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AD HOC COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON ROMA¹ ISSUES (CAHROM)

**THEMATIC REPORT ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF ROMA CHILDREN,
IN PARTICULAR ROMA GIRLS**

(following the CAHROM thematic visit to Helsinki, Finland, on 24-26 October 2012)

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¹ The term "Roma" used at the Council of Europe refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.

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Note: An **ADDENDUM TO THE THEMATIC REPORT** including all presentations collected during the CAHROM thematic visit is available to the Secretariat upon request.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

A thematic group on school drop-out/absenteeism of Roma children, with a special focus on Roma girls, was set up at the request of Finland, Norway and Sweden, during the 3rd CAHROM meeting in Ohrid, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” on 22-25 May 2012. These countries, inspired by the CAHROM thematic group on school drop-out and absenteeism of Roma children with the Netherlands as a requesting country and Hungary, Spain and Sweden as partner countries [see document CAHROM (2012)6], wished to conduct a similar exercise among Nordic countries and to include a stronger focus on the gender aspect. Latvia was later contacted and accepted to join this thematic group to share its experience.

Initial contacts with Mrs Susanna Rajala from the Finnish National Board of Education and Mrs Hannele Syrjä, CAHROM member on behalf of Finland, were followed by a written invitation received by the Secretariat on 4 September 2012 from the Finnish National Board of Education which formally invited the experts of the CAHROM thematic group and the Council of Europe Secretariat to visit Helsinki on 24-26 October 2012 (see Appendix 1).

During the 4th CAHROM meeting (Strasbourg, 28-30 October 2012), following a preliminary discussion about the main outcomes of the thematic visit, the Committee agreed to rename this report as follows: **“report on school attendance of Roma children, in particular Roma girls”**².

With a view to preparing the thematic report and visit, each expert from the thematic group was asked to provide background information about the situation of Roma, the legislative framework pertinent to the topic, and measures and policies towards Roma education, including financial means. Written background documents submitted by the requesting and partner countries and presentations made during the visit appear in an Addendum to this report.

1.2 Composition of the thematic group of experts

The thematic group of experts was composed of experts appointed by respective CAHROM members for their concrete experience in the field of Roma education: Mrs Susanna Rajala, Senior Adviser in the Finnish National Board of Education, Romani Education Group; Mrs Sarmīte Joma, main specialist of the Preschool Education Department at Jelgava Municipality, Latvia; Mr Morten Tandberg, Leader of the Department of Roma Measures in the Oslo Municipal Centre of Adult Education for Roma People; and Mr Mats Wennerholm, Director of Education in the Swedish National Agency for Education. Two of these experts (Latvia, Norway) work at municipal level. The Finnish CAHROM member, Mrs Hannele Syrjä, who works as Senior Adviser at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, accompanied the group of experts during the thematic visit in Helsinki.

1.3 Agenda of the thematic visit

The agenda of the thematic visit was organised by the Finnish Advisory Board on Romani Affairs in cooperation with the Finnish National Board of Education. The agenda and the list of participants appear in Appendices 2 and 3 respectively.

II. CONTEXT AND EXPECTATIONS

2.1 Context of the CAHROM thematic report and visit

Finland and Latvia have a relatively comparable size of Roma population (6,500 and 10,000 respectively), whilst Sweden has a larger Roma population (50,000 approximately). Norway, on the other hand has a very small Roma population (700). All of them encounter similar problems in terms of school attendance of Roma children, especially in terms of school enrolment in secondary schools. Roma pursuing higher education remain an exception.

² See para. 25 of the Abridged report of the 4th CAHROM meeting [document CAHROM (2012)21].

They share a common minority policy approach and Roma are recognised as a national minority³. None of these four countries participate in the Decade of Roma Inclusion⁴. Sweden, and to a lesser extent Finland, participate in the EU Roma Network.

2.2 Expectations and items for discussion

Prior to the CAHROM thematic visit to Helsinki, the following issues were identified by the requesting country as items to be addressed in the thematic report and during the thematic visit:

- Main challenges regarding schooling of Roma children and girls in particular;
- Main obstacles for Roma children's education and Roma girls' education in particular;
- Specific cultural aspects that need to be taken into consideration;
- Inclusive education policies;
- Gender equality and gender sensitive approach in the field of education;
- Basic education offered to Roma children;
- General, intensified and special support in the education system for Roma pupils/students, and Roma girls in particular;
- Guidance provided to Roma students to help them pursue their education;
- Motivation/incentives for Roma children, and for Roma girls in particular, to pursue their education;
- Incentives for Roma parents to send their children, and girls in particular, to school and to let them finish their studies;
- Teaching of the Romani language;
- Role of mediators and teachers' assistants with Roma background in building bridges between the Roma community and school environment.

2.3. Size and composition of the Roma groups in the participating countries

2.3.1 Finland

According to official estimates, the Finnish Roma (called *Kaale*) living in Finland are about 10,000 people, i.e. about 0.20% of the total population⁵. As highlighted by the research conducted for the publication of the Finnish Roma History Book, which was launched during the visit of the CAHROM thematic group of experts in Helsinki, Finnish Roma settled on the territory of Finland 500 years ago. All Finnish Roma are Finnish citizens. They are spread in different parts of the country and there are bigger populations in certain cities. Their mother tongue is mainly Finnish, but *Kaale* (Finnish Romani variant) and Swedish are also spoken. The Finnish Roma belong to the Lutheran religion or free sects.

During recent years, an increasing number of Roma have arrived in Finland, particularly from Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia. The number of Roma migrants is unknown.

2.3.2 Latvia

The Roma are one of the oldest ethnic minorities in Latvia and have been an integral part of Latvia's cultural diversity since the 16th century. The Roma community in Latvia is relatively small: according to the 2011 census from the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 6,489 Roma were living in Latvia. In 2011, the total population in Latvia is 2,070,371, from which 62.1% are Latvian, 26.9% are Russian, 3.3% are Belarusian, 2.2% are Ukrainian, 1.2% are Lithuanian, and 0.3% are Roma. 5.07% of the population is made up of other nationalities⁶.

³ See in this respect the Opinions of the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities on the respective countries at http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/3_FCNMdocs/Table_en.asp.

⁴ Observer status should be granted to Norway at the International Steering Committee meeting of the Decade for Roma Inclusion to be held in Zagreb, Croatia, on 19-20 June 2013. A similar status is under discussion with Sweden.

⁵ In addition, about 3,000 Finnish Roma (*Kaale*) live in Sweden.

⁶ Source: the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2011. At the same time, according to data from the population register of the Office for Citizenship and Migration Affairs, there were 8 517 Roma living in Latvia as at 1 July 2011, comprising 0.35% of the total population.

According to the results of this last census, the population of Roma in Latvia has decreased by about 21 % since 2000. The reason of this decrease can be explained by the intense level of Roma emigration to other European States over the last years. However, the Roma community is the only ethnic group in Latvia that maintains a positive natural growth: Roma have the highest birth rates and one of the lowest death rates of all ethnic groups.

Of all the Roma that are registered officially, 93.6% are Latvian citizens, out of which approximately 70% speak Latvian. A large majority of Roma regard the Romani language as their mother tongue.

Latvia's Roma is not an ethnically homogenous community. Two different groups of Roma have lived in Latvia since ancient times: the Latvian Roma (*Lofitike Roma*) and the Russian Roma (*Xaladytka Roma*), whose differences manifest themselves territorially, linguistically, culturally and in their traditional way of life.

Over the last century, Latvia's Roma have mainly lived a settled way of life and are not characterised by extensive travel and wide-spread migration. Based on the data that is available, the majority of Roma live in the large towns of the Kurzeme and Zemgale regions, such as Jelgava and Ventspils, as well as in Riga. Prior to the active migration of Roma to foreign countries, the highest proportion of Roma were found in Talsi, Dobele, Tukums, Limbaži and Daugavpils districts.

In Latvia there is no ghettoisation of the Roma community or spatial segregation at the regional or local level: the Roma have formed a territorially heterogeneous group that communicates actively with the local community. Anti-Gypsyism is not as prominent as in other EU member states as shown by the results of the Eurobarometer data survey on discrimination in the EU conducted in 2009. According to this survey, 27% of the population of Latvia stated that they have Roma friends or acquaintances. This indicator has increased since 2008 when 26% of the population gave the same response. In other EU Member States where the Roma population is similar or even larger, this indicator is far lower and the overall average for the EU is 17%.

2.3.3 Norway

No statistics are currently kept in Norway on the basis of ethnic background. However, on the basis of information provided by the Roma and persons who have contact with the Roma, it is possible to estimate the total number of Norwegian Roma registered in the Norwegian National Population Register at approximately 700 persons. Of these, the large majority (over 600) reside in Oslo. Torbjørg Bay's survey confirms that estimation.

The Norwegian Roma population is culturally and socially a part of the Vlach Roma sub-group present in Western Europe⁷.

Norwegian Roma are recognized as a national minority group together with four other groups, i.e. Kvens (*Kvener*), Romani/Travellers (*romani/tatere*), Forest Finns (*skogfinner*) and Jews (*jøder*). Norwegian Roma have been present in today's Norway since the 18th century at least.

The group of about 10,000 Romani/Travellers (*romani/tatere*) is now mostly sedentary following past assimilation policies. Their language is called Romani as opposed to the language spoken by Roma called Romanes in Norway. As stated above, Romani/Travellers are recognised in Norway as a distinct minority though both would fall under the general definition of Roma used at the Council of Europe. There is a certain agreement among experts that Roma and Romani/Travellers share a common lineage originated in India. In Norway however they represent two distinct groups with different culture and history and they face different challenges when it comes to deal with the majority population and the authorities. This is why the situation of Romani/Travellers is not, however, addressed in this particular report⁸.

⁷ Source: Ada Engebretsen, 2010.

⁸ For further information regarding schooling and education of Romani/Traveller children, please consult the three state reports submitted by Norway pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the respective opinions of the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention.

During recent years, an increasing number of Roma have arrived in Norway, particularly from Romania⁹. The number of Roma migrants is unknown.

2.3.4 Sweden

The Roma population in Sweden, estimated at around 50,000 (0.53% of the total population), is culturally, linguistically, and religiously heterogeneous, made up of different groups such as Kalderash, Lovari, Churari, Kaale, Travellers, Sinti, Arli and Gurbeti.

The earliest Roma groups arrived on the territory of what is now Sweden in the 16th century. Different Roma groups have been arriving in the country over a prolonged period of time, from recent migrant workers and refugees in the 1960s to the latest arrivals of citizens from new EU countries, particularly from Romania and Bulgaria. Most Roma in Sweden are Swedish citizens or have permanent residence in the country, with the same social rights as provided to other citizens. Nearly all Roma in Sweden speak Swedish.

