

**Péter Radó:**

## **Developing Policies for the Education of Roma Students**

### **Introduction**

During the previous decade a big number of grass-root initiatives aiming at improving the education of Roma students were launched and a remarkable proportion of these programs proved to be successful. However, even if the governments of the region attempted to deal with the serious underachievement of Roma students they failed to address them properly. In spite of the huge amount of experience and lessons has been learned at the school level the governments still appear to be perplexed. The growing pressure of international organizations and that of the internal and external human rights advocacy places the problem on the educational policy agenda in most of the countries. It definitely does not resulted in the development and implementation of sound and coherent policies. One of its reason is that the education reform agenda of the CEE and SEE countries was to respond to the huge problems of systemic transformation of education during the entire decade, therefore, no sufficient attention was paid to the specific problems of children with special needs and/or minority affiliation. In addition, there is a typical tendency towards policy reductionism; one or another component of the problems is emphasized that results in a complete lack of holistic approach that is required if all the underlying reasons for the school failure of Roma children are to be addressed.

A common feature of the countries in the region is the existence of serious obstacles to informed and high quality policy development for Roma. The most important obstacles are the lack of statistical data, the lack of measurement of learning outcomes of Roma children, the lack of program evaluation, the lack of real involvement of Roma community into policy consultation and the lack of awareness of ethnic problems among experts and policy makers. Also, there are serious obstacles to policy implementation. The most important obstacles are the low absorption capacity of the systemic environment of schools, as well as the low absorption capacity of the schools, themselves, and the low awareness of ethnic problems among teachers, school managers and local decision-makers.

As a consequence, the above mentioned grass-root initiatives – among others those programs that were evaluated by the Roma Research Program - remain isolated and their impact on the mainstream education system is quite limited. Although, these projects demonstrate that schools are not necessarily powerless, the huge majority of Roma students still attend schools, in which segregation or other forms of detrimental treatment prevail and which rather strengthen the impact of different social disadvantages than compensating for them. This is the reason, why the Open Society Network that is active in the development of the education of Roma children almost for a decade, shifted the emphasis of its programs. Instead of investing in the development of school based model programs the network launched projects that do comparative research and analysis, human rights and policy advocacy and policy analysis. This paper is the part of the

several follow-up activities of three projects of the network of that kind: it aims at drawing the educational policy implications of the results of the Roma Research Project of the Institute for Educational Policy, the Special School Initiative of the Step by Step Program and the Vidin Desegregation program.

The greatest difficulty of any papers designed to inform policy discourse and development on an international comparative basis should face is the diversity of contexts both in terms of the characteristics of the educational systems and the interethnic relations. For example, policies, that presumably can be very influential in Serbia, where the governance of education is still centralized might be completely irrelevant in Hungary where big proportion of important decision are made at the local level. Even the “what works” type of policy advice is often based on false assumptions in most of these countries: it is not obvious, that the systemic conditions of the implementation of these policies (resources, capacities, institutions and support mechanisms, information, etc.) are in place.

Therefore, this paper deliberately opted for a different type of approach. Instead of coming up with direct and concrete policy recommendations of which the relevance and feasibility in the individual countries might be questionable, the purpose of the paper is to offer a rather technical tool for country based policy dialogue and development. As it hopefully will be seen, it can not be done by the simple transformation of the developmental tools used by the different projects to magic policy bullets; influencing the behavior of huge amount of actors and institutions of the education system requires the use of different, sometimes more complex set of tools than the means of school level development.

However, it is not a simple question of size and scale; even if the problems targeted by development programs are the same and even if their goals they pursue can be incorporated to public policies, the later operates through specific channels that are very much differ from those of grass-root development. For example, while development programs are directly funded on the basis of a single budget, the implementation of policies is funded through a complex system of public financing, or when capacities of the teachers should be improved a development programs offers training for a limited number of people, but public policies should often reconsider the entire system of initial or in-service teacher training. Another difference that makes policy development a little bit more “difficult” is the inherent political nature of public policy. For example, most programs that this paper will refer to were funded by private resources; whereas public policies are financed by the use of public money that is controlled by political institutions.

To sum it all up, when we attempt to develop educational policies on the basis of good experience modeled by school-level development programs we can not spare a few intellectual exercises: (i) we should identify and structure the problems in a way that allows for “public consumption”, (ii) we should set objectives that have the chance to gain the support of the public and different stakeholders, (iii) we should design our policy bearing in mind the bigger but rather indirect set of tools that only governments have, and

finally (iv) we should make sure, that the systemic conditions of implementation are in place.

