 0 for those who did not take it) are 12.53 points out of maximum 20, or, again, equivalent to a good mark of 4 in the 6-point system.

<sup>20</sup> The same students were absent from both tests.

<sup>21</sup> The information provided by RIE Vidin does not contain separate results from the dictation, and therefore we will assume that these have been included in the overall BLL result.

<sup>22</sup> The same students did not attend both tests.

However, taking into account only the results of attending students from the 4a and 4c classes, then the average results from the two tests are within the very good mark (5 in the 6-point system). The result of attending students from 4c class is 18.18 points, which is equivalent to 6 in the 6-point system.

According to the RIE experts interviewed, the 4b class, which was included in the sample, has the lowest level of the three classes. On the one hand, this result was due to the 100 per cent attendance for the tests, and the stricter control of the administration, on the other.

Considering the extremely poor results of students in the neighbourhood school at the tests conducted by the BHC in 2005,<sup>23</sup> the latest results are more than good. How is such an improvement achieved for two years? Were the levels of difficulty too different? Or was it the organization and the control of administration that contributed to this margin? These are all questions requiring special research, which the evaluation team is not in a position to perform. The results from both tests in Vidin do not seem trustworthy however.

### **1.2 Lack of Municipal Policy for the Neighbourhood School**

Another major problem for the city as viewed by the majority of interviewees is that the municipality does not provide any incentives for Roma parents to enroll their children in city schools. For Roma children especially, attending city schools involves additional costs from the parents because the child needs to comply with the bus schedule, otherwise would need extra money to pay for transport, or the child needs some pocket money in the city. On the contrary, the segregated school, as well as the rural schools, offer such incentives for the parents, irrespective of the quality of education offered. They provide firewood, they accept children's absences without valid reasons, children can attend barefoot and dressed however they can, and they are also close to home and able to have meals there. In cases where the parents are abroad or do not look after their child, the obstacles to the educational integration increase. Poverty and unemployment are the basic grounds for parents enrolling their children in the neighbourhood school. Therefore, the desegregation project developed and applied a system of stimulating compensatory services, aiming at attracting the Roma children to neighbourhood schools and to keep them there as long as possible.

According to the RIE Vidin, municipal authorities should be doing more to open up positions for teacher assistants at all schools. RIE Director and experts interviewed confirmed that this is a position at the school, which is extremely efficient and useful and, for several years now, has not been paid for by the DROM project; however, local authorities are in a position to maintain these. This will facilitate the work with Roma children in city schools, as teacher assistants are "indispensable and valuable intermediaries between the teachers and the parents in supporting children's adaptation to the new school environment."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See: BHC, Five Years Later, p. 61.

<sup>24</sup> RIE Vidin programme.

## 2. Background of the Project

The DROM Organization has been implementing the project for Roma education desegregation since 2000, marking the start of the desegregation process in Bulgaria and creating a model for Roma education desegregation, which was later applied in other cities across Bulgaria. Initially, the projects were funded by the Roma Participation Program of the Open Society Institute in Budapest; since 2006, their funding has been taken over by the Roma Education Fund.

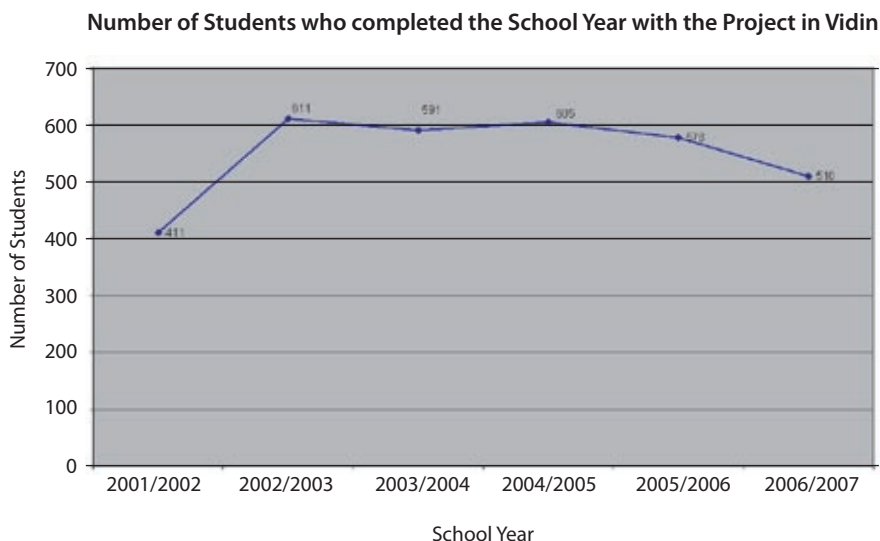
As a non-governmental organisation, DROM is currently implementing the project “Desegregation and support: entry to and exit with quality education” aimed at the educational desegregation of Roma children and students. It is particularly important that the project does not aim anymore just at transporting Roma students to the city host schools, just at bringing them into the educational process there, but also at the outcome of the process. Both at the entry and at the exit of the process, not just the number of children is counted but also the quality of education they receive. The DROM team is engaged in the implementation of this sole project, which allows it to concentrate all its energy and expertise on the desegregation process in the city.

Since 2000, all schools in the municipality work with delegated budgets.

Some children from the Roma neighbourhood are enrolled in neighboring rural schools and are transported by MES buses as per the latter’s school network optimization programme.

Data on the number of children who have completed the school year with the project since the 2001/2002 academic year are presented in the Graph 1 below.

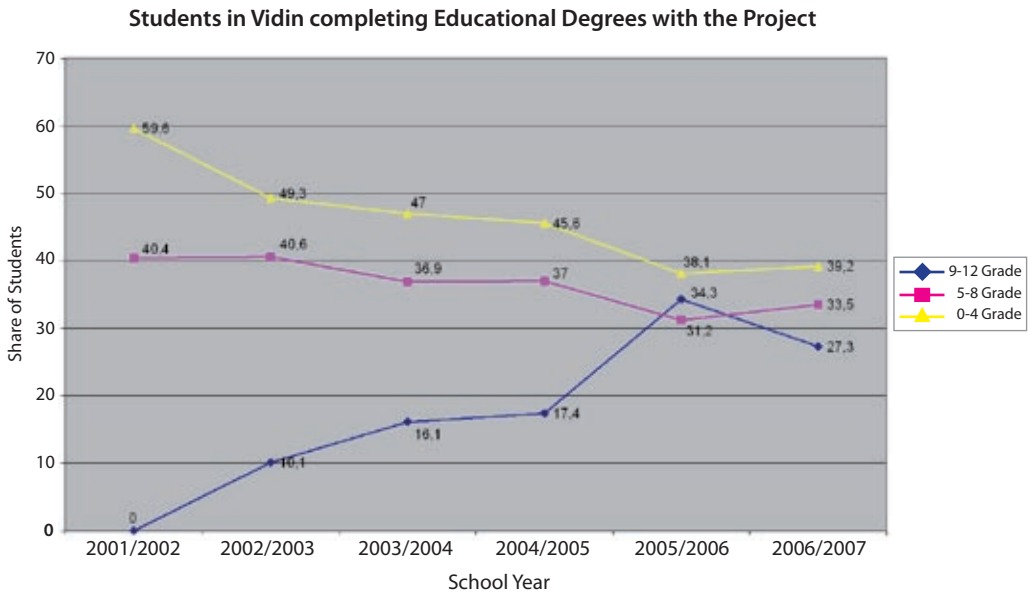
**Graph 1**



The most significant increase in the number of graduates was registered in the second academic year. With the 2003/2004 academic year, the overall number of Roma children completing the year with the project started to decrease (with the exception of the following academic year only), which has resulted from DROM's focus on enrolling a relatively equal number of children in all classes at the city schools, and these are limited in number. The number of boys who were enrolled under the project and completed the respective academic year exceeded the number of girls during all academic years.

Between the 2002/2003 and the 2004/2005, the number of children completing the academic year with the project was comparatively steady. For the last two academic years, however, it dropped by 35 and 40 students respectively, which could be attributed to a range of reasons but is also invariably influenced by the increasing proportion of students enrolled at the secondary level, as well as of those graduating (see Graph 2 below).

**Graph 2**



Graph 2 clearly illustrates that, with each academic year, the proportion of participant Roma children at the elementary and primary levels is decreasing, while their proportion is increasing at the secondary level. This confirms that the project is not only enrolling students in the city schools but is also managing to keep them there after they complete their primary education.

The largest proportion (59.6 percent) of Roma children to complete elementary education with the help of the project (preparatory to 4th grade) was registered in the 2001/2002 academic year. The portion of students who enrolled in grades 5-8 was largest for the 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 academic years with 40.4 percent and 40.6 percent respectively. For the 2002/2003, the proportion of students enrolled in the elementary education decreased, while the number of students enrolled for the secondary level increased to 10.1 percent of all students enrolled for the year. From its very launch, the Roma education desegregation project in Vidin has differed in that it enrolled Roma children in city schools irrespective of their grade. This specific lack of selection of the participant children<sup>25</sup> has, to a large extent, allowed the implementing team to work with all city schools and, therefore, minimize the risk of any one of those schools falling into the desegregation trap and, at the same time, include the largest number of Roma children among projects.

### ***2.1 Host Schools with which the Project Works***

At present, the desegregation project in Vidin works with 12 schools. From the very start of the project, DROM have endeavored to enroll Roma children in all city schools. This strategy was essential, as it would not allow for the differentiation of “white” and “Roma” schools, and, as a result, would reduce the risks for secondary segregation of Roma children at city schools.

Due to the efforts of DROM organization and the good co-operation between the project staff and school principals, this tendency is not present or its presence is successfully countered in Vidin. Still, there is one school in Vidin where the number of Roma children has started to increase and the desegregation project team has discontinued enrollment of Roma children in this school – the PS “Hristo Botev”. According to information from Ms. Panayotova, Roma children comprise over half of all children enrolled in the school.

The students who completed six of the host schools in the city in the 2001/2002 academic year were quite evenly distributed at the schools. The largest portion of them were enrolled in the PS “Otets Paisiy”, and the smallest in the CSS “P.R. Slaveykov”.

The largest portion of the students who completed the 2003/2004 academic year with the project was in CSS “Cyril i Metodiy” where children opt for various arts classes at a very early age. Three more schools were included in the DROM project for that academic year – the Mathematics School and two vocational schools. This became possible due to the gradual increase of students at the primary level.

For the 2003/2004 academic year, the project included all primary and secondary schools in Vidin, with the largest portion of Roma children to compete the year, again, in the CSS “Cyril i Metodiy”, followed by the CSS “Tzar Simeon Veliki”, which has a reputation of an “elite” school.

<sup>25</sup> See details in the report on the focus group with the teachers and academic advisors.

For the 2004/2005 academic year, the largest portion of Roma students to complete the year were from PS "Kliment Ohridski" and CSS "Cyril i Metodiy", with a notable increase in the vocational secondary school "Vasil Levski".

For the 2005/2006 academic year, beside the vocational schools in Vidin, Roma students under the project also graduated from the Mathematics School. As a whole, the proportion of Roma students in the comprehensive and vocational secondary schools marked an increase.

During the previous, 2006/2007, academic year, the proportion of Roma students at the primary educational stage remained substantial, with a steady proportion of Roma students in comprehensive secondary schools, too, which is an indication of the project's favourable performance.

## **2.2 Number of Roma Children Per Class**

The implementing team endeavors to enroll up to 30 percent of Roma children per class. Classes with a higher percentage are those where the children choose specific profiles (e.g. in CSS "Cyril i Metodiy"). The even distribution of the children in the classes and schools is especially important in view of minimizing the "desegregation trap" risks.

## **2.3. Services Provided by the Project to Participant Roma Children**

### *2.3.1. Work with Parents*

A very important aspect of the DROM Organization project is the work carried out with the parents of Roma children. It involves several consecutive stages:

1. Work with the parents in terms of their motivation to enroll their children in one of the city schools.
2. Persuasion of the parents to take on a more serious engagement in their children's education.
3. Holding special parent-teacher meetings for parents whose children are enrolled in the project.
4. Holding parent-teacher meetings with parents whose children are enrolled in the project regarding specific problems leading to dropping out of school (migration, poverty, etc.).

As a result of this activity, there are Roma parents who are members of the school managements in city schools.

Since the end of 2005, the DROM Organization has organized four parent-teacher meetings on the problems to children's education caused by seasonal migration. The problem affects not only Roma families, but also Bulgarian families with children of school age. In the 2006/2007 academic year, the principal of the St. Cyril and Methodius School organized a parent-teacher meeting for Roma parents only. This led DROM to react with criticism.

### *2.3.2. Transportation of Children from the "Nov Pat" Neighbourhood to City Host Schools*

Vidin does not have operational public transport; therefore, the children need to be transported to schools, and DROM organization ensures it. The project owns two buses which are in good technical condition, and as of this academic year, also a minibus. As most children under the project attend school in two shifts, the bus schedule is very busy and involves several trips a day.

For several years now, the project team has created a mechanism through which, on the one hand, it relieves the schedule of the buses and, on the other, stimulates the Roma children to attend the city schools alone, without relying on DROM's buses. Transportation from the Roma neighbourhood to the city schools is not used by all children enrolled in the project. For the 2006/2007 academic year, the project enrolled 756 children in grades preparatory to 13th, with only 460 using the school bus. Students in the 8th grade and upper are not provided bus transport, as well as all the students in the CSS "Tzar Simeon Veliki". The 8th graders are supposed to have sufficient motivation already without being provided transport. The students in the CSS "Tzar Simeon Veliki" are not provided transport, as DROM, RIE, students and teachers alike confirm that this is the "elite" city school and the children who are enrolled in it ensure their transportation by themselves. The project team requires that students are brought to, and taken from, that school by their parents. Thus, parents of Roma children enrolled in the school relinquish transport in exchange for having their children enrolled in the "elite" city school. This integrates the Roma children with their peers and makes the Roma parents equal to the Bulgarian parents making both part of one community.

It is Ms. Panayotova's view that so far this has been a successful practice and there have not been any negative responses by parents of children at the above school. The project team admits, however, that this is also due to the fact that there are no children from the poorest Roma families in the neighbourhood in the CSS "Tzar Simeon Veliki". Parents secure their children's transport to the school by means of personal cars or the public minibus taxi. They are informed in advance that, if they wish their child to attend this "elite" city school, they will need to provide for their transport. Other than motivating Roma children to fully integrate into the school environment and partake in its tradition, this is seen by Ms. Panayotova as a mechanism to also motivate their parents. The project team is focusing on gradually motivating Roma parents to start taking their child to other schools as well. This is an "educative" measure applied to some categories of Roma parents who can afford to ensure their children's transport to school.



The principals of PS "Otets Paisiy" and CSS "Cyril i Metodiy" and RIE representatives drew the attention of the evaluation team to some problems resulting from transportation. Because of the lack of more frequent transportation, some Roma children are unable to participate in extra-curricular activities organized by the school. The project team, too, admitted to problems with transportation of Roma children from the neighbourhood, namely that classes at the various schools finish at different times, and it is almost impossible to set a schedule for the bus that would satisfy all. For the preceding academic year, however, DROM sent the bus schedule to all schools in advance, and the school principals took that into account when organizing the shifts in their schools, which is an indication of good partnership between the project team and the school principals.

### *2.3.3. Meals*

For five years now, the project has stopped providing food. The discontinuance of this service on the part of DROM was aimed at motivating parents in their gradual involvement with a growing number of activities related to their children's education. The break between regular and SBG classes is normally used for lunch, and seems to have created a problem for many of the children at the primary level. Sometimes they would use this period to go home and, subsequently, not return for the SBG classes.

Providing food in the school canteens is totally neglected by the municipal authorities in Vidin. Many canteens have been transformed into tailoring workshops, which pay extensive rents. However, even where this is not the case, these facilities are not used. There are no operational canteens at any of the schools in the city.

### *2.3.4. Textbooks*

The DROM project provides textbooks and school aids to the Roma children following criteria agreed with the parents and teachers. This programme focuses on:

- » Children from large families.
- » Orphans.
- » Families with more than two students.
- » Families with low income proved by means of a document from the social services.

Each family is expected to file a request with DROM, accompanied by the respective documentation, and the project team then assesses the request in accordance with the above criteria. Apart from the paperwork assessment, the project can also use the expertise of the co-ordinators, who know each of the families.

### 2.3.5. Extra-Curricular Activities Organized by the Project

DROM continues to pay serious attention to extra-curricular activities in the host schools, which are organized on a multicultural basis. For the 2006/2007 academic year, the project organized the following extra-curricular activities:

- » Drafts with questions on cultural and spiritual leaders from the Vidin region, in co-operation with RIE Vidin.
- » An essay competition for the elementary level with the topic "My Vacation". The first stage was held at school level, where the winners were announced. These representatives team then took part in the second stage with first, second, and third prize. The segregated school took part in this competition along with the other schools in order for city school authorities to be able to compare their level of achievement to that of city schools.
- » PS "Otets Paisiy" organized an elective class in Roma folklore with a plan developed by the Amalipe Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance. A theatre workshop was also set up, as well as ecologic projects and young physician and biologist competitions.
- » A Christmas party was organized where each school was given 15 minutes to choose a way to perform on the topic "Children are Tolerant". At the end of the party, various certificates and small gifts were presented to children, teachers, and parents, as well as to the deputy mayor of Vidin and the deputy regional administrator for their commitment to desegregation.

The project proposal for 2007/2008 envisaged a stronger focus of extra-curricular activities under the project in three of the DROM partner schools where Roma students performed worse in the previous academic year compared to the achievement of children at the remaining city schools. These priority schools are CSS "L. Karavelov", CSS "P.R. Slaveykov", and PS "Kliment Ohridski".

### 2.3.6. Additional Classes

The schedules of the teachers in the host schools include additional tutorials for children falling behind or experiencing learning difficulties. This is a legal obligation of teachers, which the project team uses to ensure compensation for any problems that Roma students in city schools may have. In this respect, the work of the teachers from the "Edinstvo" (Unity) club has been especially useful in the context of the Vidin project because of the timely identification of the needs of students with difficulties and the provision of extra classes by themselves or teachers at the respective school (more details are available in Section 3 below).

As per DROM's project proposal to REF for the 2006/2007 academic year, extra classes were envisaged for three groups of children: three-month preparatory education for fifty

6-year-olds to be enrolled in the “elite” city schools; one-year additional preparation for 50 Roma children intending to apply for “elite” secondary schools; and four-month additional preparation for university exams for 50 Roma students. Payment was allocated for the teachers for each of the groups.

For the 2007/2008 academic year, DROM’s project proposal envisaged additional classes for the same three types of preparatory groups with a reduced number of children: 25 children to be enrolled in “elite” schools; 35 students to apply with “elite” secondary schools, and 10 secondary school students to apply for college or university.

### *2.3.7 Incentives and Scholarship Awards for Roma Children with High Academic Achievement*

DROM’s project proposal for 2006/2007 envisaged 30 monthly scholarship awards for Roma students with outstanding academic achievement. An additional incentive for good performance was envisaged in the form of a summer camp, however, without specifying the number of students this would apply for. For Roma students applying in secondary schools outside Vidin, or universities, the project envisaged providing for all transportation and entry fee costs.

The evaluation team received information that some students with high grades during the school year attended a summer camp. The evaluation team does not have information on the number of students who were awarded scholarships.

## **3. The Project Team**

The implementation team comprises of members of Roma and Bulgarian background which was intended as a deliberate integration tool. In October, DROM appointed two technical assistants under one of the programmes of the labour office for retraining of unemployed people; their remuneration is provided for by the labour office. All team members are employed under labour contracts and receive payments via bank transfers. Each of the team members has a job description. Salaries increase gradually on an annual basis, and there are also possibilities for individual pay rise based on performance.

Gradually, the team has started to recruit people with higher educational status, which, according to Ms Panayotova, allows for higher professionalism. The fluctuation in the project team reflects the project development throughout the years and accounts for the endeavor to respond to problems adequately.

Table 2 below presents the changes in the project team in the last two academic years, as per DROM project proposals.

Table 2: Project implementation team

Team Members <sup>26</sup>	Number	
	2006/2007	2007/2008
Team leader	1	1
Co-ordinator	5	4
Psychologist	4 <sup>27</sup>	1
Teacher	0	2
Driver	2	2
Office manager	1	1
Media expert	0	1
Campaigning co-ordinator	1	0
Accountant	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>

Currently, the project has two teachers with experience in working with children of minority backgrounds as a result of their experience as teachers in Kardzhali. They are a Bulgarian couple. The wife is an elementary school teacher, while her husband is a teacher in "Life and technology". Each of the co-ordinators is responsible for two schools. Each school has students in charge of tracking absences, who report to co-ordinators on a weekly basis. Such students are appointed for the elementary, primary, and secondary levels. They are provided special incentives.

Moreover, this responsibility entails a specific position of authority within the class and in the school. In the event of problems, co-ordinators perform additional checks on the attendance. This presents a specific incentive for the remaining children to become the student in charge, if they are active. For the third year now, there have been no counselors at the schools. The presence of a counselor (or teacher assistant) is essential in the first years of partnership between the school and the project. Following this period,

- » A solid core of Roma children is formed at the school
- » The school acquires experience in working with Roma children
- » A relationship is built with the Roma parents who now find it easier to trust the school, communicate with the teachers more frequently, and are less worried for their children.

<sup>26</sup> As per project proposals.

<sup>27</sup> Part-time.

In effect, after the initial three years, counselors begin to be in the way, as Roma children tend to gravitate toward him or her, thus preventing communication with their peers.<sup>28</sup>

The role of the project psychologist in the transition between the various integration stages of Roma children at school is very important, as he or she works continuously with parents and teachers, and steps in where necessary in the event of incidents.

An indispensable part of the project team is that of the teachers, members of the "Edinstvo" Club. This is a mutual support club established by DROM and comprising teacher representatives from all schools in Vidin. Participation is voluntary, with the school representatives nominated by the respective principals. The main activities of the "Edinstvo" Club involve additional individual classes with children experiencing difficulties; analysis of the performance of all participant children; reports on attendance; mediation between the project team and class teachers at the school; mediation with school authorities. Club reunions take place once or twice a month. As an incentive for participation in this peer body, teachers receive moral awards – certificates and flowers at various school occasions and festivals.

Project work is organized and supervised by means of weekly plans and reports on performance by each of the team members.

## **4. Organization of Implementation Work**

### ***4.1 Facilitating Roma Children's Leaving the Neighbourhood School and Enrollment in City Schools***

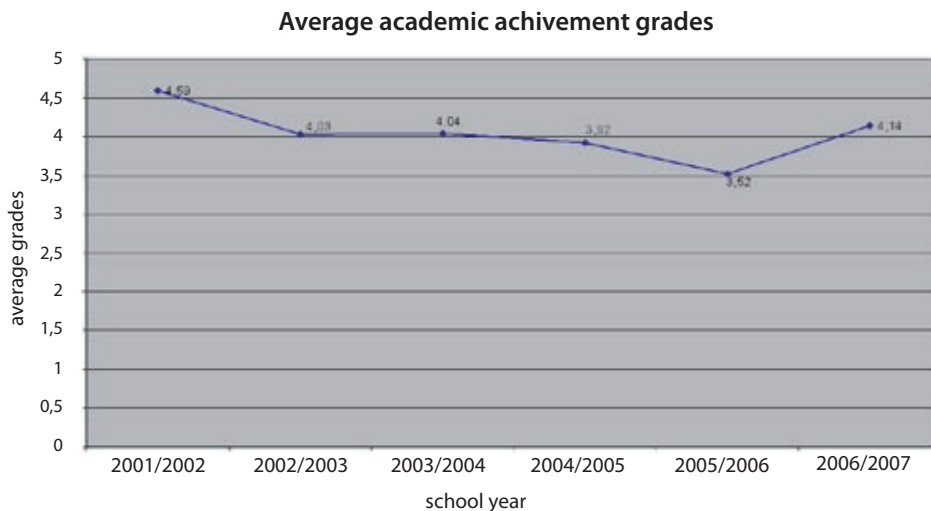
The relationship between DROM and the segregated neighbourhood school is very tense. This is understandable, considering that the project is enrolling as many children as possible in the city schools, thereby affecting the numbers at the neighbourhood school. This, in turn, entails problems with obtaining leaving certificates from the segregated schools, and their subsequent enrollment in city schools.

### ***4.2 Academic Achievement of the Participant Children***

The Grade Point Average of all participant children since the start of the project is illustrated in Graph 3 below.

<sup>28</sup> See the section on the desegregation project in Montana below where an identical problem was described with a counselor at one of the city schools.

**Graph 3**



The graph clearly demonstrates a decrease in the Grade Point Average of participant children each year, from very good at 4.59 in 2001/2002 to as low as 3.52 in 2005/2006. For the last academic year, however, student’s achievement increased by more than 0.50 to 4.14. The decrease registered in earlier years was probably due to a wide range of factors, including the steady upward trend of the number of Roma students enrolled in the secondary educational level. For them, the study content is more difficult and the volume is greater, while not all of these students have had the opportunity to attend city schools since their preparatory grade and, therefore, integrate fully in the learning and social environment of the respective school.

Table 3 below presents the average academic achievement of participant students by schools and academic years.

Table 3: Grade Point Average of participant children by academic year and school

School	2006/2007	2005/2006	2004/2005	2003/2004	2002/2003	2001/2002
1. CSS „Tzar Simeon Veliki“	4.64	4.42	4.25	4.55	4.61	5.00
2. CSS „Cyril i Metodiy“	4.52	4.35	3.77	4.05	3.90	5.00
3. CSS „Lyuben Karavelov“	4.29	4.38	4.20	4.21	4.20	4.75
4. CSS „P.R Slaveykov“	3.86	3.55	3.60	3.70	3.98	4.23
5. PS „Kliment Ohridski“	3.76	4.24	4.25			
6. PS „Otets Paisiy“	4.01	4.05	4.00	4.00	3.70	4.61
7. PS „Ivan Vazov“	4.53	4.38	4.17			
8. PS „Hristo Botev“	3.93	3.89	3.40	3.83	3.80	4.00

CSS “Tzar Simeon Veliki” is the school with consistent good academic achievement of Roma students, which varies between 4.25 and 5.00 between academic years. CSS “Hristo Botev”, which has the largest number of Roma children, has registered consistently low academic achievement (between 3.40 and 4.00) compared to the achievement of participant students at the remaining city schools. The evaluation team was not provided data on the academic achievement of participant students in the vocational and profile secondary schools in Vidin.

For the 2004/2005 academic year, all participant children in city schools registered the highest academic achievement. The only exception was PS “Kliment Ohridski” for which this was the first academic year of partnership with the project.<sup>29</sup> The same academic year was the first for PS “Ivan Vazov”, too; however, the academic achievement of participant children registered an improvement. Both schools are characterized by a trend of dropping number of completing Roma students: 86 participant students completed the 2004/2005 academic year in PS “Kliment Ohridski, with 33 in the next, and only 27 for the 2006/2007 academic year; for PS “Ivan Vazov”, numbers were 25 for the 2004/2005 academic year, with 11 for the following, and only 5 for the 2006/2007 academic year.

The average results from the NEA tests in BLL and mathematics of participant children in the 4th grade were very good.

<sup>29</sup> It has been reported that during the first year of project participation, teachers are more tolerant of Roma children’s abilities, which leads to an artificial increase in their results compared to previous academic years.

Table 4: Average results of participant children from the BLL and mathematics tests in Vidin

Subject	Average Result
BLL	Very good (4.55)
Mathematics	Very good (4.60)

Comparison of the results at the two tests of Roma students in the segregated school and participant students in city schools reveals a lead in points for the segregated school. This, however, does not affect the marks according to the 6-point system, which are within the very good range both in BLL and mathematics for Roma children in the segregated and city schools alike. We have to take into account, however, the above mentioned doubts in the quality of the organization and implementation of the external evaluation in the segregated school.

Table 5: Average results from the tests of Roma students in the neighbourhood and city schools

Average results of Roma children in the neighbourhood and city schools	Mathematics			BLL		
	Eligible	Took the test	Average result	Eligible	Took the test	Average result
PS „Sofroniy Vrachanski“	66	56	15,04	66	56	14,29
Roma students in city schools	45	32	14,19	45	34	13,58
Lowest average result in city schools	14,73			15,73		
Highest average result in city schools	18,05			18,49		

Taking into account the serious doubts as to the accuracy of the data provided by the neighbourhood school and presented in Table 5 above, it would hardly make sense to compare the results of the Roma students in the neighbourhood and in the host schools. However, comparison of the average achievement of the Roma students in host schools with the achievement of all students in city schools reveals that the results of Roma children in host schools at the test in mathematics are lower than the lowest registered by 4th graders in all city schools. And the average results of Roma children in city schools at the test in BLL is 2 points lower than the lowest average results registered by all 4th graders in city schools.

All Roma parents interviewed by the evaluation team agreed that the education provided in city schools is better than that in the neighbourhood school. Apart from



the educational achievement of Roma children enrolled in city schools, the desegregation project activities also reflect on the relationship between Roma and Bulgarian children at school, as well as the relationship between the parents of Roma and Bulgarian children within the school environment. During an interview with a former high school teacher of a Roma origin, he shared an observation on Roma children's games. According to him, children from the neighbourhood schools play brides and grooms re-enacting the typical family roles and relationships, while children from the city schools play doctors and teachers. This is indicative of the role of the desegregation project with regard to the children's socialization and the expansion of their experience and perceptions. A child at the neighbourhood school has no reasons to leave the boundaries of the isolated neighbourhood and would, therefore, be unlikely or unable to re-create the role models of the doctor and teacher, if his or her immediate role models come from the family circle of daily interaction.

In the view of the principals of the PS "Otets Paisiy" and CSS "Cyril i Metodiy", the results of Roma children integration in the host schools are easily revealed in Roma and Bulgarian children becoming friends more and more. There continue to be conflicts between the children, but not on any ethnic basis.

"Before the project started, there were Roma children enrolled in our school, but they were only children of affluent parents... Now we have any children, which are models for the others. In the beginning, there were problems, but after so many years of work the relationships between Roma children and their classmates are wonderful. They are friends." Mr. Gerasimov, Principal of PS "Otets Paisiy".

"Because of the special focus of the school, there have always been talented Roma children enrolled in it. Due to their talents, they fit wonderfully in the in-school activities, as well as in the out-of-school activities – concerts, and other public appearances. The brass, for instance, is not the same without one of the Roma students." – Mr. Milanov, Principal of CSS „Cyril i Metodiy“.

### **4.3 Preparatory Groups and Grades**

Most city schools and the neighbourhood school have a preparatory grade. Vidin also has an operational network of kindergartens with preparatory groups. The project is working with the preparatory classes at the schools. There are preparatory groups in the city's schools and kindergartens but the project only enrolls Roma children in those at the schools. The project has built a good working relationship with the kindergartens in the "Nov Pat" neighbourhood.

#### 4.4 Semi-Boarding Groups

All city schools and the neighbourhood schools have semi-boarding groups (SBG) which are paid for by the municipality. There the students prepare their homework and receive some additional schooling from trained educators. Each SBG lasts for four school hours a day. It is the municipal policy to have SBG at all schools with Roma children, children from poor families, and children at the elementary level. Ms. Panayotova is a member of the Municipal Education Board where the principals of the schools place requests for the number of SBG needed for the respective school. Based on the number of children, the Board determines the number of SBG for each school.

#### 4.5 Absences from School

The unexcused absences from school of participant children for the last academic year 2006/2007 are presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Unexcused absences of participant children for the 2006/2007 academic year<sup>30</sup>

School	No. of Unexcused Absences <sup>30</sup>
CSS „Tzar Simeon Veliki“	(grades 1 to 8) – 215; (grades 9 to 13) – 421
CSS „Cyril i Metodiy“	(grades 1 to 8) – 194; (grades 9 to 12) – 288
CSS “P.R. Slaveykov”	(grades 1 to 8)– 333, of which 286 for 2 students
CSS “L. Karavelov”	(grades 1 to 8) – 212
PS “Kliment Ohridski”	(grades 1 to 8) – 384, of which 239 for 1 student who went abroad
PS “Otets Paisiy”	(grades 1 to 8) – 235
CSS “Hristo Botev”	(grades 1 to 8) – 283
Vocational School “Vela Piskova”	(grades 9 to 12) – 143
Metals Technology Vocational School „Vasil Levski“	(grades 9 to 12) – 357
Chemical and Food Technologies Vocational School “Asen Zlatarov”	(grades 9 to 12) – 24

<sup>30</sup> These figures include lateness for classes (1 lateness equals 1/3 of an unexcused absence).

The first two schools with participant Roma students at the elementary, primary, and secondary level report an increased number of absences after the 9th grade. At the lower secondary level (5-8 grade), the unexcused absences are around 200, with 333 and 384 absences for the CSS "P.R. Slaveykov" and PS "Kliment Ohridski" respectively, most of which, however, were made by the same few students. The highest number of unexcused absences, 283, was registered at lower secondary level in CSS "Hristo Botev".