2.4. Educational situation of Roma and main problems encountered

2.4.1 Finland

School attendance of Roma children does not differ according to gender at preschool level (voluntary, age of 6) and for basic education e.g. grades 1-6. A difference is noted as from grades 7-9 and this difference of behaviour as regards school attendance is often explained by cultural factors.

In Finland the percentage of Roma children who not complete compulsory education is 19%, for both boys and girls. It is estimated that 4,7 % of all Roma pupils dropped out altogether. No difference between girls and boys has been noticed in terms of complete drop-out.

As regards further education of Roma pupils, of all Roma pupils who complete their basic education, 50 % are seeking further education (46 % are girls and 54 % are boys); of all Roma pupils who pursue studies, 95 % opt for vocational studies, whilst 5 % choose upper secondary school.

Roma pupils have discovered vocational studies. Over the last ten years, seeking vocational education has more than doubled. Enrolment rates in upper secondary schools continue to be very low among Roma pupils. Specific Roma pupils' career guidance counselling has produced some positive results.

Absence at school remains problematic. Development-oriented and other municipalities (see below the chapter "education policies" for this distinction) have compared school presence of pupils. To the question "*how many Roma pupils at your school were adversely affected in their schooling by a high number of absences in the school year 2010-2011*", school principals reported that a high number of absences adversely affected approximately one third of all Roma pupils. Surprisingly, the development-oriented municipalities included a larger number of schools where at least one Roma pupil had adversely affecting absences. However, the results in these two types of municipalities are not totally comparable since development-oriented municipalities count more Roma pupils than other municipalities and the absence of Roma pupils may be more closely monitored.

The main reasons for absence usually given are

- Illness (overprotectiveness of Roma children by their parents);
- Family reasons (funerals, festivities and other cultural traditions);
- Multi-disciplinary problems within the Roma families;
- Unauthorised absences, including as a result of bullying and demotivation.

⁹ The Norwegian authorities have informed the Council of Europe that no special measures have been established in relation to this group beyond those that apply to all other foreign nationals residing in Norway. The situation of this group of people, who support themselves, among other ways, by means of begging and busking, has been raised by the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman, *inter alia*, with regard to the right to free food in connection with food distribution and the possibility of selling the magazine Oslo.

According to information provided by school principals to a survey conducted for the school year 2010-2011, at least three or four in every five Roma children take part in pre-primary education. Participation has significantly increased during the last ten years. Pre-primary education is associated with irregular attendance. According to the school principals, repeating pre-primary education is therefore common among Roma pupils.

In terms of general school performance, 2/3 of all Roma pupils perform as well as other pupils in development-oriented municipalities which have been able to support the less capable pupils. Throughout all municipalities, there were almost equal numbers of Roma pupils doing well or excellently, i.e. one third.

Multi-disciplinary problems within the Roma families require early guidance for the Roma pupils and dialogue with Roma parents. Cooperation between Roma families and the schools is effective and has increased over recent decades: according to a survey of all the school principals, 94% considered the level of cooperation between Roma households and the schools to be very good, good or satisfactory. Ten years ago, the corresponding figure was 67%.

Bullying is a phenomenon of concern at school, though studies conducted do not reveal that Roma children are more bullied than any other ethnic groups. The most common form of bullying is ethnic name-calling. According to the school principals, addressing the issue of bullying has usually helped.

2.4.2 Latvia

The results of several studies show that the Roma community is the most disadvantaged ethnic group, with the lowest level of education.

The level of education of Roma community is as follows¹⁰:

Level of education	2000	2011
Tertiary education	0.4 %	0.8%
Specialized secondary	1.2 %	3.5%
General secondary	6.7 %	10.3%
Elementary school (including primary school) (1–9)	42.1%	36.5%
Lower than Elementary school (including cases when level of education is not specified)	50.4%	45.3 %
Illiterate persons		3.5%
All Romani people aged 15 and above:	5 985	4 901

According to some research,

- more than a third - about 39% - of Roma pupils leave school early, because of poor financial circumstances within their families;
- 13% do not continue studies because they have their own family to take care of;
- 13% of Roma children do not continue studying because their parents do not allow it for different reasons;
- 80% of Roma believe that their children should have at least 9 years of mandatory schooling.

At the last years the number of Roma students attended secondary schools has grown-up. According to statistic data from 2008 only 3 Roma children were educated in general secondary school, but in 2012 there were 20% of Roma children pursuing their education after elementary school.

The main obstacles and problems in Roma children's education are:

- Unpreparedness of Roma children for starting primary school compared with other children (very few Roma children attend pre-school);

¹⁰ Source: the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2012.

- Language difficulties at the beginning of school studies - Roma children are able to communicate only in their own language (Romani);
- Ethnic background and cultural values of the Roma community;
- Deep social problems of many Roma families;
- Teachers are not professionally prepared to work with Roma students;
- Lack of adequate training materials;
- Lack of summaries of best practices/ experiences in the educational area;
- Non-Roma children's parents' and local community's biased attitudes against the Roma. For example, according to Eurobarometer data on discrimination in EU in 2012, 26 % of Latvian citizens would feel totally uncomfortable about their children having Roma schoolmates¹¹.

2.4.3 Norway

Of the 700 Norwegian Roma, approximately 200 are assumed to have permanent residence abroad. Many Roma in Norway indeed define travelling as part of their culture and way of life, and feel travelling to be closely bound up with their identity. In 2008 scientist Torbjørg Bay mapped over 600 Roma individuals in Oslo. Similar mappings were conducted in 2009 and 2012. Results show that:

- out of 120 Roma children between the ages of 6 and 15 (compulsory education), just 71 were registered in a class¹²;
- approximately 116 children are of pre-school age, of which 35 are abroad;
- approximately 105 children are of primary school age, of which 31 are abroad;
- approximately 73 teenagers are between 14 to 19 years old, of which approximately 40 are abroad.

Roma children are often absent from school. For those who attend school, the parents often choose to take them out of school in favour of travelling. There is little common understanding from the parents that the decision to take them out of school prevents their children from integrating into society and jeopardises their professional future. Many children leave school in the 10th grade without an approved diploma. Just two Roma students have been able to complete high school. Three others are in progress now in the school year 2012-2013.

Most parents want their children to attend school, but are anxious of what might happen to them and fear that they may be bullied. The Roma point out that they often experience discrimination at school and that it is difficult to combine travelling with the children's schooling. Roma have responded positively to the adult education project for Roma that has been established in Oslo.

There is a considerable degree of functional illiteracy in all age groups. Roma have expressed a wish for Norwegian reading and writing training for adult Roma¹³. Roma otherwise communicate orally in their own language (Romanes). There is limited contact between the Norwegian society and the Roma population and scepticism is high among Roma people when it comes to interact with the majority.

Some of the Roma lack reading and writing skills; they need a support framework or support persons they can talk to. Torbjørg Bay's report of 2009 states that Roma would like schooling and education to be available to both children and adults. As yet, there has been no request from adult Roma for reading and writing training in Romanes.

On 22 October 2008, the Ministry of Education and Research invited Oslo schools with Roma pupils, the Ombudsman for Children and the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion to a discussion of challenges affecting the conditions for education of Roma children and to gain the best possible insights into improvements that can be made.

The schools informed that there is a tendency for girls to drop out of school earlier than boys.

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_393_fact_lv_en.pdf .

¹² Source: Torbjørg Bay to NRK 13.03.2012.

¹³ See Measure no. 11 of the 2009 Action Plan for the Integration of Roma developed by the Oslo municipality.

The representatives of the schools adopt different approaches to the organisation of instruction for Roma pupils. Some stress the parents' responsibility for ensuring the children's attendance. Emphasis is placed on pupils using computers and the virtual learning environment, ClassFronter, while they are out travelling.

There is uncertainty among school professionals as to whether Roma children should be placed in separate schools/classes or if they should attend the school closest to where they live. There are also differing views as regards to whether guidelines for absence and home schooling should be the same as those that apply to other pupils. The possibility of providing Romanes instruction should nevertheless be considered, but it is difficult to find teachers with the necessary competence.

The head teachers proposed no specific approaches to improving attendance and completion of schooling for Roma children, but highlighted a number of challenges that should be given further consideration by both state and municipal authorities.

According to the head teachers, the obstacles to Roma children's attendance are many and complex. Conditions for attendance include satisfactory housing, parents' confidence in the school and a support framework to ensure that the children are brought to school and followed up. Many Roma find the Norwegian rules difficult to understand. Furthermore, the schools have no way of knowing where the children are at any given time.

In addition, the head teachers consider that instruction must often be specially adapted for Roma children. Emphasis is placed on instruction in basic skills, particularly reading and writing. This applies to instruction in Norwegian, not in Romanes. It is also important that there are funds available for a support framework to ensure that children come to school.

2.4.4 Sweden

In 2011 around 83% of all children between one and five years of age in Sweden attended pre-school. However, there are indications that very few Roma children attend pre-school, which places them at a disadvantage in later school years.

Teachers in Sweden tend to have lower expectations about Roma children attending school, which also sometimes results in insufficient efforts to address school absence.

III. EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND REFERENCE TEXTS

The right to education for all children, and for Roma children in particular, including the issues of school drop-out and absenteeism, has been extensively addressed and documented by European and international governmental and non-governmental organisations through conventions, recommendations, case-law, reports and projects. Relevant texts can be found in Appendix 4.

IV. LEGISLATION, POLICIES, STRUCTURES AND SPECIFIC MEASURES

4.1 Finland

The **Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE)** is a national agency subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Culture. The FNBE has a wide range of tasks related to the development of education all through pre-primary and basic education, general and vocational upper secondary education and training, liberal adult education and basic education in the arts. The FNBE is responsible for drawing up the national core curricula.

A reform of general education in terms of objectives, lesson-hour distribution, and national core curricula and local curricula has started and will be carried out as a whole until 2016/2017.

Several core curriculum documents will be drawn up concurrently, based on involving broad-based co-operation with stakeholders and experts, as well as support for local curriculum development efforts in many different ways. The preparation of general guidelines for basic education outlined that it would be important to take into account:

- The basic values;
- The role and structure of education, school culture;
- The future competence;
- The integrating role;
- The conception of learning;
- Teaching methods;
- Learning environments;
- Pupil assessment;
- Support and guidance.

A sub-group for support to learning and school attendance has been created to focus on comprehensive literacy skills and a linguistically and culturally conscious school; comprehensive reading and writing skills as part of future competence; and linguistic and cultural awareness as part of school culture and teaching.