The framework developed by the author of this paper<sup>1</sup> is the application of the tool-kit of educational policy analysis to the specific educational problems of Roma students. According to the very purpose of the paper this analytical framework will be introduced on the basis of the comprehensive landscape that the extremely rich pool of information provided by the different development programs makes available. Therefore, in the following sections the technology of problem identification and problem structuring, the underlying conceptual framework, the different types of possible educational policies and the implementation of the policies – both in terms of implementation strategies and the tools of implementation – will be discussed. Finally, a few remarks and recommendations will be outlined for the country-based process of policy development for the education of Roma students.

## **1. Problem identification**

### *1.1 How to do it?*

No doubt, there are certain matters that are rightfully considered to be problematic “just because” they violate our values, such as the segregation of Roma students. However, the appropriate identification of the problems to be dealt with is always one of the trickiest stages of any policy analysis. It happens too often that the way, how we formulate the problems is biased by hidden value judgements or we mix the problem up with its reasons. As it will be seen, segregation or any other kind of discriminatory treatment of Roma children is one of the reasons resulting in lower achievement. Therefore, human rights related considerations – that in the case of education of Roma students are undoubtedly valid and relevant - are better to be incorporated into a coherent educational policy framework that focuses on service outcomes.

In other cases the problems are identified outside of the respected public service that does not allow finding the right solutions. The best example for this phenomenon is the statement that one may often hear in the region: education is the vehicle of the promotion social mobility of the Roma minority. This statement is based on the assumption that educational attainment by itself can tighten up the marginal social positions of the Roma communities within the society. This is not problematic only because it is an illusion, but also because it makes education responsible for something that is influenced by several other social factors, too. Another typical failure is forgetting about the contextual nature of the problems, especially when their identification is based on comparisons. In social, cultural and geographical terms the Roma ethnic groups in each countries of the region are not less divided than the non-Roma “mainstream” society; as in general, Roma educational policies also should take into account the diversity of contexts. Finally, several times the identification is driven by the spotlight effect of measurement; what we measure tends to become problematic while other outcomes unmeasured remain invisible. The best way to avoid all these traps is determining the problems in terms of

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<sup>1</sup> Péter Radó: Bevezetés az oktatáspolitikai elemzésbe: romák és az iskola. (Introduction to Educational Policy Analysis: Roma and the Schools) In: Iskolakultúra, 2001. December

service outcomes. In our case it means that *the educational problems of Roma children should be identified in terms of their participation* (enrolment, repetition and dropout rates at different levels and track of education) *and learning outcomes* (knowledge, skills, attitudes, aspirations).

An educational policy problem always refers to a specific need. Further on, by policy problems we will mean those educational service outcomes that violate certain expectations towards these outcomes. The expectations against which we judge upon the service outcomes in education can be identified in four different ways. (See Box 1.)

Box 1.

### **Identifying expectations towards service outcomes**

*Normative needs:* educational service outcomes defined by achievement standards, that is, by curricula or examination and qualification requirements determined by experts. In the case of Roma students most often their achievement measured against the targets set by the state curriculum.

*Felt needs:* the evaluation of the service outcomes is based on the expectations of the clients of the service. For example, Roma parents may expect the schools to introduce their children into their cultural traditions what the school in most cases not able or willing to provide.

*Expressed needs:* expectations identified by the behavior of the clients. For example, over-application to schools offering specific minority programs for Roma may refer to the insufficient supply of such programs.

*Comparative needs:* educational service outcomes compared with the achievement of a relevant out-group. For example, the achievement of Roma students in comparison to their non-Roma peers or the educational attainment of the adult Roma population in comparison with the attainment of the entire population of the country.

When dealing with the education of Roma students the available information will allow us to determine problems by comparing the achievement of Roma students with that of the non-Roma students. No doubt, this is a valid approach, because we consider illegitimate those differences that are based on the differences of ethnic affiliation. However, we should give a signal of warning here; identifying problems exclusively on the basis of *comparative needs* might be misleading, because the characteristics of the students groups are compared are typically different. For example, we do not have access to information on the achievement of Roma students in comparison to the achievement of non-Roma children with poor, unemployed parents. (As it will be seen in the next section the non-educational section play a decisive role in the underachievement of Roma students.) Therefore, when country-based strategies and policies will be developed the outcomes of the education of Roma children should be measured against the educational objectives set by curricula, examination and qualification requirements (*normative needs*), against the expectations of Roma parents and the Roma children themselves (*felt needs*) and against of the behavior of the target group, that is, the preferred types of education as it is expressed by the aspirations of the parents (*expressed needs*), too.