#### **4.6 Dropouts**

The majority of dropout cases in Vidin result from the large-scale migration, predominantly abroad. The poor living conditions in the city are the main reason for whole families leaving in search for work, very often abroad. This applies to Roma and Bulgarian children alike. Beside migration, the other reason for Roma children dropping out are the early marriages, especially of the girls.

#### **4.7 Teacher Training for Work with Roma Children**

Interviews with the DROM project team and school principals revealed that no training was carried out with teachers working with Roma children. According to DROM, this deficit is partially filled by the teacher's club, which, however, is more a forum for exchange of experience rather than a structure offering training for work in a multicultural environment.

Teachers' preparation for working in a multiethnic and multicultural environment is essential for the integration of Roma children in city schools and for their full inclusion in the educational process. Since all city schools, and almost all classes, have Roma students, it is necessary to ensure all teachers' preparedness and expertise for work with Roma children. This requires the design and implementation of an active training programme in co-operation with the RIE, local authorities, NGOs, and various higher schools including all teachers.

### **5. Political, Administrative, and Public Support for the Project**

The public at large in the city supports the desegregation process and this is evident in the attitude of parents of Bulgarian students. The school principals interviewed by the evaluation team also evidenced the support and friendly relations between Bulgarian and Roma students. The teachers from the city schools also harboured a favourable and supportive attitude to the desegregation process. Owing to the work of the project team, this is not an isolated case in one school or in the work of one specific teacher, but a widespread practice in the schools in the city.

Some Roma leaders in the city firmly support the desegregation process and the project. On the other hand, the project director and the director of the Vidin REI reported that certain Roma municipal counselors frequently adopted decisions hindering the project's work. According to the project director, the reason behind this was their illiteracy which made them manipulable and dependent on party interests.

### ***5.1 Political Parties***

Prior to the local election, there were six Roma community representatives in Vidin's Municipal Council from the "Roma" political party. The extent of their influence, however, on local policy and their involvement in the process of desegregation of the Roma education is uncertain. According to information provided by RIE Vidin and DROM, the municipality is far from being committed to the desegregation process, and even some of the Council members firmly support the existence of the neighbourhood school.

### ***5.2 The RIE in Vidin***

Despite the 5-year co-operation agreement between the RIE and DROM, the relationship between them is quite complicated. On some of the activities the two parties act as partners, such as, for instance, the organization of extra-curricular activities. On others, however, they disagree, and this has been confirmed by a number of sources.

### ***5.3 The Municipal Authorities***

DROM took part in the drafting of the municipal plan for integration of minorities. However, the demonstrated unwillingness for its implementation, as well as the lack of any co-operation thereof, has created a feeling of non-commitment and lack of vision on Roma educational desegregation in the municipality, shared by both the project team and the other local institutions, such as the RIE and the schools.

### ***5.4 Mass Media***

The DROM project has established successful co-operation with several of the national and local media, such as the National Channel 1, bTV, the "24 Hours" and "Trud" national dailies, as well as the local TV "Vidin", TV "Roma", as well as with the newspapers "Konkurent", "Vidin", and "Nie". Owing to their partnership with local and national printed and electronic media, DROM has managed to publicize and promote their vision for the integration of Roma into the educational system, as well as the continuous project outcomes.

In partnership with the WITNESS NGO, DROM made two films on Roma education desegregation to publicize the desegregation model and inform the parents, teachers and other interested parties of its benefits.

### ***5.5 Religious Denominations***

Within the “Nov Pat” neighbourhood in Vidin, there are several operational Evangelical churches which, to some degree, contribute to motivating Roma families to enroll their children in the city schools and become more involved in their children’s education.

## **6. Incidence of Discrimination in Host Schools**

As a whole, the incidence of discrimination in city schools in Vidin against Roma students and their parents has been low. Interviews with participant children and their parents did not reveal any instances of discriminative treatment. Which is not to say that there have not been any but rather that they did not perceive it as based on ethnic prejudice.

A few instances of discrimination were described by the project team members, the principal of one of the schools, and the director of RIE Vidin. The project team has dealt with these isolated cases in a timely manner.

## B. MONTANA

### 1. Background of the Project

#### *1.1. Access of Roma Children to Integrated Schools*

All mainstream schools of general education in Montana accept children of Roma background. So children from the segregated Roma neighbourhood Kosharnik are able to complete their education in a school of their parents' choice. The desegregation project of the Sham Foundation works with five of the nine schools in the city. Four schools remain outside the project. Of them two – the 1st PS "Cyril i Metodiy" and the 6th PS "Lyuben Karavelov" are situated in the vicinity of the other Roma neighbourhood Ogosta, near the downtown Montana, and traditionally have a high percentage of Roma students. The 2nd CSS "Nikola Yonkov Vaptsarov" and the 9th CSS "Yordan Radichkov" are located in the city outskirts and are the most removed from the Kosharnik neighbourhood. There is one school in the Kosharnik neighbourhood – PS "Georgi Benkovski" which is still open despite the poor quality of the education delivered according to both Roma parents and NGOs. A significant portion of the Roma children attend the school in the nearby village of Studeno Buche – PS "Cyril i Metodiy". According to RIE Montana, for the 2007/2008 academic year, the school had 60 children, 40 of which were of Roma background. The school has become segregated.

Montana has two segregated Roma neighbourhoods – Ogosta and Kosharnik. In Ogosta there are no schools and the children have always attended the nearby 1st PS or 6th PS, along with their peers of Bulgarian ethnic background. The target group of the desegregation project of the Sham Foundation comprises the children of Kosharnik, most of whom have attended the neighbourhood school, PS "Georgi Benkovski". Since its launch seven years ago, the desegregation project has worked with children from grades 1 to 8. Four years ago, the project expanded the target group to children from the preparatory grade in the kindergartens.

#### *1.2. The Segregated School in the Kosharnik Neighbourhood*

In the 2006/2007 academic year, the neighbourhood school "Georgi Benkovski" had 53 children from the preparatory to 3rd grade. A 4th grade class was not set up. The Kosharnik students in the 4th grade attended the school in Studeno Buche. The neighbourhood school also had a remedial class for children with developmental disabilities, a class

which was attended by children who were “healthy”, according to information from the Sham Foundation and the “Monitoring of the Local Implementation of the National Action Plan – Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015” conducted by a team from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and the C.E.G.A foundation.<sup>31</sup> This year the remedial class in the Kosharnik school was closed by RIE – Montana.

For the 2007/2008 academic year, the neighbourhood school enrolled considerably more children compared to the previous year. A 4th grade class was formed. The number of the children enrolled in preparatory to 4th grades was 91, according to data provided by RIE Montana.

PS “Georgi Benkovski” in Kosharnik is formally a primary school, which is supposed to enrol children up to 8th grade. In practice, however, its highest grade is the 4th. Thus, the target group is relatively small. Despite that, the desegregation project has not yet managed to include all the children in the neighbourhood. BHC estimates reveal that the Sham Foundation team has the capacity to include the children from Kosharnik in the desegregation project, and especially those to be enrolled in the preparatory and 1st grades. This will allow initiating the gradual closing of the school.

### **1.3. General Information on the Project**

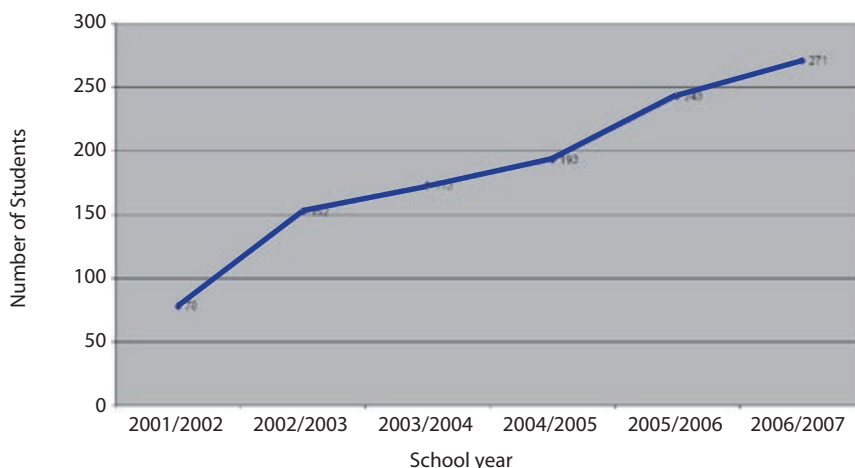
Currently, in the seventh year of its operation, the Montana desegregation project includes 287 children from preparatory to 8th grades, according to Sham Foundation and RIE Montana data. According to Sham, the total number of Roma children in partner schools under the project is 314. 100 of them were enrolled in integrated schools by their parents. Meanwhile, Roma children who were enrolled independently, too, have benefited from the services of the Foundation provided for the rest, i.e. transportation, snacks. Thus, Sham considers them project participants, too. The dynamics of students who completed the school year with the project in Montana is illustrated by the following graph. The data include all children who have benefited from the services of the Foundation.

In the past two years, the project registered a decreased number of new students enrolled at host schools. For the 2006/2007 academic year, the project enrolled a total of 28 new children who are provided various services by the foundation. For the 2007/2008 academic year, 36 of the total of 46 children in Kosharnik born in 2000 were enrolled in the 1st grade classes of city schools, says the team leader. With some of these children (16), the organisation worked during the previous academic year by attracting them to the preparatory classes at the kindergartens.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. : C.E.G.A. Fondation, Monitoring of the Local Implementation of the National Action Plan – Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 – 2015, Sofia, 2007, p.90, available at: [http://rc.cega.bg/files/Hronika/Monitoring\\_01-156.pdf](http://rc.cega.bg/files/Hronika/Monitoring_01-156.pdf). (in Bulgarian).

**Graph 4**

**Number of Students who completed the school year with the Project in Montana**



The history of the project has two distinct waves of increasing numbers of children enrolled. In the second year of the project, the number of children enrolled in schools doubled from 78 to 152. The second increase was registered in the fifth year where 50 new children were included, with almost half in the lower secondary school grades. In the third year of the project, Sham began to work with children from the preparatory classes at the kindergartens. The same year the foundation decided to focus on work with 1st graders. The main reason for this was that the earlier the children start attending mainstream schools along with their Bulgarian peers, the more successful will they be at school.

One of the major achievements of Sham is the enrolment at host schools of children from the poorest families in Kosharnik newcomers in the neighbourhood. By default, those children attended the segregated schools in the neighbourhoods. The closure of the segregated school will depend on the organisation's success in involving and enrolling the children of the poorest families in the neighbourhood at mainstream city schools. The matter will acquire further significance with the cut-off, as of January 2008, of social assistance payments which are currently the main source of income for the poorest in the neighbourhood, namely the newcomers who live on the hill of Kosharnik. According to information from Sham, the above measure will affect ca. 70 percent of Kosharnik residents.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See more information on the discontinuation of the social assistance payments from the complaint lodged against Bulgaria under the procedure under the European Social Charter: [http://www.coe.int/t/e/human\\_rights/esc/4\\_collective\\_complaints/list\\_of\\_collective\\_complaints/CC44Index\\_en.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/esc/4_collective_complaints/list_of_collective_complaints/CC44Index_en.asp#TopOfPage).



## 2. The Project Team

The Sham foundation team comprises of 11 people: 1 team leader, 1 academic advisor, 5 counsellors, 1 co-ordinator of work among parents, 1 office assistant, 1 driver, 1 accountant, and 1 social worker. The accountant and the social worker are volunteers. All of them have job descriptions.

In the 2006/2007 academic year, the Montana desegregation project recruited a new academic supervisor – Ms. Marieta Baycheva, who has extensive experience in working with ethnic minority and bilingual children. The evaluation team was left with an excellent impression of her: she knew the children; she was extremely attentive, and focused on each child's individual needs. The academic advisor co-ordinates the work of the counsellors and works along with them. The teachers and counsellors provide the academic advisor with information on children's progress and any difficulties they may encounter in any of the subjects. The advisor has individual classes with them in order to help them catch up with the material. Her time is divided between the five schools in the project, alternating between them on a weekly basis. The advisor works with children from the lower grades and, in co-operation with counsellor, provides support to those in the 5th to 8th grades.

Each one of the host schools in Montana has an appointed counsellor. All counsellors are Roma. Their position required secondary education. One of the counsellors is an elementary level teacher and works with the children in the 5th CSS. One very positive contribution of the desegregation project in Montana is that part of the young people who worked as counsellors are currently pursuing university studies. Continuing education was the reason for one of the counsellors' leaving the project last year. The counsellors have said that they are not happy with their remuneration under the project.

Every morning, the counsellors take the children from the neighbourhood to the host schools and stay on site until late afternoon. While 1st graders are in class, counsellors discuss with teachers and principals any problems the children may have encountered, and especially the absences. Then they contact the co-ordinator for the work with parents whose task is to check why children are absent from school. The counsellors are the point of contact for teachers in the event of problems such as poor marks, behaviour, or attendance, or if they need to communicate anything to parents. The counsellors keep a record of student's achievement at school, and deliver regular information and reports. They control attendance of the students from grades 1st to 8th and provide support during extra (after-school) classes. Their responsibilities also include distribution of snacks provided under the project.

The co-ordinator for the work with parents, along with the counsellors, keeps in touch with the parents in the neighbourhood.

Before the start of the academic year, the team and its new members received training for working with children and parents. Teachers from the host schools were provided training under a PHARE funded project during the previous academic year. Some of them are doing MA courses at the University of Blagoevgrad.

### **3. Academic Profile of the Project**

#### ***3.1. Organisation of the Project***

During the 2006/2007 academic year, the project enrolled through its own efforts 203 children from preparatory to 8th grades, according to RIE Montana. The preparatory grade consists of 16 children in two fulltime kindergartens in Montana. Most of them were enrolled in the first grades in the city integrated schools. During the previous academic year, the project enrolled independently 187 children from grades 1st to 8th. 111 pupils or 59 percent of them were students from the elementary grades. 16 students dropped out during the 2006/2007 academic year. Most of them went abroad with their parents. Three girls dropped out because of early marriages and three more interrupted their education after the 8th grade because of marriage.

The students are evenly distributed in the classes and the Foundation and school principals stick to the rule of Roma children not exceeding 20-30 percent, or 3 to 5 children per each class. Cases with more Roma children per class are due to the school's specific educational profile and parents' preferences (i.e. in 5th CSS, which is an arts profile school). The county and RIE, too, support this rule. Data provided to them by principals reveals that, indeed, Roma students per classes do not exceed 30 percent. The students are evenly distributed among the schools in the city.

Participant children attend schools in two shifts and are transported with a bus and a minibus, both vehicles property of the foundation. They are accompanied by counsellors who remain at the premises during the classes.

At each school, counsellors have offices where they can be contacted by children if they need to. This enables the counsellors to respond quickly in the event of a problem. The counsellors have become protectors and rally points for children at host schools. This, however, prevents children from interacting with their Bulgarian classmates: instead of spending breaks with them in the hallways and schoolyards, they tend to go to their counsellor; thus they become isolated. On one side, the counsellor is available as a protector but, on the other, by trying to stay near them, participant children isolate themselves from their peers. Counsellor offices are also used for extra after-school classes held by the project teacher, which are essentially individual work with the children falling behind in their studies.

#### ***3.2. Academic Achievement of the Participant Children***

In the 2006/2007 academic year, the Grade Point Average of the participant children was 4.38. Children have been improving their academic achievement. Where it was a firm 3.73 at the beginning, by the fourth year it reached a stable "Good", and in the fifth, the average achievement improved to 4.43.

Table 7: Dynamics of the Grade Point Average of children included in the desegregation project in Montana

Academic Year	Grade Point Average of Participant Children		
	GPA*	II-IV grade	V-VIII grade
2006-2007	4.38	4.64	4.13
2005-2006	4.43	4.60	4.25
2004-2005	4.09	4.52	3.67
2003-2004	3.85	4.12	3.60
2002-2003	4.03	3.96	4.10
2001-2002	3.73	3.45	3.90

\* The GPA is calculated from the average marks for the specific academic year of the children at each of the schools included in the project. Source: Sham Foundation.

There is quite a significant difference between the GPA of students from the 2nd to 4th grades and those from 5th to 8th grades. In the first four years of the project, the GPA of students from the lower secondary school grades was 3.81. These were children who graduated from the segregated school in Kosharnik and children who attended that school up until the 2nd or 3rd grade. Among the main reasons for their low achievement are the educational gaps that they are unable to fill and the different requirements and environments at the host schools.

The achievement of 5th to 8th graders increased in the fifth year, which was when the first primary school graduates who started their education at the host schools entered their 5th grade. Improved academic achievement enabled the project to overcome another major problem – dropouts after the 5th grade. For the last two academic years (2005/2006 and 2006/2007), the number of students at host schools to complete 5th – 8th grades remained unchanged. Again, these were the children who started their 1st grade at the host schools.

In the 2006/2007 academic year, 11 students had to sit for supplementary exams, some of them in music. All of them passed into the next grade. All schools have been encouraging outstanding students under the desegregation project.

According to school principals, however, the GPA of participant children is below that of the rest of the students. The Sham Foundation does not have comparable data on the academic achievement of students of Bulgarian ethnic background at the host schools. One actual achievement indicator, according to the foundation team, too, comes from the secondary vocational schools where students continue their education. Most of them apply with their primary school diplomas and are admitted to subjects with lower admittance thresholds.

### **3.3 Semi-Boarding Groups (SBG)**

One of the main ways of catching up with studies is provided with SBGs and extra after-school classes, which the teachers organise as part of mandatory tutoring. At each of the host schools, teachers give individual tutor classes to students with educational gaps. Additionally, up to the 4th grade, the academic advisor works individually with children falling behind with studies.

In the last academic year, SBGs were organised for 1st to 4th and 5th and 6th graders in each school. These were funded by the municipality. Each school had two mixed SBGs: one for 1st to 4th and one for 5th and 6th graders. The latter was also available for volunteers from the 7th and 8th grades. SBGs were facilitated by teachers from the host schools. The attendance rate in the 1st to 4th grade SBGs was 100 percent. The project activities are organised so that the children can be transported back after the extra classes. According to school principals, attendance rates are much lower in the junior secondary school grade groups. At the beginning of the current academic year, the municipality cut down funding for SBGs. As a result, the lower secondary school grade groups were closed. This is presenting a serious problem, as extra classes are the main form of support for lesson preparation and extra classes for the lower secondary grades. Meanwhile, the academic achievement of students under the project remains comparatively low, which is a clear indication of the need for SBGs.

### **3.4 Absences from School**

All individuals interviewed in Montana reported that, as a whole, children from the desegregation projects are absent from school rarer than children from the segregated schools. One of the main problems are the 7th and 8th grades students' absences from school. In the winter, attendance rates are good. The absences happen in the spring when, Sham representatives say, some of the parents engage in seasonal employment.

Host schools employ two mechanisms for reducing absences. One is reporting to the counsellor who, in turn, contacts the families in order to clarify the reasons for absence and retrieve the children. The second mechanism involves sanctions by means of unexcused absences reports which school principals submit to the Social Assistance Directorate, and which may result in reduction of child support allowances. Under the Child Support Allowances Act principals are obliged to submit monthly reports for children with more than five unexcused absences from school.

### **3.5 Parent Meetings**

The Foundation organises meeting with parents in the Roma neighbourhood at the beginning of each term. The meetings are attended by teachers from host schools and have a high attendance rate. Sham organises also the transportation of the families to parents

meetings at the host schools. However, according to the project team and school principals, attendance of the latter is low. It is only the staff of the 5th CSS “Hristo Botev” who refuse to attend the meetings organised by Sham in the Roma neighbourhood. Their argument is that integration and equal access mean equality for all children and parents. According to the principal, Ms. Vilma Georgieva, there have been no problems with the parents’ attendance of school meetings.<sup>33</sup>

### 3.6. Incidence of Discrimination

According to interviewed principals, counsellors, and parents, there have been no cases of discrimination of the students in class. The casual conflicts are assessed as “normal”, “children’s” and not based on ethnic grounds. However, the testimony provided by the academic advisor stated the opposite saying that in some host schools there have been cases of discrimination. ‘It would have never crossed my mind that a teacher could address a child as a “filthy gipsy”. When interviewed by the research team, some project children shared that their classmates at school call them “Gypsies”. According to the Sham team and school managements, when problems arise both sides manage to respond in a timely manner. It is the view of the evaluation team that further work toward prevention of classroom discrimination is needed, as well as more of the joint activities with all children at school.

### 3.7. Test Results from the National External Assessment

34 children participants from the 4th grades of the five partner schools took part in the NEA. As last year there was no corresponding class in the segregated “Georgi Benkovski” school, no tests were held there, therefore, comparison of children’s achievement was not possible.

Table 8: Average results of participant children from the BLL and mathematics tests in Montana (2007 results compared with the 2005 BHC test results)

Academic Year	Average Mark in BLL	Average Mark in Mathematics
2006-2007	15.21	15.14
2005-2006	3.83	4.25

Note: The results for those who took the test from the 2006/2007 academic year in the preceding BHC report are presented according to the six-point scale.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Vilma Georgieva, Principal of the 5th CSS “Hristo Botev”, Montana, 10 October 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Cf.: BHC, Five Years Later, p.70.

On the six-point scale the students' results from the NEA tests in Montana are "Very Good" at both subjects. The students demonstrated much better results compared to the previous assessment conducted by BHC in 2005. At the time, the average result of children from integrated schools in mathematics was "Good", 3.83, compared to "Very Good", 4.92 in 2006/2007. The Bulgarian language score in 2005/2006 was 4.25 compared to the 4.67 in the past academic year.

#### 4. Financial Sustainability

The Montana desegregation project is 100 percent REF funded. However, the Foundation also has a successful bid at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France, aimed at secondary school students. Two of the partner schools have submitted bids to the Ministry of Education and Science for funding under the European Social Fund. Sham are partnering in both projects. As of the completion date of this report, there was no information whether the bids had been approved. The main actors in the educational integration in Montana – the Sham Foundation, the schools, and the municipality – at the time of publication of this report, were already seeking additional funding for integration of the Roma children.

The interviews with representatives of the foundation team, the principals, and the monitoring team show that the most important components of the project are the provision of transportation for the students in the host schools, the counsellors, the academic advisor, and the SBGs. The financial sustainability of the desegregation process depends on the availability of resources for the above components and on the extent to which each of the stakeholders (the Sham Foundation, host schools, and the municipality) commits funding.

It is only the SBG which have been funded externally since their establishment, and that was by the county (or municipality). As was mentioned above, this funding was cut-down for the current academic year, which has led to the closing of the junior secondary groups at all schools. This further reduces the chances of upper grades students of catching up with their studies, and, consequently, of continuing their education. At present, activities for which the schools seek external funding are mainly complementary and are not covered by the project. The REF remains the sole source ensuring both the implementation of the desegregation project, and its financial sustainability.

So far the active parties seeking funding for integration of Roma children have been schools and the Sham Foundation. The municipality provides the co-operation required for the application by the donors, but is not an active party in securing financial means. Beside its clear and unfaltering political support for the desegregation project, the municipality's financial contribution for the present academic year has suffered a critical decrease with the closing of the 5th to 8th grade SBGs, which were the major form of educational support of Roma children in the lower secondary school grades.

Although at the time of the monitoring the Sham Foundation relies extensively on funding from the REF, the organisation has a potential for differentiating its sources of fund-

ing. The evidence for this is the successful bid with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France, which provided for activities aimed at another target group – secondary school students. As part of its additional fundraising campaign, in 2008 the Foundation plans to secure half of the funding necessary for transporting students to host schools from the municipality.

## 5. Social Services

The project provides the following social services: transportation, teaching aids for students up to grade 4, full textbook and teaching aids sets for 5th to 8th graders, snacks for all students, extra-curricular activities, after-school classes, transportation of parents to parent meeting, communication with teachers. In the 2006/2007 school year, 168 out of the total 271 children who completed the school year with the project benefited from the full package of services. The rest benefited from some of the services. In 2007/2008, provision of snacks for lower secondary school students was discontinued as students threw them away, the foundation team explained. However, in reality the foundation provides a lot more services, as they provide full care and protection to the children. Counsellors have reported that they occasionally take some of the children to the doctor instead of the parents. The foundation provides fulltime care for the children while in school. This was in fact the main reason given by virtually all parents for involving their children with the project.

The project team points that taking up parents' responsibilities is problematic, as it leads to reduced responsibility for the child on the part of the family, and does nothing to motivate them to be part of their children's education. The project teacher sees the lack of interest on behalf of parents as the main problem. The planned focus of the foundation for the coming year is on working with parents, extra-curricular activities, and extra after-school classes.

The organisation intends to reduce the number of social services in order to stimulate family responsibility. For the next year, Sham envisages for 50 percent of the textbook and teaching aids costs to be covered by parents and for snacks to be discontinued. Exceptions will only be made for children of poor families.

The project does not provide many extra-curricular activities. For years now the foundation has been supporting a dance group at the city's art school. Two excursions to Varshtets were organised for participant children as a reward for academic achievement over 4.00. The trips, however, were only for the Roma children included in the project.

Insufficient work with children of Bulgarian ethnic background and their exclusion from project activities is seen as a weakness of the project by both the teacher, Ms. Marieta Baycheva, and the project team leader, Mr. Petar Borisov.<sup>35</sup> The foundation intends to extend the activities targeted at children from both ethnic groups.

<sup>35</sup> Interviews with Petar Borisov and Marieta Baycheva, Montana, 10 October 2007.

## 6. Project Development

In the last four years, the Montana project has changed its strategy and focused on the inclusion of children from kindergartens and the 1st grade. The project team has pointed out that children included in the integrated environment from preparatory grade tend to cope better in school compared to those who were included at a later stage. The main focus of the project activities is on children in the lower educational grades and their adaptation at school. For the last and the current academic year, the majority of newly included children were in the 1st grade. The project academic advisor works with them individually, as well as with other children in need of additional study support.

According to the project team leader, Mr. Petar Borisov, next year it will be possible to close the school in Kosharnik. The municipality and RIE Montana have officially declared their support for this. However, the municipality has stressed that the existence of that school is strongly supported by some Roma from the neighbourhood and some of their leaders. There is a serious concern that following closure of the segregated school, some of the children from the poorest families will not attend the city schools as their parents will be unable to support them, besides not being sufficiently concerned with their education. The crucial factor for the closing of the segregated school in Montana will be Sham's ability to attract the poorest children from the neighbourhood to the host schools, and to also work even with those without learning habits, who do not get the support of their parents. Keeping and adapting children to the integrated environment would be impossible unless the skills and motivation of teachers compensate for the gaps in the children's education, and include them in the school environment.

The main directions in which the Sham Foundation team plans to develop the desegregation project are:

1. Focus on 1st to 4th grade children and provision of a solid support for them to continue their education.
2. Working with parents to involve them in their children's education.
3. Joint activities for Bulgarian and Roma children on a multicultural basis.
4. Working with 8th to 12th grade children toward completing secondary education.

## 7. Public Support

One of the most significant achievements of the Sham Foundation is the support of the Kosharnik community which the desegregation project has managed to secure. The foundation has succeeded to popularise the education in integrated schools among parents and to reduce the attractiveness of the neighbourhood school. In interviews with parents from Kosharnik, the common view emerged that the quality of education in the segregated school is poor, the level of preparation is low, and there is a lack of control. Sham has won the trust of the neighbourhood community.

At the same time, the fact that 'the foundation looks after them' was one of the highly held advantages and reasons for parents to choose education in the city for their children.



Seven years into the desegregation project, it is not the school or their children's peers, or the host environment that parents trust but the care of the counsellor and the foundation. Yet, the question remains of whether parents would entrust their children to a 'Bulgarian school', outside the community and the ghetto, were it not for the foundation. Another such question is to what extent the project contributes to building of relationships, communication, and acceptance among the children of different ethnic backgrounds at school. The foundation's intention of increasing the extra-curricular activities and including both Bulgarian and Roma children will assist in solving both problems.

The project has the support of the municipality and the RIE. The RIE has demonstrated a very good knowledge of the project.

As an institution, the municipality fully supports the project but its financial support is still limited. The municipality funded the opening of SBGs at the start of the project when these were crucial for Roma children to catch up with studies and stay in the host schools. However, this year it reduced the funding provided and half of the SBGs were closed.

The Sham Foundation is the main actor for the inclusion of Roma children in integrated schools in the municipal Plan for Educational Integration. In fact, the activities entrusted to the Foundation ensure freedom of work it needs to enrol Roma children at mainstream schools. However, under this allocation of responsibilities, the municipality is even less involved in the process, especially as the municipal plan does not provide for any funding of the planned activities.

The Montana project receives good media coverage and support, according to the project team leader Mr. Petar Borisov. The project has also established good relationships with the local representations of state institutions, such as the local Child Protection Division and the local Social Assistance Directorate.

## C. PLEVEN

### 1. Background of the Project

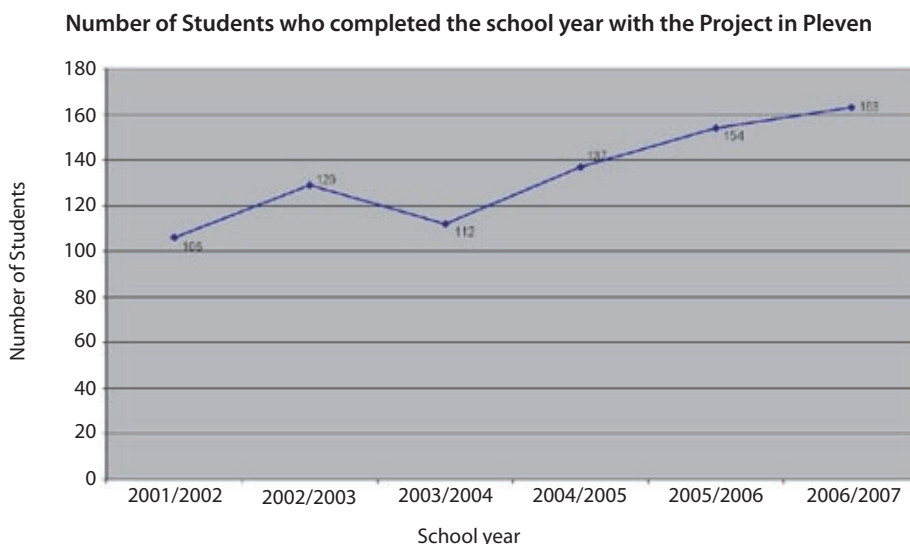
#### 1.1. Dynamics of the Number of Participants by Years

The project “Free Access of Roma Children to All Schools in Pleven and the Region” has been operational since 2001, and the 2006/2007 academic year was, as with several other projects, its sixth year. From the very start, the implementing organisation was the Roma NGO Amala-R, chaired by Mr. Milan Nikolov.

For the 2006/2007 academic year, 178 children were enrolled with only 15 drop-outs,<sup>36</sup> which is a relatively small number. 163 Roma children successfully completed the school year.

The dynamics of Roma children’s participation in the project is shown in the graph below.

**Graph 5**



For the six years of its existence, the project registered an increase of 65 percent. This is a small increase compared to the project in Sliven (where there is a twofold increase) and the project in Vidin (with an increase of 2.2 times for seven years).

<sup>36</sup> According to data communicated by Mr. Valeri Nikolov, the academic supervisor of the project, the dropout reasons are as follows: 3 children “returned to the segregated school in Bukovlak”, 2 „moved to other schools in Pleven”, 3 went abroad with their parents, and 2 “moved to other cities within Bulgaria with their parents”. No information is available on the remaining 3 children. Interview conducted on 11 October 2007.

Viewed by grades, the distribution of children for the 2006/2007 academic year was as follows: preparatory grade – 21 or 11.79 percent; 1st to 4th grade – 87 or 48.9 percent, 5th to 8th grade – 67 or 37.6 percent, secondary education – 3 or 1.7 percent. Similar to the situation from two years ago, the proportion of students from the elementary level (including the preparatory grade) is about 60 percent.<sup>37</sup>

The trends outlined before the project in Pleven in the 2005 report continue to apply today. The first is the already mentioned relatively low increase of the number of enrolled children and of children completing the year; the second is the constant high cost per completing child calculated as a correlation between the total costs of the project and the number of children completing the year.