Rationale of the educational reform: the world surrounding school has changed essentially since the beginning of the 21st century. This is due to the effects of globalisation and the challenges of sustainable future changes in children's and young people's growth environment, in the nature and amount of information, in production and communication of information, in technologies, in the nature of work, in the complexity of society, in demographics, in natural environments, etc. Therefore new skills to build a sustainable future are needed. In that context, it is necessary to examine educational contents, pedagogy and schools' working practices and reform these in relation to changes.

Principles for the preparation of the core curricula: The following aspects must be taken into account when drawing up the core curricula in all of their sectors (targets, contents and practices):

- strengthening the continuum of education and teaching and the consistency of teaching;
- consistency from early childhood to pre-primary and basic education and between various sectors of the curriculum, in basic education especially between various subjects;
- promoting extensive literacy skills, media literacy skills and ICT skills as a task that permeates all teaching sectors;
- identifying change in literacy skills and promoting these skills as a task that is shared by all teachers, consciously taking the role of the media and ICT into account in all learning;
- promoting equality;
- strengthening safety, promoting inclusion and participation, reducing inequality and preventing discrimination, taking gender-related needs into account;
- supporting the pupils' growth and development, improving well-being and other prerequisites for learning, strengthening early childhood education and care partnership;
- taking the pupils' age groups and various development stages into account, increasing experiences of success, taking individual needs into account (the need for support, the need for further challenges), developing the quality and sense of community in learning environments;
- promoting language and cultural awareness;
- strengthening pupils' identity, taking their language and cultural roots into account, valuing diversity and conscious inclusion of pupils with different backgrounds, recognising the significance of languages and cultures in the world;
- working with knowledge, technological change, especially the impacts of the constantly growing volume and complexity of information and technology on schoolwork, strengthening skills in knowledge work;
- internationality/globality, i.e. ability to think and act globally and to examine local and global needs and their possibilities in relation to one another;
- promoting a sustainable future: aspects of social and sociological, cultural, ecological and economical sustainability, education for responsibility.

State subsidy for supporting basic education for the Roma children in Finland: the main goal of this development programme is to establish methods created in the development programmes as part of the everyday activities in schools and municipalities.

Between 2008 and 2012, a total of 35 municipal authorities received state subsidy for this need – totalling 2.1 million €. Despite the small number of municipal authorities assisted, subsidy is effectively targeted at those with a high number of Roma within their jurisdiction. It is estimated that at least 80% of all Roma pupils of basic education age come within the scope of the aid. Every subsidised municipality has to create a plan for supporting Roma pupils in basic education.

Development programmes for supporting the Roma pupils in basic education include measures for:

- interacting with the Roma pupils, developing the cooperation between the Roma family and the school;
- promoting tolerance and positive ethnic relations, as well as increasing awareness of the Roma culture;
- promoting connections between the Roma minority and the majority population in the school;
- promoting the Roma identity of the Roma pupils and promoting acquisition of the Roma language;
- contributing to enhancing the learning abilities of the Roma pupils;
- developing teaching methods for the Roma pupils requiring special support;
- developing pedagogy and materials taking into account the varying backgrounds of the Roma pupils.

The **Strategy of the Finnish National Board of Education 2011** stresses the characteristics of basic education in Finland (Roma children like any other children benefit from these advantages):

- Basic education is free of charge for pupils;
- Textbooks and other materials, tools etc. are free of charge;
- Pupils are offered a free daily meal;
- School health care and other welfare services are free to the pupils;
- Pupils in basic education living some distance from school (more than 5 km) or if the journey is considered dangerous are entitled to free transport.

The first **Finnish National Policy on Roma** has been prepared in 2009 by a Special Working Group appointed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

The general objective is that Finland will be a forerunner among European countries in promoting the inclusion of Roma by 2017.

The specific objectives are to provide guidelines to all administrative sectors for the implementation of activities, as well as guidelines also to the activities of the National Board of Education and especially to the Roma Education Group.

The main key objectives in the Finnish National Policy on Roma as regards education are:

- Enhancing the participation of Roma children in early childhood and pre-primary education;
- Enhancing the social inclusion of Roma children and youth in basic education and upper secondary education;
- Enhancing the participation in vocational education and training of adult Roma;
- Promoting the development of the Romani language and culture.

During the visit in Helsinki, the Finnish National Board of Education presented the **new Strategy for Special Needs Education in Comprehensive Education, based on the support for learning and school attendance**. This is a new long-term strategy for the development of pre-primary and basic special education that has required changes in the **Basic Education Act**¹⁴, as well as in the **National Curricula for Pre-Primary and Basic Education**. It has also established a large development programme and guidelines to help teachers to follow the new Act.

The Act, amending the Basic Education Act, has as its main aim to strengthen the pupil's right to early, preventive support in learning and growth. The support is intended to be intensified by stages: a) general support; b) intensified support and c) special support.

¹⁴ The Basic Education Act came into force on 1 January 2011.

A pupil has:

- the right to get instruction and guidance counselling in accordance with the curriculum and sufficient support in learning and school attendance, as soon as the need arises¹⁵;
- the possibility to get support and counselling is a right every pupil has on every school day.

Part-time special needs education is provided to a pupil who has minor difficulties in learning or adjustment and needs special support to overcome learning difficulties. It is arranged, in general education, as team teaching; in small groups or individually.

Part time Special Needs Education in Finland	Pupils concerned
Speech difficulties	20 671
Reading and writing difficulties	56 527
Learning difficulties in mathematics	24 576
Learning difficulties in foreign languages	12 006
Emotional and social difficulties	6 726
Other special difficulties	9 442
<i>Total</i>	<i>129 948</i> ¹⁶

The **education support plan** is a collaborative effort. The level of support is based on the pedagogical assessment involving all teachers, the pupil and his/her parent and pupil welfare personnel and other professionals.

The support goes from a medical approach to pedagogical assessment and involves multi-professional co-operation. New pedagogical methods, co-teaching, differentiation, flexible grouping, and minimizing the barriers to learning in a learning environment, as well as equal opportunities to get support in different schools and municipalities, are required. The goal is to support every pupil so that every pupil can fulfil his/her full potential.

The **content of the local curriculum** is determined in more detail in the core curriculum:

- Support to learning and the structure of the support;
- The principles underlying the provision of the support, the aims and the practical arrangement of the different forms of support;
- The division of work and responsibilities in devising the personal learning plan and conducting the pedagogical examination;
- Cooperation with the pupil and the parent/career/legal representative.

Implementation of the reform: for the time being, the evidence shows that the way of doing is being successful, through in-service education for teachers, locally organised networks, peer learning, benchmarking, supporting materials for teachers and good learning materials for students. Between 1999 and 2011, the number of special-needs schools has fallen by nearly 60% and the number of pupils in these schools by nearly 50%. Further information can be found in the **Basic Education of Roma Pupils - Review 2010–2011**¹⁷ and its 11 proposals (see Appendix 5 of this report).

The **Finnish Romani language** is under serious threat and included in the UNESCO list of endangered languages. For the time being, there are Romani-speaking people in Finland, but their average age is rising rapidly. **Language nests** are meant for Roma people of all ages: children, young people and adults. Romani language nest activities are mainly verbal and activities may vary from one town to another. President Tarja Halonen is patron of the project.

According to the governmental statistics for the teaching of the Romani language, the actual number of pupils is 174 pupils, or 20.2%.

¹⁵ Amended Section 30.

¹⁶ i.e. 21.9% of the total amount of pupils in basic education which is 593,148.

¹⁷ An online publication and learning materials can be found at www.oph.fi/julkaisut (see *Romanioppilaiden*). The publication can also be ordered from the Roma Education Group at the Finnish National Board of Education: marita.korp@oph.fi.

94% of the school principals (at schools with Roma pupils) were of the opinion that school staff had familiarised themselves with Romani culture only a little, to some extent or considerably. Of all school principals, 6% reported that staff had not familiarised themselves at all with Romany culture.

The teaching of the Romani language aims to activate the pupils' skills and use of the Romani language so that Roma pupils are able, and have the courage, to use their own language as a tool of interaction and thinking both within the Roma community and outside it. Pupils are instructed in understanding the importance of their own language for the vitality and identity of their own culture and the position of the Romani language as a language next to all other languages. Teaching of the Romani language must help the pupils to understand that the spoken language learned at home and the standard language taught at school are elements that supplement one other. The task of teaching is to support the balanced development of pupils' dual identity and their ability to integrate into both the Roma and the Finnish community.

The government has aids for arranging teaching of the Romani language for a maximum of two hours per week. The group must have at least two pupils at the beginning of the term or, in course-based teaching, at the beginning of the course. The pupils may be from pre-primary education, from various grades in basic education and upper secondary school, from different municipalities¹⁸ and from private and state schools. Teaching takes place during the school day.

Summer courses in the Romani language and workshops for Roma parents in various parts of the country have also been developed.

School assistants, teacher's assistants, mediators of Roma background: the adoption of enhanced support is very important for the Roma pupils. The school assistants' tasks include identity support to Roma children (female-male) and contacts between teachers and assistants (intensive "working couples", good companionship). It is important that teacher assistants of Roma background take care of all children, the majority children, as well as Roma children.

Supporting Roma girl students in basic education - Development project in Oulu municipality¹⁹: The Department of Education in the city of Oulu has been involved in the Supporting Roma Students' Basic Education Project since August 2008. This project has received funds from the Finnish National Board of Education which have been essential in supporting several functions and actions targeted at Roma students. A Steering Group has monitored and guided the project in co-operation with a network consisting of schools, authorities and third sector organisations (Primary and Secondary Schools, Regional State Administrative Agency of North Ostrobothnia and Roma people of Northern Finland, a registered association).

The objectives and aims of the Oulu project are:

- To increase Roma students' identity;
- To promote the use and learning of Roma language;
- To increase the facts and awareness of Roma culture amongst all students and teachers;
- To develop home-school co-operation;
- To enhance the Roma students' possibilities in education

The main practical and concrete outputs of the Oulu project are:

- A development plan;
- Local curriculum for Roma language;
- Showcases and workshops presenting Roma culture and history (clothing, music, handicrafts);
- In-service training for teachers;
- Weekend family camps for parents and children.

¹⁸ This teaching was available in 2011 in Espoo, Heinola, Helsinki, Iisalmi, Imatra, Jyväskylä, Kangasniemi, Kokkola, Kuopio, Lahti, Savonlinna, Tampere, Turku, Urjala, Vantaa, and Ähtäri.

¹⁹ For further information, please contact: katja.huusko-ahlgren@eduouka.fi or raimo.salo@ouka.fi.

The project emphasises the cultural awareness for teachers through training courses about Roma culture. The project has obtained positive outcomes as teachers have become more aware of the true factors of Roma girls' culture, especially of their clothes.