### 1.2 Problems identified by the development projects

The following list of Roma education related problems that are determined in terms of participation and in terms of learning outcomes is the distillation of three research based analysis: (i) the preliminary policy analysis of the results of the Roma Education Research Project of the Institute for Educational Policy – Open Society Institute Budapest<sup>2</sup>, (ii) the results of the research that is one of the components of the Special School Initiative of the Step by Step Program of the Open Society Institute New York<sup>3</sup> and (iii) the policy analysis based on several empirical research projects conducted in Hungary in the previous years<sup>4</sup>.

Since the weight of the particular problems and even the components of the actual pool of problems may vary from country to country or from Roma community to Roma community, the list serves pure demonstration purposes. Connecting these three studies allows outlining a comprehensive inventory of the possible policy problems. Although, empirical evidences prove that all these problems are typical throughout the entire region, one cannot spare their careful checking when developing country based national, regional or local policies aiming at improving the education of Roma students.

<b>Education of Roma students: service outcomes</b>	
<b>Participation</b>	<b>Learning outcomes</b>
Low enrolment in high quality pre-school education	Low level school preparedness (“school maturity”)
Large number of students misplaced in special education	Poor academic achievement
High repetition rate, high proportion on over-aged students in primary education	Weak motivation to learn
High number of students who are regularly absent from school	Weak self-confidence
High drop-out rates in primary and secondary education	Poor majority language competencies
Low rate of timely completion in primary education	Poor mother tongue language competencies
Low enrolment in secondary, especially in general secondary education	Poor knowledge of the Roma culture
High proportion of students enrolled in “dead-end tracks” of VET	Behavioral problems
<b>Education of non-Roma students: service outcomes</b>	
	Discriminatory behavior and attitudes
	Poor knowledge of Roma culture

<sup>2</sup> Noe Medina: Roma Education Research Project: General Policy Recommendations. 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Susan Rona – Linda E. Lee: School Success For Roma Children: Step-by-Step Special School Initiative. Interim Report, December 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Péter Radó: Bevezetés az oktatáspolitikai elemzésbe: romák és az iskola. (Introduction to Educational Policy Analysis: Roma and the Schools.) In: Iskolakultúra, 2001 December.

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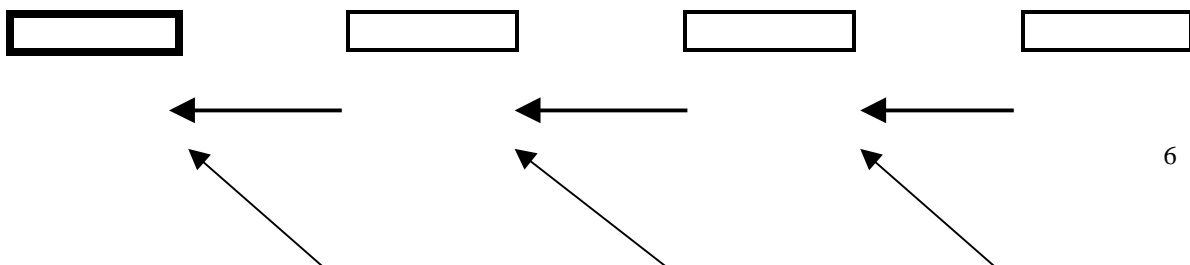
All available data prove that the huge majority of Roma students are effected by a big proportion of the above listed problems in each countries of the region. In addition, these problems demonstrate that Roma student start their educational “career” with a serious drawback and their lag is increasing during the period they spend in formal schooling. The scope and the extent of the failure of Roma children reaches that level where we should talk about the failure of these education systems; in other words, the gap between the achievement of Roma and non-Roma students hardly can be considered legitimate. The schools of these countries are proved to be unable to compensate for the disadvantages and adjust to the different cultural background of these students. An additional problem indicated by this list of service outcome deficiencies is the failure of the schools in creating a welcoming and unbiased school climate that is necessary for a safe and integrative learning environment without which no students can succeed.