In 2005, this project was found to be “the project with the highest total budget to number of children completing school under the project relation (378.4 US dollars per student who completed the 2004/2005 academic year)”.<sup>38</sup> Currently, the situation is similar with only the Stara Zagora project of those operating for several years having a higher cost on per participating child basis. The Berkovitsa project is also more expensive, however, the 2006/2007 school year was its first with a number of one-off expenses, like school buses, making its first year of operation more expensive. Thus the cost per child in the Pleven project is twice that for Sofia, and almost twice that for Montana. In Vidin, the cost per child is more than two and a half times lower than in Pleven.<sup>39</sup>

## 1.2 Target Schools for Project Activities

From its very foundation, the desegregation project in Pleven has been trying to move the children out of the segregated Roma primary school “Kliment Ohridski” in the village of Bukovlak, which is practically the largest Roma neighbourhood of the town of Pleven, located some 4-5 kilometres off town. According to data provided by Mr Milan Nikolov, the population of the neighbourhood is currently around 3,000 Roma, both Christian and Muslim. Official data from the school (register of the students), for the current academic year (2007/2008, the figures were similar for the previous one), indicate that there are 444 children enrolled in it, with 408 in the elementary and lower secondary levels, and 36 in the preparatory grade. According to Mr. Valeri Todorov, in fact “no more than 100 children attend the school at any one day”.<sup>40</sup> To some extent, this slight decrease in the number of children at the segregated school (during the 2001/2002 academic year 500 children were enrolled in it<sup>41</sup>) is also owing to the activities of the foundation.

<sup>37</sup> See BHC, *Five Years Later*, p. 98.

<sup>38</sup> As above.

<sup>39</sup> For specific figures see Annex 1. It should be taken into consideration that in Stara Zagora the project changed its leadership after a crisis two years ago.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Valeri Todorov, educational expert of the project, Pleven, 11 October 2007.

<sup>41</sup> BHC, *The First Steps: An Evaluation of Non-governmental Desegregation Projects in Six Bulgarian Cities*, BHC, Sofia, 2002, p. 44 (in Bulgarian).

There is a second Roma neighbourhood in Pleven, “Balabair” (now called Iztok District) with a population of 800 inhabitants. It is important to note that it does not have its own Roma school. Its children attend integrated schools, predominantly the CSS “Hristo Smirnenski”<sup>42</sup> and other schools which have become integrated due to the lack of segregated schools in this small neighbourhood bordering large areas populated with Bulgarians. Some of the Roma children from this neighbourhood attend other schools in town with the intermediary of the foundation. According to Ms. Sergeeva, elementary education expert at RIE Pleven, all three schools, “Vaptsarov”, “Beron”, and “Hristo Smirnenski” have Roma children who live close to the integrated schools and are, therefore, enrolled in it already but still benefit from some of the foundation’s services.<sup>43</sup>

In the past years, the project also worked with the segregated primary school “Kiro Stanev” located immediately next to the Roma district “Balabair”. This was a dismal tiny school with only a few Roma children (20 two years ago).<sup>44</sup> In 2006, it was finally closed. Without any doubt, the Amala-R project played a part in the closing of this pseudo-school. Now the only target of the Pleven project is the segregated school in the village of Bukovlak.

### 1.3 Host Schools Where the Project Operated

According to data from the project team for the 2006/2007 academic year, it enrolled Roma children in several schools as illustrated in the table below.

Table 9: Schools with project activities for the 2006/2007 academic year

No.	School name	Number of children
1.	Primary school „N.Y. Vaptsarov”	42
2.	Secondary school „Hr. Smirnenski”	53
3.	Primary school „Peter Beron”	34
4.	Primary school „V. Levski”	28
5.	Secondary school „P.K. Yavorov”	21
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>178</b>

The foundation has been working closely with these five schools from the very beginning, and has built strong working relationships.

<sup>42</sup> „There were some Roma children who attended non-segregated schools outside and irrespective of the project’s activities in the Secondary school “Hr. Smirnenski” which is close to the Iztok District (popular with its old name “Balabair”) located between Pleven and Bukovlak neighbourhood”, BHC, Five Years Later, p. 100.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Ms. Sergeeva, Pleven, 11 October 2007.

<sup>44</sup> BHC, Five Years Later, p. 99.

The distribution of the children in classes at the integrated schools is between one and six per class. According to information supplied by Amala-R, Roma children used to be less than three per class but, due to the decreasing number of students and the merging of two classes into one, there are changes and the number of Roma children per class has increased. However, from the registers it becomes clear than there are only two classes with six Roma children in them. Thus, the average number of Roma children per class in the integrated schools is 2-3 and there are classes with only one Roma child.

#### ***1.4 Transportation of Children***

The children are transported from Bukovlak with two buses. Data provided by the foundation management shows that every day 110 children are transported to the five schools, while 53 children living in the Iztok District walk to the CSS "Hristo Smirnenki" as it is located nearby. Since most children study in the morning, there are two buses in the morning, and one in the evening for the afternoon school shift.

#### ***1.5 Enrolment of Children***

The increase of the number of children in the project for the two years since the 2005 evaluation has amounted to 35 children. The team have complained about the need for too much continuous persuasion of parents, of the competition with the school in the neighbouring village of Pelishat which transports at least 15 children to the village school daily, and even provides heating materials for Roma families. According to the foundation, that school has turned into a Roma school although there are few Roma living in the village itself. The project team explained that the competition between the schools to attract Roma children against the background of low supply of students is very strong. They have claimed that there have been a considerable number of Roma parents who would take the clothes and textbooks provided for the children under the projects, and then find various reasons to stop their children from attending.

#### ***1.6 Additional Services Provided by the Project***

For all children participating in the project the foundation has provided all necessary study aids (such as notebooks, exercise books, pens and pencils, etc.) as well as textbooks for all children above the 4th grade. Textbooks for the elementary level are provided for by the state. Following requests and consultation by the project co-ordinators, children from poor families have been bought sports outfits and trousers. In this way the foundation appears to be providing a relatively large set of benefits for children in the project and their families. However, judging by the relatively low increase of the number of children in the project, this does not appear sufficient incentive for the majority of Roma parents in Bukovlak.

In Mr. Milan Nikolov's view, it is much more cost-effective for parents if children participated in the project. "Only for the 4th grade and just for study aids, parents need 30 leva, whereas we provide all that free-of-charge" he said."<sup>45</sup>

### **1.7 Organisation of Day-to-day Work**

As with the other projects for Roma education desegregation, the project provides the transportation of the children to and from school. The students are accompanied by counsellors who stay at the school where they have offices. In the morning, counsellors make sure that the children get on the bus and make a note of those absent, and, if possible, try to establish the reasons immediately. They also act as the liaison between the teachers and the parents, and between the foundation management and the teachers. Besides, they make sure the children have all the materials for school on them. They act as intermediaries also in small arguments and situations between Roma and Bulgarian children, if any.

The SBGs in Pleven are funded by the municipality; therefore the foundation does not operate such groups. It does, however, top up teachers' pay in the SBGs, so that children may receive extra education.

## **2. The Project Team**

### **2.1 Membership, Composition, Motivation, and Functions**

During the 2006/2007 academic year, the implementation team of the desegregation project of the Amala-R foundation comprised of 14 people with the following positions:

Table 10: Membership and positions in the project during the 2006/2007 academic year.

<b>No.</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Number of individuals</b>
1.	Project team leader	1
2.	Administrative supervisor	1
3.	Educational expert	1
4.	Counsellor	5
5.	Co-ordinator	3
6.	Driver	2
7.	Accountant	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>14</b>

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Milan Nikolov, Pleven, 11 October 2007.

The counsellors are of Roma background and know the children well.

The overall team level of motivation is satisfactory. Last year, two counsellors had to be replaced, as the original staff members went to work in Greece, the reason being, according to their colleagues, the low pay with the project.

Beside what was listed in the Section 1.7 (Organisation of day-to-day work) above, counsellors also have to submit regular reports (every two weeks) on their activity and the achievements and problems of the children at their schools, as well as keep track of children's attendance and academic achievement. There are 5 counsellors, one at each of the host schools.

Part-time drivers transport the children. The administrative operation of the project is managed by the administrative supervisor who also keeps track of the daily drivers' and counsellors' schedules. The schedules are also the responsibilities of the educational expert.

The team leader, together with the educational expert, supervises the overall operation of the project – prepares development plans, establishes and maintains contacts and communication with the local authorities, the RIE, as well as the host schools management. The team leader manages the essential desegregation project activity of recruiting new children every year. This is a job involving a lot of campaigning and door-to-door visits which has led to the aforementioned increase in the number of children participating in the project.

The good team spirit of the project is very obvious, and is maintained through regular meetings of the whole team every two weeks. The team members have clear job descriptions.

### **3. Academic Profile of the Project**

As two years ago, the academic aspect of the project is managed by educational expert Mr. Valeri Todorov. He has the necessary education and has now acquired extensive experience from the project work, which he lacked in 2005.

#### ***3.1 Functions of the Educational Expert***

In the Pleven project, the educational expert follows daily the dynamics of the achievement (and failure) of participant children. He also organises the extra classes paid for by the foundation to the teachers in the SBGs, by discussing with them the additional support and classes necessary for each individual child, if there is any needed.

In order to acquire up-to-date monitoring data on student achievement, last year the project conducted its own test in BLL and mathematics for children in the project only. It should be noted that in Pleven it has become the custom for the educational expert to be involved in activities, such as drafting new projects, purchasing of textbooks and study materials, supervision of the drivers. Besides, he is the immediate day-to-day supervisor of counsellors, and this is one of his direct duties.

### 3.2 Distribution of Children Into the School Shifts

Contrary to the convention in other projects, in Pleven (and this is not entirely up to the project), there are children at elementary educational levels, even children in the 1st grade, who have to go to school in the afternoon. This, for instance, is the situation with the primary school "Petar Beron" where 20 children in grades 1st to 4th go to school second shift.

### 3.3 Parents Meetings at the School

As with other locations, the project assists the parents and provides transportation for them to attend the meetings with parents at the respective schools. The overall impression is, however, that only very highly motivated parents will attend such meetings, and the percentage of those who do not is rather high.

### 3.4 Grade Point Average of Participant Children

For the 2006/2007 academic year, the average achievement of children was 3.91. For the different years it was as follows:

Table 11: Grade Point Average by academic year

No.	Academic Year	GPA
1.	2006/2007	Good (3.91)
2.	2005/2006	Good (4.18)
3.	2004/2005	Good (4.24)
4.	2003/2004	Good (4.13)
5.	2002/2003	Good (3.85)
6.	2001/2002	Good (3.78)

An ascending trend is easily detectable for the period between 2001/2002 and 2005/2006 which broke with a drop in the achievement for the last academic year. Foundation managers explain this with the families' emigration, which includes children with good academic achievement, and with the fact that the new children enrolled last year had not attended preparatory classes.

It is worth noting that the academic achievement of the PS "Hristo Smirnenski", where there are other Roma children, not participating in the project, was the highest (4.34)".

As before, the foundation claims that in the winter the attendance at school drops because the families cannot afford clothes and shoes, therefore, for a time, some of the children are stopped from school.



No information was provided by the RIE "Education" Department of any trainings of teachers from the project.

#### **4. Achievement at the NEA Tests**

In the last academic year, there were 19 children participant in the project's 4th grade. Only four of them, however, were from the school in Bukovlak and their marks at the NEA tests were very good: an average of 15.5 points in BLL, and an average of 16 points in mathematics. The other 4th graders simply do not come from that village, they are from town. It would, therefore, be pointless to compare their achievement to that of the children from the segregated school where the test in mathematics was taken by 30 children with an average achievement of 14.5 points, and the BLL by 29 children with an average achievement of 12.1 points. The total number of children eligible for the tests in the segregated school, according to the records, was 48. The four children's achievement was very good but because of the small number of participants, it would be incorrect to make any further conclusions.

#### **5. Extra-curricular Work and Social Work**

In the 2006/2007 academic year, the foundation organised Christmas parties with presents for the children in the project. The activities are insufficient and more efforts are needed in the future to ensure financing for more and more varied extra-curricular activities.

##### ***5.1 Qualification Activities Organised by the Foundation***

A seminar was conducted by the foundation in the village of Lesidren but it seems to have been more of an exchange in support of the newly launched project in Berkovitsa. Also, a seminar was organised on the "prevention of discrimination" which took place on 3 January 2007 with two guest lecturer lawyers from Sofia.

#### **6. Political, Administrative, and Public Support for the Project**

According to the management of Amala-R, the foundation's relationship with the municipal actors and the RIE is good. The foundation advises them on project activities every year. They also claim that there are no problems in Pleven with the enrolment of the children and no one is trying to stop them as there is "a hunger for children because of the demographic crisis". The foundation representatives have stated that neither political powers, nor institutions are hindering the project. They pointed that in past years the local authorities would pay for their counsellors but this is currently

not the case, as personally the head of the Education Department of the RIE does not see their work positively.

School principals interviewed by the research team have expressed satisfaction from their work with the project. They are very happy, inter alia, that the project is “supplying them with children”, so that some of them manage to maintain the same number of classes, and, consequently, the staffing levels. Thus, for instance, the principal of the PS “Petar Beron”, Mr. Geshev, stated that he was “99 percent happy with the project; I have had no problems with these children. I am in constant contact with Mr. Nikolov and Mr. Todorov”.<sup>46</sup> His view is shared by the principal of the CSS “Peyo Yavorov”, Ms. Grancharova. „I have had no issues with Amala-R, because the counsellors are doing a great job” she said.<sup>47</sup>

The RIE declared its support for the project, as it considered its work to be going well. The fact, however, that this is only so on paper is revealed by the fact that Ms. Sergeeva, the basic education expert with the RIE mentioned above, said that “the school in Bukovlak is not a Roma school but just an ordinary rural school” and, besides, “she did not see why these children need to go to school in town”.<sup>48</sup> This cannot be interpreted but as a genuine lack of acceptance for the ideas of desegregation.

Therefore, it could be concluded that the school authorities support the project partly because it helps them deal with some of their own acute problems (the diminishing number of children), and the remaining educational institutions offer a passive declarative support, while the political and public forces in Pleven are not interested in the project and its activities.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Mr. Geshev, Pleven, 11 October 2007.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Ms. Grancharova, Pleven, 11 October 2007.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Ms. Sergeeva, Pleven, 11 October 2007.

## D. SLIVEN

### 1. Background of the Project

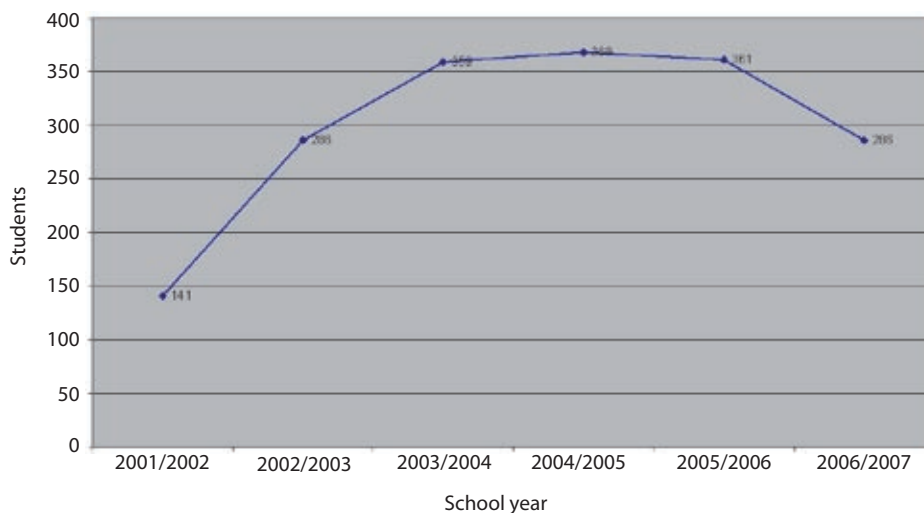
#### 1.1 Dynamics of the Number of Participant Children

In the academic year 2006/2007, the project “Desegregation – Sliven” in the city of Sliven continued to be implemented by the Roma Youth Organisation (RYO). The organization is directed by Ms. Stella Kostova whose education is in teaching and education. The project was launched in 2001 and the preceding academic year was its sixth year of operation. The project has accumulated experience and established traditions.

For the 2006/2007 academic year, 407 children participated in the RYO desegregation project, of which 286 completed the year successfully and 121 dropped out for various reasons. The dynamics of the successful graduates in the respective academic years is presented in the graph below.

**Graph 6**

**Number of Students who completed the school year with the Project in Sliven**



The upward development trend till 2005 is easily visible, as well as the downward trend afterwards. The evaluation team was not provided data on the number of participant and graduating children for all academic years; however, judging by data on those

successfully completing the 2004/2005 and 2006/2007 academic years,<sup>49</sup> it would seem that the margin was constantly high.

Analysis of the figures of enrolled and graduating children in the project by academic years reveals that these figures stabilized over time with a slight decrease during the last two years. The proportion of newly enrolled children in the 1st grade is dropping, while the number of upper graders is increasing. The distribution of the 286 graduates for the 2006/2007 academic year by school grades was as follows: 202 children or 70.6 percent at the elementary level (grades 1 to 4) and the remaining 84 children or 29.4 percent at the lower secondary level (grades 5 to 8, or up to 7th grade if we are to be more precise, since, unlike preceding years, there were no 8th graders in the project in the 2006/2007 academic year). It is important to note both the increased total number and the increased relative proportion of children at the lower secondary level: these were only 20 in the previous two academic years, accounting for 5.5 percent,<sup>50</sup> while currently their number is four times that, which means a six times increase of the relative proportion of the overall figure. In the 2003/2004 academic year, out of a total of 359 graduates, only 42 or 11.7 percent were at the lower secondary level.<sup>51</sup>

### **1.2 Adverse Factors of the Environment, Specific to the Project in Sliven**

For the analysis of the relatively large number of dropouts for the previous academic year (121) and the pupils' academic achievement (see Section 4 Results from the tests below) we need to take into account a range of unfavourable factors influencing the project work, specific to Sliven. These include, most importantly, 1) parents relocating or emigrating in search of new sources of income (a dropout factor), and 2) that because of extreme poverty, many of the families opt for stopping their children from school, as this involves leaving the ghetto which, especially in the winter, is hard. The majority of families residing in the Roma neighbourhood Nadezhda (probably the poorest urban Roma ghetto in Bulgaria) are unable to secure clothing and shoes for children to go to the city, whereas in the ghetto and the neighbourhood school they do not need to dress up. Moreover, the RYO team and some parents pointed that, as with numerous other schools throughout the country, the segregated 6th PS „Bratya Miladinovi“ „issues attendance certificates, even if a child does not attend school regularly“, these certificates being one of the prerequisites for social assistance payments.

In this line, it is important to stress that the findings of the previous report on the progress of non-governmental desegregation projects in Bulgaria (Five Years Later) about the environment in which the project in Sliven operates, apply fully today, two years later.

<sup>49</sup> BHC, Five Years Later, p. 81. In 2004/2005 academic year 431 children participated in the project, of which 368 successfully completed the school year.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Data was provided by the team leader of the RYO desegregation project in Sliven, Ms. Stella Kostova, interviewed in Sliven on 18 October 2007.

The Nadezhda ghetto (with population of 18,000) where the RYO projects recruits children is not only a place where people live in extreme poverty but also where the residents' cultural isolation from the remaining world, including downtown Sliven which is only a few kilometres away, is deeper than anywhere in Bulgaria with operational desegregation projects.<sup>52</sup>

As was pointed out two years ago, as early as 2001, the desegregation project in Sliven "focused on the poorest strata of the Roma population of Nadezhda neighbourhood". This was and still is a "deliberate strategy", and therefore the "social circumstances of participant children are worse than that of children enrolled at the segregated Roma school".<sup>53</sup>

Co-ordinators and counsellors to the project claim that the children participating in the project are only recruited from families living in the large Nadezhda ghetto, mainly among the so called "barefoot Gypsies", while the other, more well-to-do groups, such as the "gradeshnitsi" and "musicians", prefer to enrol their children at the neighbourhood 6th PS "Bratya Miladinovi" located within the ghetto.<sup>54</sup> In other words, as two years ago, the project participant children come from the poorest, even inhumanly poor families where, as a general rule, the conditions for children's preparation for school at home are extremely bad. According to Ms. Stella Kostova, for at least 80 percent of parents and children participating in the project for the last two years, the sole income comes from social assistance payments.<sup>55</sup>

### 1.3 Special Cultural Mission

The project team and external observers of the project's work agree that most of the children in the project would have been at school, were it not for the RYO initiative; moreover, the majority would not even be attending the segregated school, despite the fact that education until the age of 16 is compulsory in Bulgaria. More importantly, by attending schools with predominantly ethnic Bulgarian children, these Roma children for whom the first trip on the school bus was, in effect, their first time outside the ghetto, learn to speak the Bulgarian language well, which would have probably never happened otherwise.

#### 1.3.1 Racism

It is important to note, however, that the general environment for participant children at host schools in Sliven is far from what is required. During one of the evaluation team visits in Sliven on 18 October 2007, a number of complaints were brought up that "teachers insult our children, they place them at the back rows",<sup>56</sup> „children are being insulted,

<sup>52</sup> See: BHC, Five Years Later, p.82

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Bozhidar Simeonov, project co-ordinator, Sliven, 18 October 2007.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Stella Kostova, Sliven, 18 October 2007.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Kolyo Dimitrov, co-ordinator to the project, Sliven, 18 October 2007.

while teachers look after their own interests”.<sup>57</sup> The project co-ordinator for the 11th CSS stated that „our children are placed as far back in the classroom as possible; this isn’t always the case but it is most of the time”.<sup>58</sup> Albeit with some reservation, this view is also shared by Ms. Stoilova, expert at the “Elementary Education” Department with RIE Sliven. At the interview she said that the practice of putting Roma children at the back of the class is non-existent in the 2nd PS “Hristo Botev” (which, however, has only 10 Roma children) and the ES “Anton Parvanov” (with 19 children); it is, however, quite pronounced in the 10th CSS “Yordan Yovkov” (where the children are considerably more – 42), in the 11th CSS “Konstantin Konstantinov” (with 58), and the 5th SS “Peyo Yavorov” (with 17).<sup>59</sup>

During its visit at the 7th school in the city on 29 November 2007, the evaluation team witnessed one of the staff (a history teacher) shout at Roma children and explain that “they are unable to grasp abstract concepts, you know”. When an incident in class (a fight) which had taken place a few minutes before our team’s arrival was reported, the same teacher, without further enquiries, immediately blamed the Roma child and let the Bulgarian child go, while there was no reaction whatsoever on the part of the school principal who was accompanying our team. At all three schools visited by the evaluation team, as well as in the Roma neighbourhood Nadezhda, there were Roma children complaining about insults by their Bulgarian peers. The evaluation team also saw a number of Roma students placed in the back rows.

In its social and educational activities, the RYO project in Sliven includes children from the poorest families, and more often than not these children are not properly dressed even by today’s informal school dress-code standards. This, as well as the fact that many have practically no running water at home, is probably the unconscious but powerful reasoning behind the racist rejection these children face by part of their peers and even some teachers and school principals.

#### **1.4 Schools of Project Activity**

As with the previous 2005/2006, during the 2006/2007 school year the project operated at 11 city schools. The table below presents these schools with the number of participant children in each.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Ms. Stoilova conducted on 18/10/2007.

Table 12: Host schools of the desegregation project in Sliven

School Name	No. of Children
ES „Anton Ivanov“	19
ES „Hadzhi Dimitar“	5
2nd PS „Hristo Botev“	10
3rd CSS „Dr. Ivan Seliminski“	3
4th PS „Dimitar Petrov“	7
5th CSS „Peyo Yavorov“	17
7th PS „Panayot Hitov“	22
8th PS „Yuriy Gagarin“	70
10th CSS „Yordan Yovkov“	42
11th CSS „Konstantin Konstantinov“	58
12th PS „Elisaveta Bagryana“	31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>286</b>

It is clear that the distribution of the children at the schools is very uneven. In the 3rd CSS “Dr. Ivan Seliminski” there are only 3 children, and only 7 in the 4th PS “Dimitar Petrov”, with 70 Roma children in the 8th PS “Yuriy Gagarin”. The latter constitute one fourth of all children transferred by RYO Sliven. The total number of students enrolled at the 8th PS “Yuriy Gagarin” for the last academic year was 528, according to information provided by the school principal who was interviewed during our team’s second visit to Sliven.<sup>60</sup> The school is located near the border of the Roma ghetto Nadezhda, and the project enrolled quite a large number in it. Students enrolled in that school do not use transportation. Children here, however, have counsellors (called co-ordinators in the Sliven project) and benefit from services provided by the project. According to the school principal, Ms. Kovacheva, the presence of a RYO co-ordinator at this particular school is “essential for the children’s regular attendance”, as “there are many children whose parents went to work abroad and left them with their grandparents”, and were it not for the co-ordinator who visits their homes and takes them to school, albeit without a school bus, they would simply not be going to school.”<sup>61</sup> About 110 Roma children attend this school, and two thirds of them were enrolled by the project. Moreover, despite its proximity to the ghetto and the large number of Roma children enrolled, this is not a segregated school, and the parents’ wish to enrol their children in a good school as close to home as possible is only natural.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Ms Kocheva, Principal of the 8th PS “Yuriy Gagarin”, Sliven, 29 November 2007.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

One positive aspect is that the number of children in the RYO project in this school decreased, with 82 children enrolled two years ago, and 70 at present.<sup>62</sup>

### **1.5 The Segregated School**

Because of the national teachers strike at the time of the evaluation, RIE Sliven was unable to provide accurate data on the number of children enrolled in the segregated 6th PS "Bratya Miladinovi" for the current academic year but they assured us that the present figure is almost the same as two years ago.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, it can be seen that the project is transferring a considerable portion – more than 20 percent of Roma children of the poorest Roma neighbourhood Nadezhda outside its boundaries.

As in 2005, the project has included all of the large schools in Sliven, with the exception of ES "Vasil Levski" where the principal, Mr. Kadirev, has persisted in refusing to accept Roma children because they do not live in the pertaining region, and because, as he claimed, the school already has children from the minorities and does not need more.<sup>64</sup> This principal's position has remained unchanged throughout the operation of the project, and was noted in previous BHC reports.<sup>65</sup>

### **1.6 Transportation of the Children**

During the last academic year, children were transported to host schools with two buses and a minibus. The RYO owns a bus and a minibus, and the second bus was rented by the State Transport Company in Sliven. RYO owned a second bus but it broke in June 2007, and was discarded as being too old to be repaired.

As with previous years, the project currently enrolls only children in the 1st grade. There have been no particular problems with enrolment, as the RYO has established stable working relationship with host school principals, and the process of enrolment and distribution of the children between the classes has been customised. However, last year the 5th CSS "Peyo Yavorov" introduced an application-like procedure for selection of children wishing to enrol at the school. Therefore, the whole group of Roma children the project was planning to enrol at the school was not admitted, although no such admittance procedure is provided for in the National Education Act for the 1st grade.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> BHC, Five Years Later, p. 83

<sup>63</sup> At the time, the "segregated 6th SS "Bratya Miladinovi" had enrolled (at least on paper) 1,150 pupils for the 2005/2006 academic year. Due to the large number of dropouts, only 33 percent of them were in the senior primary grades". BHC, Five Years Later, p.82.

<sup>64</sup> According to data provided by the project team leader, Ms. Kostova, interview conducted in Sliven on 18 October 2007.

<sup>65</sup> BHC, Five Years Later, p. 83.

<sup>66</sup> Information from co-ordinators and teachers with the RYO project in Sliven, interviews conducted on 18 October 2007.



### **1.7 Organisation of Day-to-day Work and Services Provided**

The buses and the minibus leave from the Roma neighbourhood Nadezhda at 07:00 h in the morning and stop at the respective schools according to the schedule. Children go to school both in the morning and in the afternoon. Those in the first shift stay at school until about 12:30, and then prepare their lessons for the next day in study support groups organised for them by the project. As two years ago, the municipality in Sliven does not provide SBGs except for the 1st graders, therefore, project teachers have classes with the pupils until about 16:00 h, and then the children are taken back home. The buses take the children in the second shift two or two-and-a-half hours before the beginning of classes. The project is providing for lunchtime meals of all participant children, except for the children at the 5th CSS "Peyo Yavorov", which does not have a canteen.

All educational staff interviewed by the evaluation team stressed the major significance of having Roma as counsellors and co-ordinators with the children both on the buses and at school. Some of the children, especially the younger ones, refuse to go into class, as they are afraid of what are still strange city schools and because, as was mentioned above, the schools in Sliven register relatively high incidence of racism. This is where co-ordinators step in to fill in for the parents. The principal of the 10th CSS "Yordan Yovkov" said that "were it not for the co-ordinators, teachers would have difficulties keeping children in for all classes, as the vacuum would be too big"<sup>67</sup> However, the fact that study support groups are provided for Roma children and not for the rest has caused some problems, in the opinion of the principal.<sup>68</sup>

## **2. The Project Team**

### **2.1 Members and Constitution**

During the 2006/2007 academic year, the implementing team of the RYO desegregation project in Sliven comprised of 38 people, the Sliven project ranking, therefore, as the one with the biggest team. This is due to the large number of counsellors (co-ordinators), namely 21. They are not, however, a burden to the project budget, as they were unemployed Roma recruited with the intermediary of the Labour Office, and included in the municipal programme for subsidised temporary employment. Thus, the RYO has managed to secure two and sometimes even more co-ordinators per partner school.

During the 2006/2007 academic year, the project team included the following positions and number of people:

<sup>67</sup> Interview with the principal of the 10th CSS "Yordan Yovkov", Sliven, 18 October 2007.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

Table 13: Positions and number of people employed with the desegregation project in Sliven

Position	Number of People <sup>69</sup>
Project Director	1
Technical (administrative) assistant	2
Teacher	5
Co-ordinator	23
Driver	1
Co-ordinators of work with parents	4
Co-ordinators for contacts with institutions	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>

## 2.2 Additional Social Function of the Project

By the recruiting of unemployed Roma to act as co-ordinators, the project adds a new function to its basic cultural and educational functions, namely in creating employment for long-term unemployed Roma as an act of positive social work. If they had not been employed by the project, these 21 Roma persons would have, at best, been employed as street-sweepers under one of the temporary employment programmes.

## 2.3 Tasks of the Co-ordinators

Co-ordinators account for the major portion of the project team. They are responsible for collecting children from the bus stops in the neighbourhood and accompanying them to, and back from school to their homes. While classes last, they remain at the school premises but not in the classroom. Children contact them during the breaks.

Co-ordinators are also the live link between the host schools and the parents. They keep track of children's achievement and report to their parents. They ensure, to the extent possible, the regular attendance of classes. By means of weekly reports, they provide timely information to the project of any problems arising in Roma children's day-to-day school life severed from their original environment. Co-ordinators also keep record of absences and report back to the project educational expert, whose role has been taken up by the team leader Ms. Stella Kostova. The previous educational expert, Mr. Petar Kotanov, a retired teacher, is no longer with the project.

<sup>69</sup> Of the 23 co-ordinators 21 were recruited under a temporary employment programme with the local Labour Office, and two paid by the project, of which one lead co-ordinator acting as supervisor.

## **2.4 Tasks of the project Director**

Ms. Stella Kostova coordinates and supervises the overall educational work in the project: recruiting of new children and enrolling them in the host schools; distribution of children so as to keep the rule of a maximum 3-4 children per class, which will allow each to spend as much as possible in a Bulgarian cultural and linguistic environment. A central responsibility of the educational expert is to plan and implement extra work and classes with the children which, in Sliven, are being held by five teachers recruited for this specific task. The educational expert reviews the co-ordinator's weekly reports and provides them with the necessary guidance. Ms. Kostova also maintains continuous communication with the principals and teachers at host schools.

It is the evaluation team's view that despite her numerous responsibilities as a Roma leader and the manager of an NGO involved in various activities other than desegregation, including her duties as a second mandate member of the Municipal council, Ms. Kostova is coping well with her responsibilities under this project.

## **2.5 Tasks of the Teachers**

The five teachers work with the Roma children from the different partner schools according to a schedule on a daily basis and ensure that they receive the necessary additional support with their studies. As before, there are currently no SBGs provided for by the Sliven municipality, save for the 1st graders, and this is seen as a serious shortcoming of the municipal policy on education. In effect, experience has long shown that SBGs are indispensable for Roma and other children alike.

The educational work is supported on a daily basis by the lead co-ordinator who is a young student of Roma background. He visits host schools on a daily basis and is aware of any issues school co-ordinators may have. The evaluation team was able to see that he knows the large majority of the participant children by name, as well as the family or school environments of each one of them. His organisational and logistical experience enable the smooth running of the complicated matter of transporting more than 300 children to and from 11 host schools according to a schedule.

## **3. Academic Profile of the Project**

### **3.1 Organisation of the Educational Activities in the Project**

As mentioned earlier, the educational work is managed personally by Ms. Stella Kostova. She supervises the large project team and its work at what can be deemed highly adverse circumstances, stemming from the extreme poverty of the majority of Roma families living in the Nadezhda neighbourhood.

An important prerequisite for the smooth implementation of desegregation projects is prevention of the enrolment of too many Roma children in the same class, so as to avoid secondary segregation. The RYO team adhere to this rule and enrolls maximum of five children, the general case being of three enrolled Roma children per standard class of 22-24 pupils.