Other practical and concrete outputs include:

- In-service training for staff members in Roma language;
- A theatre play filmed into a movie of Roma culture;
- Production of a Roma music CD;
- Supporting Roma teenagers in applying for further studies;
- Homework afternoon clubs for Roma students.

There is a large variety of **measures supporting Roma girls' education**:

- Homework afternoon clubs have provided peaceful time and space for girls to discuss matters worrying them (they feel the need to exchange ideas about with a Roma woman). Homework clubs are also useful to maintaining discussions about subjects such as education, traditions, cultural identity (e.g. clothes), and self-esteem;
- Supporting Roma students' basic education. At the early stage, i.e. during primary school years, it is essential to make clear the importance of education and attending school daily so as to affect the students' attitudes towards schooling in the long run;
- Homework and handicrafts;
- Supporting the application process for further studies by trial periods;
- Personal programme for 3-5 days;
- One-to-one counselling discussions: motivation, interests, need for support;
- Visits to vocational institutions (discussions and visits give a more realistic image and view of the content of different professions which help students to find suitable training for themselves).

Among the **positive outcomes of such measures**, one can say that:

- Students do not fall behind;
- There is sharing of experiences of success and knowledge;
- There is a positive meaning among students which inspires better education and keeps them motivated;
- They enhance students' learning possibilities;
- They decrease the drop-outs.

All of those activities encourage girls to make their dreams come true and to find new perspectives to their study plans. The practices in working life combined with practical examples on how other Roma girls have solved similar problems give them courage and hope to continue on the path of their own choice. It is necessary for Roma girls to see and hear from true examples and cases of successful Roma women who have been trained for a profession and are doing well in working life.

Young Roma people recognise the necessity of vocational studies which would improve their quality of life and well-being. Nevertheless, still today, girls' lives are aimed at finding the spouse of their dreams and starting a family of their own. Girls experience that further education prevents moving on and discover the world which is the only way to find a partner unless there are any suitable candidates in their hometown.

4.2 Latvia

The main legislation of education in Latvia includes the **Education Law from 1998** and the **General Education Law from 1999**. The **1998 Law of Education** forbids the differential treatment to education. It means that Roma people have the same rights and obligations with regard to education as the general Latvian population.

More specific guarantees, aims and goals are regulated by the normative acts of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia. For example, the amendments to the **Cabinet Regulation No. 461 of 18 May 2010 "Regulations Regarding the Classification of Occupations, the Basic Tasks Appropriate to the Occupation and the Basic Qualification Requirements, and the**

Procedures for the Use and Updating of the Classification of Occupations” allow municipalities to provide their pre-schools and elementary schools with a teachers’ assistant of Roma background in order to promote school attending especially among Roma children. The general secondary education level is the minimal grade to work as teachers’ assistant of Roma background, but in the same time the tertiary pedagogical education is necessary to be employed as non-Roma teacher assistant.

Given the specific national situation and conditions, such as the small Roma population, Latvia has developed a series of **national Roma integration policy measures** (hereafter “Measures”). These Measures have been included in the development planning document: **National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy Guidelines 2012-2018** (hereinafter “Guidelines”). There are concrete actions and projects will be formulated to implement the Measures in every two years in close cooperation with the representatives of the Roma community.

In 2012 the **Council supervising the implementation of Roma integration policy measures** (thereafter - Council) has been established by the Ministry of Culture. The Council includes representatives from state bodies (co-responsible ministries, the Office of the Ombudsman, local authorities, and educational authorities), Roma and non-Roma NGOs that work in the area of protecting the interests of the Roma, as well as experts in Roma integration issues. Totally 8 Roma representatives are involved in the Council: 6 representatives of Roma NGOs, one representative from the Office of Ombudsman and one expert. The main aim of the Council is to assess and foster the policy for Roma integration, as well as to promote civil participation of the Roma community and to strengthen cooperation between the Roma community and national authorities, in accordance with the National identity, civil society and integration policy guidelines for 2012-2018. The main tasks of the Council are ensuring an effective implementation and evaluation of results of the policy for Roma integration and particular the set of national Roma integration policy measures; providing recommendation to the authorities to improve the implementation of the policy for Roma integration especially in field of education, employment, health care and housing; fostering the cooperation between Roma community, authorities, stakeholders, social partners, NGO and experts; evaluating the possibility of effective use of EU structural funds to implementation of the set of national Roma integration policy measures.

Roma representatives are also members of the **Consulting Council in Ethnic Minority Education Affairs of the Ministry of Education and Science**.

The **Measures** of the national Roma integration policy have been developed in accordance with the European Union, Council of Europe and other international instruments and legislative acts binding on Latvia. These have also been inspired by Recommendations of the study “*Roma rights to education: implementing the situation in Latvia*”. According to this study, the main challenges for Roma integration in the area of education are as follows:

- To continue the good practice of preparing and facilitating the inclusion of teaching assistants of Roma background in schools by providing for the further professional education of these teaching assistants. To acknowledge, collate and disseminate other examples of good practice in Roma education;
- To develop and improve intercultural competencies in order to facilitate the integration of Roma school children in general education;
- To implement teacher training and continuing education by ensuring a link with practice in classes where Roma children study together with other children;
- To regularly analyse the situation in the work of educational establishments where Roma school children study, such as teachers’ professional qualifications for classroom work with children of different ethnic origins;
- To support projects to foster Roma education implemented by non-governmental organisations (or representatives of the Roma community) together with educational establishments or other nongovernmental organisations;
- To develop a mechanism for recording the educational age of Roma in order to reduce the risk of school absenteeism and to foster Roma children’s regular attendance at school. To collate data on preparing Roma children for pre-school education, mandatory five-year and six-year education, educational results and completing basic education;

- To develop and publish methodological materials for teaching 5-7 year old children the Romani language (with translation into Latvian), with the content representing the traditional key elements of Roma culture;
- To maintain a dialogue with the parents of Roma children, to support and involve them in the education process by explaining the importance of education;
- To foster the improvement of socio-economic conditions for Roma children in preparation for primary school;
- To include experts from the Roma community in the work of the consultative board on issues of minority education of the Ministry of Education and Science.

The **Guidelines** define the following policy results to be achieved and result indicators which have a targeted approach to Roma. The main policy areas set out in the Reform Programme for reducing the proportion of young people who do not finish school are as follows:

- ensuring access to primary and secondary education;
- implementing modern teaching methods.

Given that the Roma are one of the social groups with one of the lowest levels of education, and the fact that a large number of Roma children drop out of the education process before completing their education, the tasks set out in the Reform Programme for reducing the proportion of young people who do not finish school also apply to the Roma population.

Preschool education is under the responsibility of municipalities. Since 2002, education of 5-6 year old children is obligatory. Every child has the right to equal and quality education.

Solutions:

- Creating multicultural, inclusive groups/classes and involving children in early education;
- Teacher trainings for work in multicultural, inclusive groups/classes;
- Parent support centres in schools;
- Teacher's assistants with Roma background as intermediary between school and family.

Teacher's assistants of Roma background were prepared to work in the school environment during the following projects of the Centre for Education Initiatives (CEI):

- « Roma Child in a Welcoming School » (2004 CEI project): One of them obtained a Bachelor degree and works as a preschool teacher, two of them continue their work as teachers assistants with salaries from the municipality budget;
- « Teachers assistants of Roma Background » (2006-2009 CEI project): In the 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 school years, eight teachers' assistants of Roma background were working in schools in several regions. In 2009/2010, there were eight teachers' assistants, two of which were paid from the municipality budget. These measures are implemented in the framework of the **State Programme "Roma in Latvia"**.
- «School and Community for Inclusion of Roma Children» (2011 CEI project): In the 2011/2012 school year, five teacher's assistants of Roma background were working in schools in several regions. In 2012/2013, three teachers' assistants receive salaries from the municipality budget.

Other examples of projects run by the Centre for Education Initiatives (CEI) include²⁰:

- 2011/2012: research on "financing and governance of education for children with learning difficulties: focus on effectiveness, efficiency and equity";
- 2011/2012: "training of pedagogues for inclusion of Roma children";
- 2011/2012: "creation of the support system for work with Roma children";
- 2011/2012: "inclusive family, pre-school, school and society";
- 2011/2012: "school and community for inclusion of Roma children";
- 2008/2010: "integration's suitcase" for children with special needs;
- 2009/2011: "quality inclusive education for children with disabilities".

²⁰ For older CEI projects, see information provided by Latvia in the Addendum of this thematic report.

Roma children's inclusion and integration into mainstream education and the integration of their families, especially senior Roma, into society, is promoted through cooperation and intercultural dialogue in order to reduce social disparity.

In that respect, **parental support centres** and **adult education** - through cooperation with teachers, school administrators, local government representatives and parents - lead to more educated Roma adults who are more inclined to send their children to school.

New projects are being initiated under the "Social rehabilitation programme for Roma families with preschool or school age children" for the 2012-2013 school year in Jelgava and Jurmala.

There are also many special activities regarding Roma inclusion, including Roma education, that are implemented in the framework of PROGRESS 2007-2013 project "*Different people. Various experiences. One Latvia*". For example, Roma NGO leaders and representatives, specialists of municipalities and local governments, as well pedagogical staff of schools, are involved in activities to raise awareness of Roma and supporting their integration. These activities are implemented in 2012-2013 by the Social Integration Fund and the Ministry of Culture.

4.3 Norway

According to Sections 1-3 and 2-1 of the **Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education (Education Act)**, all children have the right and obligation to attend primary and lower secondary education, and the school owner must ensure that they receive schooling adapted to their abilities and learning needs. The obligation may be met by means of publicly maintained primary and lower secondary schools or through other equivalent education. Experience indicates that it can be difficult to find satisfactory solutions for safeguarding Roma children's right to education while also enabling them to develop their cultural identity and way of life, of which travelling is a major feature.

In addition, young people and adults who have completed primary education are entitled to upper secondary education. Section 2-1 of the Education Act regulates the right and obligation to attend primary and lower secondary education, while section 3-1 regulates young people's right to upper secondary education. Section 2-1, fifth paragraph, of the Education Act states the consequences of failure to attend compulsory schooling.

Pupils attending private primary and upper secondary schools have a corresponding entitlement pursuant to section 3-5 of the **Private Education Act**. This arrangement also applies to Roma. According the Primary and Lower Secondary School Information System (GSI), no Roma pupils have received education in accordance with this provision. However, the GSI's census is taken on 1 October each year, when many Roma are still travelling.

Pupils attending primary, lower and upper secondary education and training whose mother tongue is neither Norwegian nor Sami "*have the right to adapted education in Norwegian until they are sufficiently proficient in Norwegian to follow the normal instruction of the school. If necessary, such pupils are also entitled to mother tongue instruction, bilingual subject teaching, or both*" (Section 3-12 of the Education Act).

Bearing in mind that the Roma are one of five national minorities in Norway, the Norwegian authorities therefore have a particular responsibility for ensuring that the Roma, as a national minority, are given a genuine opportunity to take part in Norwegian society on the same terms and with the same potential as other people. On the basis of the Government's social and welfare policy, all people, including the Roma, should have the opportunity for inclusion in the Norwegian community and be able to take part in education and working life.

In January 1973, due to the media's focus on, and criticism of the marginalisation and unfavourable living conditions of Roma in Oslo, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs submitted the **White Paper Report No. 37 (1972-73) to the Storting On Measures for the Norwegian Gypsies (Om tiltak for de norske sigøynere)**. In the White Paper, the responsibility and work on ensuring improved living conditions for the Roma were divided between the Municipality of Oslo and the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs.

On the basis of the White Paper, an official with responsibility for Gypsy affairs was appointed at the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in 1973. An agreement was concluded between the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and the Municipality of Oslo concerning full reimbursement of the cost of the municipality's services for Roma. **The Department for Gypsy Matters ("Gypsy Office")** was established in the municipality of Oslo. In compliance with the intentions of the White Paper, the Gypsy Office was to coordinate all services for Roma which, in the case of the population at large, were divided between various different agencies and institutions.

The tasks of the "Gypsy Office" were as follows:

- providing advice and guidance and making recommendations and decisions pursuant to the Social Welfare Act and the Child Welfare Act;
- carrying out settlement work among Gypsies (neighbourhood work, residential training, site procurement, planning of accommodation with the extended families concerned);
- coordinating work on health issues among Gypsies in cooperation with Sagene Health Clinic;
- cooperating with other bodies/agencies;
- foreign language teaching for primary and lower secondary school;
- adult education for Gypsies;
- *Gaustadbekkdalen* day care institution for Gypsy children;
- a youth club for Gypsies;
- County Employment Office (with responsibility for labour market measures for Gypsies);
- providing advice and guidance to other municipalities and agencies, and assisting foreign Gypsies travelling in Norway.

Special teaching arrangements for Roma were established in 1973 in the form of special classes for Roma in certain schools in Oslo. Roma women were periodically attached to these classes as mother tongue assistants. A number of teaching aids were developed in Romanes.

At the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, the teaching arrangements for Roma children were changed from special classes to attendance of normal classes with mainly the same rights as minority language children²¹.

In 1990, Oslo City Council decided that special measures for "Gypsies" were to be abolished completely on the grounds that "*Norwegian Gypsies should as far as possible be treated in the same way as any other inhabitant of Norway*"²². The Labour Party and the Socialist Left Party referred at that time to reports from experts and argued against completely abolishing the measures, which they said would have negative consequences for the Gypsies' school attendance, housing situation and implemented employment measures.

In 2009, an **Action Plan for Roma** – primarily designed for Roma in Oslo - was established by the then Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion (subject to follow-up by the present Ministry of Government Administration, Reform and Church Affairs). The task of the **Department of Roma measures (Skullerud VO)** is to carry out parts of this plan in cooperation with the Board and the authorities. Coordination among various actors is ensured through the *Skullerud* board, namely:

- the leader of the Department of municipality board of culture and business/industry;
- a representative from the Agency of Knowledge and Pre-School Education (Kindergarten);
- a representative from the Agency of Social Services;
- a representative from the Agency of Substance Abuse Problems;
- a representative from the Agency of Education;
- a representative from the Department of Roma Measures (*Skullerud Vo*);
- representatives from official agencies and departments;
- representatives from the Roma group;
- School rector/principal;
- Teachers and supervisors.

²¹ Source: Lars Gjerde: *Rom i Norge - en historikk* [Roma in Norway - a historical account.

²² Case No. 585/90:1017.

The main goals of the Action Plan for Roma include the following:

- To teach parents basic skills in reading, writing, mathematics, data and social science;
- To help out each individual and family in contact with the authorities.

From 2007 until today, the authorities have tried out different methods and approaches to meeting participants needs, such as:

- Ordinary lessons in classrooms;
- Projects;
- One-to-one education;
- Focusing on special subjects to motivate the participants to achieve their goals;
- Role plays;
- Vocational training.

Since 1991, the Municipality of Oslo has taken responsibility for measures for Roma in **day care institutions, primary and lower secondary schools and adult education.**

Day care institutions: In 1978, a day care institution for Roma children was established in Gaustadbekkdalen in Oslo. This was operated as an experimental day care institution until 1988, and was then approved as a permanent day care institution by the former Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Government Administration. The day care institution was owned by the Municipality of Oslo. The state covered 25% of the operating deficit of the day care institution until it was closed down in 1991. It was then intended that Roma children would be integrated in the municipality's ordinary day care institutions. Since then, no day care institution projects/measures have been specially designed for Roma.

Primary and lower secondary education through stimulating funds: in 2007, the Municipality of Oslo provided stimulating funds to improve follow-up of, and counteract dropout among, Roma pupils in Oslo schools. Schools were allocated funds on the basis of pupil numbers and action plans.

The action plans emphasised *strengthening of the contact between home and school, building of mutual trust, individual follow-up, reinforcing the contact teacher function, surveying skills, providing suitable materials for better adapted instruction and implementing routines and clear agreements in connection with travelling.* Schools mainly used these funds for increased staffing and for purchasing materials for monitored instruction, PCs, food and books about the Roma. The results indicated the necessity for close and personal contact between parents and the school, which improves the basis for communication, not least concerning agreements in connection with travelling.

The increased staffing enabled certain improvement of individual follow-up including the use of a "reading assessment form" which proved to have a positive effect on the pupils' skills. All schools stressed the importance of increased staffing as a condition for progress. The use of contracts in connection with travelling has had positive effects in some cases. The stimulating funds were provided for autumn 2007, but a number of schools followed this up by allocating funds from their own budgets. Stimulating funds were also provided to schools in autumn 2008. Seventy-one Roma pupils have been registered, divided between 22 schools, each of which has from one to eleven Roma pupils.

Adult education for Roma: adaptive training for adult Roma began in 1973 in order to provide Roma with elementary reading and writing skills and to provide social and vocational training. Attendees were paid daily cash benefits. The main reason for transferring the responsibility for education of Roma from the state to the municipalities in 1991 was that the instruction provided should be as consistent as possible with the provision for other social groups.

During the transitional phase, it was sometimes proposed that Roma should be offered instruction in the Norwegian language and civic life similar to that provided to immigrants and refugees. However, Roma have different learning needs, along-established connection with Norway and knowledge of Norwegian society, although they may be said to live outside of it. Considerable illiteracy has also been revealed among Norwegian Roma.

Remedying this is in many cases dependent on specially adapted educational provision. Within the existing arrangements, there is no reason why literacy training, for example, should not be offered. Such instruction is already part of statutory primary education and is required to be adapted to the learning needs of the participants. Additional educational adaptations needed by the Roma population may involve further expense. Indeed, the Roma have themselves expressed a need for subsistence support while attending courses.

In 2007 Oslo Municipality decided to organise adult education for Roma people (in line with the OSCE recommendation for better integration of the Roma people). The idea behind this was that the children's ability to complete school depended on the parents' living conditions.

The Norwegian authorities focus on education as a key element for the Roma to help themselves to become a greater part of society and to successfully integrate into society.

The main stakeholders and actors of Roma adult education include:

- Ministry of Government Administration, Reform and Church Affairs;
- Ministry of Education and Research;
- Oslo Municipality Department of Culture and Education;
- Oslo Municipality Centre of Adult Education Oslo.

Adults are entitled to primary and lower secondary education if they require it (section 4A-1 of the Education Act). They are entitled to upper secondary education from the year they reach 25 years of age if they have completed primary and lower secondary education but have not completed upper secondary education (section 4A-3).

The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion provides support for educational provision at the **Oslo Adult Education Centre at Skullerud**. Since December 2007, the Centre has held regular ICT courses in word processing using Microsoft Word, searching the Internet and using e-mail. The focus on **e-learning** is continually being developed, and efforts are now being made to make more active use of the virtual learning environment ClassFronter with a view to closer cooperation with primary and lower secondary schools.

In the view of the Government, educational provision for adult Roma should as far as possible comply with current guidelines, mainly providing adapted instruction within these arrangements, with the cost of the instruction covered within the existing grant schemes. However, measures for Roma sometimes require additional resources and the State has, for example, contributed to the funding of the adult education project under the auspices of the Municipality of Oslo.

Adult Roma have the same right to education as other Norwegian citizens, and no state funds are currently specifically allocated to measures for Roma (apart from the adult education project for young adult Roma).

The policy development regarding national minorities concerns, among other things, defining the content of, and clarifying the relationship, between the various human rights conventions that Norway has undertaken to follow up. Article 27 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 and Article 5 of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities guarantee the Roma, as a national minority, a special right with regard to the safeguarding and development of their own **language**, their own **culture** and their own **identity**.

4.4 Sweden

The **Swedish Education Act** stipulates that all children and young people must have access to education of equal value, irrespective of gender, place of residence and social and financial circumstances. In Sweden, compulsory schooling lasts for nine years and children have a right to education from the age of seven. The aim of compulsory school education is to provide all pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to participate in social life and in continued education. Special support is given to pupils who have difficulties with school work. Attending school is free of charge, although minor amounts may be charged for one-off activities. Educational content is determined by

the curriculum and subject syllabuses. Individual development plans and written assessments are to be provided every school year and grades are given from year 8 onwards.

The **new Schools Act** reinforces the pupils' right to support and improves the monitoring of pupils in need of special support by way of written assessments, earlier formal qualifications and more national tests. In its reform work, the Government has focused on the earlier school years, since these lay the foundations for a subsequent successful education. The Government is also making efforts to develop pupils' skills in reading, writing and arithmetic.

The responsibility for the student to fulfil their compulsory schooling relies with several parties. The municipality should ensure that the students in primary education and with basic learning disabilities attend school. Anyone with custody of a child of school age shall ensure that the child fulfils their compulsory schooling. If a student does not attend school because the pupil's guardian has not done what he is required to ensure this, the municipality shall oblige the pupil's guardian to fulfil their obligations. A compliance order may be combined with a penalty.

In Sweden, the **pre-school system** is intended for children from the age of one until they start compulsory education. The purpose of pre-school is to stimulate children's development and learning in a secure and caring environment. Pre-school takes a holistic view of children and their needs and is designed so that care, development and learning come together to form a whole.

The pre-school class is a voluntary form of school within the state school system. Municipalities are required to offer children places in pre-school classes from the autumn term of the year in which a child turns six until the child starts his/her compulsory schooling. Today approximately 96 per cent of all six-year-olds go to pre-school classes. The aim of education in pre-school classes is to stimulate pupils' development and learning and to prepare them for their future school career.