Schooling in Sliven takes place in two shifts, with 1st graders in the morning shift only. The 2006/2007 academic year registered a relatively high number of dropouts – 121. (See also comments in Section 1 Background of the project). We may only add that this level of dropouts has, to a certain extent, resulted in the project team's efforts in involving as many children as possible from the poorest families characterised by high frequency of migration and low level of parent motivation with regard to children education. Formal education is not among the top priorities for majority of these parents, as centuries of ferocious discrimination have taught generations that "even with education, a Roma person will not be allowed a good job", which accounts for the low or virtually non-existent parent control of school attendance. A lot of these parents believe that by including their children under the project, they are handing their children to the project team to look after in every respect, and if and when this is not happening the way they imagined it, they take their children back to the segregated school which, on the one hand, is much closer to their homes, and, on the other, is much less reluctant to issue the attendance certificates they need to receive social assistance.

The semi-boardings groups set up by the project and for the teachers (a total of five) in which the project is paying, are very important. Through the additional classes and support, the SBGs fill children's educational gaps ensuing from their original cultural environment, and make sure that children go to school with their homework and lessons prepared.

RYO provides all children with study aids, as well as textbooks where these are not provided for by the state.

### **3.2 Grade Point Average Growth**

The GPA of participant children during the last three academic years has been improving steadily, with 3.40 for 2004/2005, 3.50 for 2005/2006, and 3.64 for the last 2006/2007 academic year. This, of course, remains a relatively low academic achievement; however, which matters in this case is the upward trend.

For the 2006/2007 academic year, the highest GPA was registered by participant children at the 8th PS "Yuriy Gagarin" with 4.23, and the lowest at the 7th PS "Panayot Hitov" with 3.18. The 8th PS had the largest number of participant children, which is 70 but these mostly came from the better-off part of the Nadezhda ghetto with some infrastructure and lower unemployment. These factors, along with the family circumstances of the children, are relatively more favourable to the children's academic achievement compared to the remaining parts of the ghetto.

### **3.3 Contact with the Schools**

It became a tradition for the project management to hold regular meetings with principals and teachers at the host schools to discuss current issues concerning the desegregation process. At the start of the project, the team conducted – in co-operation with the RIE – teacher training for work in a multicultural environment, and the body of teachers trained are still working with participant children.

Co-ordinators do not take part in the daily educational process, as they do not have the necessary education, but sometimes they assist teachers if Roma children have difficulty understanding some expressions or other part of the lessons in Bulgarian. The majority of host schools have provided an office for the co-ordinators where they can be found during classes. This is where children attending SBGs prepare their lessons with the help of the SBG teachers, or simply stay with the co-ordinator.

### **3.4 Parents Meetings**

As before, the project is actively supporting parents for attending parents meetings at the host schools. The project provides transportation to the city, as otherwise parents would be unable to afford to travel downtown, both because of the time and cost involved. The project members allocated to the respective schools are invariably present and active at these meetings. However, many of the principals complained that parents rarely attend.

## **4. Results from the Tests**

### **4.1 General Data**

There is a total of 78 4th graders under the Sliven project who took the NEA tests in May 2007. 194 students were eligible for the test in the segregated 6th PS “Bratya Miladinovi”.<sup>70</sup> In fact, the test in that school was taken by 44 children less (33 “absent” and 11 “dropped out”). In the original protocols from the tests provided to the evaluation team, the majority of pupils on the list who did not take the test because of absences had a score of 0 points. The names of the remaining 11 children were marked with “dropped out”, and these were apparently children initially enrolled at the PS “Bratya Miladinovi” but had dropped out of school due to long absence or other reasons. The 33 other children who did not take the test, were sick or absent without any reported serious cause.

Of the 78 4th graders under the project, 24 did not take the mathematics test, and 19 did not take the BLL one. The average result of all children in segregated school was 8.28 points for the mathematics test, and 7.44 points for BLL. The average result of children

<sup>70</sup> This is the number according to official records at the beginning of the academic year.

who took the test (i.e. without the absent children) in the segregated school was 10.7 and 9.75 at mathematics and BLL tests respectively.

For the integrated schools, the average results of all children from the mathematics test was 7.66 points, and 11.7 of the children who took the test. The situation with BLL was similar, with an average result of all Roma children in the host schools at 6.97 points, and 9.37 for the children who took the test. These data are summarised in the table below:

Table 14: Average results from the tests in Sliven

	Mathematics			BLL		
	<i>Eligible</i>	<i>Took the test</i>	<i>Average result</i>	<i>Eligible</i>	<i>Took the test</i>	<i>Average result</i>
<b>Roma children at segregated school</b>	194	150	10.7	194	148	9.75
<b>Roma children at integrated schools</b>	78	54	11.07	78	57	9.37

### 4.3 Analysis of the Data

As a whole, the margin of the results between children at the segregated and the integrated schools is very low, 1 to 2 points, which (the maximum being 20 points) accounts for a margin of 5 to 10 percent. However, if we disregard the zero result of those absent, i.e. analyse only the results of those who actually took the test, figures show that Roma students in the integrated schools scored a higher average result in mathematics at 11.07 points against 10.7 for children in the neighbourhood schools, while the 0.38 points lead for its children in the BLL score could be accidental, as in percentages this means that children in the neighbourhood school score merely 2 percent better in BLL than those in integrated schools.

The paradox with participant children in Sliven described in the previous report, namely that “children participating in the desegregation project in Sliven receive the highest degree of care compared to all the remaining projects, and still register lower academic achievement”<sup>71</sup> continues to be valid. Few things can change in as short a period as two years, especially if they resulted from decades of negative factors. Therefore, conclusions on the reasons behind the low academic achievement of participant children under the Sliven project made Two years ago still apply in full force:

- » The considerably lower social status of participant children than those at the segregated school.

<sup>71</sup> BHC, Five Years later, pp. 88-89.

- » The existent latent racism of a considerable part of the teachers, which leads to partial segregation of Roma children within the host integrated schools. Unfortunately, school authorities seem to still have a lot to do to eradicate all incidence of racism in the classrooms.

## 5. Extra-Curricular Activities

Starting with the 2004/2005 academic year, the desegregation project in Sliven reduced extra-curricular activities due to insufficient funding by donors. This is a policy which finds some grounding in that the interest toward desegregation should not be maintained artificially. However, extra-curricular activities when they take place on a multicultural basis are also important as they create a positive atmosphere for learning and socialization.

As in the preceding years, during 2006/2007 school year the project organised a Christmas party for the participant children and gave them small presents. This was, of course, far from sufficient, and it would seem reasonable to reconsider donor policy in view of granting more funding for extra-curricular activities on a multicultural basis.

## 6. Political, Administrative, and Public Support for the Project

In general, the project in Sliven is supported by the authorities in the city. Its leader, Ms. Kostova, is member of the Municipal Council. This is probably the reason why the municipality, in co-operation with the local labour office, continues to allocate resources, thus enabling the Sliven project to appoint more co-ordinators (counsellors). Still, it would be appropriate to quote the principal of the 10th CSS "Yordan Yovkov" in saying that "for seven years now, the municipality has not not succeed in incorporating integration as a permanent municipal policy. It [the municipality] continues to be rather indifferent".<sup>72</sup>

As before, the RIE is supportive of the project, but only in words. The overall feeling is that "desegregation is a good thing and we are all for it but the project needs to intensify its work with the parents."<sup>73</sup> How the RIE intends to help to this end, however, remained unclear.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with the principal, conducted in Sliven on 18 October, 2007.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Ms. Stoilova, Elementary Education expert with RIE Sliven, conducted on 18/10/2007

## E. STARA ZAGORA

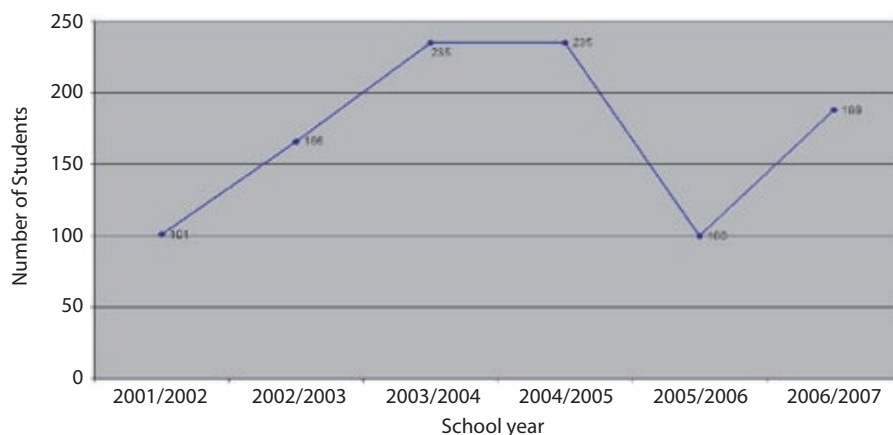
### 1. Background of the Project

The desegregation project in Stara Zagora experienced a serious crisis during the 2005/2006 academic year when its management changed following years of inefficient implementation and the poor results from the tests in May 2005.<sup>74</sup> In line with BHC recommendations, REF discontinued its support for the Rainbow Foundation, and as of 2005/2006 academic year has granted funding for the desegregation project of the Lozenets Foundation chaired by Mr. Alexander Kracholov. Mr. Kracholov is a well known Roma activist and former municipal councillor in Stara Zagora, as well as the organiser of the annual Roma Folklore Festival in the city. The transition of the project from the Rainbow Foundation to the Lozenets Foundation went through some difficulties, but managed relatively quickly to stabilise the desegregation process in Stara Zagora. According to data provided by Mr. Kracholov, for the 2005/2006 academic year his team managed to enrol about 100 of the students who participated in the Rainbow project, as the rest returned to the neighbourhood schools. The Rainbow Foundation transports the Roma children to the host schools with buses hired from a subcontracted private company.

During the 2006/2007 academic year, 230 Roma children participated under the Lozenets Foundation project "Roma Children Education in Bulgarian Schools", with 188 completing the year. The dropouts were 42. Graph 7 below illustrates the dynamics of the number of children who completed successfully the school year with the desegregation project in Stara Zagora since 2001.

**Graph 7**

**Number of Students who completed the school year with the Project in Strara Zagora**



<sup>74</sup> See BHC, Five Years Later, pp.72-80.



As shown in the graph, following the drastic drop in the number of participant children for the 2005/2006 academic year, Lozenets has increased the number of enrolled children but is still far from the Rainbow peak of the 2004/2005 academic year.

The main part of the children participant under the Lozenets project reside in the two neighbouring large Roma neighbourhoods in Stara Zagora, "Lozenets" and "Chomleka", with a total population of approximately 25,000. There has been a slight population decrease compared to preceding years, mainly due to emigration. As of October 2007, there was a total of 1,498 students enrolled at the two segregated neighbourhood schools, CSS "Hristo Smirnenki" and the 12th PS "Georgi Garbachev", which means that the desegregation project of the Lozenets Foundation has managed to transfer 1/8 of all children at schooling age out of the neighbourhood schools.

For the 2006/2007 academic year, 63.8 percent of children who successfully completed their grade under the project were in the elementary grades, with the rest in the lower secondary school grades. Project team data point to a total of 12 city schools with Roma children enrolled under the project. Table 16 below presents their distribution at host schools.

Table 15: Participants in the Lozenets Foundation project by host school

School Name	Number of Students
1st PS „Georgi Bakalov“	67
2nd PS „Petko Rachov Slaveykov“	12
CSS „Maxim Gorki“	5
5th PS „Mityo Stanev“	30
6th PS „Sv. Nikola“	22
7th PS „Mitropolit Metodi Kusev“	36
9th PS „Vesselin Hanchev“	19
PS „Georgi Raychev“	33
Music School „Hristina Morfova“	3
CSS „Todor Kableshkov“	1
CSS „Vasil Levski“	1
3rd PS „Kolyo Ganchev“	1
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>230</b>

In fact, four of the host schools accepted a total of six children, of whom three were in the music school and the remaining three one at each school. Transportation by the project is not provided to of these four schools. Therefore, children under the project are

enrolled primarily in eight schools in Stara Zagora. Of them, seven are primary schools, and one secondary. The distribution of participant children in them is uneven. The largest group of participant children were enrolled at the 1st PS "Georgi Bakalov" attended by a total of 67 children throughout the academic year. This peripheral school is the most removed from the two Roma neighbourhoods, and the enrolment of such a large number of children in it does not seem reasonable. This number is probably "inherited" from the Rainbow project which, too, reported the highest portion of children at the 1st PS. One of the Lozenets project's significant achievements is the enrolment of Roma students in two of the central (and seen as "elite") city schools, the 6th PS "Sv. Nikola" (with 22 children) and the 2nd PS "P.R. Slaveykov" (with 12 children).

Except for the two Roma neighbourhood schools, a total of 10 elementary, primary, and private schools in the city have not been included in the project. The reasons for this vary between their remoteness from the bus routes; presence of Roma children from other parts of the city; the fear that children will not continue into the higher grades upon graduation (in the case of elementary schools); unwillingness of school authorities to accept Roma children, etc. The Lozenets team discontinued relationships with the 11th PS "Nikolay Liliev" where Roma children were not properly accepted in preceding years, and registered very poor results at the 2005 test.<sup>75</sup>

The children are transported to the host schools with two buses of a private company contracted by Lozenets Foundation. The project team said that 33 children enrolled in the PS "Georgi Raychev" do not use the bus but walk to the school which is located close to the Lozenets neighbourhood. During its visit at the 7th PS "Mitropolit Metodi Kusev", the evaluation team was informed that the situation is similar with some of their children residing in the Chomleka neighbourhood, which is very near the school. The buses start at 7:00 am from two different points in the Roma neighbourhoods and their routes merge near the neighbourhood borders where children switch as necessary. After the children are transported to the host schools, one of the buses returns to collect the children attending morning SBGs. Similarly, the buses make additional trips to take children from different shift SBGs to and from school. The long distances involved in a city like Stara Zagora with a population exceeding 160,000 render children transportation a labour and cost intensive activity. The project team leader said that using a sub-contracted transport company is preferable to buying buses, as this allows for avoiding additional maintenance and security costs.<sup>76</sup>

According to the project team, the primary target group for enrolment at the integrated schools are the children to start in the 1st grade. The project works predominantly with parents of children in the 10th and 24th kindergartens which service the Lozenets and Chomleka neighbourhoods. A few children are enrolled in the senior grades, too, but these were more of an exception to the general rule. In these cases, the team has reported that parents encounter difficulties in obtaining their children's leaving certificates from the two neighbourhood schools.

<sup>75</sup> See BHC, *Five Years Later*, pp.78-79.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Alexander Kracholov, Chair of Lozenets Foundation, Stara Zagora, 6 November 2007.

The evaluation team was not provided details of difficulties encountered with enrolling Roma children at the host schools in Stara Zagora. Several of the foundation associates interviewed by the evaluation team confirmed that host school authorities are understanding and even seek the foundation to recruit children. Thus, prior to the start of the 2007/2008 academic year, the school management of the 2nd PS "P.R. Slaveykov" requested to meet the project team to discuss the enrolment of Roma children in their "elite" school.<sup>77</sup> The principal of the other "elite" school, the 6th PS "Sv. Nikova" shared, in turn, that at the beginning of the 2007/2008 academic year the schools had a capacity to enrol more Roma children but the foundation was unable to provide any.<sup>78</sup> In this case, it is regrettable that the Lozenets Foundation is not yet capable of utilising all opportunities for enrolling Roma children in the leading schools of Stara Zagora.

## 2. The Project Team

During the 2006/2007 academic year, the desegregation project of Lozenets Foundation in Stara Zagora maintained a large team of 23 people. It comprised of:

- » 1 Project Director
- » 1 Educational Expert
- » 2 Parent Work Co-ordinators
- » 6 Counsellors
- » 8 SGB Teachers
- » 1 Technical Assistant
- » 1 Accountant
- » 1 Driver
- » 1 Academic Advisor
- » 1 Advocacy Consultant.

At the time of the visit in Stara Zagora (the beginning of the 2007/2008 academic year), part of the team from the 2006/2007 academic year had left or been dismissed. For the new academic year, there were seven new team members, including the educational expert, Mr. Dimitar Ivanov, who replaced the previous expert, Ms. Milena Ilieva. Apart from the teacher consultant, three of the teachers of the SBG groups at the host schools had been replaced. Such replacements, including senior staff, had somewhat disrupted the continuity of the project operation.

The Stara Zagora project has the largest number of educators compared to the other desegregation projects operating in Bulgaria. The total number is 10. Of them, eight were recruited for the SBGs at host schools. SBG teachers have classes with Roma chil-

<sup>77</sup> Interview with Doroteya Zlatanova, Technical Assistant to the Lozenets project, Stara Zagora, 6 November 2007.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Milena Genova, Principal of the 6th PS "Sv. Nikola", Stara Zagora, 6 November 2007.

dren before or after the regular classes in order to compensate for the lack of municipally funded SBGs, which is a serious deficiency of the educational system in Stara Zagora.<sup>79</sup> They work at all host schools with a relatively large number of Roma children. There are two of them at the 1st PS "Georgi Bakalov". Beside the SBG teachers, a counsellor of Roma background was appointed for each of the host schools. The counsellor accompanies the children from their homes in the neighbourhood to the host schools and is available in the school throughout the day. The counsellor is responsible for children's attendance at school; providing textbooks and study aids. He/she acts as an intermediary between the parents and their children with any problems arising from the study process. Host schools are providing classrooms for the SBG teachers, which are also used by the counsellors to accommodate the children waiting for the buses.

The two parent work co-ordinators with the Lozenets Foundation project are primarily engaged with the initial enrolment campaign. The project also recruited as an academic advisor Assoc. Prof. Veska Shosheva, head of the Social Work Department with the Thracian University of Stara Zagora. Assoc. Prof. Shosheva conducts pedagogical meetings and discussions with the 1st graders under the projects at the start of the academic year and once again at mid-term with the purpose of establishing student's level and their academic progress. For the 2006/2007 academic year, she recruited several students from the Medical Department as volunteers.

### **3. Academic Profile of the Project**

#### ***3.1 Organisation of Academic Activities in the Project***

The academic activities of the Lozenets Foundation desegregation project for the 2006/2007 academic year were supervised by the educational expert, Ms. Milena Ilieva. For the current academic year she was replaced by Mr. Dimitar Ivanov. Mr. Ivanov is an educator with extensive experience as a teacher and principal in several educational institutions in Stara Zagora and the region. At the time of the evaluation team visit, he had only recently been appointed with the project and was unable to say much of his experience and vision. The educational expert, who is the actual leader of the Stara Zagora project, supervises the regular transportation service for the children and the work of the SBG teachers and the counsellors at the host schools. SBG teachers have 3 classes with the children every day. They work in two shifts to reflect the study process at the majority of schools in Stara Zagora (9 of the 12 partner schools to the project). With a few exceptions, all Roma children at host schools attend the SBGs.

The distribution of Roma children in the host schools is 2 or 3 per class. Considering the number of participant children and the number of host schools under the Lozenets Foundation project, the team has experienced no difficulties in adhering to this ratio, with

<sup>79</sup> See BHC, *Five Years Later*, p. 77.

the exception of a few isolated cases in the 1st PS “Georgi Bakalov”, which has more Roma children. Some host schools with a smaller number of Roma children report one Roma child per class. The majority of the children, including those from the second shift, spend all day at school. The project team kept a strict record of students’ attendance for the 2006/2007 academic year. Unexcused absences were registered at the schools with the largest number of participant children, namely in the 1st PS “Georgi Bakalov” (384), followed by the PS “Georgi Raychev” (252), and the 7th PS “Mitropolit Metodi Kusev” (231). Divided by the number of participant children, the average figure is between 6 and 8 unexcused absences per child for the entire year. The absences were one of the major problems raised by the principal of the 6th PS “Sv. Nikola” at the meeting with the evaluation team.<sup>80</sup> The project in Stara Zagora reported a significant number of dropouts for the previous academic year, with a total of 42 students or 18 percent of all participant children. The reasons for this were seen by the team in the high percentage of emigration along with parents and difficulties in the adaptation, especially for children who had not attended kindergarten.

The interviews conducted by the evaluation team with children, teachers, and counsellors at the host schools revealed that, as a whole, Roma children are well received and looked after, while both teachers and project SBG teachers watch carefully for any conflicts on ethnic grounds. Several children from the 6th PS “Sv. Nikola” complained that their classmates call them “Gypsy”.<sup>81</sup> However, teachers are immediately informed of such cases and take the necessary measures. Other schools, such as the 7th PS “Mitropolit Metodi Kusev”, did not report any incidence of insults of racist nature. During the meeting with the principal, Ms. Dora Dimitrova, it became clear that the school authorities are especially intent on the creation of a welcoming educational environment for Roma children.<sup>82</sup>

### 3.2 Results from the Tests

Table 17 below presents the summarised comparative results from the NEA tests conducted by MES in May 2007 in BLL and mathematics among students in the 4th grade of the two segregated schools in Stara Zagora and the students in integrated schools participating in the Lozenets Foundation project. For the purposes of comparison, the highest and lowest average result from the NEA test in city schools is also included.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Milena Genova, Principal of the 6th PS “Sv. Nikola”, Stara Zagora, 6 November 2007.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Zara Yordanova, student from 5b class in PS “Sv. Nikola”, Stara Zagora, 6 November 2007; Interview with Todor Panchev, student from 6d class in PS “Sv. Nikola”, Stara Zagora, 6 November 2007.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Dora Dimitrova, Principal of the 7th PS “Mitropolit Metodi Kusev”, Stara Zagora, 6 November 2007.

Table 16: Average test results in Stara Zagora

	Mathematics			BLL		
	<i>Eligible</i>	<i>Took the test</i>	<i>Average result</i>	<i>Eligible</i>	<i>Took the test</i>	<i>Average result</i>
<b>Roma students in CSS "Hristo Smirnenski"</b>	70	52	10.98	70	52	13.46
<b>Roma students in PS "G. Garbachev"</b>	56	39	11.44	56	41	11.80
<b>Roma children in integrated schools</b>	17	16	13.90	17	16	12.30
<b>Highest and lowest average test result in city schools</b>			15.31-19.08			13.54-19.28

The above results demonstrate a considerably higher achievement by Roma students in integrated schools in Stara Zagora. The only instance of a relatively higher achievement was of Roma students in the segregated CSS "Hristo Smirnenski" at the BLL test. This figure, however, refers only to students who took the test, namely 52 out of the total of 70 enrolled in the 4th grade for the 2006/2007 academic year. More than one fourth or 25.7 percent of these students did not take any of the tests. The large number of habitually absent children during the year presents a very serious issue for this and many other segregated Roma schools in Bulgaria.

The situation is similar and, in some ways, worse in the 12th PS "Georgi Garbachev". For the 2006/2007 academic year, it had 56 children enrolled in the 4th grade. Of them, according to RIE data, 56 took the test in mathematics and 39 the test in BLL. The average achievement at the BLL tests, according to the RIE reports, was 8.88 points, and at the mathematics test it was 11.44. However, the report signed by the school principal and provided to the BHC evaluation team, claims 55 students in the 5th grade for the 2007/2008 academic year, where for 15 of them there is no record of achievement at the tests. The RIE report contains data of the same number of 15 students who received one point. This suggests that 15 students (27.3 percent) did not take the BLL test, and 17 students (30.3 percent) did not take the mathematics test. Taking this into account, the average result from the BLL test will include the students who did not take the test but received one point. If the calculation methodology for the BLL test results were to be unified with that for the other subjects, the average BLL test result would amount to 11.8 points.

Of participant children enrolled under the Lozenets Foundation project, only one student was absent at both the BLL and mathematics tests. The achievement of Roma chil-

dren under the project is better than that of children in the segregated schools in terms of the number who took the tests (with the exception of BLL test results compared to those in the segregated CSS “Hr. Smirnenski”) and especially in terms of absent students. The margin of the mathematics result is considerably higher than that of the BLL result. Even so, achievement in the segregated schools is considerably lower than that in the integrated city schools. This is apparently due to a wide range of factors influencing the academic achievement outside the integrated education.

#### 4. Extra-curricular Activities and Social Assistance

The focus of the desegregation project in Stara Zagora is on all-day involvement of Roma children at integrated schools. To use the words of the chair of the Lozenets Foundation, Mr. Kracholov, the aim is for the children to “to work at school all day, then return home, go to bed, and go straight back to school in the morning, so as to spend as little time as possible in the neighbourhood”.<sup>83</sup> This concept leaves little room for extra-curricular activities.

The Lozenets Foundation project provides Roma children to a large extent with anything needed for school. It provides all study aids for students in the elementary grades whose textbooks are provided for by the state. For the children from the lower secondary grades, the foundation provides the textbooks (which are, at this stage, not provided for by the state) and the study aids. All that is left for parents of participant children is to buy the schoolbags. The project does not provide clothing and shoes for any of the children.

All participants in the Stara Zagora project receive free meals at lunchtime. With the exception of the 2nd PS “P.R. Slaveykov”, all host schools have canteens. Roma children from the 2nd PS use the canteen of the nearby CSS “Maxim Gorki”. In this respect, a problem was brought up only by the principal of the 7th ES “Mitropolit Kusev”, Ms. Dora Dimitrova. Roma children from her school, too, take their meals at the CSS “Maxim Gorki” which, however, is further removed from it.

#### 5. Political, Administrative, and Public Support for the Project

The chairperson of the Lozenets Foundation, Mr. Kracholov, told the evaluation team that the desegregation project in Stara Zagora is supported by all interested institutions and organisations in the city. This includes even the extreme nationalist party “Ataka” whose representatives have personally assured Mr. Kracholov of their party’s support.<sup>84</sup> The evaluation team was able to see the favourable attitude toward the project of the Chief of

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Alexander Kracholov, Chairperson of Lozenets Foundation, Stara Zagora, 6 November 2007.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Alexander Kracholov, Chairperson of Lozenets Foundation, conducted in Stara Zagora on Stara Zagora, 6 November 2007.

the RIE Mr. Lyubomir Lyubenov. However, the evaluation team was unable to meet representatives of Stara Zagora municipal authorities because of the, at the time, confusion around the recent local election.

The support for the desegregation project of the Lozenets Foundation of various organisations and institutions in the city is mostly declarative. The only instance of pro-active support recently came from the local "Samariani" Association which expressed readiness to take part in specific project activities. Other than this, the project had not received any financial support, and it was Mr. Kracholov's view that any such support was unlikely for the near future.

## F. PLOVDIV

### 1. Background of the project

The project "Desegregation of Roma Schools in Plovdiv" has been implemented by the Foundation for Regional Development "Roma – Plovdiv" since the 2005/2006 academic year. The Roma Foundation is also operating a number of other projects.

Table 17 below presents the number of children enrolled in the first two academic years of the project.

Table 17: Number of children enrolled under the project by grade and gender

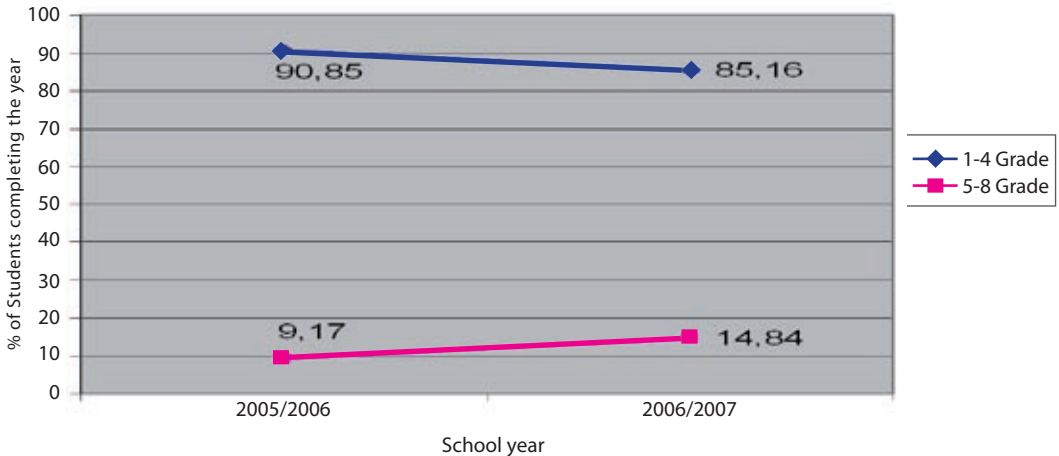
Acad. Year	Total No. of Children	By Grades								By Gender	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	M	F
2006/2007	182	61	61	15	18	13	10	2	2	99	83
2005/2006	120	61	14	19	15	9	2			71	49

For the first academic year of the project, 45.6 percent of the students who completed the year successfully were girls, and the remaining 54.4 percent were boys. For the second academic year, the proportion of girls creased to 45.6 percent, nearing that of the boys (54.4 percent).



**Graph 8**

**Share of Roma Students in elementary and in the lower secondary level**



The second academic year of the project’s activities saw a gradual increase of children enrolled in the elementary level of education, with a respective decrease in the number of those enrolled from the lower secondary level, which was a result of the team’s strategy to include children from as early an age as possible – pre-school or 1st grade. Because of the recent launch of the desegregation project in Plovdiv, it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify clear-cut trends with regard to children who have successfully completed the various levels of education with the help of the project.

**1.1 Roma Neighbourhoods in Plovdiv**

According to the information of the project implementation team, they have been working with children from four distinctly Roma neighbourhoods within the city – “Stolipinovo”, “Sheker Mahala”, “Hadzhi Asan Mahala”, and “Arman Mahala”. Their data shows that the population of Stolipinovo approximates 28,000, that of Sheker Mahala – 3,000, another 3,000 in Hadzhi Asan Mahala and 2,000 in Arman Mahala. Illegal construction in Stolipinovo has been growing steadily. A new part of the neighbourhood has emerged by the river where “newcomers” from other cities are settling. Project team estimates show that there are 40,000 Roma living in Stolipinovo. From the Roma population over 18 years old it is estimated that merely 50 percent with completed high school, and there is a very high overall level of illiteracy.

### 1.2 Neighbourhood Schools

Presently, there are four segregated schools in Stolipinovo, and one in Sheker Mahala where, according to the estimate of Mr. Vargulev,<sup>85</sup> the educational expert of the project and principal of one of the segregated secondary schools, are enrolled in total about 3,000 children. One central problem in the neighbourhood is that of children at schooling age outside the educational system the number of which, according to Mr. Vargulev, amounts to 600.

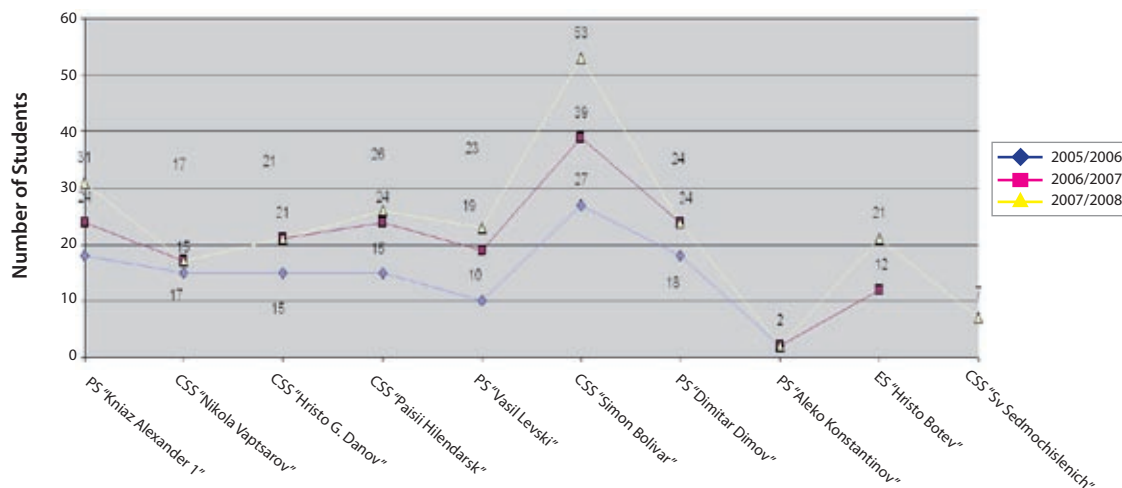
The principal of the CSS “Nikola Vaptsarov” pointed to some problems in the segregated schools relating to gaps in teacher training and education without identifying the existence of this type of schools as a problem in itself.

### 1.3 Schools of Project Activity

According to the data provided by the Roma Foundation, during the first year of the project operation, eight of the city schools were included in the project. During the 2006/2007 school year, the PS “Hristo Botev” was added and during the current school year the CSS “Sv. Sedmochislenitsi” was also included with seven children. Thus the number host schools of the project at present is 10.

**Graph 9**

**Number of Students from the Project by school and school year**



<sup>85</sup> Interview with Vassil Vargulev, Plovdiv, 5 October 2007.

All host schools registered an increase in the number of students for the second year with the exception of the PS “Aleko Konstantinov” where the children were still only two. The PS “Hristo Botev” was included in the second academic year with 12 children. According to data from the Roma Foundation, the number of Roma children enrolled in the city schools under the project during the current school year is 182; this number could undergo insignificant changes after the finalisation of the classes’ composition, which has been postponed owing to the month-long teachers’ strike.<sup>86</sup>

Two of the schools – CSS “Dimitar Dimov” and CSS “Simon Bolivar” in the immediate vicinity of the two Roma neighbourhoods, were already accepting Roma children at the time of launch of the project.

With the introduction of the “delegated” budgets, each school is trying to enroll more children in order to fill up classes and maximize the allocated rates, which is why the Roma Foundation is now receiving requests by principals across the city for Roma children from the neighbourhoods to be enrolled. On the one hand, this is a possible mechanism for the transferal of a larger number of children from segregated to integrated urban schools, but it could also entail a number of problems, because:

- » The Roma Foundation is not in a position to offer the services envisaged under the project for larger numbers of children.
- » The local municipality refuses to be involved in, at least, providing transport for these children and opening up counselor positions at each school.
- » Teachers at the integrated schools are not trained to work with children of ethnic minorities.

#### **1.4 Kindergartens of Project Activity**

In line with the project proposal to REF for the 2006/2007 academic year, the team is working with six kindergartens. This has become necessary due to the fact that the project is aiming at including children from preparatory groups/classes and directing them for their 1st grade; since very few of the city schools partnering the project actually offer a preparatory grade. This is why the project is trying to work with kindergartens across the city.

Most children participating in the project have attended kindergarten, whether under the project or not. This is one of the requirements of the project at the selection stage for the children to participate for the respective academic year.

<sup>86</sup> According to the latest data supplied by the Roma Foundation in January 2008, there were a total of 217 Roma students participating in the project.

### **1.5 Number of Roma Children per Class**

According to the project proposals to REF for the current and the previous academic years, the portion of Roma children in classes at the schools should not exceed 40 percent of the class constituency. It is the project leader's view that the optimum rate for the integration of Roma children is between two and four per class.

This is a correct strategy both from the point of view of the individual city schools in view of avoiding the desegregation traps, and from the point of view of project development. Here the support of local authorities and the RIE is essential.

According to the information provided by Anton Karagyozov, the selection procedure for children's participation in the project was based on each child's academic record at the completion of the preparatory group/grade and an interview with the parents of those who achieved the highest marks in BLL and the highest degree of acquisition of learning habits.

On the one hand, the procedure established for the selection of children participants in the project ensures the project's sustainability, as there should be no reason for a child with sufficient knowledge of Bulgarian and good learning and class habits not to cope with the study process at integrated schools and/or drop out of school. On the other hand, this procedure condemns the poorest and the most problematic children to an extended stay at segregated schools or lack of any opportunity for inclusion in the educational system.

According to one of the project team counselors, an additional children selection procedure is in place, namely for each counselor to select their children with the main criterion being of them living close to where the counselor lives.<sup>87</sup>

### **1.6 Excessive Enrollment of Roma Children in Several Urban Schools**

Because of the specifics of the city, the characteristic features of the urban infrastructure and the school network, in Plovdiv there is a real danger of some of the partner schools to the project falling into the desegregation trap. This means that more and more Roma children will be enrolled in them to the effect of provoking a reaction on the part of Bulgarian parents, and, as the project is not in a position to include all the schools in the city, those which work with it will be labeled "Gypsy schools".

In the view of Ms. Ignatova, principal of CSS "Simon Bolivar", this is already happening in her school, although the project has only been working with it since the 2006/2007 academic year. In this particular case, the label of the school is also the result of the principal's policy to enroll Roma children at the school long before the launch of the project because of the school's proximity to Stolipinovo neighbourhood. The fact that there are two other "white" schools in the area which refuse to accept children of Roma background has aggravated the situation of the "Simon Bolivar" school, and it is already exhibiting a trend of becoming a segregated school in only a few-years' time.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Gyulezar Saduk, counsellor in the project, Plovdiv, 5 October 2007.

Some signs of falling into the desegregation trap are already at hand at the CSS “Dimitar Dimov” which, similarly to the “Simon Bolivar” school, is located close to the Roma neighbourhood Sheker Mahala.

According to the principal of the CSS “Nikola Vaptsarov” which is located downtown and was included in the project, the reasons for a school’s refusal to enroll Roma children would be as follows:

“The reasons for other principals’ refusal to accept Roma children I see as: 1) in order to retain Bulgarian children; and 2), because they do not understand the problem and have no vision for overcoming it. They want to keep their schools “clean”, that is with Bulgarian children only. Then on what basis would they demand a pay equal to that of their colleagues who work with children from the ethnic minorities and children with special educational needs?!” Ms. Elena Alexandrova, principal of the secondary school “Nikola Vaptsarov” said.<sup>88</sup>

This brings up an especially important problem facing the desegregation of Roma education, namely training the teachers across the country according to a special schedule reflecting the existence of priority schools and kindergartens where teachers need skills to work with Roma children in a multicultural and a multiethnic environment.

## **2. Organization and Implementation of the Project**

### ***2.1 Services Offered by the Project to Students of Roma Background***

According to the information provided by the team leader of the Roma Foundation project, children participating in the project are provided schoolbags, textbooks, study materials and aids, snacks, and transport. During the last academic year, a local company also provided sweat suits for the children.

The children from Sheker Mahala who participate in the project do not use transportation provided by the project because they attend primary school Dimitar Dimov which is close to the neighbourhood. The children from Stolipinovo neighbourhood who participate in the project are transported by one bus and two mini busses to schools in the city. The children who attend Simon Bolivar school do not use transportation provided by Foundation Roma because the school is close to their neighbourhood. In the last school year, 63 children in the project did not use transportation provided by Foundation Roma, 39 of them study in Simon Bolivar school and 24 in Dimitar Dimov school. According to the project team, these children walk to school accompanied by the supervisors.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Ms Alexandrova, Principal of PS “Nikola Vaptsarov”, Plovdiv, 5 October 2007.

According to the project team, the maintenance of the school bus requires substantial resources.

Only some of the children participating in the project are provided with snacks.

Due to the recent start of the project, most of the children participating in it are in the first stage of their school careers at which the state provides textbooks for all children. Foundation Roma provides notebooks, pens, school bags and other necessary school equipment. According to school directors and teachers, purchase of school equipment poses financial problems for many Roma families.

In a further conversation with the school principal,<sup>89</sup> we established that as of the end of the first school term the Roma children from the 1st and 2nd grades taking part in the project had been ensured a counselor and given snacks. They number 25 children in the 1st and 2nd grades.

### *2.1.1 Transportation of Children from Stolipinovo and Sheker Mahala Neighbourhoods to the City Schools*

The children from Sheker Mahala do not use any transport under the project, as they attend the CSS "Dimitar Dimov", which is located near the neighbourhood.

The children from Stolipinovo neighbourhood participating in the project are transported to the city schools with one bus and two minibuses. The children enrolled in the CSS "Simon Bolivar" do not use the transport provided by the Roma Foundation, as the school is very near their neighbourhood. During the last academic year, 63 children did not use the transport provided by the Roma Foundation at all. 39 of them attended the CSS "Simon Bolivar" and 24 the CSS "Dimitar Dimov", and, according to data provided by the project, they walked to school accompanied by the counselors.

Provision of snacks for the children by the project is a service used only by the participant Roma children in some of the city schools. Because of the recent launch of the project, the majority of students enrolled under it are still at the elementary level of education, and their textbooks are provided for by the state. Principals and teachers from city schools claim that a major problem for Roma children is the supply of the necessary study aids and exercise books.

## **2.2 Extra-Curricular Activities Organized by the Project**

No extra-curricular activities are being organized at schools under the Roma Foundation project, as funding is insufficient, which is why the project is focusing exclusively on education. The project budget for the 2006/2007 academic year contained two excursions for all children participating in the project to some of the city's sights.

<sup>89</sup> Telephone interview, 24 March 2008.

Beside these excursions, the project budget of the Roma Foundation for the current academic year envisaged the organizing of a 4-day green school for 80 children participant in the project and 10 teachers. On the one hand, this type of extra-curricular activities create opportunities for the children to change the neighbourhood setting for two or more days, and to communicate with their teachers outside the classroom, but, on the other, the exclusion from these activities of the rest of the class or school, may have an isolating effect on the Roma children. Extra-curricular activities organized by the schools themselves are open to all students of the respective school.

In the project proposals to REF for the current and the previous academic year, activity 12 states that, because of the lack of groups for additional work with the children at the schools, it will be necessary for this to be done on a daily basis by the Foundation at the "Second Chance" School premises. Thus, after class, the children will be able to prepare their homework and receive assistance as needed from a counselor or a teacher in their preparation for the next day.

Both principals of the schools closest to the two Roma neighbourhoods state that all teachers have an approved schedule for individual consultancy and extra classes for children with learning difficulties.

### **2.3 Work with Roma Parents**

Work with the parents of the participant children under the project is implemented in two stages:

1. At the initial preparatory stage, a member of the team meets parents whose children fall to be enrolled in preparatory groups/classes and tries to persuade them in the importance of education for their child's development and the better opportunities offered by integrated city schools as opposed to segregated neighbourhood ones.
2. At the next stage, after obtaining the parent's consent for enrolling the child in one of the city schools, the co-ordinator for parents work organizes regular monthly meetings with the parents where the latter can voice possible issues and problems. If necessary, the parent work co-ordinator organizes individual meetings and consultations with parents.

### **2.4 Additional Financial Burden on the Parents of Children Participant in the Project**

The team leader has stated that, since the start of the project, there have been no cases of parents of participant children providing any financial support. On the contrary, they rely on benefiting from the services under the project.

The parents of participant children whom the evaluation team interviewed acknowledged the differences in the education offered by the integrated city school and the segregated school in the neighbourhood. They pointed out, however, the additional expenses incurred by them as a result of enrolling their children at the city schools. These expenses are on additional to the the Roma Foundation expenditure on each child.

### 3. The Project Team

The evaluation team found a small discrepancy between the project proposal for the current academic year and the information provided by the project team leader – instead of the listed 10 counselors and 4 educational experts, the project is staffed with 11 counselors and 3 educational experts. The extracurricular activities ensured by the project are essential to the success of the desegregation process and to each child's individual academic achievements, especially when no SBG is available at the school.

What is specific in this project is the role of the educational expert in the project, Mr. Vargulev, who is also the principal of one of the segregated schools in the neighbourhood, CSS "Nayden Gerov". This is a very complex conflict of interest where, on the one hand, he works for the desegregation process as a member of the project team, and on the other, he is the principal of the largest segregated school in the city and has no interest to have the school he runs closed down. According to the project director, however, Mr. Vargulev's reputation in the education sphere is beneficial to the desegregation process.

Staff turnover within team is low. Team members are motivated in their work, as this is permanent employment with a strong element of prestige for people living in the Roma neighbourhoods. The staff selection process is competitive. Three basic requirements apply: minimum secondary education, Roma background, and knowledge of the respective language – Roma or Turkish. For special cases requiring a larger number of staff, the project uses other staff of the foundation.

According to the team leader, even if the municipality undertook to ensure the children's transport to the city schools, there would still be need for the counselors, as "this is an extended process"<sup>90</sup> City school principals we interviewed, too, find the counselors' role to be essential at this stage.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*



## 4. Organization of the Work and Implementation of the Project

### 4.1 *The Process of Children Leaving the Segregated School and their Enrolment in the Integrated City Schools in the City*

The Plovdiv project has not encountered any problems with the children obtaining their leaving certificates from the neighbourhood schools.

### 4.2 *Academic Achievement of Children Participant in the Project*

Data provided by the project team on the GPA of the children as well as their achievement at the two tests were aggregated and summarized, but do not allow for a more detailed analysis. The evaluation team requested the information in question from the RIE Plovdiv whose representatives, despite the directive of the MES to cooperate with the evaluation team, refused us access to the children's achievements under the pretext that RIE is not a personal data administration body.<sup>91</sup>

According to the scarce information obtained from the project team, the GPA of students is within the good and very good marks range. For the 2005/2006 academic year, the children in all schools included in the project registered good achievement, and in the last academic year, the academic achievement of all schools included in the project was very good. For the 2006/2007 academic year, the children at the "Knyaz Alexander I", "Vasil Levski, and "Aleko Konstantinov" primary schools, and the "Simon Bolivar" secondary school improved their academic achievement to very good. For the same academic year, the elementary school "Hristo Botev" was also included in the project with Roma children enrolled in it with a very good academic achievement.

At the BLL and Mathematics tests of the national assessment, Roma children participating in the project registered an average of good and very good results. This was the maximum the evaluation team managed to find out in Plovdiv. Beside the academic achievement of children enrolled in city schools, some of the significant project outcomes include a change in the attitude toward education on the part of Roma children and their parents; the opportunity for Roma and Bulgarian children to communicate; and the opportunity for Roma and Bulgarian parents to communicate.

### 4.3 *Preparatory Groups and Classes*

Most integrated schools in the city do not have preparatory classes and, therefore, the project has had to work with kindergartens in order to enroll children as early as the preparatory stage before the 1st grade. This stage is especially important for Roma children in view of helping them learn Bulgarian and acquire learning habits.

<sup>91</sup> Providing of aggregated data on the test results however has nothing to do with administration of personal data.

#### 4.4 Semi-Boarding Groups (SBG)

Most integrated schools have SBGs provided for in terms of staff by the municipality and attended by all students of the schools who wish to do so. If a particular school does not have a SBG, Roma children attend SBGs organized by the project in two shifts at the “Second Chance” School premises.

#### 4.5 Absences from School

According to information provided by the project team in Plovdiv, the unexcused absences from school for the last academic year were as follows:

Table 18: Unexcused absences of children participating in the project by school for 2006/2007 academic year

School Name	Unexcused Absences
CSS “Nikola Vaptsarov”	25
CSS „Hristo G. Danov”	20
CSS „ Paisiy Hilendarski”	18
PS „Vasil Levski”	15
CSS „Dimitar Dimov”	28
ES „Hristo Botev”	10
CSS „Simon Bolivar”	27
PS „Aleko Konstantinov”	3

Children’s absences from school were predominantly due to sickness and it was the counselor’s duty to establish the reasons for a particular child’s absence on the very first day.

#### 4.6. Dropouts

According to information provided by the project team, dropouts were registered only in the first year of the project and this was due to a mistake on the part of the team: they enrolled children in integrated city schools straight into the 7th grade, and they were unable to keep up with the pace and the study load. Another reason for dropping out is the early marriages which are traditional in some Roma groups. During the last academic year, a total of 16 children dropped out for various reasons. Four children dropped out due to change of residence. Difficulties in adaptation were the cause for dropping out of 4 more

children, while the lack of motivation combined with family issues caused the dropping out of another 4. Two children dropped out for health reasons.

Table 19: Total number of project participant dropouts by schools for the 2006/2007 school year

School Name	No. of Dropouts	Reason for Dropping out
PS "Knyaz Alexander I"	1	Difficult adaptation of the child
CSS "Nikola Vaptsarov"	2	Change of residence
CSS „Hristo G. Danov“	4	Lack of motivation in children and parents. Family issues. Divorce.
CSS „ Paisiy Hilendarski“	2	Health reasons
PS „Vasil Levski“	2	Change of residence
CSS „Dimitar Dimov“	2	Difficult adaptation of the child
ES „Hristo Botev“	1	Difficult adaptation of the child
CSS „Simon Bolivar“	2	Lack of motivation

#### 4.7 Teacher Training for Working with Roma Children

Teachers from all schools visited, with the exception of the CSS "Simon Bolivar" have attended training under the project conducted by Yosif Nunev, state expert at the MES. According to the educational expert, however, no comprehensive trainings for principals and teachers have ever been conducted.<sup>92</sup>

## 5. Political, Administrative, and Public Support for the Project

### 5.1 Political Parties

The project is definitely supported by the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF). At the 2007 local election, Anton Karagyozev ran for municipal councilor for the MRF but did not secure a place at Plovdiv's Municipal Council.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Mr. Vasil Vurgulev, Educational Expert, Plovdiv, 5 October 2007.

## 5.2 Regional Administration

The evaluation team was not made aware of any support for the project and the desegregation process in general on the part of Plovdiv Regional Administration.

## 5.3 RIE Plovdiv

The RIE Plovdiv has an approved annual plan for the implementation of the plan for educational integration of children and students of ethnic minorities developed in September 2005, which is when the project “Desegregation of Roma Schools in Plovdiv” was launched. As a whole, the plan contains detailed description of activities, implementation and expected outcomes, the institutions involved in the implementation of specific activities, as well as a time frame. The main issue, however, is the lack of envisaged funding for the achievement of the goals envisaged in the plan and the lack of how it can be provided for. The plan focuses on the implementation of five strategic goals:

- » To guarantee the right to equal access to quality education of children and students from ethnic minorities (CSEM).
- » To preserve and further develop the cultural identity of CSEM.
- » To secure conditions for successful socialization of CSEM.
- » To turn cultural diversity into a source and a factor for mutual knowledge and cultural development of the coming generation, and the establishment of an environment of mutual respect, tolerance, and understanding.
- » To forge a relevant social and psychological environment facilitating the implementation of the national strategy.

Without attempting to monitor the implementation of the RIE Action Plan, the evaluation team concludes that a large part of the essential activities envisaged are not being implemented. Moreover, this action plan was designed for the 2005/2006 academic year and has not been updated since.

As of the time of the first visit of the evaluation team,<sup>93</sup> RIE Plovdiv was managed by Ms. Antoaneta Pakova, director of one of the departments and acting head of the Inspectorate, as the official head had taken service leave to participate in the city’s local election. Apparently, Ms. Pakova was not acquainted with the issue, and after making sure she could not be of help, she fetched a colleague responsible for the specific project.

The RIE has cooperated with the project by exerting pressure on principals of segregated schools to issue leaving certificates for the children, and also on other principals to enroll Roma children. Mr. Radev rightly pointed that it would be necessary for the RIE and the implementing foundation to sign a co-operation agreement specifying the commitments and responsibilities of the parties in the desegregation process.

<sup>93</sup> 5 October 2007.

### **5.4 The Municipality**

The Strategy for the Integration of Ethnic Minorities in the Municipality of Plovdiv for 2006-2007 envisaged some specific activities, which could facilitate the desegregation process:

“Introduction of teacher assistants from the respective ethnic group for the preparatory grades; development of a desegregation programme for the “segregated schools”; provision of study aids and textbooks for students in grades 2 to 8 from poor families; ensuring regular attendance and retaining at school through development of programmes for children with risk of dropping out.”

None of these activities was implemented.

### **5.5 The Mass Media**

The project proposals of Roma Foundation to REF for the previous and current academic years contain activities toward increasing the publicity of the project through monthly press releases to all local and the major national media. No information is available on the implementation of this activity by the project team.

### **5.6 NGOs**

The evaluation team did not get any information on co-operation of the project team with other NGOs on the desegregation process.

### **5.7 Churches**

The local Evangelical Pentecostal Church supports the project’s vision and the desegregation process in general. According to project team data, about 150 children attend the church; of them 50 participate in the project.

## **6. Incidence of Discrimination in the Schools of Project Activity**

The evaluation team found incidence of negative response of Bulgarian parents and their children to children and parents of Roma background. Instances of discrimination are most often insults to Roma children. There has been some incidence of discriminative behaviour on the part of Bulgarian parents, mainly in the form of resistance to the enrolment of Roma children at their children’s schools.

## G. SOFIA

### 1. Background of the Project

Activities of the Romani Baht Foundation under the project “Desegregation of the Fakulteta Neighbourhood, Sofia” started four years ago, during the 2003/2004 academic year. The organisation is working primarily with children in grades 1 to 6 of Fakulteta neighbourhood who are now the children enrolled in the 1st and 2nd grades at integrated schools four years ago. In the 2007/2008 academic year, the oldest among them are in the 6th grade. Additionally, the foundation is supporting students in the 123rd CSS “Stefan Stambolov”, the 92nd CSS “Aleko Konstantinov”, and the 28th “Dimitar Talev” PS in Krasna Polyana District, which are not included in the current REF project. This evaluation concerns solely the “Desegregation of the Fakulteta Neighbourhood, Sofia” project.

For the last academic year 2006/2007, a total of 247 children were enrolled in grades 1 to 5. 226 of them completed the academic year. 21 students in grades 1 to 4 dropped out from the project. 13 of them moved to different schools, with nearly half of them returning to the neighbourhood 75th PS “Todor Kableshev”. Eight children dropped out completely. In the 2006/2007 academic year, 33 of the first alumni of the foundation’s first implementation year of the project five years ago attended school and completed the 5th grade. In the current academic year (2007/2008), for the first time Romani Baht has a 6th grade with 26 children enrolled. No information is available concerning the remaining seven children who completed 5th grade in the previous (2006/2007) academic year.

The enrolment dynamics of the children in the project and the numbers to continue into the next grade can be seen in Table 20:

Table 20: Number of enrolled Roma children under the project by grade and gender in the period 2003-2007

Academic Year	Total number of children	Grades								Gender	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	M	F
2007-2008	250	55	64	49	33	20	26		3	132	118
2006/2007	247	68	35	31	35	33				132	115
2005/2006	174	56	58	28	26	6				89	85
2004/2005	148	38	41	52	17					77	71
2003/2004	93	48	37	8						50	43

Source: Romani Baht Foundation

What should be noted is the high degree of grade repetition and fluctuation among children under the project. In the 2004/2005 academic year, almost one third of the children in 2nd grade did not pass into 3rd grade, only 50 percent of the students enrolled in the 3rd grade passed into the 4th, and one third of those enrolled in the 5th passed on to the 6th grade. The 2005/2006 academic year, too, was difficult for the project, with only a little over half of the children passing on from 1st grade into 2nd, and from 2nd to 3rd. The remainder returned to the neighbourhood school. The foundation stated that individual children dropped out from the project due to a large number of unexcused absences. That, however, does not account for the fluctuation in all the years of the project operation up until the 2006/2007 academic year. In the year under review, 2006/2007, the organisation re-increased the students in 6th and 7th grades but with a significantly lower number of dropouts compared to previous years.

### ***1.1 Access to Education for Roma Children from Fakulteta Neighbourhood***

The desegregation project implemented by Romani Baht is the only one in Sofia and it is operating in one of the largest segregated Roma neighbourhoods, Fakulteta. According to data provided by the foundation in its project proposal, the population of the neighbourhood is approximately 40,000. This figure is also confirmed by other NGOs. According to Krasna Polyana district authorities, the official number of registered residents is approximately 15,000-16,000, while according to local council estimates, they are 25,000.<sup>94</sup> No institution or organisation will undertake to determine the number of children aged 6 to 16 and eligible for compulsory education. Official institutions have been unable to establish the exact number of residents of Fakulteta due to the constant migration of citizens without registration of residence to and from Sofia, and the common practice of a number of households registering at one and the same address. There are no official data on the incoming flow to the neighbourhood, and especially on the number of accompanying children. At the same time, institutions, civil organisations and experts agree that there are children outside the system.

Within Fakulteta neighbourhood there is one school from preparatory to 8th grade where during the last academic year the official number of enrolled children was 1,100, according to Romani Baht data. Again, according to foundation data, quoted by RIE Sofia, during the 2006/2007 academic year, 605 children from Fakulteta attended host schools in Vazrazhdane and Ovcha Kupel residential districts. In other words, 1,705 students from Fakulteta in grades 1 to 8 were enrolled in educational institutions. Another 247 children were included in the REF funded Romani Baht project. Viewed together, the data of RIE Sofia and Romani Baht reveal that a total 1,952 students from Fakulteta neighbourhood were included in the educational system during the last academic year.

<sup>94</sup> The data was provided at an interview with a representative of Krasna Polyana district conducted as part of the survey "Roma in Sofia – from isolation to integration" of a team of the Department of Sociology with Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" headed by Prof. Maya Grekova, Ph.D in the period April-June 2007.

The problem described aims to draw the attention toward the lack of accurate information on the number of children living in Fakulteta neighbourhood. Without accurate information on the number of children for whose education they are responsible, Sofia Municipality, MES, RIE, or the civic organisations are not in a position to fulfil any of their obligations as per the law or the respective organisation's mission. It is, therefore, necessary for the municipality, in co-operation with NGOs, but without transferring full responsibility to them, to conduct a survey of the children within the boundaries of Fakulteta. Such a survey would provide detailed information on the population of the neighbourhood. Speculations on its size before the donors, the media, and the public rebound negatively on the target group's image.

### **1.2. Access of Roma Students to Integrated Schools**

RIE Sofia data reveal that Roma students from Fakulteta at present attend nine integrated host schools in the districts Vazrazhdane and Ovcha Kupel. These are the 92nd CSS "Aleko Konstantinov", 123rd CSS "Stefan Stambolov", 28th PS "Dimitar Talev", 67th PS "Vasil Drumev", 136th PS "Lyuben Karavelov", 66th CSS "Filip Stanislavov", 88th CSS "Dimitar Popnikolov", and 149th CSS "Ivan Hadzhiyski".

The Romani Baht foundation is working with the following five schools within the Ovcha Kupel and Vazrazhdane districts:

- » 67th PS "Vasil Drumev" – Vazrazhdane district
- » 136th PS "Lyuben Karavelov" – Vazrazhdane District
- » 66th CSS "Filip Stanislavov" – Ovcha Kupel District
- » 88th CSS "Dimitar Popnikolov" – Ovcha Kupel District
- » 149th CSS "Ivan Hadzhiyski" – Ovcha Kupel District

At the beginning of the project, the foundation started work with four of the above schools, and in 2005 it enrolled children at the 67th PS "Vasil Drumev" in Batalova Vodenitsa, which was traditionally attended by Roma children from the neighbourhood. Schools in Krasna Polyana district, in which the project used to enroll Roma children, discontinued their working relations with Romani Baht after the foundation sued them for discrimination on ethnic ground for the refusal of one of the schools to enrol Roma children.<sup>95</sup> As a result, children from Fakulteta remained enrolled at schools in this district but the relationship between principals and the foundation has been discontinued.

The distribution of the children under the project is uneven, especially during the current academic year, which has resulted in creating conditions for secondary segregation of schools. Roma students in the 67th PS in Batalova Vodenitsa and in the 136th PS are several times more than in the other schools. At the same time, the number of Roma children in the

<sup>95</sup> See BHC, *Five Years Later*, p.106.



88th CSS – which is one of the largest schools included in the project – is the merely symbolical: 20. According to the foundation and the deputy principal, this is because of the students in 4th grade who returned to the 75th segregated school. It is the school’s deputy principal’s view that this does not speak well of his school.<sup>96</sup> No reasons were given for the dropouts. The distribution of children under the project and the dynamics of their inclusion in host schools through the desegregation project can be seen in Table 21:

Table 21: Number of children enrolled under the project by academic year and school

Academic Year	Number of Children per School				
	67th PS	136th PS	88th CSS	66th CSS	149th CSS
2007-2008	60	96	20	43	36
2006-2007	46	82	36	44	39
2005-2006	26	62	24	34	28
2004-2005	-	55	25	38	30
2003-2004	-	36	16	21	20

Source: Romani Baht Foundation

Up until last year, there was a relative balance of the children at host schools. The only exception was the 136th school where twice as many children were enrolled compared to the remaining schools. The 136th school, too, traditionally has a large number of Roma children who live in the area around Konstantin Velichkov Blvd. Still, the school was included in the project from the very beginning of the desegregation project. This is also one of the schools with the highest decrease in the number of children of Bulgarian ethnic background.

### 1.3. The Desegregation Trap in Sofia

The decrease in the number of ethnic Bulgarian students at host schools is seen as a major problem of all parties to the desegregation process – Romani Baht, RIE, and principals and teachers at the schools. Even after transferral from the segregated school in Fakulteta, Roma children are still isolated from their peers. “There has been a clear trend from last year for children of Bulgarian background leaving these schools. The overall number of children is also dropping and this has lead to an increase in the number of Roma children.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with the Deputy Principal of 88th CSS “Dimitar Popnikolov”, Sofia, 28 November 2007.

So we are basically effecting a secondary segregation of the Roma population which is not a positive indicator" – was the view of one of an expert with RIE Sofia.<sup>97</sup>

In effect, the number of Roma children exceeds 50 percent in two of the five schools included in the project – the 67th and the 136th. A decrease in the number of Bulgarian students, however, is being registered by all integrated schools in Krasna Polyana, Ovcha Kupel, and Vazrazhdane districts, although in most schools Roma children do not exceed 30 percent. This is the case for instance, with the 149th CSS in Ovcha Kupel the children under the project account for a mere 7 percent. RIE Sofia representatives state that neighbouring schools are full, "neighbouring" meaning not only located nearby but also with a smaller number of Roma children.

According to RIE Sofia data, the two schools with secondary segregation are the 67th PS "Vasil Drumev" and the 136th PS "Lyuben Karavelov". One of the causes of this was the desegregation project's strategy, as both schools are located close to Roma neighbourhoods and a large portion of the children from these neighbourhoods were already enrolled in them. Despite this, these schools were included in the project. In effect, more than half of the students under the desegregation project, i.e. 150 for the 2007/2008 academic year, attend schools of predominantly Roma students.

RIE data show that around 60 percent of the students in the 67th PS "Vasil Drumev" in Batalova Vodenitsa are of Roma background. The school traditionally enrolls the Roma children living in Batalova Vodenitsa, but it was included in the desegregation project anyway. PS "Vasil Drumev" has accepted a total of 239 students for the current academic year, of which 60 of Roma background living in Batalova Vodenitsa, and 60 living in Fakulteta. The evaluation team was left with excellent impression with the school principal and the teachers interviewed. Students' results from the tests, the dynamics of their academic achievement, and the level of attendance are at a much higher level than that of students at the segregated 75th school. Even so, further increase in the number of Roma students at 67th school would lead to a secondary segregation from their peers of different ethnic background.

RIE data show that more than 70 percent of the students in the 136th PS are of Roma ethnic background. The school traditionally enrolls Roma children living in the area around Konstantin Velichkov Blvd., Pernik Street, and for several years now, from the "Vietnamese" community housing area, said the school principal. The decrease in children numbers started with the 2004/2005 academic year, RIE evaluation reveals.<sup>98</sup> Currently, students of Bulgarian background are mostly in the upper secondary grades. The constituency of the lower grades is predominantly Roma.

In order to attract the children from the Roma neighbourhood, the principal of the 136th ES introduced a variety of initiatives and projects, such as "Elder brother, younger brother", and "Schooling for All Children", as well as free lunch for students at the Children's Palace. The school's strategy is to compete with the remaining ("Bulgarian") schools by providing various services for its students. Bulgarian families from the district (Zone B19), however, will not enrol their children at the school despite the services provided.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with the Integrated Education Expert with RIE Sofia conducted on 15 November 2007.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with the Integrated Education Expert with RIE Sofia conducted on 15 November 2007.

“We are trying to step in but the public won’t let us” the principal explains. The experience of the 136th PS shows that in order for the school to have a more successful standing in the district community, work needs to be done on overcoming anti-Roma stereotypes. Otherwise the services offered benefit only children from the ethnic community. This, in turn, results yet again in segregation of Roma students. The school cannot win this “battle” without the support of the local municipality and Romani Baht. What is sought in this particular case is municipal support.

Pulling out of children is in progress not only in schools with over 50 percent Roma children. Another school which has been labelled “Gypsy” by the residents of Ovcha Kupel district is the 149th CSS, the principal of the school said.<sup>99</sup> In the beginning of 2007/2008 school year, there were only 36 Roma children out of a total of 520. According to RIE Sofia, similar problems are being encountered by the schools with Roma children in Krasna Polyana.<sup>100</sup> RIE Sofia representative stated that one of the successful desegregation models is the 88th SS with 30 Roma children out of a total of 1100 and existing further capacity.

## 2. Project Team

The Sofia project comprises 15 people: 2 administrators, 4 educators, 7 teacher assistants, 1 parent work co-ordinator, 1 accountant, and 1 team leader. Assoc. Prof. Angelina Ivanova is the educational expert to the project, and Mihail Georgiev is the team leader. The project appointed one teacher assistant per partner school. For two of them, the 67th and the 136th, where the number of participant children is the highest, an additional teacher assistant was appointed in the last two years. A teacher assistant under the project would normally be responsible for about 30 children.

The duties of the teacher assistant in Sofia are similar to those of the counsellor with the other desegregation projects. Teacher assistants look after the children at school and keep record of their achievement and development feed data back to the foundation. They also act as the link between the school and the family. To this end, they keep track of attendance and marks and submit weekly reports which are later discussed at the team’s Friday meetings. They also assist teachers in a variety of day-to-day situations and co-operate in the communication with the students’ families. In the morning, the teacher assistant takes the children from the neighbourhood and accompanies them to the host school where he or she remains during classes, and then returns with them to the neighbourhood.

The educational expert is responsible for maintaining contacts with school principals and the remaining institutions – the RIE and the municipality; she is also responsible for organising transportation, for supporting teacher assistants, and is basically in charge of the day-to-day implementation of the project. The educational expert monitors the data

<sup>99</sup> Interview with the principal of the 149th PSS “Ivan Hadzhiyski”, Sofia, 15 October 2007.