On 16 February 2012, the Swedish Government adopted a **coordinated and long term Strategy for Roma Inclusion for the period 2012–2032**²³.

The twenty-year Roma inclusion strategy is to be regarded as a strengthening of the already existing minority policy that applies to all the five national minorities in Sweden²⁴.

The Swedish strategy for Roma inclusion, which was already planned, also serves as a response to the call of the European Commission on Member States to adopt national Roma integration strategies or further develop existing strategies. The strategy is based on human rights, with particular emphasis on the principle of non-discrimination. This means that the Government emphasises that the Roma, like all others, are entitled to enjoy all human rights.

The target group is above all those Roma who are living in social and economic exclusion and are subject to discrimination. Women and children are a special priority.

The overall goal of the twenty-year Roma strategy is for a Roma who turns twenty years of age in 2032 to have the same opportunities in life as a non-Roma. The rights of Roma who are then twenty should be safeguarded within ordinary structures and areas of activity to the same extent as are the rights for twenty-year-olds in the rest of the population.

The Swedish strategy contains goals and measures within six specific areas of activity: a) education, b) employment, c) housing, d) health, social care and security, e) culture and language and f) the organisation of civil society. The Swedish Roma Strategy is based on human rights, with particular emphasis on the principle of non-discrimination.

²³ See Official Communication 2011/12:56. The text of the Swedish Roma Strategy (available in Swedish only) is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_sweden_strategy_sv.pdf. Further information about the Government's Official communication 2011/12:56 about national minorities, minority policy, minority conventions, and the Government bill 2008/09:158 "From recognition to empowerment" are available on the Government's websites www.manskligarattigheter.se and www.regeringen.se/romastrategin.

²⁴ Minority groups recognised in Sweden are Sami, Sweden Finns, Jews, Roma and Tornedalians. These groups respond to the following criteria. They have inhabited Sweden for a long time and are explicitly connected in communities; they have unique linguistic, religious or cultural signifiers; and they have a desire to keep their identity.

The Government has allocated SEK 46 million for the period 2012–2015 to measures for the Roma. This sum is in addition to the ordinary means allocations for national minorities.

The Government offices have the overall responsibility for coordinating and monitoring the strategy. Implementation as a whole is aimed at reinforced implementation and continuous follow-up of Roma people's access to human rights at the local, regional and national level. To achieve results, authorities and municipalities must participate and take active responsibility, within their ordinary activity, for drawing attention to and guaranteeing Roma people's access to their rights. Follow-up will be done in relation to the six goals for the various areas of activity. Progress reports on the implementation of the strategy will be presented annually to the Riksdag in the budget proposal.

The Roma Strategy foresees measures at the local level, in particular **a pilot project at municipal level for the period 2012–2015**. In order to speed up developments at local level, the Government will arrange a special pilot project in a number of municipalities in which county councils will also be involved. The Stockholm County Administrative Board will be responsible for monitoring and coordinating the project. The National Agency for Education, the Public Employment Service and the Equality Ombudsman will be involved, with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions will also be invited to participate. State measures in the pilot project include training of bridge builders, testing the use of health communicators, and increased knowledge of the extent to which support is given to Roma children in school in accordance with the law. It is envisaged that a number of these municipalities join the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion set up by the Council of Europe.

Teaching of the Romani language and culture: the Roma strategy developed by Sweden focuses on the rights of Roma as both a minority with special cultural and language rights and a target group for improving their socio-economic situation. The current minority policy, the objectives of which are to protect national minorities, increase their power and influence and support the historical minority languages in order to promote and preserve them, was adopted in 2000, in conjunction with Sweden's ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.

In Sweden, Roma children have the possibility to be taught in their own language. However, there is a belief that many Roma children choose not to study their mother tongue. They may not tell people that they are Roma because they fear harassment or discrimination, and thus do not obtain the extra tuition in their mother tongue to which they are entitled²⁵. Mother tongue teaching does not always work as much as one might hope either. There is a lack of teachers of Romani, few Roma pupils choose to study their mother tongue and there is a lack of educational material/textbooks in Romani.

There is a possibility for special classes with bilingual tuition. A municipality or an independent school can arrange bilingual tuition in years 1-6 for a group of pupils entitled to mother-tongue tuition. A maximum of half of the time may be used for teaching in the mother tongue. Bilingual tuition for Finnish pupils is allowed in years 1-9.

Involvement of Roma: In Sweden, all Roma-related questions and problems must, as far as possible, be approached and handled in close co-operation with Roma themselves. As an example, the Swedish Roma strategy is based on proposals from the **Delegation for Roma Issues**, which was active between 2006 and 2010. The Delegation's final report²⁶ has been circulated for comment and a number of meetings have been held with Roma representatives in drafting the proposals to the strategy.

Dialogue with Roma pupils and families: in Sweden, schools need to be flexible and find ways to adapt their teaching as far as possible to the needs of each pupil. At least once a term, the pupil, teacher and the pupil's guardian meet to discuss progress in school and how the pupil is feeling. This is called development dialogue. The dialogue should give an all-round view of the pupil's learning

²⁵ Sweden ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 2000. The Romani language (*Romani čhib*) is protected under Part II of the Charter, as a non-territorial language.

²⁶ Report's reference: SOU 2010:55.

and social development. During the dialogue, discussion can cover how the school can support and stimulate the pupil's development. The dialogue gives the pupil and guardian the opportunity to influence, and take responsibility for, the pupil's schooling.

Sweden has developed the system of **bridge-builders who act as mediators**: they mainly work to increase the participation of the Roma population in society and to influence the structures in the Roma cultural code that constitute obstacles to participation. They also increase knowledge in schools about Roma customs. Malmö and Göteborg, among other cities, use bridge builders from Roma NGOs.

V. CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNT AND GOOD PRACTICES IDENTIFIED

5.1 Conclusions and lessons learnt

The working methods of the thematic meeting were new to Finnish participants. The idea of a very small, almost intimate, forum for cross-country discussion and exchange of experience was considered as a positive method. During the whole meeting, Finnish experts felt strong trust towards other members of the thematic group. The discussion was very open.

The thematic group, as originally proposed by Finland, Norway and Sweden (joined later by Latvia), was supposed to have a stronger gender component. It was based on the general assumption that girls drop out earlier and are more absent from school than boys (which seems to be the case in Norway and Sweden, but not in the requesting country, Finland). Indeed, when the experts met in Helsinki, they were told that in Finland the difference in terms of school attendance or school drop-out is not that big between Roma boys and Roma girls and that, to a certain extent, Finnish schools have bigger problems with Roma boys' school attendance than Roma girls'. After analysing data in more detail, the Finnish experts however realised that there still might be some gender differences that they had not thought of. For instance, out of the Roma boys and girls who finish their compulsory education, the number of Roma students pursuing their studies is higher among boys than girls.

Countries participating in this thematic group are usually known to be particularly attentive to the gender approach and to have strong equal gender policies. However, when it comes to Roma girls specifically, it seems that the gender dimension is not sufficiently articulated. There was little information provided in writing or during the discussion in Helsinki, at the exception of the presentation by the Oulu Municipality about their Development Project "*Supporting Roma girl students in basic education*".

5.1.1 Conclusions regarding the situation in Finland

Partner experts were presented with a **long-lasting and strong integration process of Roma inclusion in Finland**. The education of Roma in the requesting country can be summarised as follows:

- The majority of Roma pupils perform at school as well as other pupils, including some gifted or very gifted pupils;
- The general Roma attitude to education has become more positive;
- Bullying is not today a big problem for Roma pupils – however, ethnic name-calling exists;
- The school system retains a positive attitude when taking into account the Roma culture;
- The development work for the basic education of Roma pupils has produced good practices that can be used as models.

Still, the partner countries' experts identified **structural difficulties** in the Finnish system: one in five young Roma do not complete compulsory school education, only 50% of those who complete compulsory education enter secondary education and almost all of them enter vocational secondary education.

The provision of Romani language and culture education from preschool, through the compulsory and secondary school, is rather weak. There is a strong legal right for children and pupils in order to develop Romani (Kaale) as a mother tongue in the school system. However, there are only a limited number of teachers in Romani language. On the other hand, new guidelines are being drafted and since recently there is the possibility to study Romani at the Helsinki University.

The fact that the Finnish State provides funding to municipalities that apply for development measures was seen as an interesting experience.

Although some Roma assistants have been permanently employed by municipalities, there is a need to formalise the cultural bridge-building of the mediators' programmes.

Early recognition of pupils that need extra assistance and the large resources provided at an early stage are impressive. The fact that this extra assistance is provided to more than 20% of all pupils in their first years of school makes this provision less stigmatising. The Finnish school system is successful judging from the results of PISA studies but there is still a substantial group of teenage Roma pupils (19% of all Roma pupils) who do not fit into the education system.

The Oulu Municipality example of family, school, social and labour market support is an interesting local example of minority and majority collaboration.

5.1.2 Lessons learnt by the Finnish experts

According to the Finnish experts, it was rather difficult to handle the thematic discussion from the Roma girls' perspective only. Nordic countries are used to thinking that boys and girls are totally equal as pupils with the same kind of challenges and same kind of possibilities. One of the Finnish experts indicated that her own prejudice was very strong in that respect: she thought initially that there might be no differences at all between Roma girls and boys. However, when preparing documentation for the thematic report and visit, she realised that there still might be some gender differences that they had not yet thought of.

A year ago the Finnish National Board of Education carried out a review on the situation of Finnish Roma pupils in basic education. It collected a large amount of data from Roma families and the school principals (1,500 principals – 50% of the total number - answered the online questionnaire). The results were surprisingly good. According to the principals, about 70% of all Roma pupils are doing as well as majority children. However, the Finnish National Board of Education figured out, looking into more detail, that there was a slight difference between Roma girls' and boys' further studies. 54% of all Roma boys are continuing their studies after basic education, whilst the figure for girls is only 46%. The challenge is naturally to get higher participation figures in further education for both girls and boys.

Finland is paying much attention to **how to prevent Roma pupils' drop-out and absenteeism**. It is easier to prevent absenteeism by education of both teachers and Roma parents. Preventing school drop-out is much more difficult. It has many links to the general marginalisation of the families, and the whole field of problems is thus very difficult to solve. A lot can be done for those Roma children who are still at school, even if they are sometimes absent; as soon as the Roma children drop out completely, remedies and solutions are not that numerous.

The Finnish expert highlighted that the first National Policy on Roma in Finland is an important tool for the Finnish National Board of Education which has accepted to fulfil the educational goals of the policy paper. She recalled that since 2008 the National Board of Education has been working to improve the quality of the basic education of Roma children. However, **a remaining challenge is to ensure that the national programme is implemented at the local level for concrete results**.