<sup>100</sup> Based on data obtained from interviews with teachers and school principals in Krasna Polyana in the period May-June 2007 by a team from the Sociology Department of Sofia University, headed by Prof. Maya Grekova.

on students' marks and attendance, the record keeping, and is responsible for the methodological implementation of the project. During the 2006/2007 academic year, with Assoc. Prof. Ivanova as the educational expert, withdrawing of children was reduced while achievement at school improved. The project team is working in a relatively unfavourable environment for carrying out desegregation, with an uncertain political will at the local level, not always well-intentioned institutions, and with a much less expressed demographic problem in Sofia than in the other regions across the country. The project team has been able to achieve good results with the children's academic achievements. At the same time, the project's strategy to enroll over half of the students in the schools where Roma children had already been schooled, had lead to re-segregation in the 136th school of the children from the Fakulteta neighbourhood and the children from the Vietnamese boarding houses and those living along Konstantin Velichkov Blvd., which are not covered by the Romani Baht Project. Unless the number of Roma children taking part in the desegregation project, who are enrolled in the 67th school, is decreased, within two years they will also be segregated from their peers.

### 3. Organization of the Project

#### 3.1. Project Participants

Quoting the project educational expert, Assoc. Prof. Ivanova, the Foundation adheres to two basic principles of inclusion of new children in the project:

1. It accepts only 1st and 2nd grade students and organises a summer school camp for them.
2. Requires school principals to set a limit to the number of children enrolled in the 1st grade.

The foundation works to include children at integrated schools from the 1st grade, as most children in the Fakulteta neighbourhood do not attend kindergarten and have not been included in a pre-school preparatory group, which means that at this initial stage they are already falling behind study content. The project educational expert backs this with her experience at the Fakulteta school: "Because 70 to 80 percent of children in the 1st grade are still illiterate in April. They do not know the alphabet; they cannot spell but are already at the spelling-book stage. This basically means that by the 3rd or 4th grade they are already struggling. This is the reason for the 30 percent of dropouts in the 75th school".<sup>101</sup>

Some of the participant children have not attended kindergarten or preparatory grade at the 75th school. In order to prepare them for the 1st grade, the foundation organises a summer school for all students to be included under the project in the respective academic year. The summer school lasts for one month and classes are taught by elementary school teachers with the help of teacher assistants. The children are

<sup>101</sup> Interview with Assoc. Prof. Angelina Ivanova, Educational Expert to the project, Sofia, 15 October 2007.

divided into two groups of 20. Last year classes were taught by the teachers from the 75th school.

The project dynamics indicates that in the majority of cases where host schools have enrolled new students in the 2nd grade, part of these students invariably drop out because of learning difficulties. During the second year of the project, there were at least 20 new children with a total of 58 students for the year; only 31 of them enrolled in the 3rd grade next year, i.e. 27 students dropped out. This was a steady trend for almost all cases of including children in grades other than the 1st.

Previously, the Foundation did not follow this basic principle and enrolled new students in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. This changed last academic year with Assoc. Prof. Ivanova as the project educational expert. The number of children enrolled at host schools after the 1st grade was reduced, and so was the overall fluctuation of children in the project.

In the last academic year, the organisation worked only with children up to the 5th grade, host school principals and project advisor reports show. Despite of the adopted approach, the project proposal submitted to REF envisaged work with students up to the 8th grade. The interim report to the donor, which the foundation availed to the evaluation team, reflected only activities and achievement of children with whom actual work had been done.

By requiring from principals to define specific limits to the number of children to be enrolled, the foundation avoids the confrontation for which it is known. At the same time, this allows teachers to have their say in how many children they can work with. On the other hand, decreasing overall numbers of children and the schools' strife to ensure maximum staffing levels lead to increase in the number of Roma children the schools need to accept. Conforming with the needs of the schools leads to the situation already described in the 67th PS and the 136th PS where Roma children under the desegregation project fill up almost half of the class.

### **3.2 Number of Roma Children per Class**

It should be stressed that the data provided below concern only Roma children participating in the project of the foundation. Additionally, there are Roma children in the 67th school in Batalova Vodenitsa, and also in the 136th PS from the Konstantin Velichkov Blvd., Pernik Street and the "Vietnamese" community housing area. The 66th CSS has children of various ethnic backgrounds – Turkish, Armenian, Romanian, the Romani Baht teacher assistant working at the school claims.

For the 2006/2007 academic year, the desegregation project enrolled 60 new children in the 1st grade. In the 2nd grade host schools were attended by 35 children, 31 in the 4th, and 35 in the 5th. According to Romani Baht data, distribution of children per class is as follows:

- » 67th PS – 10-12 children
- » 136th PS – 10-12 children
- » 66th CSS – 4-5 children
- » 88th CSS – 4-5 children
- » 149th CSS – 4-5 children

Thus in the first two schools the Roma students apparently predominate in the classrooms.

### ***3.3 Organization of the Project***

On Fridays, the educational expert and the teacher assistants discuss the attendance and achievement figures for the past week, as well as any problems the children may have encountered. These meetings are open for the parents of the participant children and their participation is eagerly sought for. The foundation organises parents meetings in the neighbourhood on the first Friday of each month, which are also attended by teachers from the host schools. Each child has an individual record with information on their family, social status, and home environment. The record contains details of the child's achievement throughout the academic year.

Each of the schools included in the project has signed a co-operation agreement with Romani Baht detailing the responsibilities of the two parties. The foundation is responsible for: ensuring the children's attendance at school; procuring the conditions for a full-day study process; providing meals; securing parent active participation; solving any problems arising of the implementation of the desegregation projects. Schools, on the other hand, provide the foundation with feedback on any encountered problems and monitor and control teachers' performance as per their job descriptions.

The project uses five buses hired from the Public Transport Municipal Company (PTMC). Students attend school in two shifts. Since second-sift students at the 149th CSS and the 88th CSS in Ovcha Kupel finish classes at different times, in order for them to be able to go home, it has been necessary to leave after-school classes earlier or miss the last class. At the time of this evaluation, the project team was working to solve this problem.

### ***3.4 Academic Achievement of Participant Children***

The GPA of participant children for 2006/2007 school year is very good (4.80). The achievement figure provided by Romani Baht was calculated on the basis of the marks in BLL and mathematics only, the reason being that these are the two subjects in the focus of the foundation. The highest achievement was registered in the 136th CSS with 5.50. For the last academic year (2006/2007) the achievement of participant children registered improvement in all host schools. The achievement of students at the 149th CSS improved by one point compared to the preceding 2005/2006 academic year. Achievement of students in the 136th school registered an improvement of almost 1 point, from a very good 4.80

to excellent 5.50. The achievement of children in the 67th school registered a drop in BLL and mathematics of 0.2. Eight children were left for additional exams from grades 1 to 4. Only one of them did not pass.

All children in grades 1 to 4 are included in SBGs. Host schools do not have SBGs for students of the 5th and the 6th grades. In order to compensate for any gaps, children utilise extra classes within the compulsory tutorials provided by teachers at all schools.

### 3.5 Absences from School

The children under the desegregation project in Sofia have the highest number of absences compared to the remaining desegregation projects, although the total number of participant children in Sofia does not significantly exceed that of other projects. According to project records, a large portion of the absences were of a limited number of the same children. However, the problem of children’s attendance was brought up as essential by all principals interviewed by the evaluation team. They were unanimous in their view that habitual absences are at the bottom-line of the spiral of omitted study content which is difficult to fill up at a later stage, thus leading to the child’s falling behind in studies, and, often, to dropping out of school.

Table 22: Participant children absences for the 2006-2007 academic year

School name	No. of absences
66th PS	460
136th PS	840
88th CSS	532
66th CSS	428
149th CSS	625

Source: Romani Baht Foundation

If we take into account the number of enrolled Roma children in the 2006/2007 academic year, the rate of absences per child is highest in the 88th CSS (14.7 absences on the average per child) and in the 149th CSS (16 absences on the average per child).

Teachers firmly believe that habitual absences lead to difficulties for these children in catching up with the study content. At the same time, schools agree that by not sanctioning absences, they further decrease the children’s and parents’ motivation for regular attendance, thus causing an infinite loop of irregular attendance and difficulties with the study content.

In order to find a solution to this problem, teacher assistants at school keep records of all absences, visit parents and talk to them. Sometimes they have to go back to the neigh-

bourhood and return the child back to school, if there are no actual health problems. The foundation team described successful cases where project members visited a child's home on several occasions to speak to the parents.

### 3.6 Results from the NEA Tests

Table 23: Average results from the NEA tests in Sofia by school and ethnic group of the students

Subject	Scool Name									
	149th CSS		88th CSS		66th CSS		136th PS		75th ES	
	<i>Bul</i>	<i>Roma</i>	<i>Bul</i>	<i>Roma</i>	<i>Bul</i>	<i>Roma</i>	<i>Bul</i>	<i>Roma</i>		<i>Roma</i>
<b>BLL</b>	13	9	17	9	11	10	14	9		7
<b>Mathematics</b>	16	9	16	13	16	17	16	13		12

Source: Romani Baht Foundation

35 students from the 4th grade participating in the desegregation project of Romani Baht took part in the national external assessment in BLL and mathematics. The tests were conducted in four of the partner schools. The 67th ES did not have 4th graders in the last academic year, as the foundation only started working with it three years ago. The test results of participant children in BLL are between 9 and 10 points equalling a good mark of 4 in the 6-point scale.

The Roma students in integrated school did better on both tests compared to the Roma students in the segregated 75th PS. The only exception is the mathematics test in the 149th CSS. The difference from the achievement of peers is significant in the 88th CSS – good for participant children and excellent for the rest. The results of participant children are closest to those of the remaining children in the 66th CSS where the majority of children are of some minority background.

The highest test results at the mathematics test were achieved in the 66th CSS equalling an excellent mark (or 6.00 in the 6-point scale). The achievement was lowest for the 149th CSS with a good mark (4.00) against a very good achievement for the 136th PS and the 88th CSS. A point to make here is that at the mathematics test, students results vary to a lesser degree.

### 3.7 Incidence of Discrimination

According to statements by project teacher assistants, host schools with predominantly Roma children do not report any cases of discrimination by peer students. These are the 67th PS, the 136th PS and 66th CSS. In the first two schools, the basic group of



children are of Roma background. However, students in the 66th CSS are of different ethnic background and “the situation there is quite different”.<sup>102</sup> In the opinion of the principal of the 149th CSS “Ivan Hadzhiyski”, there is no tension between the children. Foundation data, however, reveal that problems between children have been reported at the schools in Ovcha Kupel, where their number is smaller. The Foundation and the principals have developed strong working relations which allow them to respond and look for solutions.

#### 4. Social Services and Extra-Curricular Activities

The desegregation project in Sofia provides the following social services: transportation to and from host schools for children in grades 1 to 4; provision of study aids and notebooks, and snacks. Older students are only provided transport to school; they have to go back home on their own, as the project buses collect children from grades 1 to 4 before older students’ classes finish. The lack of transport has caused some of the children in Ovcha Kupel to leave the host schools and continue their 5th grade at the neighbourhood school. This is the case with the 149th CSS in Ovcha Kupel. The school principal and project members state that parents’ are wary of letting their children return from school alone. The foundation has secured textbooks and study aids for students in the 5th or higher grades. School principals confirm that this is only true for some of the children, as Romani Baht does not have sufficient resources to provide for all of them. The foundation also managed to secure a donation of textbooks from “Narodna Prosveta” publishers for the children (irrespective of their participation in the project) in the schools.

Similar to some other projects throughout Bulgaria, the desegregation project in Sofia does not provide extra-curricular activities. The project proposal envisaged visits to the “Patilantsi” children’s complex as part of summer school.

According to the project’s educational expert, the extra-curricular activities are far from sufficient.<sup>103</sup> On the one hand, they are necessary in order to take the children out of the ghetto, as some of them have never set foot outside its boundaries; on the other, activities alongside their peers at the host schools are important for their integration. The main problem facing participant children in most of the extra-curricular activities organised by the host schools are the costs involved.

#### 5. Public Support

Attitudes of the different institutions toward the Romani Baht Foundation can be best summarised with the comment of a RIE Sofia expert, “The Foundation is quite active but

<sup>102</sup> Interview with the teacher assistant at the 136h PS “Lyuben Karavelov” who also worked with the 66th school.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Assoc. Prof. Angelina Ivanova, Educational Expert to the project, Sofia, 15 October 2007.

also, unfortunately, quite aggressive". Despite its methods or maybe because of them, Romani Baht has signed co-operation agreements with RIE Sofia and Sofia Municipality aimed at institutionalising their relationship.

The co-operation agreement with Sofia Municipality was effected following prolonged negotiations between the two parties which started with the foundation's approaching the Commission for Protection against Discrimination. The reason was the discrimination against the children from Fakulteta neighbourhood in Sofia by "denying Roma children equal start and quality education on the part of Sofia Municipality and Krasna Polyana district authorities".<sup>104</sup> At the Commission's recommendation, the two parties drafted a co-operation agreement.

The agreement specifies the number of Roma children to be enrolled in the schools of Krasna Polyana for the current academic year. These are, in effect, the students currently at schools outside the Fakulteta neighbourhood. In addition, the agreement provides for the enrolment of children participant in the desegregation project.

Under this agreement, the municipality undertakes to provide funding for lunch of all children of poor families at the host schools. Toward the end of November 2007, the schools began to set up committees whose task was to identify such children. The agreement also envisaged for the municipality to undertake half of the transportation costs for participant children to and from host schools. As at November 2007, the transport agreement with Sofia Municipal Council was yet to become operational.

The agreement stipulates the joint work of the foundation, the municipality, the principals of schools and kindergartens in determining the number of children for each academic year through:

- » Collation of the data on children in schooling age (as per the official state register) as early as January each year.
- » Identifying and agreeing on specific kindergartens and schools to work with children in preparatory groups/classes.
- » Working meetings between municipal officials, foundation representatives, and school and kindergarten principals to discuss enrolment of children as early as February.

The municipality undertook to fund parties and celebration of traditional Roma festivals – Vasilitsa, Todorov Day (the official day of Fakulteta), the 8th of April, as well as some other initiatives at the schools in Krasna Polyana district. The municipality also agreed to secure the study facilities and the teachers for the summer school organised by the foundation.

The partnership of Romani Baht and RIE Sofia, too, is regulated by means of an agreement. It stipulates:

<sup>104</sup> Press release by the Romani Baht Foundation published on the organisation's website at <http://baht2000.free.bg/pres.html>

- » The inclusion and celebration of Roma festivals in the annual school plans.
- » Priority training for teachers at host schools.
- » Conducting of seminars with the Commission for Protection from Discrimination with the participation of principals and teachers from the host schools.

For the 2006/2007 academic year, some of the host school teachers were enrolled for MA courses with the University of Blagoevgrad under the Phare 2003 programme.

At present, the foundation is not working with any of the churches in the Fakulteta neighbourhood.

## H. BERKOVITSA

### 1. Background of the Project

The 2006/2007 academic year was the first for the desegregation project in Berkovitsa. The project is implemented by the Nangle 2002 Foundation for Regional and Cultural Development headed by Tashko Tanov.

The desegregation model of the Berkovitsa project is unique among the remaining projects for two reasons:

- » This is the first desegregation project to be implemented by an organisation outside the target city.
- » From the very start of the project, the project team was mixed, with Bulgarian counsellors working directly with Roma children.

Berkovitsa has a population of approximately 15,700. The town has one segregated Roma neighbourhood, Rakovitsa, with a population of about 3,430 Roma. There are 857 households. The neighbourhood is located at the entrance of Berkovitsa and is removed from the town schools. Berkovitsa does not have public transport to ensure communication and commuting between Rakovitsa and the remaining parts of town. The primary occupation of the Roma population in Rakovitsa is wood-cutting and retail trade, with seasonal migration. The absence of the parents who also often take the children along is one of the main issues in the work of the Nangle Foundation and teachers with the children in the neighbourhood. There is one segregated school in the neighbourhood, PS Georgi Sava Rakovski, with children in grades 1 to 8.

### 2. The School Network in Berkovitsa

There are four primary schools in Berkovitsa of which one is in the Roma neighbourhood. The town also has a remedial school for children with developmental disabilities, "Hristo Botev", a Home for Children Deprived of Parental Care (HCDPC), "L. Teneva" and a health boarding school. The majority of the children at the remedial school and at the health school are of Roma background. To determine the number of children with special educational and health needs would require a special survey which the research team was not in a position to conduct.

Nangle Foundation data point that the segregated school in the Rakovitsa neighbourhood has about 370 children from preparatory to 8th grade. Some children from Rakovitsa attend the school in the neighbouring village of Barziya which became a segregated Roma school.

As early as the first year, Nangle Foundation started work in all schools in Berkovitsa with children of Bulgarian ethnic background. Although these schools participate in the

desegregation project, students in them are not evenly distributed. The largest portion of Roma children attend the PS “Nikola Vaptsarov”, which started accepting with Roma children five years ago. Forty-nine Roma children attend the school and these have been enrolled in the Nangle project, according to the RIE Montana and Nangle data. The second primary school, “Hristo Smirnenski”, has 39 children under the project. This is also the school closest geographically to the Rakovitsa neighbourhood. The smallest number of Roma children attend the third primary school, “Ivan Vazov”.

According to the interviews conducted with the project team and the teachers from the remaining two schools, the third primary schools is gradually becoming known as the “Bulgarian” school and uses this to recruit students. The principal’s reasoning for this is that the school is working at its full capacity for Roma children from the nearby Home for Children. Even so, unless the three schools are not equally committed to educating Roma children, the first two schools are in danger of being labelled as “Roma” schools. In the same way, the third primary school “Ivan Vazov” may also become segregated, only as “Bulgarian”.

The shortage of children in schools in Berkovitsa, as in the remaining towns participating in the desegregation projects, is one of the major factors facilitating the inclusion of Roma children in host schools. Often it is Roma children who “save” the classes. Project team members in Berkovitsa as well as Montana, Pleven, and Vidin confirm that, toward the beginning of the academic year and the formation of the necessary documentation, the pressure on them increases to “provide” children. The only school in Berkovitsa to maintain its level of students for the last five years is the 3rd PS, which has the smallest number of Roma children. The remaining schools experience difficulties in forming classes and maintaining contracted staff levels.

Table 24: Total number of students in primary schools in Berkovitsa

Number of Children Enrolled	School		
	1st primary school	2nd primary school	3rd primary school
Number of children 2007-2008	291	267	335
Number of children five years ago	370	360	370

Source: Schools included in the project

At its project launch, the Nangle Foundation managed to enrol 100 children between preparatory and 8th grades at host schools in town. Of them, 71 completed the year successfully, the foundation claims. In the course of the school year, 29 children dropped out. The core group of dropouts were students in the 7th and 8th grades who did not manage to catch up with earlier education gaps from the segregated school.

### 3. The Project Team

All of the remaining desegregation projects were managed by people working, if not specifically in the neighbourhood, then within the same town. The Nangle 2000 foundation was registered in Montana, and had not operated in Berkovitsa prior to this project. Tashko Tanov, the project team leader and his colleague Veselin Lakov came from Montana. They were both among the pioneers of the desegregation project in Montana. From the point of view of the local community in Berkovitsa, the Nangle foundation started work as a “stranger” from another town. The project team leader is not a stranger to the Rakovitsa community, as he has relatives living there. The organisation, however, is a stranger to the majority of the Bulgarian community in town, and is, therefore, viewed with distrust.

The team of the desegregation project in Berkovitsa comprises 10 people: a team leader, an accountant, an educational expert, three counsellors, a co-ordinator, a driver, a co-ordinator for work with parents, and a consultant. The team leader is Tashko Tanov.

From its very start, the Berkovitsa project launched with a mixed team of Roma and Bulgarian background. With the exception of the team leader and the co-ordinator, the remaining team members are local. They were selected by means of a competition advertised in local media. At the start of each of the remaining desegregation projects, the key role of the counsellor working with the parents, whose function is to assure them of their children’s safety and to protect Roma children at host schools, was entrusted to Roma representatives. The Berkovitsa project is the only one to have Bulgarians as well on this position to work directly with parents and children from the Roma neighbourhood already since the start. The project appointed a counsellor for each of the three host schools. Two of these counsellors were of Bulgarian background and were appointed because of their education and training. “Parents [in the neighbourhood] look better on campaigning from outside. They are not confused with political functionaries, they have authority, and people can see that they are educated” is one of the grounds for the team leader appointing counsellors of Bulgarian background.<sup>105</sup> The co-ordinator of parent work and one of the counsellors come from the Rakovitsa neighbourhood. The educational expert to the project maintained communication with host school principals and teachers, and, of course, the parents. The educational expert was also responsible for managing the administrative work of the project. The entire project team worked closely with the parents from the Roma neighbourhood.

In the morning, the counsellors meet the children from the neighbourhood and take them to school. They stay at the school throughout the day until classes are over. The counsellors are the link between the parents and the teachers. Any problems arising at school are settled by the counsellor, the project educational expert, and the team leader. Each child has an individual record with the project.

The team organised an exchange visit to Pleven. During the first year, the project and its counsellors were consulted by Yosif Nunev, a state expert with MES. No teacher trainings at the host schools were conducted.

<sup>105</sup> Interview with Tashko Tanov, Chairperson of Nangle Foundation, Berkovitsa, 19 October 2007.

## 4. Organisation of the Project

### 4.1. Scope of the Project

Nangle chose to launch the desegregation project in Berkovitsa primarily with children up to 4th grade. More than 70 percent of the children included in the project for the first academic year were between preparatory (pre-school) to 4th graders. The largest number of children, a total of 40, was in preparatory or 1st grade. 37 students from 2nd to 4th grade were included, and 23 from the primary level, of which 10 in the 5th grade.

Table 25: Distribution of Roma children included in the process by grades

Academic Year	Total Children	Children by Grades								
		Prep.	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
2006-2007	100	20	20	12	10	15	10	2	5	6
2007-2008	123	16	21	20	15	9	16	12	9	5

Source: Nangle-2000 Foundation

For the current academic year, 123 children were enrolled under the project, of which 48 were new. The foundation continued to enrol children of all grades. However, the focus was maintained on children in the preparatory or 1st grade. Of them, 16 were in the preparatory grade, and 8 were new children enrolled in the 1st grade. The second largest group of students were enrolled in the 6th grade – 8 new children.

Students attend school in two shifts and are transported with one bus of the organisation. The driver pay and fuel costs are paid by the municipality. In case of bus repairs, children are transported in rented buses, or taxis for smaller groups. Because there is no operational public transport, the only way for most of the children from the Roma neighbourhood to get to the host schools is by means of the transport of the organisation. Some children can afford the fare and use taxis as a means of transport, Nangle data show, but these are only a few.

Initially, transportation to school of Roma children only, was met with discontent by the Bulgarians in Berkovitsa. Therefore, the local municipality organised two buses for children from other neighbourhoods attending the 1st and 2nd primary schools.

### 4.2. Dropouts

Almost one fourth of the children participating in the project left the host schools in the first year. The largest portion of dropouts at the host schools was that of students with completed 5th grade at the Rakovitsa school. Of the 13 children enrolled at host

schools after 5th grade, 8 dropped out in the course of the academic year. Among the 1st graders, only one child returned to the neighbourhood school. Interviews with the project team and the teachers from 1st and 2nd primary schools identify the low level of preparation those students received at the neighbourhood school in Rakovitsa as the main reason for this. Some cases were quoted of illiterate and innumerate students in the 6th to 8th grades. The situation in Berkovitsa reinforced what was already evident from previous experience, namely that the level of preparation at segregated schools will not allow students to join as equal at the respective educational level in the integrated schools.

The other main reason for dropping out is child labour and children's inclusion in herb and wood picking along with their parents at the start of the season in the spring. Four children in grades 5 to 8 were listed as travelling with their parents or "in the woods".

### 4.3. Problems with the Educational Process

The GPA of children participant in the project during the first year was 3.99.

Table 26: GPA for the first year of the desegregation project in Berkovitsa

School name	GPA at the end of the academic year by grades							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
1st Primary School "N.Y. Vapsarov"	5.00	3.98	3.00	4.19	3.46	-	3.50	4.00
Number of children in the class *	13	8	3	4	3	0	2	4
2nd Primary School "Hr. Smirnenski"	3.50	4.56	3.87	3.95	4.00	3.25	-	-
Number of children in the class	5	4	5	9	5	1	2	2
3rd Primary School "Ivan Vazov"	3.33	3.86	4.78	3.89	-	-	5.29	-
Number of children in the class	2	-	2	2	2	-	1	-

\* Number of children in the class at the beginning of the academic year. Where the average academic achievement is not provided, students dropped out. Source: Nangle-2000 Foundation

Only the children in the 1st grade at the first primary school registered a very good GPA of 5.00. It is worth noting that after the 2nd grade, there are only a few cases of children participant in the project with a GPA equal or higher than 4.00. The GPA of children from the 1st



primary school is 3.87, with 3.85 for the 2nd. The GPA at the 3rd PS is slightly higher at 4.23, and nine children under the project completed the academic year successfully.

The main problems encountered by teachers at host schools have to do with the gaps in children's education. The main forms of catching up are the semi-boarding groups (SBG) and additional (after-school) classes at specific subjects. SBGs are provided for by the local municipality. The 2nd and 3rd PS organised two mixed SBGs – one for grades 1 to 4, and one for grades 5 and 6. The SBGs for the lower secondary level was also attended by older students in the 7th and 8th grades. Teachers at both schools confirm that the existing groups are insufficient, considering the number of children and the need for individual work with each child. Teachers also expressed disagreement with the mixed group for the 1st to 4th graders, as children are bilingual and, beside help with preparation for the next they, they need extra help with learning Bulgarian. Two SBGs for the elementary levels were organised only at the 1st primary schools where children from the Roma neighbourhood predominate. SBGs are organised as follows: grades 1-3, grades 2-4, and grades 5-6. The foundation is paying for extra classes for individual work of teachers from host schools with children participant in the project.

According to the teachers in the host schools, the SBGs and extra classes are not sufficient to ensure the filling of earlier educational gaps. The evaluation team was also confronted with a number of complaints by teachers from the two schools applying to the majority of the children. The main concerns of teachers at these two host schools can be summarised as follows:

- » The majority of children have not attended kindergarten and preparatory groups, and do not speak Bulgarian well.
- » Teaching the same class with children of varying degrees of mastery of the language is very difficult.
- » Children lack classroom habits and lesson preparation habits.
- » Children lack personal and public hygiene habits.

The children in Berkovitsa are bilingual. Romanes is the main language in many of the families of the neighbourhood. Meetings with the project team and the teachers revealed that a large part of the children from Rakovitsa neighbourhood have not attended kindergarten or preparatory groups. According to the teachers, some students are still unable to catch up on any linguistic gaps as high as the 4th grade. "For them Bulgarian is like a foreign language, and this is discouraging and they lose interest" said a teacher from the 1st PS. Kindergarten may be up to the parent's choice; pre-school education, however, is compulsory. The municipality did not fulfil its responsibility to include all children in pre-school education, as well as to secure the necessary conditions for its realisation. Teachers recommend two-year pre-school education, so as to ensure sufficient focus on language acquisition during the first year.

Teachers also have difficulties in working with students of varying levels of knowledge. Some teachers even refused to work with Roma children. These issues were settled by the principals and representatives of the foundation. These difficulties in their work

with the children have caused quite a palpable tension between the teachers and the Nangle foundation.

At the same time, the strongly felt pessimism as regards the chance for positive results with Roma children, accompanied by attitudes such as “this is intolerable for the teacher”, and “it is impossible to work with these children”, or “the numbers are overwhelming” are bordering prejudice and discrimination. The RIE need to comply with its responsibility of providing active methodological support for the schools, and most of all, provide sufficient opportunities for training and retraining of teachers in Berkovitsa to work with bilingual children and in a multicultural environment. Evaluation team meetings with teachers identified the strong need for capacity building for work with Roma children.

In spite of the problems, the Nangle Foundation, in co-operation with the local authorities, has managed to advance the process of desegregation in Berkovitsa.

#### ***4.4. Work with the Parents***

The Nangle team see the motivation of parents as key to the success of the project. There are virtually no people with secondary education in the neighbourhood, Nangle representatives say. Most of its residents are street-vendors or wood-cutters who are successful even without education. The organisation is attempting to change these attitudes and convince parents to enrol their children at integrated schools. The main issue for Nangle here is parents' tendency to take their children along when leaving to work or going to the woods. This results in irregular attendance and/or dropping out of school. Individual meetings and talks seem to be the main approach of the organisation in their work with the parents. Nangle also has the support of the pastor of the neighbourhood Evangelical church who encourages its members to enrol their children in the schools outside of the neighbourhood and offers its premises for meetings.

The foundation has organised a number of parent meetings in the neighbourhood at the Evangelical church. These take place with the participation of teachers from the host schools. Transport has been provided for parent-teacher meetings announced at the schools but attendance is very low.

#### ***4.5. Recruiting of Children for the Project***

The organisation started work with the parents on enrolment of their children at host schools as early as April 2006. In the summer of the 2007/2008 academic year, teachers from host schools visited the neighbourhood along with the Nangle team to persuade parents to enrol their children in the respective schools.

According to Nangle and host school teacher information, problems were encountered with obtaining leaving certificates from the segregated school in the neighbourhood. Parents experienced delays and were asked to return several times. Certificates were obtained following the interference of the municipality and official requests by principals of the host schools.

The Nangle foundation is literally fighting the neighbourhood schools for the children. During the national teacher strike, the principal of the segregated school tried to attract back children already enrolled in the host schools. In order to keep them, Nangle organised classes at the host schools which were taught by the counsellors of the project.

#### 4.6. Results from the NEA Tests

Table 27: Average results at the NEA tests in Berkovitsa.

	Mathematics			BLL		
	<i>Eligible</i>	<i>No. took the test</i>	<i>Average result</i>	<i>Eligible</i>	<i>No. took the test</i>	<i>Average result</i>
<b>Roma children in the G.S. Rakovski Primary School</b>	38	33	10.78	38	35	10.78
<b>Roma children in integrated schools</b>	12	12	11.91	12	12	10.99

Source: Nangle-2000 Foundation and RIE Montana. Results of the achievement of students from the 4th primary school "G.S Rakovski" were provided by RIE Montana.

A total of twelve 4th graders took part in the NEA tests in BLL and mathematics, out of a total of 14 enrolled under the project. Two of them have resource teachers as children with developmental disabilities follow an individual study plan, and, therefore, were not eligible to participate in the national assessment. Children participant in the project received an average of 10.99 points which equals a good mark of 3.67 in the 6-point scale. The average number of points at the mathematics test was 11.91 points which equals 4.42. The results at the mathematics test of 4th graders in the segregated school were significantly lower than those in the integrated schools. Out of a total of 38 students in the 4th grade in the Rakovitsa neighbourhood school, 35 took the test, according to RIE Montana data.

## 5. Social Profile of the Project

The Berkovitsa project provides a full package of social services for all children participants. These include transportation, a set of textbooks, notebooks, and other study aids, a set of clothes and a pair of shoes, as well as extra classes. The project provides for snacks at lunch-time at the school booth. The project also bought health record books for the children. According to the team leader and the project educational expert, the social services provided are the reason why parents agree to have their children enrolled at the host schools.

The Berkovitsa project did not have an extra-curricular activities budget allocation for the first year. These were, however, included in the second project proposal. Starting from the second term of the 2007/2008 academic year, the foundation is planning to organise a number of activities for children of both Roma and Bulgarian background. Some of these activities are planned to take place in the town's "chitalishte" (community centre). These include a dance group, a sports team, and a pottery workshop.

## 6. Public Support for the Project

At the start of the project in Berkovitsa, the foundation encountered public distrust. "They did not believe we were serious. Why us? They only believed us when they saw the bus" says project team leader Tashko Tanov. The inclusion of Roma children in the schools was accompanied by a few cases of Bulgarian parents withdrawing their children to the 3rd primary school where there were, allegedly, less children under the project. The number of such families was insignificant. Teachers spoke of parent's disagreement: "One learns of tolerance in one's immediate environment. At home, any child would hear, well, they don't pay taxes, electricity bills." Therefore, teachers at host schools recommend stronger focus on work with parents of Bulgarian background.

The municipality supported the Nangle-2000 foundation and the desegregation project. It agreed to cover all expenses for transport and driver pay. It also provided for SBGs with the schools although their number is far from sufficient in the teachers' view. The municipality supports the foundation politically; however, the evaluation team was left with the impression that there is room for a more active position in disputes between Nangle and the segregated school, such as the problem with children's leaving certificates. One of the basic lines of action, however, should be to tighten control on attendance at the segregated school in Rakovitsa neighbourhood. There have been a series of signals by the Nangle team and teachers in town of continuous absences of students. And the problems they face at inclusion in the integrated schools are indicative of the gaps in the preparation they are provided in the segregated school.

The Berkovitsa desegregation project launched about a year after the municipality was successfully sued for discrimination. The municipal policy was set by a Framework Programme for the Integration of Ethnic Minorities in the Municipality of Berkovitsa, passed by the local Municipal Council. The chosen format of the document allows the municipality to only make policy statements but not commit to specific actions, deadlines, or expenditure.

One of the measures envisaged in the Municipal Framework Programme is the integration of Roma children in host schools. Their enrolment in integrated schools was planned to start with the 2005/2006 school year with the moving of 100 children from the segregated school during the first year. In fact, the process started a year later with Nangle-2000 activities. During the first year of the project, 100 children were transferred

to integrated schools, which is the exact number envisaged in the programme. The municipal programme also envisages the gradual inclusion of children at host schools where their number was to increase by 20 percent in the second year, 30 percent in the third year, and 50 percent in the fourth. This timeframe ends with the 2008/2009 academic year. The programme plans the transferral of approximately 200 Roma children, but these are not all the students at the segregated school. Still, the inclusion of Roma children is one of the few specific commitments on the part of local authorities. As part of the framework programme, the municipality undertook to provide transport for Roma children to the host schools. This commitment is being fulfilled.

The programme envisages a variety of measures to support the inclusion of Roma children, such as:

- » Stimulating young Roma people completing their primary education to continue into a higher levels by providing information on donor organisations for financial support of students from ethnic minorities.
- » Implementation of various forms of efficient work with parents who will not allow their children to attend kindergartens and school.
- » Specialised activities by school psychologists and educational counsellors for the facilitation of the mutual adaptation of Roma and non-Roma children to the new educational environment, and the appointment of teacher assistants of Roma background.
- » Implementation of various activities at kindergartens and schools in view of building positive attitude toward the educational integration of Roma children, etc.

Until the funds, the specific timeframes and contractors are allocated, the municipality cannot guarantee the implementation of the measures.

The Regional Educational Inspectorate in Montana is openly supporting the project and is acquainted with it. However, there is still room for stricter methodological control on teaching and attendance levels at the segregated school in Rakovitsa neighbourhood, as well as response to the need for additional qualification and training of teachers at host schools.

It is the view of the Nangle manager that political parties in Berkovitsa, including extremist nationalist Ataka are supportive of the project. The desegregation project was given positive publicity in the media even at the very beginning when public opinion was not favourable.



## Evaluation of the Costs of a Nationwide Roma Education Desegregation Programme

**U**nder the agreement with the Roma Education Fund (REF), the evaluation team undertook to determine the estimated costs for a national Roma education desegregation programme in Bulgaria. The purpose of this evaluation is to calculate (on the basis of current prices) the approximate cost of the enrolment and schooling of Roma children in the integrated schools in those areas of Bulgaria with express political will to that end.

### 1. Methodology of the Evaluation

The points of departure for this analysis of the costs per annum of a nationwide school desegregation programme are the good practices of the current REF funded projects. Costs will be calculated as an extrapolation of the integration costs per Roma child in an optimally functioning desegregation project including all necessary parameters of the current projects on the total number of Roma students enrolled in the geographically segregated schools in the urban environment, for which express political will and/or some degree of commitment on the part of national or local authorities has been expressed for the realisation of educational integration.

This evaluation does not apply to:

- » Geographically segregated schools in rural areas operating under different economic circumstances and lacking experience in the NGO implemented desegregation projects, as well as in absence of political will for their integration.
- » The costs for the initial purchasing of buses and other transportation means where necessary.
- » The savings due to possible closure of segregated schools in Roma neighbourhoods.
- » The costs for the integration of Roma children enrolled in special remedial schools for children with developmental disabilities, as well as for the integration of children placed in homes for children with deviant behaviour.

The estimation of necessary costs for the implementation of a national school desegregation programme in Bulgaria involves the following three steps:

### **Step 1: Estimating of the costs per integration of one Roma child participating in a fully operating non-governmental desegregation project**

- » Estimates will be made on the assumption that the activities funded under the current desegregation projects (transportation of children; provision of counsellors or co-ordinators at the host schools; provision of additional educational and extra-curricular activities; delivery of study aids; administration of the projects) will also be necessary in a nationwide programme.
- » Based on the observation of operating projects, we will determine the degree of optimum utilisation of available resources by them. This includes, for instance, the optimal use of buses; the existence of unnecessary costs or unsatisfied needs; and the optimal utilisation of the school network within the city.
- » Finally, we estimate the average integration costs per Roma child by dividing budgets of optimally operating projects by the number of Roma students participating in them.

### **Step 2: Determining of the number and location of geographically segregated Roma schools for which there exists an express political will for desegregation, as well as the number of Roma children enrolled in them.**

- » Based on programme documents and statements by government officials representing the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), identifying the types of segregated educational institutions (schools and kindergartens) with express political will for desegregation.
- » Identifying of those educational institutions, including their location and calculating as precisely as possible the total number of Roma children enrolled in them.
- » Determining the degree to which it will be possible to apply the desegregation project model described in **Step 1** for schools and kindergartens in the final list.
- » Determining as precisely as possible the number of Roma children for whom the **Step 1** model would be applicable.

### **Step 3: Determining of the cost of a nationwide programme for territorial desegregation of Roma education**

- » We will calculate the final figure of the cost per annum for a nationwide programme for territorial desegregation of Roma education after multiplying the final number of children to be desegregated as per **Step 2** by the average cost per integration of one Roma child for one year as per **Step 1**.
- » Following the calculation of costs per annum, we will be able to derive an estimate of the costs for a period of five and ten years of programme implementation.



In addition to estimating the costs of a national Roma education desegregation programme, the team will be able to obtain the number of Roma children who will remain outside the scope of the programme on an annual basis. Once the number of Roma children to be enrolled under the programme for one year is established, we will be able to deduce that figure from the total number of Roma children at compulsory schooling age enrolled in territorially segregated schools. This will leave us with the estimated number of children who will remain outside the scope of a future national programme.

The evaluation team heard from project teams conflicting estimates of the differences between the cost involved in the desegregation of one child for the first and subsequent years. This is why the current evaluation does not take possible differences into account.

## 2. Implementation of the Methodology

### Step 1

Annex 1 presents the overall data on the currently operating desegregation projects including a number of indicators also observed in previous evaluations.<sup>106</sup> Here they are appended not only with the ratio of total projects budget to the number of successfully graduated children (i.e. cost per graduate) but also the ratio of the total projects budget to the number of children participant during the year (i.e. cost per participant). It is the evaluation team's belief that the latter presents a more adequate analytical point of departure for the calculation of the cost for a nationwide Roma education desegregation programme. Obviously, a comprehensive desegregation programme will need to include not only successful Roma children in terms of grade completion but also potential dropouts.

The data in Annex 1 clearly indicates that the lowest cost per child participant in the project is 170 euros (the cost for Vidin). If the cost for the 2006/2007 academic year of this project is compared to that for the 2004/2005 academic year (which was 90.8 US dollars), it will be noted that there has been a substantial increase over a period of two years. This increase resulted from the increase of the prices of almost all of its components, namely transportation fuel, the study aids, rent, and labour costs. Currently, the project in Vidin is the one with the highest degree of optimum performance of all REF funded desegregation projects. We could accept that it is the project containing all necessary components in a relatively adequate proportion considering its specific conditions of its operation in this city. Still, it has to be taken into account that, during the 2004/2005 academic year, 730 children took part in the Vidin project, of which 605 completed the year successfully. The current technical and staff resources of the project, which have not changed substantially compared to 2005, seems to allow assuming the additional burden which would equal the number of children for the 2004/2005 academic year. This would present an additional optimisation resulting in the reduction of costs per child participant. If the total

<sup>106</sup> See: Krassimir Kanev, *The First Steps: An Evaluation of the Non-governmental Desegregation Projects in Six Bulgarian Cities*, Budapest, OSI, 2003, p. 49; BHC, *Five years late*, p. 125-126.

budget for the 2006/2007 academic year is divided by the number of children participants during the peak 2004/2005 year, the resulting figure would be the **optimum cost of 130 euros per child participant**.

However, it should be taken into account that this cost is applicable for the specific circumstances of Vidin and similar settlements with regard to family, school, and urban environment of the local Roma communities. (See Model No. 2 below.) This is to say that it applies to a Roma community, which, although territorially isolated, has a social and economic status more or less similar to that of the remaining part of the population which accepts it at some basic level. This Roma community has some internal resource and a positive attitude toward improving its educational status; it can offer successful role models and some financial resources to support the educational integration of Roma children. This model is matched by some existing technical and administrative educational infrastructure in the respective city, which is capable of responding to Roma children needs in an integrated environment. These include sufficient capacity of the host schools, possibility for including all children in pre-school groups, and sufficient number of semi-boarding groups at the host schools.

Currently, however, this will be possible in some, albeit by no means in all Roma settlements throughout Bulgaria. Many cities demonstrate a situation similar to that of the Nadezhda neighbourhood of Sliven, namely extremely isolated Roma community rejected by the macro-society with a very low social status and barely any resources for independent support of educational integration. In circumstances like this, Roma parent expectations of children's education are normally low, with the community being unable to offer any relevant role models. (See Model No. 3 below.) Therefore, in situations of this type, educational integration costs would be higher than those entailed by the "Vidin" model. In order to determine the cost per child participant in this case, it is possible to adopt the desegregation project in Sliven as the point of departure for the analysis. Here, the resulting ratio figure of total budget to the number of children and student participants in the project for the 2006/2007 academic year is 196.3 euro per participant. This figure, however, does not include the costs for the 23 co-ordinators paid by the local Labour Office (LO). If added, the total cost per child participant will increase to 262 euros. The higher cost per participant results from the need for a wider presence of co-ordinators and/or counsellors at host schools, and for additional educational support. It should also be noted that during the 2006/2007 academic year, the project in Sliven has been operating below its maximum capacity of 425 children registered during the 2004/2005 academic year. Bearing this in mind, along with the slightly exaggerated number of co-ordinators, it may be concluded that **an optimally operating desegregation project under this model should be possible at the cost of 250 euros per participant**. The remaining desegregation projects subject to this evaluation are, therefore, operating, in one way or another, below their optimum. Specific reasons are presented in the respective sections.

**Conclusion: Under an optimally operating non-governmental desegregation project, the cost for the integration of one Roma child varies between 130 and 250 euros.**

## Step 2

As it became clear in Chapter 1 above, the Bulgarian authorities, in so far as they demonstrate at all political will for the implementation of the territorial desegregation of the Roma education, has reduced this process to the educational institutions of segregated urban Roma neighbourhoods. Since 2001, a number of attempts have been made to make an inventory of the segregated schools in Bulgaria and the number of children in them.<sup>107</sup> The most up-to-date report including geographical location by regions and settlements, names and number of schools and kindergartens with 50 or higher percent of Roma children and students, as well as the total number of Roma children in them, is presented in Annex 2. This report was prepared by the Regional Inspectorates of Education (RIE) of MES at the end of 2005 and was published as part of the study of Yosif Nunev, state expert with the Ministry, on the desegregation of Roma education.<sup>108</sup> This report shows that, toward the end of 2005, a total of 30,421 children and students were enrolled in kindergartens and schools with 50 or higher percent of Roma children in Bulgaria. Of them 2,464 were younger children in 24 kindergartens, whereas the remaining 27,957 were students in segregated schools. It is namely the primary schools that register the highest percentage of Roma students. Where these are comprehensive secondary schools (CSS), it could well be deduced that because of the high percentage of Roma dropouts from the segregated schools, and especially so at the higher grades, the large majority of Roma children in them are currently at the primary educational level.

A significant portion of Roma children in segregated kindergartens are enrolled in pre-school groups. The settlements mentioned in the report do not differ substantially as types from those with currently operating desegregation projects. Therefore, the models developed by currently operating desegregation projects would, in principle, be applicable for them.

The RIE report, however, exhibits some deficiencies. For instance, it does not include the segregated primary school Hristo Botev in Veliko Tarnovo where 256 Roma children were enrolled in 2006.<sup>109</sup> The most likely reason for this is that these children and their

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Open Society Foundation, *Roma Schools in Bulgaria – 2001*, Sofia: OSF-Sofia, 2001; Yosif Nunev, „Analysis of Conditions at the Schools with Roma Children”, *Education Policy Strategies*, MES, Special edition, 2002; Open Society Foundation, *Roma Schools in Bulgaria, 2002-2003*, available at [http://www.osi.hu/esp/rei/Documents/Roma%20Schools%20in%20Bulgaria\\_2002-03.doc](http://www.osi.hu/esp/rei/Documents/Roma%20Schools%20in%20Bulgaria_2002-03.doc) last visited on 30/11/2007; OSI, *Roma Schools in Bulgaria -2005*, unpublished; Yosif Nunev, *Roma and the Process of Segregation of Education*, Sofia, Kuna Publishing House, 2006, pp. 147-166.

<sup>108</sup> Yosif Nunev, *Roma and the Process of Desegregation of the Education*, p. 65-66.

<sup>109</sup> Cf.: OSI-EUMAP/ESP/RPP, *Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma*, vol. 1, Budapest, OSI, 2007, p.154.

parents usually identify themselves as Turkish. However, there is no reason to believe that this school cannot be included in a future nationwide Roma education desegregation programme. This report does not mention any segregated schools in Gabrovo, Ruse, and Razgrad regions of which several were reported toward the end of 2005. Some other segregated schools are omitted from the regions included in the report (those in Lom, Razgrad, Ruse, etc.). Therefore, viewed against alternative data available<sup>110</sup>, another 3,000 would need to be added to the total number of Roma children enrolled in segregated city educational institutions as per MES report.

Demographic trends among Roma communities in Bulgaria since the end of 2005 have been contradictory. On the one hand, because of the higher birth rate among the Roma population, it is likely that the number of children of schooling age has increased. On the other hand, emigration is a powerful counter factor of this trend. As has transpired with regard to the situation in some of the settlements with operating desegregation projects, there has been a decrease in the number of Roma children of school age. Other settlements, however, have registered an increase. On this basis, we can accept that, in the end, demographic trends since 2005 have not played a major part in changing the number of Roma children of school age, including those of pre-school preparatory group age.

**Conclusion: The number of Roma children attending territorially segregated schools and kindergartens for which political will for desegregation may be assumed to be present, amounts to approximately 33,000.**

### Step 3

In line with the methodology adopted, the annual cost of a nationwide Roma education desegregation programme in Bulgaria can be calculated by multiplying the final number of children for which desegregation will be initiated as per Step 2 by the average cost per integrated Roma child for the first year as per Step 1. In this case, this would mean multiplying 33,000 children and students by 130-250 euros per child. The resulting figure is 4,290,000–8,250,000 euros. This would be the range of the cost for one year of a nationwide Roma education desegregation programme in Bulgaria, calculated at prices as of 2007. For a 5-year period, the cost would be within the 21,450,000–41,250,000 range, and for 10 years within the 42,900,000–82,500,000 euros range.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. footnote 2 above.

**Conclusion: A nationwide Roma education desegregation programme for Bulgaria to involve all educational institutions with express political will for desegregation would cost between 4,290,000 and 8,250,000 euros for 1 year, between 21,450,000 and 41,250,000 euros for 5 years, or between 42,900,000 and 82,500,000 euros for 10 years, as calculated as per 2007 price levels.**

If we accept that the MES estimation of the total number of Roma children of schooling and pre-schooling age was approximately 106,000 in 2001<sup>111</sup> and apply some extrapolations based on the current birth rate of Roma population, it would become clear that a possible nationwide programme for the geographical desegregation of Roma education in Bulgaria implemented under the above conditions would include around 30 percent of children of schooling and pre-schooling age. If we assume that about 50 percent of Roma children attending school are enrolled in a segregated educational environment<sup>112</sup>, then the nationwide programme would include about 60 percent of Roma children studying in a segregated educational environment.

### *3. Models for Implementation of Roma Education Desegregation on the Basis of the Additional Factors Influencing Academic Attainment of the Roma Students*

The survey conducted by the evaluation team among students-participants in the NEA tests and their parents revealed a number of factors of the family and educational environment which demonstrated the strongest influence on Roma children academic achievement. Some of the major ones include: parents' education; language of communication within the family and friends; access to books, Internet, libraries and periodic printed media; attendance of a preparatory pre-school group; social contacts outside the neighbourhood, etc.<sup>113</sup> Some additional factors influence the possibilities for desegregation of Roma education, such as the relatively removed Roma neighbourhoods from the integrated schools; the capacity of the school network; the degree of integration of Roma children within the educational environment of host schools. Each of these factors also directly affects the cost of the territorial desegregation of Roma education within the specific settlement.

Experience from operating desegregation projects has shown that the distribution of the above factors varies between the different settlements throughout Bulgaria. Depending on this distribution, the cost of an optimal desegregation could vary significantly. The

<sup>111</sup> These data were published in Yosif Nunev, „Analysis of Conditions at Schools with Roma Children“, pp.110-144.

<sup>112</sup> For a detailed discussion of all available data on the subject, see: OSI-EUMAP/ESP/RPP, Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma, pp. 42-50.

<sup>113</sup> See Chapter IV above.

evaluation team has, therefore, suggested the following four models of desegregation developed in view of the above factors:

**Model 1 (“no cost”):** This model can be implemented without any financial resources or nearly so. It can be applied in smaller towns where Roma neighbourhoods are not removed from the host schools and are within walking distance, or would involve minimum use of public transport. The implementation would involve the following: inclusion and even distribution of all Roma children in preparatory groups at the host schools or kindergartens; a fully operational system of semi-boarding groups at all schooling levels; positive acceptance of Roma children by teachers and peers at the host schools; full support of the process and active role in its implementation on the part of local authorities, RIE, and the local community; relatively active participation of Roma parents in the educational process by ensuring their children’s regular attendance at school, attending parents meetings, and ensuring the physical and financial security of their children at school.

**Model 2 (Vidin):** This model can be applied in all types of urban environments with Roma neighbourhoods relatively removed from the host schools, and it is cheaper than Model 3. Model 2 could be implemented by an administering organisation. It would involve support for the enrolment of Roma children at host schools; their transportation; some form of educational support to fill up possible gaps of the local educational system; establishing a system to ensure Roma children’s attendance at school; providing for their safety, as well as ensuring constant communication between their parents and the host schools (not necessarily by individual counsellors); limited support with study aids and food for the poorest children; provision of extra-curricular multicultural activities; ensuring the support for the project by local authorities and communities. This model envisages a more passive role for Roma parents than Model 1, with the mediator role of the organisation compensating for it.

**Model 3 (Sliven):** This, too, is a model which could be applied in all types of urban environments with Roma neighbourhoods relatively removed from the host schools, but it would involve higher costs than Model 2. As with the latter model, Model 3 would involve an administering organisation. The model would be applicable for very poor, marginalised, and rejected Roma communities lacking positive role models of successful Roma members because of good education; and for families not only passive but also hindering their children’s education. The model would involve active participation of the organisation in enrolling of Roma children at host schools, as well as preparatory pre-school groups or kindergarten groups; transportation to host schools; securing of sufficient number of counsellors, co-ordinators, or teacher assistants to provide for Roma children security at school premises and act as a link to, and sometimes compensate for, the role of the parents; securing of full-time education at host schools through thorough inclusion of Roma children in semi-boarding groups; support by means of textbooks and study aids for all Roma children; providing meals and, depending on the season, of clothing and shoes; ac-

tivities for securing the support of local authorities and the local community; organising of multicultural extra-curricular activities.

**Model 4 (rural):** This model could be applied for desegregation of village schools with predominantly Roma students. Practical experience in this area is very limited, and it is, therefore, difficult to provide an estimate of the relative costs involved. The desegregation of segregated village schools can be implemented both through enrolling at city schools, and through enrolling at “hub” village schools. Either case should take at least three factors into account:

- » The need for more resources for transportation due to the longer distances.
- » The need for a longer stay for children at host schools.
- » The need for overcoming not only of anti-Roma prejudice at the host schools but also prejudices relating to the children’s rural origin.
- » The additional difficulty in parent communication.

Desegregation of village schools, however, does not necessarily involve higher cost than that for some of the urban schools. A number of flexible systems can be put into place depending on other factors such as: inclusion in semi-boarding groups and preparatory pre-school groups; the possibility of increased support by local authorities in some settlements; more active participation of parents in some settlements. Even transportation, which would seem like the most costly factor in rural desegregation, can, in some cases, prove more cost-effective considering the longer distances and the complicated traffic in many of the larger cities, as well as the lower labour cost in smaller settlements.

The above models should be considered in any pragmatic approach to the organisation and evaluation of costs for the desegregation of various educational environments. Each of them compensates, albeit in a different way, for different types of deficits, including the lack of political will in the preparation and organisation of the process of integration.





# Conclusions and Recommendations

## 1. Conclusions

The desegregation of Roma education in Bulgaria has established itself as a policy without alternative, which is widely accepted both by the state and the Roma communities. After a lengthy, practically passive period on focusing predominantly on production and collation of documentation, the Ministry of Education and Science finally made the first steps toward policy realisation through the activities of the Centre for Education Integration for the Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (CEI). Since the start of their operation, all active non-government desegregation projects demonstrated successful organisational models of the desegregation process and laid a solid basis for its further expansion. Those who functioned well demonstrated flexibility and ability to cope with difficulties, and succeeded in successfully adapting to the changing environment. The experience gained in the course of their operation makes it possible to determine the cost of a national programme for desegregation of Roma education in Bulgaria. The formulation and implementation of a programme of this kind presupposes a serious reform in the educational legislative framework and a sustainable long-term engagement of the government and the local authorities in its implementation.

## 2. Recommendations

The desegregation of Roma education, which is a process of immeasurable significance for the whole Bulgarian society and key to equal integration of the Roma, is on the road to its maturity. During this critical period, it is necessary for the educational system to make a solid judgment and realistic planning of the future steps for the desegregation of education. With this in mind, we make the following recommendations:

### ***2.1 Recommendations to National and Local Authorities Involved in Education Management***

- » In the planning of the process of Roma desegregation, the government should not limit itself to the will and initiative of individual institutions and organisations, but should aim to establish a solid legal basis for this process including through linking the municipal budget policy with the implementation of the desegregation policy.
- » CEI should start funding not just individual projects of organisations and institutions, but whole regional programmes for the desegregation of Roma education.
- » CEI should adopt and apply criteria for project quality evaluation maintained in

view of dismissing the possibility of funding of projects which implement desegregation only partially or indirectly. A discussion involving all stakeholders should be organised as soon as possible following which an evaluation system for the support of desegregation projects should be elaborated and disseminated.

- » MES should establish an effective system of specific rules and regulations for fighting discrimination to complement the existing regulation at national level provided for by the Protection against Discrimination Act. The system for fighting discrimination in education should be adapted for the purposes of desegregation of Roma education.
- » As an immediate priority, MES should launch the closure of segregated schools in settlements where they are more than one and where this is practicable in view of the specifics of the settlement and the local school network.
- » MES should put in place appropriate measures to encourage zero enrolment policy in segregated Roma schools.
- » The Regional Inspectorates of Education (RIE) should link their activities with the objectives of the desegregation of Roma education.
- » Each of the 28 RIEs should open one position for an expert on education of minority children. Those experts should offer resource and methodological support to schools and teachers working with such children.
- » An effective mechanism for strict sanctioning of school principals refusing to accept Roma students for any reason should be established at local level. To this end, the Minister of Education and Science should issue an appropriate internal legislation regulation specifying the sanctions for school directors who refuse to accept children on ethnic grounds.
- » Municipalities should adopt plans for the equal distribution of all Roma children in schools in their areas and monitor their effective implementation.
- » Effective monitoring systems for children outside the education system at the compulsory stages of school and pre-school education should be developed and implemented at both national and local levels.
- » Mechanisms for close co-operation between RIEs and the municipal offices of Directorate General Civil Registration and Administrative Services (CRAS) should be put in place to monitor and control the children in the respective area subject to compulsory pre-school and school education to be established.
- » RIEs and municipalities should exercise their controlling functions to a maximum degree and monitor attendance in segregated schools.
- » Mechanisms should be put in place to enable close co-operation between RIEs, municipalities, district mayors and deputy mayors in segregated Roma residential areas, as well as civil organisations for obtaining up-to-date information on children subject to compulsory education not registered with the local CRAS but residing in the same residential area.

- » Municipalities should facilitate Roma children access to kindergartens outside segregated areas in order to guarantee their socialisation with the other children from an early age, as well as mastering of the Bulgarian language, and subsequent enrolment in integrated schools. This is based on the assumption that municipalities will allow for the enrolment of all children within the neighbourhood in kindergartens corresponding to the demands of their parents.
- » The state should allocate state budget funding for semi-boarding groups (SBG) at all educational levels where needed. This should be provided for by legislative amendments transforming such funding into an obligation for the state, as opposed to leaving it to the free will of the municipalities, which is the case at present.
- » Compulsory pre-school preparation provided for by the state budget should be extended to two years.
- » The system for provision of free textbooks and study aids should cover the entire period of primary education.
- » The state should encourage and fund extra-curricular activities on a multicultural basis in schools at all educational levels.
- » Training of teachers working with children from minorities should be prioritised in regional teacher qualification plans.
- » Possibilities for teaching Roma language, folklore, history and culture in integrated schools should be increased. This will involve teacher training for teaching such subjects.
- » Schools should include a representative for the Roma children at the meetings of the Teacher Committees.
- » School Boards should ensure the participation of parents of Roma children at the respective schools.
- » The state should provide funding for surveys related to the process of desegregation of Roma education.
- » The national social assistance policy should be linked to the priorities of educational desegregation.
- » National and local authorities should establish effective mechanisms to monitor and prevent racism inside and outside of Bulgarian schools and promote programmes aimed at interethnic tolerance and co-operation, including thorough financing.
- » RIEs should link their activities, including periodic school visits, to the priorities of the desegregation of Roma education.
- » MES should organise classes for teaching Roma as a mother tongue in host schools for Roma children who wish to learn it.
- » If and when necessary, local authorities should provide free transportation to host schools for Roma children and support the desegregation of Roma education in any other possible way.

## **2.2 Recommendations to NGOs Involved in the Implementation of Desegregation Projects and their Donors**

- » The planning and implementation of desegregation projects should take into account the full variety of factors influencing the interethnic relations in a particular area and the educational achievement of Roma children.
- » Organisations implementing desegregation projects should be flexible in their approach and be prepared to adapt their strategies to the changing environment.
- » Academic management of the projects should be ensured at all levels of the projects' implementation, including the stages of enrolment, determining the amount of extra work with the children, collecting of information on the educational achievement and behaviour of the children in host schools.
- » The amount of extra classes and study support, which is of crucial importance to Roma children, should be customised as much as possible. It should be carried out both independently and as part of any such facilities organised by the host schools, and depending on individual needs. Special attention should be paid to extra classes and support in places where there are no semi-boarded groups. The provision of a maximum amount of extra classes and support should be made pre-requisite for granting funding by donor desegregation projects.
- » The projects' academic management should enlarge as much as possible additional forms of education for students at the lower secondary level, as well as take measures to improve their attendance at school.
- » Projects should promote and organise various forms of co-operation and exchange between principals and teachers at host schools on issues concerning the desegregation of Roma education. The establishment of formal structures, such as Committee of the Principals and Teachers from integrated schools working with Roma children may be one such form. The latter may be especially useful for newly included partner schools not acquainted with the project and possible problems arising in the work with Roma children and their parents. One especially positive and useful practice would be to include potential partner schools in such a forum at least one year before their actual inclusion in the process, so as to acquaint them with the nature of the work and with the enrolled Roma children.
- » Enrolment of Roma children in host schools should take into account the quality of education at these schools, their motives for co-operation, the existing ethnic balance of students, and the schools' evaluation by the local RIE.
- » Project should aim at signing long-term co-operation agreements with all partnering institutions. In the case of municipal authorities, these agreements may extend to the end of the mandate of the respective authority in order to ensure the continuity and sustainability of commitments thereof. In the case of integrated schools, agreements may extend for longer periods. These agreements should identify

- key points of the desegregation process and include specific strategies for their achievement, as well as time frames and responsible individuals (or positions).
- » Transport of Roma children to the host schools should allow for greater flexibility to allow them to attend semi-boardings groups and various extra-curricular activities, as well as benefit from the opportunities for individual tutoring and extra classes at school.
  - » Projects should collect and collate data according to a preliminary set scheme agreed with the other projects. As a minimum, it should contain: data on enrolment, dropping out, and attendance of the children throughout the academic year; data on the GPA, including continuous assessment; aggregated data on the mid-term and end-of-year academic achievement by grades and host schools; data on any additional work with the children at host schools, including the exact number of extra classes and vacation/summer classes; data on any and all incidents involving the children, especially incidents on ethnic grounds; data on the families of participant children; data on parent's attendance of parent meetings at the host schools; data relating to the provision of snacks and meals, study aids, clothing, etc.
  - » Project should include various forms of team member training in view of their responsibilities with the project, as well as on the principles of multicultural education. Such trainings should include primarily counsellors who should be specifically selected and whose work should be constantly monitored. Monetary incentives for counsellor work should be increased in order to make this position more attractive for young Roma with secondary education.
  - » Project should support the training of teachers at host schools in the fields relevant to the purposes of integrated education. Training of teachers at host schools should, therefore, be adopted as a priority by the CEI. CEI should fund a permanent system of continuous training and retraining of teachers working in integrated schools.
  - » Project teams should continue the exchanges through regular meetings and exchange visits. Professional forums for experience assessment should become integral part of such exchange.
  - » Desegregation project teams should respond immediately and firmly to all incidents of violence and insults on racial grounds at host schools. They should aim at involving school authorities as much and as early as possible in dealing with such situations.
  - » Desegregation project teams should encourage positive interpersonal contacts between Bulgarian and Roma children, and organise appropriate extra-curricular activities to support this.
  - » Desegregation project teams should seek as wide local institutional and public support for desegregation as possible. They should endeavour to encourage public involvement in the process and campaign with Roma parents and activists in support of desegregation.
  - » Desegregation project teams should encourage Roma children's participation in extra-curricular activities, including by assisting children of poor families.
  - » Desegregation project teams should work closely with Roma student's parents and

ensure their involvement and participation in their children's education. Project teams should endeavour to include Roma parents in various school initiatives, as well as extra-curricular activities.

- » All currently operational desegregation projects, and especially the projects in Stara Zagora, Berkovitsa, Plovdiv, and Pleven, should be encouraged to include more children.
- » Projects should ensure that every Roma child attending an integrated school is well fed and dressed, especially during the winter months, as well as take action toward social support of families and children to this end.
- » Project proposals should contain the exact number of project participants, as well as expected qualitative and quantitative outcomes with appropriate indicators and sources of information. Project proposals should demonstrate consistency of objectives, activities envisaged for their achievement, and expected outcomes. In order to prove the effectiveness of the proposal, the logical matrix method may be applied.
- » Project proposals should be granted funding by donors based on clearly specified criteria and in consideration of the specific characteristics of their operational environment, including the specific needs of the project.
- » Donors should exercise strict regular control on the projects' operation in accordance with the set criteria. Rewarding or any form of tolerating poor organisation and outcomes should be avoided by all means. These criteria should include unified but flexible norms in view of the different operational environments. Donors should provide for discrepancies in costs after careful consideration of the specifics of the work and operational environment of each project.
- » Desegregation project teams should seek as wide local institutional and public support for desegregation as possible. Projects should, therefore, utilise the full capacity and potential of host schools to secure the support of the community.
- » Considering operational weaknesses identified in Plovdiv, further detailed analysis and evaluation of this project should be performed. Its management should be given specific recommendations and guidelines the implementation of which should be assured by means of regular monitoring.
- » REF should perform controlling functions on the implementation of the project operations and their effectiveness, in view of minimising the risks of discrepancies between the projects' accounting and reporting and the actual implementation of activities for which funds are provided. To this end, the REF representation in Bulgaria may be assigned direct operational responsibilities, such as continuous control and monitoring of the implementation of project proposals.