In this respect, the thematic group of experts noted that the **Oulu Municipality project** gave good results: the national seminars had a positive influence; local working group meetings have brought people together, making the invisible more visible. The project raised awareness and knowledge about Roma living in the municipality, with facts and figures.

5.1.3 Conclusions concerning partner countries

Experts from Finland, Norway and Sweden – which are used to cooperating in the Nordic Council - found it interesting to have Latvia participating in this thematic group. They noted some of the concrete results and conclusions of the (CEI) projects in Latvia, such as

- An early start at school gives the best results: more Roma children attend and remain longer in school;
- Parent Support Centres and adults' education - through cooperation with teachers, school administrators, local government representative, and parents - lead to more educated Roma adults who are more inclined to send their children to school;
- Teachers assistants with Roma background: several of them are employed by municipalities;
- Multicultural education environment for 5-7 year olds is provided;
- Children's books in the Romani and Latvian languages are published.

The experts of the thematic group were however concerned that some measures targeting only Roma pupils could *de facto* lead to segregation of those Roma pupils from the rest of children.

As regards Norway, the group of experts found the data collected by the Primary School Information System (GSI) interesting. However this census takes place on 1 October each year, when many Roma are still travelling. Regard could be paid to the issue of travelling in the development of certain state measures, when making provision for the safeguarding and development of culture and identity and in data collection on school attendance. The group of experts would also support the idea that the Day Care Institutions Act and the Education Act in Norway be practised in such a way that Roma children receive the educational provision to which they are entitled.

The training of bridge-builders (mediators) in Sweden and the fact that all students are given opportunities to have in-depth learning and positive learning experiences through the use of a new learning environment and inclusive methods was positively assessed by other experts of the thematic group.

Sweden is seriously looking for practical examples of initiatives that support both girls and boys in their double cultural identity and their choices, especially in the school system. There is also a need for training for all, to allow the majority and minority to meet each other. There are good examples of pragmatic local work often connected with educated Roma personalities.

The group noted that in all participating countries, some Roma families are more concerned by immediate socio-economic challenges than education.

It was also recalled that EU member states should make use of structural funds to develop regional and local programmes for Roma and that the Council of Europe Member States should share experiences and ideas at the regional and local levels, using in particular the newly-launched European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion. The Municipality of Oulu showed a strong interest in being an active participant of the Alliance.

The success of special measures is dependent on a change of attitude in the broader population regarding Roma. Achieving this is partly made difficult by the negative media focus on Roma. Establishing a common understanding by the general public of the need to implement measures for the Roma is therefore a particular pedagogical challenge for all participating countries. The group of experts felt that it is also important that the Roma themselves take responsibility for the development of constructive measures to improve their situation.

The group of experts considers that building trust between the school and the Roma is crucial for ensuring that the children come to school and that they feel secure. Once this trust is in place, pupils and parents often contact teachers and other school employees when they need help and support.

5.2 Good practices identified

Four Roma-related good practices (three from Finland and one from Latvia) were introduced in the Council of Europe database on Roma-related policies and good practices:

- 1) **Practice n° 13 (Finland): The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs** which is an administrative and inclusive structure which ensures the participation of Roma in Roma inclusion policies and co-operation between Roma and authorities, as well as the **Roma Education Group within the National Board on Education** which provides educational services for the Roma;
- 2) **Practice n°15 (Latvia): school assistants of Roma origin;**
- 3) **Practice n° 19 (Finland): the project “Roma into working life”** carried out by the Municipality of Jyväskylä to improve the employment opportunities of the Roma population;
- 4) **Practice n° 32 (Finland): the promotion of equality and non-discrimination including towards Roma developed through the RASMUS network.**

The experts of the thematic group highlighted the following good practices:

- **Support for Roma children’s education:** different kind of workshops or afternoon clubs organised for the Roma pupils and/or their families; direct support for homework (maths, mother tongue, etc.); free snacks or meals; plays, sports, arts, etc.;
- **Roma parent seminars and other forms of support** (often during the weekends) with a view to creating confidence towards the education system and its actors, teachers etc.; to informing parents about school practices, the child’s development and importance of education; to creating cooperation between home and school; to providing advice for preparing healthy meals; to addressing issues relating to life management and parenthood;
- **Support for further studies** to get acquainted with regional possibilities to study in vocational institutions or general upper secondary schools;
- **Further education of teachers and other staff:** lectures in cooperation with the municipality/education regional department and Roma community;
- **Study trips** organised for Roma families;
- **School assistants with a Roma background (Latvia) / bridge-builders (Sweden)** who have a positive impact to the Roma pupils on the level of identity and are important to connect Roma and non-Roma adults. Experts highlighted the need that such assistants take also care of the majority children; they should be “cultural bridges” for both Roma children and majority children;
- **Home/school cooperation tools**, such as parent evenings, face to face meetings, parent-teacher discussions, meetings at the pupil’s home, telephone, electronic journal, school website, paper-based journal, e-mail, letters, written notifications, are all effective and bring results. The Roma parents use all standard cooperation tools. Ten years ago, written contacts were rare;
- **Combating discrimination and bullying of children at school:** the Finnish Programme “No bullying in KiVa school” raised a great deal of interest among experts as it provides an interesting approach on addressing bullying for all schools and for different age groups. It had been implemented in 90% of the Finnish schools, partially or entirely. However, experts of this thematic group would recommend including a section on bullying specifically targeted at Roma pupils and giving teachers tools for reacting to ethnic discrimination towards Roma;
- **Using Roma role models:** interviews or articles about Roma acting as role models and who are good examples of successful integration are found in the local Swedish press. The example of Stockholm Municipality which speaks and promotes Roma in its municipal publications is a positive one. Positive articles concerning Roma published in publications and national press (Finland, Latvia, Sweden) help to promote a better image of Roma;
- **Teaching of Roma history and culture:** Sweden provides a good example having translated the Council of Europe factsheets on Roma history into Swedish. In school curricula, one of the overall knowledge goals is that students must get acquainted with national minorities’ culture, language and history. The recent publication of the first comprehensive book on Finnish Roma in Finland is another good example²⁷;

²⁷ During their visit to Helsinki, the CAHROM group of experts had the possibility to join a large celebration of the first book on Finnish Roma published by the Finnish Society of Literature. The celebration took place at the House of Nobility in Helsinki,

- **Teaching of the Romani language:** as undertaken by Latvia, Finland and Sweden. The teaching of Romani language and Romani culture at Helsinki University²⁸, including by teachers from abroad, was a positive example. Experts of the thematic group would encourage further efforts to teach Kaale at university so as to attract Finnish Roma students;
- **Financial State support** such as the one provided in Finland to municipalities that apply for development measures is an interesting practice.

5.3 Immediate follow-up

Shortly after the CAHROM thematic visit, the expert from the Finnish National Board of Education started working at the Swedish National Agency for Education in Stockholm, under the supervision of the Swedish expert from the CAHROM thematic visit. This kind of exchange of governmental officials is possible under the cooperation framework between Nordic countries. It was suggested that the Nordic Council of Ministers²⁹ should use the results of the thematic report when addressing in particular Roma education issues.

Bearing in mind that most Norwegian Roma speak Swedish, the Norwegian and Swedish experts indicated that they would further exchange teaching material in Romani which is available in Sweden. In addition, both experts highlighted that there are international collaborative possibilities within higher education for sharing and production of teaching materials for all ages. They would also further explore the sharing of experiences and material through new media and Internet. Norway has already entered into cooperation with Sweden on Internet resources for mother tongue instruction for linguistic minorities and resources have been developed for Roma pupils too.

Norway, having difficulties to find young educated Roma to be employed as mediators, could possibly envisage collaboration with Sweden as regards an exchange of mediators (bridge-builders) between the two countries.

One of the most important objectives of the Finnish National Board of Education for 2013 is to produce a national report on the education of Finnish adult Roma. The Board will contact different kinds of vocational and other institutions by electronic survey means and will interview a significant group of adult Roma asking about their current education and their current needs for education. A national report with many new data on Roma adults will be ready in March 2014. Information could be shared at one of next year's CAHROM plenary meetings.

In Latvia, there are many activities regarding the improvement of the level of education of Roma which will be implemented in the national framework of the European Social Fund programme for next planning period 2014-2020. For example, training activities for new teacher's assistants of Roma background where necessary, activities that provide better inclusion of teacher's assistants of Roma background in local schools (including financial support); activities providing training materials and schoolbooks for every Roma pupil.

and many of those people who had historically struggled for the rights of Roma people were also there, including Finnish former President Tarja Halonen.

²⁸ The expert group visited Helsinki University where it met Mr Henry Hedman and Dr Kimmo Granqvist who informed the group about their first year's experience teaching Romani language and Romani culture.

²⁹ The Nordic Council of Ministers is the forum for Nordic governmental co-operation. Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden have been members of the Nordic Council of Ministers since 1971. The Prime Ministers have the overall responsibility for Nordic Co-operation.

Appendix 1: Formal invitation letter from Finland

To Mr. Jeroen Schokkenbroek
Special Representative of the Secretary General
of the Council of Europe for Roma Issues

cc:
Mr. Michael Guet
Secretary of the CAHROM

*Support Team to the SRSG for Roma Issues
Council of Europe
Agora Building
F-67075 Strasbourg cedex
France*

Helsinki, September 4th 2012

Dear Mr Jeroen Schokkenbroek, ^{10/9/12}

The Finnish National Board of Education and especially the Romani Education Group kindly invite the CAHROM experts from Latvia, Norway and Sweden, as well as members from your Support Team, to visit Finland in the framework of the CAHROM thematic group on school drop-out and absenteeism of Roma girls.

The task of the group of experts is to share experience, learn from each other and identify good practices in improving school enrolment of Roma girls, as well as to study the situation in Finland. We would like to suggest some of the topics that are of particular interest for the Finnish experts:

- Inclusive education;
- General, intensified and special support in education;
- Motivation/incentives for Roma girls to pursue their education and for Roma parents to send Roma girls to finish their studies;
- Basic education of Roma pupils (especially Roma girls);
- Guidance to further education (especially Roma girls);
- Gender equality and gender sensitive approach in education;
- Teaching of Romani language;
- The practice of mediation and teachers' assistants with Roma background.

The visit to Finland will take place in Helsinki on 24-25 October 2012, followed by a half-day debriefing meeting between members of the team of experts on 26 October 2012. From the side of Finland, Ms Susanna Rajala, Senior Adviser at the Finnish National Board of Education, Romani Education Group, will take part in this thematic group as the main expert. Ms Hannele Syrjä, CAHROM member, will also attend parts of the programme of the visit in Finland.