## General Information on the Projects

Berkovitsa	75	100	25	3.99
Plovdiv	182	198	16	
Sofia	226	247	21	4.80
Sliven	286	407	121	3.64
Stara Zagora	188	230	42	4.26
Montana	271	287	16	4.39
Pleven	163	178	15	3.91
Vidin	510	557	47	4.14
	Number of children and students who have completed the 2006/2007 academic year with the project	Number of children and students who participated in the project during the 2006/2007 academic year	Number of drop-outs during the 2006/2007 academic year	Average academic achievement of those who completed the 2006/2007 academic year ****

<b>Average results at the BLL and Maths tests of participant Roma students from integrated schools ****</b>	Maths: 14.19 BLL: 13.58	Maths: 16** BLL: 15.5**	Maths: 15.14 BLL: 15.21	Maths: 13.9 BLL: 12.3	Maths: 11.07 BLL: 9.37	Maths: 12.5 BLL: 9.06	Maths: 11.91 BLL: 10.98
<b>Relative proportion of participant students in the lower grades (including preparatory classes)</b>	39.2%	50%	9.1%	63.8%	70.4%	27.5%	77%
<b>Total number of participants in the project implementation team</b>	15	14	11	23	37*	15	10
<b>Number of team members with education training ***</b>	3	1	2	10	6	1	3
<b>Number of counsellors</b>	5	5	5	6	23	7	3
<b>Average number of staff to number per children and students with a completed academic year</b>	1:34	1:12	1:24	1:8	1:8	1:15	1:7
<b>Total project budget for the 2006/2007 academic year (euros)</b>	94 730	86 539	86 045.80	100 146	106 553	50 537	67 525
							85.16%
							18
							11
							1:10
							82 996
							67 525



<b>Cost per participant:</b> Total budget to the number of children and students-participants in the project ratio (euros per participant for the 2006/2007 academic year)	170	486.2	299.8	435.4	261.8	204.6	419.2	675.2
<b>Cost per graduate:</b> Total budget to the number of children and students who completed the academic year with the project ratio (euros per participant with completed 2006/2007 academic year)	185.75	530.9	317.5	532.7	372.6	223.6	456	900.3

\* Of them 21 co-ordinators recruited via the local LO and paid by the local council (municipality). The financial contribution for their work for the project in Sliven was calculated based on their work for 10 months.

\*\* Only those of Roma children from the Bukovlak district who attend integrated schools.

\*\*\* Staff with training in education stand for staff with formal higher education (see the descriptions and evaluations of specific cases in Vidin, Stara Zagora, and Sliven) who are a valuable asset for the implementation of the respective project, and not just number of teachers (or staff with training in education) as positions within the projects.

\*\*\*\* Information on the average academic achievement of children participating in the project in Plovdiv was not presented in figures, and did not allow for an accurate use in comparisons with children's achievements under the remaining projects.



## Segregation Kindergardens and Schools in Some Cities

Source: RIE as at 2005

Region	Name and Type of Educational Facility	Percent of Roma Children	Number of Roma Children	Total Number of Children
Blagoevgrad	1. 5th CSS, Petrich - affiliate of 182nd school	100	180	180
	2. ADK, Ralog, affiliate of "Zdravets"	100	59	59
Bourgas	1. PS „Atanas Manchev“, Aytos	99	479	484
	2. ADK „Kalina Malina“ „ „, Aytos;	80	68	84
	3. PS "Vasil Levski", Bourgas – "Gorno Ezerovo" neighbourhood;	70	216	308
	4. PS „Hristo Botev“, Bourgas – „Dolno Ezerovo" neighbourhood	50	150	300
	5. PS „Hristo Botev“, Bourgas – "Pobeda" Neighbourhood	50	320	641
Varna	1. PS "Otets Paisiy", Varna	88	371	421
	2. ES "Otets Paisiy", Devnya	96	107	111
	3. ADK „Zornitsa“, Dalgopol	60	114	190
	4. ES "Ivan Vazov", Dalgopol	90	18	20
Veliko Tarnovo	1. ES „P.R. Slaveykov“, Pavlikeni	92	87	95
Vidin	1. ADK 19 „Zvanche“	100	512	512
	2. PS „Episkop Sofroniy Vrachanski“	100	564	564

<b>Vratsa</b>	1. ES, Byala Slatina	100	144	144
<b>Dobrich</b>	1. PS „Panayot Volov“, Dobrich	72	581	807
	2. PS „Yordan Yovkov“, Dobrich	70	250	358
	3. ES „Bratya Miladinovi“, Kavarna	100	205	205
	4. ADK „Detelina“, Kavarna	100	165	165
	5. ADK 2 „Zdravetsa“, Tervel	100	134	165
<b>Kardzhali</b>	1. PS “P.K. Yavorov”	100	500	500
	2. ADK “8th March”	100	21	21
	3. ADK “Detelina”	100	88	88
	4. CSS “G. Benkovski”	63	119	189
<b>Kyustendil</b>	1. CCF “Mechta”, Kyustendil	69	204	295
	2. PS “Ivan Vazov”, Kyustendil	100	863	863
	3. PS “Hristaki Pavlovich”, Dupnitsa	70	174	249
<b>Montana</b>	1. ES “G. Benkovski”, Montana – “Kosharnik” neighbourhood	100	93	93
	2. PS “G.S. Rakovski”, Berkovitsa – “Rakovitsa” neighbourhood	100	493	493
	3. ES “Vasil Levski”, Varshets	100	195	195
	4. ES “Kl. Ohridski”, Lom – Mladenovo neighbourhood	88,6	78	88
	5. PS “Hristo Botev”, Lom – Mladenovo neighbourhood	94	559	596

<b>Pazardzhik</b>	1. ADK "Zornitsa", Pazardzhik	100	132	132
	2. ADK "Varbitsa", Pazardzhik	100	88	88
	3. ES "G. Rakovski", Pazardzhik	100	771	771
	4. PS "Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodiy", Pazardzhik	100	748	748
	5. PS "L. Karavelov", Peshtera			
	6. ES "M. Kumanov", Peshtera	100	398	398
	7. CCF "Denitsa", Peshtera	100	378	378
	8. PS "G. Benkovski", Velingrad	100	60	60
	- „9-ta Asfaltova Baza" neighbourhood	100	197	197
	9. PS "Hristo Botev", Rakitovo, "Zapad" neighbourhood	100	517	517
10. ES "Vasil Levski", Septemvri	100	191	191	
<b>Pleven</b>	1. PS "Aleko Konstantinov", Cherven Bryag	100	199	199
	2. ADK Cherven Bryag, 5th neighbourhood	100	15	15
	3. ES "Hristo Botev", Levski	80	132	165
	4. ES "Kiro Stanev", Pleven	100	25	25
	5. ES "Knezhitsa" - affiliate of „N. Vaptsarov" school, Knezha.	100	112	112
<b>Plovdiv</b>	1. PS „Panayot Volov", Plovdiv	100	625	625
	2. PS „Pencho Slaveykov", Plovdiv	100	1580	1580
	3. ES „Kiril Nektariev", Plovdiv	100	867	867
	4. CSS „Nayden Gerov", Plovdiv	100	1090	1090
	5. PS „N. Y. Vaptsarov", Asenovgrad	100	723	723
<b>Silistra</b>	1. PS "Yordan Yovkov", Silistra	62	177	286
	2. ES "Vasil Levski", Tutrakan	65	43	66

<b>Sliven</b>	1. PS „Bratya Miladinovi „, Sliven	100	1412	1412
	2. ADK 5, Nova Zagora	100	126	126
	3. PS „Hristo Smirnenski „, Nova Zagora	100	1096	1096
<b>Sofia (city)</b>	1. ADK 62	100	93	93
	2. ADK 187	100	90	90
	3. 75th PS with Technical CSS /110 pupils/	100	1624	1624
	4. 103 PS with Technical CSS /69 pupils/	100	414	414
	5. 94 PS with Technical CSS /158 pupils/	100	570	570
	6. 70 PS	80	189	236
<b>Sofia (Region)</b>	1. CCF „Radost“, Ihtiman	80	86	108
	2. ES „D. Milchev“, Ihtiman	74	87	117
	3. PS „Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodiy „, Ihtiman	100	548	548
	4. ADK „Prolet“, Samokov	80	141	176
	5. ES „P. Beron „, Samokov	100	436	436
	6. Vocational ES „Neofit Rilski „, Samokov	90	342	380
<b>Stara Zagora</b>	1. ADK „Mir“, Nikolaevo	100	58	58
	2. PS „Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodiy“, Chirpan	100	440	440
	3. PS „A. Strashirov „, Kazanlak	100	384	384
	4. ADK 4, Radnevo	100	38	38
	5. 12th PS „G. Garbachev“, Stara Zagora	100	828	828
	6. CSS „Hristo Smirnenski „, Stara Zagora	100	826	826

<b>Targovishte</b>	1. Aux. K to CK 10, Targovishte	100	88	88
	2. 2nd PS „N. Vaptsarov“, Targovishte	72	238	330
	3. ADK 3, Omurtag	100	88	88
	4. ES “Vasil Levski”, Omurtag	100	258	258
	5. PS “Acad. Daki Yordanov, Omurtag	58	365	630
<b>Haskovo</b>	1. ES „G.S. Rakovski“, Haskovo	80	294	367
	2. PS „N. Vaptsarov“, Хасково	80	353	441
	3. PS „P. Yavorov“, Dimitrograd	100	369	369
	4. ES „Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodiy“, Simeonovgrad	90	64	71
	5. ES „Hristo Popmarkov“, Svilengrad	100	128	128
<b>Shumen</b>	1. PS “N. Vaptsarov”, Novi Pazar	64	122	190
	2. Affiliate “Iglika” of CK 2, Novi Pazar	75	40	53
	3. PS “Ivan Vazov”, Shumen	59	199	376
<b>Yambol</b>	1. ADK “Lyulyatsite”, Yambol	62	124	200
	2. PS “Dr. P. Beron”, Yambol	58	764	1317





## Report on the Focus Group Discussion with Teachers and Educational Experts Working on Desegregation Projects

### 1. Focus Group Description

The focus group was organized on 7 November 2007 at the office of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC); it lasted 132 minutes and was moderated by Dr. Krassimir Kanev. Only four out of all seven educational experts invited from Sliven, Vidin, Montana, Berkovitsa, Stara Zagora, Sofia, and Pleven attended the meeting. The educational expert from Plovdiv was not invited to participate in the focus group because of his double role within the project (see the case of the desegregation project in Plovdiv).

Ms. Donka Panayotova, team leader and educational expert for the Vidin project, Mr. Dimitar Ivanov, educational expert for the project in Stara Zagora, Assoc. Prof. Angelina Ivanova, educational expert to the project in Sofia, and Ms. Polina Dimitrova, educational expert for the project in Berkovitsa, also took part in the focus group.

### 2. Participants Selection

The evaluation team selected those participants after visiting all desegregation projects and acquainted itself with the local project development, and the respective implementing teams. The most important participants in the focus group are the project educational experts for their being very well acquainted with the idea of the desegregation process which best satisfies our goal with regard to focus group results.

The goal of the focus group is as follows: discussion on the general condition and problems of desegregation, project development perspectives, and opportunities for project cost optimization.

### 3. Focus Group Results

The first issue discussed by the participants was the desegregation models in Bulgaria. According to the model inventors from Vidin, desegregation follows a common model which is

“to take the children out of the segregated school and integrate them with the children from the city school, the strategies how this is to be done being multiple and various; however, this is no longer a model”  
– Ms. Panayotova.

In addition, Ms. Panayotova insisted that the most significant features of the desegregation model are transparency and detailed records which will allow establishing

“who gains and what is gained from children and from parents, what extra-curricular activities a child takes part in, how many children use school buses and at what time, the information about all this being provided in the relevant documents”.

An interesting point with regard to the desegregation model was made by Assoc. Prof. Ivanova. According to her,

“there are two models in relation to desegregation – the model of the organized desegregation which applies in most of the cities. The other model is the model of a non-organized desegregation of children who, voluntarily or without pedagogic and any other outside intervention, are enrolled in different schools, as their parents are positively motivated. (...) As for the organized process, the children are provided with transportation, parents decide on their enrolment with the help of the project team which takes care of children’s food and daily schedule. We do not follow the non-organized model because if the children are given textbooks, this will be again provided by a project. However, the children do not receive everything we provide. Besides, no one monitors integration quality, degree of socialization, interaction with other children or possible problems among children, with teachers and parents. This is not integration for me. There are colleagues from other projects, who, for the sake of student’s number, admit on paper children who are already enrolled in city schools without any organization whatsoever. There are also places where the two models are combined as is the case in Vidin and Montana.”

The first issue to be discussed is what makes a child a participant in the project as different projects provide different participation models, as well as different criteria for a child to be a project participant.

According to the participants, there are two types of projects:

- » Projects in which a child can take part and benefit from some of the services provided by the NGO.

These are usually long-existing projects which have been developed for quite some time and which can afford to attract children to the city schools without necessarily providing the whole set of services. Example is given by the founder of the desegregation model – the project in Vidin. According to Ms. Panayotova:

„Desegregation motto is that no-one gets everything. Everyone can only get what they need. If a child has low grades in class, we pay a teacher who is to help a group of students with low grades; however, not every child can be included in this group...”

- » Projects in which the child benefits from the whole set of project services:

„Our project provides everything for all children who participate. We buy textbooks for all 120 children and each of the children is entirely taken care of by the foundation; we also take them to prophylactic medical examinations, and there are no parents present at all!” – Ms. Polly Dimitrova

Project efficiency and results from desegregation financing depends on the following parameters:

- » Number of children enlisted in the project. There are projects with more than 500 children enlisted, and projects with only 120 children, and both projects are equally financed.
- » Characteristics of the children enlisted in the project. If the children taking part in the project are extremely poor and come from the ghetto as is the case with Sliven, they shall need much more support from the project team. However, this does not mean that in Vidin, for example, where the social and economic contrast among the children from the neighbourhood and their peers from the city is insignificant or even missing, they do not need any special care and support.
- » Successive year of project participation for a child. Depending on the number of children enlisted in the project, on the project mechanisms and on the degree of project development, the financial resources necessary for the integration of a Roma child who again takes part in the project, can be optimized and be less than the resources necessary for the integration of a child who will take part in the

project for the first time. For instance, the project's team leader in Vidin announced that the participation of a child becomes cheaper with every successive year due to the following factors: there are more textbooks in storage; the project team has become more experienced and efficient in task execution; the team representatives can more easily reach the children's parents; there is no need for snacks and such are no longer supplied; the need of teacher assistants is being gradually eliminated. However, the educational expert for the project in Berkovitsa, Ms. Polly Dimitrova, where desegregation has been implemented for a second year, expressed the opposite view.

- » Services provided to children enlisted in the project. Depending on the abovementioned two features, the services provided to the children enlisted in the projects in the eight cities considerably differ. Moreover, it seems that nowhere in Bulgaria desegregation has been executed by the means and mechanisms with which its initiation was launched in Vidin in 2000. With the development of the projects and gradually increasing the number of children enlisted by taking into account their characteristics, there is a tendency for the projects to minimize the social services by establishing specific criteria according to which each child is provided a given service. In this way, the number of the children participating in the projects, who are provided with the full set of services, significantly decreases. The problem is that not all projects have established all the necessary criteria and maintain the relevant documentation to guarantee transparency and clarity for a given service to be provided to a group of children and refused for another.
- » Activities envisaged for the project execution. According to several educational experts in the projects, it is wrong to calculate the project execution expenses on project duration and neglect activities envisaged by the project.

This principle of project financing according to activities planned allows for fewer opportunities to monitor the degree to which a given activity is absolutely obligatory for the effective desegregation and integration, or it has been included in the project only to increase the amount of its financing.
- » Successive year from the project start. Certainly, upon the start of the project, there should be resources available to meet a certain type of investment expenses which, in the years to come after its implementation, shall no longer be needed. Such expenses are: expenses for the purchase of buses; expenses necessary to convince principals, teachers and any local institutions in the project necessity; to convince the parents of the Roma children in the importance of their children to attend city schools. With each successive year, the necessity of such expenses may not disappear, however, it may become supporting against the project start and the investments incurred at this start. Moreover, there is a recent tendency which

reveals itself as follows: the more recent the project is the more activities and services are to be provided for all children.

Depending on project duration; on the experience gained by the project teams; on the peculiarities of the Roma neighbourhood and its inhabitants; on the characteristics of the urban infrastructure and the school network, every educational expert in the projects defines a set of various activities which are essential for the project success and constitute the core of the desegregation process.

According to the project educational experts, the core of all necessary project activities includes:

- Transport.
- Food which is different from the paste snacks provided to children under “A Cup of Warm Milk” Programme and is hot lunch.
- Semi-boarding groups.
- Extra lessons for children with low grades in class.
- Teacher assistant who not only takes care of the children but also provides help in the adaptation process within the school environment
- Competent monitoring of the progress made by each child included in the project.
- Work with the parents of Roma children, with teachers and principals of the city schools, and with parents with Bulgarian background.
- Textbooks, teaching aids and equipment.
- Extra-curricular activities.

All educational experts agreed that the extra-curricular activities are an extremely important part of the project and an essential mechanism for children’s socialization out of class. It was only Ms. Panayotova who made the point that the extra-curricular activities should not have to be an obligatory part of the project activities, as the schools can well provide for these. According to her, snacks and transportation are expenses that can be gradually optimized – the project in Vidin no longer supplies snacks to the children, and transport is no longer a service used by all children from the project. In addition, after the second year of a project implementation, according to Ms. Panayotova, teacher assistants are no longer needed.

The rest of the participants in the focus group united on the crucial role of the teacher assistants and their absolutely necessary functions for desegregation. Here is their argumentation in support of the teacher assistant’s role in the project:

- » The teacher assistant assumes the parent’s role for the child in the project:

„With us, the teacher assistant assumes the role of the parent, of the teacher and educator. He or she is indispensable. I hope that some day we shall reach the success in Vidin, and the teachers will start to

accept these children as a part of the class. Besides, they (the teacher assistants – editor's note) play a certain role for the Bulgarian children, too, and it is of extreme importance whether the teacher assistant is with Roma background or not. A teacher assistant with a Roma background serves as a positive example to the children especially if they are being insulted." – Ms. Polly Dimitrova.

- » In addition, the teacher assistant has important protective functions for the Roma children and their parents in the city school. These children and their parents accept the teacher assistant as their representative in the urban environment.

„Besides, the parents are still afraid that their children might be maltreated in school. On the one hand, the Bulgarian parents do not want Roma children in their own children's school, and I am sick of constantly hearing about Bulgarian children leaving the school only because there are Roma children enrolled and it's already a 'Gypsy' school. On the other hand, the parents of Roma children are afraid that their children might be maltreated, so the teacher assistant can calm down the atmosphere and help the children adapt to their new environment." – Assoc. Prof. Ivanova.

- » Controlling functions of the teacher assistant in the process of education and the presence of children in school.

„If there is no teacher assistant, half of the children will not come to school at all. To a great extent, the children attend school only because they really like their teacher assistant. Parents come and ask their child to be admitted to a given school only because Slavka (one of the teacher assistants for the project in Sofia – editor's note) works there. They feel better this way. First of all, the children will not be enrolled in these schools without a teacher assistant. Second, when the child must be absent, we are informed about the absence and the reason for it by the teacher assistant. After fourth grade, we make things loose. But the young ones still need a teacher assistant." – Assoc. Prof. Ivanova.

In the third year of its implementation, the project in Vidin discharged the teacher assistants in the city schools in which Roma children have been enrolled. Preliminary conditions for the successful desegregation in city schools without teacher assistants are as follows:

- A critical number of Roma children in the city schools:

„For the first years, there is a need for teacher assistants as the number of Roma children is insufficient. In 2-3 years, when there are enough Roma children in school and they are no longer ashamed to say they come from the neighbourhood, the teacher assistants become useless.“ – Ms. Panayotova.

- Work with the principals and teachers for the purpose of convincing them that these are their children and they are responsible for them as for anybody else:

„But, at the same time, our team managed to convince the principals and the teachers that the wellbeing of the child is their responsibility. (...) Besides, the Ministry of Education and Science must have recruitment criteria guaranteeing that the teachers are really able to work with children. A teacher assistant is necessary for the first year as everything is unknown to parents, students, and teachers, and no one knows what it is like to be a Roma child. That’s all for the assistant- teacher to do. (...) In the first years, we tried to show the teachers that they must take care of these children because they are the same students as the Bulgarian ones, that these are not my children, these are their children. And the way they care for one child, that’s the way they must care for another one. I think we managed that working with the teachers, the principals and the expert from the Regional Inspectorate of Education (RIE) Sibila Gocheva.“ – Ms. Panayotova.

According to the project’s team leader in Vidin, what played a crucial role in persuading the teachers to work with Roma children was the human rights experience of the project team. There were even cases when “DROM” organization had threatened to bring a charge against a teacher or a school refusing to teach Roma children.

- Constant and diligent work with the parents so that they can daily see and feel the competence and efficiency of the team, and acknowledge the results by their own child.

The beneficial results from the work with teachers and principals in the city schools in the first two years from the project initiation made it possible for our team to work more with Roma parents. In the beginning, an “SOS parents” club was founded as a part of the project. Every month, there are various and useful discussions organized by the club. Parents of Bulgarian children are also invited to take part in these discussions.

„During the discussions with the parents, we communicate with psychologists or a parent can give a lecture; we also discuss various issues; Bulgarian parents are always invited. We are always trying to emphasize that education gives greater chance for finding better job or just make a better choice. (...) It is very important when a family has a problem to have a neighbor parent who can visit and give advice.“– Ms. Panayotova.

As a result, the students and the parents of Bulgarian ethnic background get used to the Roma children and accept them as friends.

The project's team leader in Vidin does not deny the role the teacher assistants play in desegregation. However, this role is only necessary at the start of the desegregation process:

“In the first years, it is obligatory to have people from the neighbourhood in the team, irrespective whether they are literate or illiterate or have primary education. They must be a part of the team as this is an essential element for the project success, especially in the first years. It will be better if these people come from the neighbourhood. People need to know this person very well, to know he was born in their area and has had the same life as they have“– Ms. Panayotova.

After the successful start, teacher assistants are no longer needed and they are hindering rather than facilitating the Roma children integration.

„The problem is when Roma children spend their breaks around their teacher assistant. They do not interact with their peers“– Ms. Panayotova.

In Vidin, the controlling functions of the teacher assistants such as supervising absence from class or checking attendance are currently executed by supervising students for each educational degree in every city school. In this way, after the third year of the project initiation, one of the functions of the teacher assistants – the controlling one – is taken by the students according to schools and educational degrees, and the rest is the duty of 3 co-ordinators responsible for two or more schools, as well as of the parents whose children take part in the project.

Without teacher assistants, the Roma parents are given the opportunity to take care of their own children and their future. Moreover, some projects, in which there still are teacher assistants, clearly demonstrate the increased role and commitment of the parents with each year. In the beginning, doubling of parental meetings appeared to be of crucial importance. In this way, there are meetings organized with parents in the city schools, and meetings with parents in the neighbourhood. Main emphasis during these meetings falls on the positive changes observed in children (see Sofia, Vidin, Berkovitsa,



Montana). For the purpose of desegregation, especially at the beginning of this process, it is very useful to have principals and teachers invited from the city schools, so that they can demonstrate their attitude towards Roma children and try to attract the parents. Attendance is usually higher in the neighbourhood compared to attendance in the city schools. In the course of work with parents, transparency is crucial, so that the parents will know that no one lies to them, and their children are properly treated.

The last and most significant issue discussed by the participants in the focus group concerned the relation between desegregation and the demographic problems of the Bulgarian society. All participants expressed their concern about the currently increasing tendency on the part of the city schools to “search for” Roma children. – “Children are traded as if they are products.” – Ms. Polly Dimitrova. On the one hand, this is due to the decreasing number of school-age children, and on the other hand – due to the local optimization of educational network. These two directions are “definitely useful to desegregation and to us, so we must rationally utilize them.” – Ms. Panayotova.

The problem is that, in the next few years, this lack of children in classes will change, and simultaneously with this trend the quota for number of students in class will be altered in return without fixed limits, and there is a fear that this can affect negatively the process of taking the Roma children out of the neighbourhood segregated schools and their integration to the city schools. The participants in the focus group expressed their confidence that such thing shall not happen for the following reasons: until the reversion of this trend, the city schools will be already accustomed to educating Roma children, will overcome their racial and discriminatory attitudes, and the Roma children and their parents will understand and feel the benefits from education in an integrated educational environment. In addition, there are more factors, according to the participants, which will contribute to the overall integration process, as follows:

- Maintaining official partnership with schools, Regional Educational Inspectorates and local municipalities on the grounds of mutual agreements, as well as maintaining informal and close relations with school principals, REI experts and municipality representatives.
- Improving the educational network optimization mechanism by recommending the Ministry of Education and Science to close segregated schools down in the big cities, where there are more than one, instead of closing down city schools.
- Delegated budgets, change in the quota for the number of students in class and external assessment – these are all complex changes that will only benefit and accelerate the process of desegregation.
- Another problem of great significance appeared to be impossible for the projects to include all city schools as partners in the process of desegregation. The resultant tendency of setting “Gypsy” and “white” schools apart in the city school network is also problematic. In consequence, when a city school starts enrolling Roma children, these schools are already labeled “Gypsy” and parents gradually start enrolling their own children in schools where there are

only Bulgarian students. So, the schools taking part in the project fall into the trap of desegregation and are forced to enroll more Roma children which, in turn, segregates the school. This problem is present in the big cities where the school network is too big and the projects can hardly cover all city schools, for example, because they cannot provide transportation to the children living in the suburbs but studying in the city ( Plovdiv, Sofia, Stara Zagora). However, it is a problem for the small towns, as well, where there are schools which simply refuse to enroll Roma children (Berkovitsa).

## Protocol for Data Collection on the Projects

### I. General Information About the Projects

1. How many children participated in the project since its beginning up to the current academic year by school year, grade and sex?

School Year	Number of Children	By Grade												By Sex		
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	M	F
2006/2007																
2005/2006																
2004/2005																
2003/2004																
2002/2003																
2001/2002																

2. How many and which Roma schools were desegregated? How many Roma children study in each school?

School Year	School	Number of Children
2006/2007	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
2005/2006	1.	
	2.	
	3.	

2004/2005	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
2003/2004	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
2002/2003	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
2001/2002	1.	
	2.	
	3.	

**3. How many Roma neighbourhoods were involved in the project? How many people live in these neighbourhoods and from what groups of Roma?**

**4. In which host schools did the project work? How many and what kind of schools were they?**

School Year	School	Number of Children
2006/2007	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
2005/2006	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
2004/2005	1.	
	2.	
	3.	

2003/2004	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
2002/2003	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
2001/2002	1.	
	2.	
	3.	

**5. How many schools (apart from the integrated schools) in your region were not covered by the project? What is their name and type? Why did they not participate?**

School	Reason why the school was not included in the project

**6. How many school buses were used by the project during the past academic year? Was the number of busses sufficient? What is the current technical condition of the busses?**

**7. Did any children in the project travel to the host schools by means other than the school buses? How many children used these other means and what neighbourhoods were they from?**

Number of Children	Neighbourhood	Means of Transportation

8. *Does the project plan to include more children?*
9. *Does the project plan to cut activities? Which ones and why?*
10. *Does the project plan to include new activities? Which ones and what made this necessary?*
11. *Does the project plan to seek support from other donors?*
12. *Does the project have support from other donors?*

## II. Project Team, Project Documentation

13. *How many staff members worked on the project (total and in each category)?*

Number of Staff	of them
	1. Project Director 2. Administration 3. Educators 4. Counselors 5. Co-ordinators 6. Drivers 7. Other (Please specify) _____ _____ _____

14. *What was the proportion of staff members to children participating in the project?*
15. *What responsibilities did each type of staff member carry out? Are there job descriptions with duties and responsibilities for each staff member?*
16. *What was the staff's level of motivation? Were they engaged with the children? Were they engaged with the parents? Were they engaged with the project goals? Did they help each other? Did they work as a team?*

17. *How was the staff paid now in comparison to previous years? Are there problems with the financial management of the project?*
18. *Were there any internal conflicts in the staff? If so, what were the reasons?*
19. *Were any staff members replaced during the past year? Why?*
20. *What documentation did the staff collect about the project and who maintains it?*
21. *How is the documentation kept?*
22. *Who manages the project in practice and how did he or she run it?*

### III. Academic profile of the project

23. *In what shifts (morning/afternoon) do the children study?*
24. *How many Roma children are in each grade and classroom in the host schools?  
Please provide information for each school and for each classroom with Roma children*
25. *Grade Point Average of the children by academic year*

School Year	GRADE POINT AVERAGE OF THE PARTICIPANT CHILDREN
2006/2007	
2005/2006	
2004/2005	
2003/2004	
2002/2003	
2001/2002	

**26. Grade Point Average in each host school**

School Year	School	Grade Point Average of the Participant Children
2006/2007		
2005/2006		
2004/2005		
2003/2004		
2002/2003		
2001/2002		

**27. Grade Point Average of Roma and Bulgarian children by school and grade**

**28. Average achievement from the NEA test in BLL and mathematics for the participant children**

Test	Average Achievement
BLL	
Mathematics	



29. *Comparison of the results from the NEA tests in BLL and mathematics of Roma children from the project with those of the Roma children in segregated schools*
30. *Comparison of the results from the NEA tests in BLL and mathematics of Roma children with those of the Bulgarian children in integrated schools*
31. *Reasons explaining the difference in quality of education and the test results in integrated and in segregated environment, if any*
32. *Reasons explaining the difference in quality of education and the test results between the Roma and the Bulgarian students in integrated schools, if any*
33. *Dynamics of dropout of the children from the project by school year, school and reason*

School Year	School	Number of Dropouts	Reason for Dropout
2006/2007			
2005/2006			
2004/2005			
2003/2004			
2002/2003			
2001/2002			

**34. Unexcused absences from school over the past year by school**

School Year	School	Number of Unexcused Absences
2006/2007		

35. *What was the quality of academic management of the project? Criteria for evaluation: education, experience as an educator, where was this experience gathered, experience in working with children from ethnic minorities*

36. *What other kinds of academic supervision was undertaken (by the RIE, by the host schools, by other NGOs)?*

37. *Procedures for selection of staff working in the project*

38. *Staff turnover; reasons*

39. *Mechanism for selection of counselors*

40. *What are the necessary qualities a counselor must possess in order to better perform his/her job?*

41. *Were any counselors replaced during or after the past academic year? Why?*

42. *Was any education, exchange of experience or other form of training related to the desegregation project provided to the teachers/principals of host schools? If so, what types of training?*

43. *Was any education, exchange of experience, or other form of training related to the desegregation project provided to the project staff (especially the counselors)? If so, what types of training?*

44. *How many hours of extra classes were provided in the host schools? At what time of day were they offered, what topics did they cover, and how were the teachers paid?*

45. *Were any additional classes provided to Roma children outside the host schools? Why were they necessary? What results have been achieved?*

46. *Were textbook and teaching aids available? Were they ensured by the project?*
47. *Did any children have to make up their final examinations after the beginning of the academic year? If so, how many children, what grades were they in, and what subjects did they have to make up?*
48. *How often were teacher-parents' meetings held at the host schools and to what extent did Roma parents participate in them?*
49. *Did the project staff organize any other teacher-parents' meetings? If so, how often were they held and to what extent did Roma parents participate in them?*
50. *Were there elements of discrimination or segregation in the host schools (were Roma children seated in the back rows of classrooms, did teachers or school administrators make racist comments, etc.)? How did the project staff, host-school administrators or other organs react to such problems?*
51. *What were the relationships between the Roma and Bulgarian children like? How did the project staff, host-school teachers and principals and other institutions react to the problems in this regard?*
52. *Apart from desegregation, what other factors influence the educational achievements of the Roma children?*

#### **IV. Enrollment**

53. *Problems encountered by Roma parents obtaining leaving certificates from the Roma schools*
54. *Does the city involved have a school-districting system? If so, what type of districting is stipulated and by what laws?*
55. *Did any schools refuse to enroll Roma children from the project? What were the reasons for that?*
56. *Did the project staff have to intervene in the parents' choices of host schools for their children?*
57. *Does the project team make any kind of selection when enrolling children in the project? If so, what kind?*

- 58. Do any Roma parents support the project financially? What are these means used for? Are there any criteria for asking parents to pay for some services which are offered for free to other parents?**
- 59. Does the project currently include any children who had already attended an integrated (non-Roma) school in the past? If so, how many children?**

## **V. Political, Administrative and Public Support for the Project**

- 60. Official local documents on the policy of Roma education**
- 61. Do the municipal authorities support the project?**
- 62. Does the RIE support the project?**
- 63. Do the local political forces support the project?**
- 64. Do other public authorities (district administration, police, social services, etc.) support the project?**
- 65. How is the project covered by the media? What are the media's attitudes to the project?**
- 66. Do NGOs and other sectors of civil society (trade unions, professional organizations, churches and businesses) support the project?**
- 67. What are the attitudes of the parents of Bulgarian children in the host schools toward the project? How have they evolved over the years?**
- 68. Do Roma organizations and formal and informal Roma leaders support the project?**

## **VI. Social Profile of the Project**

- 69. Does the project provide meals or snacks, textbooks, and/or school supplies to the participating children? What exactly was provided, in what quantities, and to whom?**
- 70. What are the reasons for a Roma parent to enroll his/her child in the project or in the neighbourhood school?**

- 71. What makes the Roma parent prefer the integrated school?*
- 72. What makes the Roma parent prefer the segregated school?*
- 73. Do local authorities or NGOs exercise discriminatory practices against project participants in their distribution of humanitarian assistance?*
- 74. Did the desegregation project organize any summer camps and other extra-curricular activities for the children in the project? Did any ethnic Bulgarian children participate?*
- 75. Did the project provide any awards or other encouragement for children and parents participating in the project? If so, what kind?*
- 76. Did the project support other children apart from project participants? How?*

## **VII. Additional Comments**