A draft programme will be sent to you at a later stage. I can already inform you that on 24 October 2012, the CAHROM thematic group of experts will have the possibility to hear presentations by the Finnish Literature Society on the first written history books on Finnish Roma (Kaale).

Should you have any questions concerning the program please do not hesitate to contact Senior Adviser Susanna Rajala at the Finnish National Board of Education, susanna.rajala@oph.fi, phone +358 (0)29 533 1129.

Yours sincerely,

Leena Nissilä
Head of Unit, Counselor of Education
Finnish National Board of Education

Susanna Rajala
Senior Adviser
Finnish National Board of Education

Appendix 2: Programme of the thematic visit to Helsinki, Finland, 24-26 October 2012

Programme of
CAHROM visit to Finla

Appendix 3: List of participants of the thematic visit to Helsinki, Finland, 24-26 October 2012

Final list of
participants_CAHRO

Appendix 4: European and international standards and reference texts

As far as the **Council of Europe** is concerned, special attention should be given to:

- the 1950 Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ETS No. 5), in particular in Article 14 (Prohibition of discrimination), in the 1952 Protocol thereto (ETS No. 9), in particular in its Article 2 (Right to education), and in the 2000 Protocol No. 12 thereto (ETS No. 177);
- the 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No. 157)³⁰;
- the 1992 European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148)³¹;
- the 1961 European Social Charter (ETS No. 35)³²;
- the Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)4 of the Committee of Ministers on the education of Roma and Travellers;
- the Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on policies for Roma and/or Travellers in Europe;
- the Recommendation No. R (2000) 4 of the Committee of Ministers on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe;
- the Recommendation 1924 (2010) and Resolution 1740 (2010) of the Parliamentary Assembly on "The Situation of Roma in Europe and relevant activities of the Council of Europe";
- the Congress Recommendation 315 (2011) and Resolution 333 (2011) on the situation of Roma in Europe: a challenge for local and regional authorities;
- ECRI General Policy Recommendations No. 3 on combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies (1998), No. 7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination (2002), No. 10 on combating racism and racial discrimination in and through school education (2006) and No. 13 on combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma;
- the Final Declaration of the 22nd session of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education, on "*Building a more humane and inclusive Europe: role of education policies*" (Istanbul, 4-5 May 2007);
- recommendations and policy orientations included in the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living together as equals in dignity", launched at the 118th Session of the Committee of Ministers (Strasbourg, 7 May 2008);
- the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma adopted at the High Level Meeting on Roma (Strasbourg, 20 October 2010);

³⁰ http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/default_en.asp.

³¹ <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/>.

³² <http://www.coe.int/T/DGHL/Monitoring/SocialCharter/>.

- the Declaration adopted at the Summit of Mayors on Roma (Strasbourg, 22 September 2011), which *inter alia* calls for the support of the ROMED programme and the setting-up of a European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion³³;
- the Roma Youth Action Plan based on guidelines proposed by the participants of the Roma Youth Conference (September 2011).

Additionally, apart from the reports of the relevant Council of Europe monitoring bodies (the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), as well as the case law of the European Court of Human Rights³⁴, and the conclusions and decisions of the European Committee of Social Rights, the following Council of Europe reports, publications and initiatives are relevant for this thematic report:

- the Commissioner for Human Rights' Viewpoint "The key to the promotion of Roma rights: early and inclusive education"³⁵;
- the Commissioner for Human Rights' publication "Human Rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe", Council of Europe Publishing (February 2012);
- Jean-Pierre Liégeois "*Roma in Europe*", Council of Europe Publishing (2009);
- Jean-Pierre Liégeois "*The Council of Europe and Roma: 40 years of action*", Council of Europe Publishing (2010 for the French edition; 2012 for the English one);
- the Commentary of the Advisory Committee on Education under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities³⁶;
- the project "Education of Roma children in Europe" (2002-2009)³⁷ and its publications;
- the joint CoE/EU ROMED programme "*Intercultural mediation for Roma*"³⁸;
- the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion launched in Strasbourg on 20 March 2013;
- the CAHROM thematic report on school drop-out and absenteeism of Roma children (with the Netherlands as a requesting country; Hungary, Spain and Sweden as partner countries);
- the CAHROM thematic report on inclusive education of Roma children as opposed to special schools (with the Czech Republic and Slovakia as requesting countries; Hungary, Slovenia and the United Kingdom as partner countries).

As far as the **European Union** is concerned, relevant references include:

- Communication from the Commission "Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth";
- Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion;
- Communication from the Commission: An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 (5 April 2011);
- Council conclusions on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 adopted in Brussels on 19 May 2011;
- Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin;
- Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation;
- the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) *Overview of the situation of Roma and Travellers in Public Education in EU Member States*³⁹ (published by EUMC, May 2006);
- the European Parliament Resolution on the EU Strategy on Roma Inclusion (March 2011).

³³ Most of these documents are electronically accessible at http://www.coe.int/web/coe-portal/roma_reference-texts.

³⁴ In particular *D.H. and Others v. The Czech Republic*, *Sampanis and Others v. Greece*, and *Orsus and Others v. Croatia*.

³⁵ http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/Viewpoints/080331_en.asp.

³⁶ http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/3_FCNI/docs/PDF_CommentaryEducation_en.pdf.

³⁷ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/histoCulture_en.asp.

³⁸ <http://www.coe-romed.org/>.

³⁹ EUMC Study available on FRA website at: http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/roma_report.pdf.

Other relevant international reference texts and documents include:

- the **United Nations** Convention on the Rights of the Child⁴⁰;
- the 2003 Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the **OSCE** Area⁴¹;
- the ODIHR Status Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the **OSCE** Area (Warsaw, 2008);
- the ODIHR Mapping of participation of Roma and Sinti children in early education processes within the **OSCE** Region⁴² (Warsaw, November 2010);
- the joint **UNICEF/OSI/REF** Overview report “*Roma Early childhood Education*” (2012).

Appendix 5: Proposals of the Basic Education of Roma Pupils in Finland (2010-2011 Review)

Proposal 1/11: Participation of Roma children in pre-primary education

- Roma pupils and their parents or carers should be offered support in issues related to children’s early childhood and pre-primary education, so that starting school could be made easier;
- The importance of the regularity of attending pre-primary education should be continually emphasised to Roma families;
- The competencies of Roma pupils in pre-primary education, particularly language and mathematical skills, should be practised. Exercises could be offered, for example, in a booklet distributed to Roma parents.

Proposal 2/11: General school performance level of Roma pupils

- The state of the basic education of Roma pupils and effectiveness of the measures should be regularly monitored;
- Roma pupils’ possible need for support should be assessed especially in the lower grades and at the time of moving on to grades 7-9 of basic education;
- Necessary support measures should be employed to ensure that Roma pupils complete their basic education.

Proposal 3/11: Cooperation between Roma homes and the school

- Roma parents or carers participate in general parents’ evenings organised by the school, in addition to which separate Roma parents’ evenings should be arranged for them, if the need arises;
- Intercultural understanding and interaction should be further emphasised;
- More information should be passed on to the entire school community concerning Roma culture.

Proposal 4/11: Bullying and exclusion

- All school bullying, ethnic name-calling and exclusion should trigger immediate intervention;
- The KiVaKoulu programme should include a section specifically on bullying targeted at Roma pupils and giving teachers tools for reacting to ethnic discrimination.

Proposal 5/11: Absences, change of schools and dropping out

- It should be ensured that monitoring of, and intervention in, Roma pupils’ absences follow the same procedures as with other pupils;
- Teachers and other educational staff should tighten up their investigations into the reasons for absences;
- Roma parents and carers should be informed about the adverse effects of even short-term absences and the changing of schools based on school performance;
- Support for the Roma pupil, especially at transition stages, should be ensured, for example with the help of a support person or special needs assistant with a Roma background.

⁴⁰ Full text of the UN Convention at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>.

⁴¹ Full text of the OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/17554>.

⁴² See this OSCE-ODIHR mapping published in Warsaw in November 2010 at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/73874>.

Proposal 6/11: General, enhanced and special support

- Roma parents and carers should be informed of the possibilities of general, enhanced and special support;
- Roma pupils experiencing significant problems in their schooling, or who are in danger of dropping out, should be offered more effective forms of support at an early stage;
- If Roma parents and carers wish to remove their children from school in order to be tutored at home, the consequences of this alternative schooling method should be made clear to them. The progress of home-tutored children of compulsory education age should be monitored.

Proposal 7/11: Completion of basic education and seeking further education

- Roma pupils should be given intensive guidance counselling as early as grades 1-6 of basic education;
- In grades 7-9 of basic education, Roma pupils should receive educational guidance aimed specifically at the Roma and supporting their own hopes for the future, while also addressing the practical challenges viewed from the Roma's own perspectives;
- Mentoring should be organised for Roma pupils where the pupils would regularly meet with a (Roma) adult who would act as a role model and be able to advise and encourage Roma youth in their school careers as well as the seeking of further education. Career guidance training should be organised for special needs assistants with Roma backgrounds.

Proposal 8/11: Completion of basic education and seeking further education, continued

- Roma parents and carers should be informed at the stage of grades 7-9 of their children's education about application processes, selection criteria, study practices, and benefits and aid provided by society and available to students. A guide in simple language should be prepared for the Finnish National Board of Education website, which schools could print off for Roma pupils and their parents.

Proposal 9/11: Completion of basic education and seeking further education, continued

- Educational guidance should stress the importance of upper secondary school for further education and encourage Roma pupils who have done well at comprehensive school to go on to upper secondary level. Information should also be provided on the alternatives to daytime upper secondary school, such as upper secondary school for adults and taking upper secondary courses alongside vocational education;
- Preparatory education for general upper secondary school should also be aimed at Roma youth. Supplementary teaching should be utilised more in order to equip better the Roma youth for further education.

Proposal 10/11: Romani language and culture

- Schools should inform Roma families more effectively of the possibility of receiving Romani language teaching;
- The Ministry of Education and Culture decree should be amended so that the education provider must organise teaching of the Romani language, if the parents or carers of two or more pupils request it.
- Teaching of the Romani language via distance learning methods should be used when a teacher of the Romani language is not available locally. In such cases, the teacher of the Romani language should be provided with support in teaching via distance learning methods.

Proposal 11/11: Romani language and culture, continued

- There should be more special needs assistants with Roma backgrounds. They serve as role models and support for Roma pupils, as well as familiarising other pupils with the Roma and Romani culture.
- The Roma are experts of their own culture, so the school should make use of members of the Roma community (including volunteers) as a resource in the effort to improve the study motivation of Roma pupils;
- Different language and cultural groups, including the Roma, should be more extensively addressed in basic and continuing teacher training;
- As a Finnish national minority group, the Roma should be given more consideration when setting the curriculum and in teaching materials.