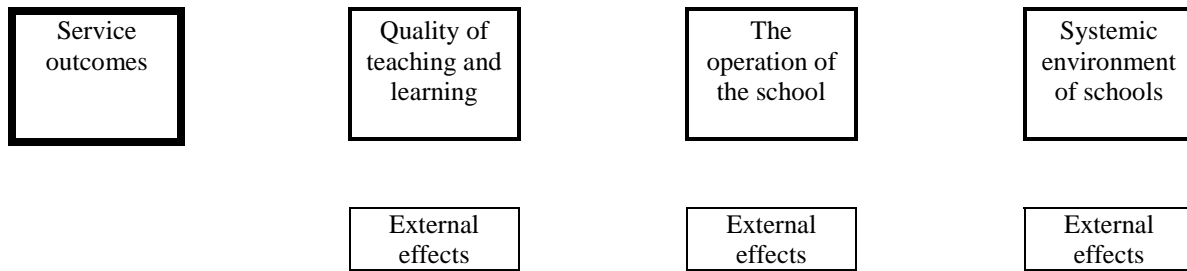
However, the obvious and visible is not always well documented. When identifying the policy problems we should rely upon the results of the reports developed for international organizations and those of human rights protection organizations. In most cases in the individual countries the efforts to draw evidence based picture on the scope, extent and nature of the educational problems of Roma children were limited. Due to the lack of an appropriate educational statistical system, systematic sociological system monitoring and regular measurement of the achievement of students representing the ethnic groups, too, analysis based policy development is hard. In addition, since the generally weak voice of Roma communities and organizations are not heard. As a consequence of all these deficiencies even the first steps of informed policy making that is the identification of service outcomes related problems should overcome serious obstacles.

## 2. The analysis of the reasons for the problems

### 2.1 Structuring the reasons for the problems

In order to identify the points of intervention and to design its tools we should understand the reasons for the education service outcomes related problems we identified. This exercise is worth to be done in a structured way that adjusts to the internal logic of education. This structure must enable us to grasp casual relationships, to set adequate and realistic policy objectives and to identify the appropriate policy tools. Also, the framework within which we outline the entire problem map should make possible to separate the genuine educational reasons that can be tackled by the toolkit of educational policy and those reasons that are external to the education system, therefore, should be handled by non-educational (social, health, etc.) measures. The following framework aims at supporting to reveal the causal relationships by the development of a problem map:

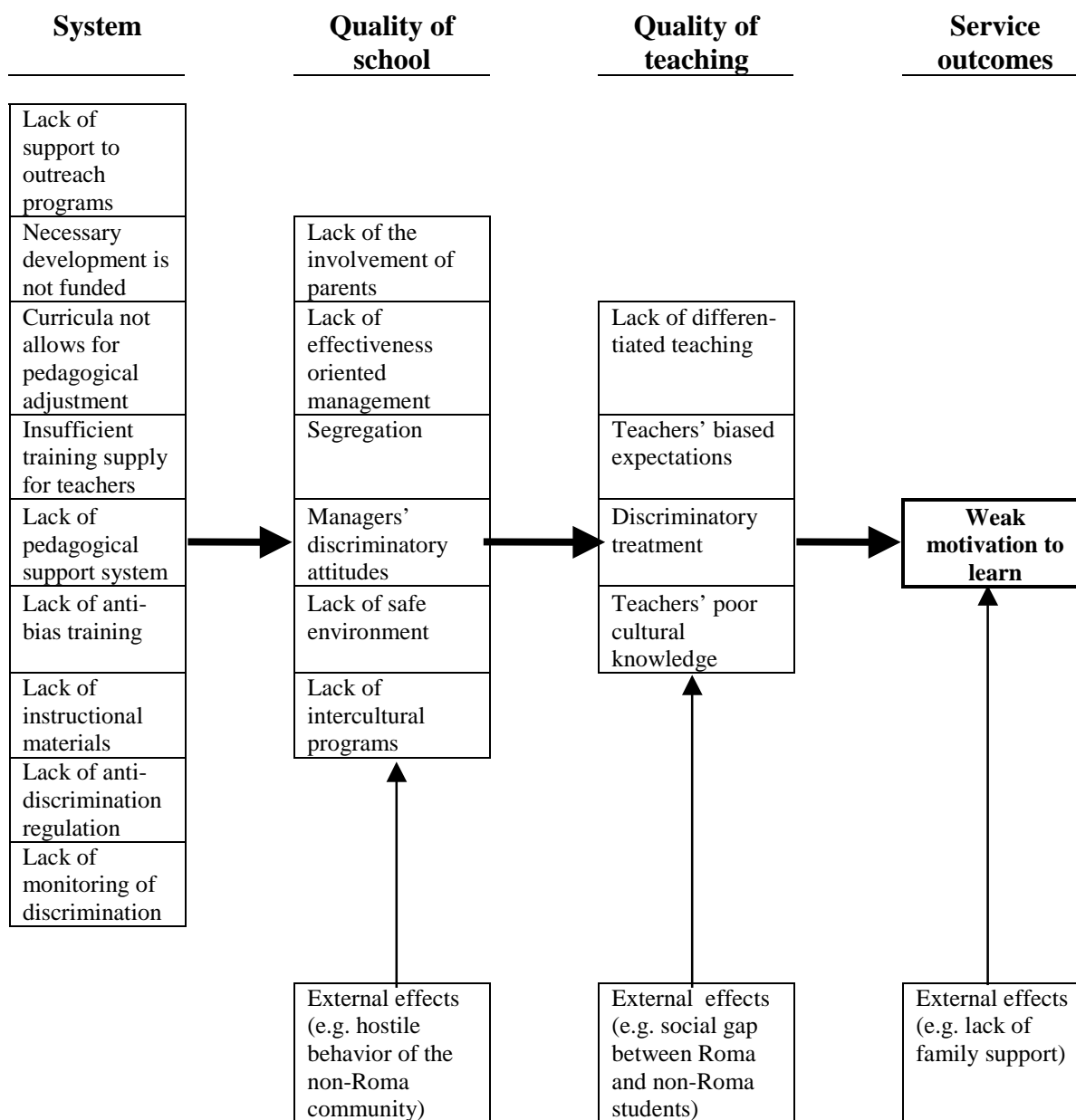




As this figure show, service outcome deficiencies can be explained by problems related to the quality of the teaching-learning process: by pedagogical methodology used by the teachers, by the way how in-classroom interactions are managed, the preparedness and the expectations of teachers, the content of learning, etc. Also, very often non-educational reasons, such as the lack of appropriate learning environment at home or the characteristics of family life directly influence the achievement of Roma students. The next step is the identification of school level problems explaining in-classroom obstacles to effective learning. These problems are related to the internal organization of teaching, the management of the school, the feature of co-operation among teachers, the ethos and every-day rules of the operation of the school, the physical learning environment provided by the schools, the characteristics of the school’s relationship with parents and the community in general, etc. Again, certain characteristics of the teacher-student interactions are rather rooted in external influences. For examples, schools can’t be blamed exclusively for the often biased expectations of teachers. The last step of filling in the problem map is sorting out those characteristics of the systemic environment that explain the problems that were identified in the previous stage. It requires the analysis of the regulation, financing, governance and management of education, the content of curricula, examination and qualification requirements, the characteristics of initial and in-service teacher training, the system of pedagogical services, the supply with and content of textbooks and teaching materials, the education information system and the system of research and development. Of course, there are important factors at this stage, too, that cannot be controlled by educational policy. It is important to see that the shortcuts between not subsequent stages – for example, between learning outcomes and the functioning of the school – are rare. Nevertheless, in certain cases it might be obvious. For example, the problem of unprepared teachers can be attributed to the lack of appropriate teacher training.

## 2.2 Revealing casual relationships

When filling in the problem map we may explore the underlying casual relationships step by step. As it is illustrated by the following figure, it happens quite rarely that one single reason explains a problem. Rather, whole sets of reasons can be connected to other sets of effects. Also, we may find the same reasons behind various effects. For example, if in the example we replace the weak motivation of Roma children to learn with another problem the underlying deficiencies identified in the system, in the schools and in the teaching-learning process partly might be identical.



### 2.3 Listing the underlying policy problems

When all possible casual relationships are explored we can compile the list of policy problems to be addressed at all levels. Of course, there are issues about which we have access to information, but there others about which we don't. For the sake of demonstration we shall offer three lists of possible problems that were identified by the quoted reports of the Roma Research Projects, by the Special School Initiative and the Vidin Desegregation Project. It worth to reiterate the already mentioned warning: since all these development and research projects targeted one or another aspect of the problems and because of the diversity of the country contexts, when developing a comprehensive policy framework the validity of these sets of problems should be

considered against hard evidences when policy action will be planned in the individual countries of the region.

*Quality of the teaching-learning process:*

- Lack of the use of developmentally-approach teaching methodology in pre-school and primary education;
- Lack of the effective development of language competencies in majority language;
- Undifferentiated character of teaching, low emphasis on the development of the skills of students;
- Biased expectations of teachers;
- Discriminatory treatment of Roma children;
- Teachers' poor knowledge on Roma culture, history and literature;
- Teachers' low willingness to be reflective towards the effectiveness of their work and to improve the teaching methods they use;

*The operation of the schools:*

- Managers' low willingness to be reflective towards the effectiveness of their school and to improve the quality of teaching;
- Lack of communication and co-operation among teachers and schools;
- Segregation of Roma children;
- Discriminatory attitudes of school management towards Roma;
- Lack of save environment provided for Roma students;
- Misplacement of Roma children to special schools or classes;
- Lack of high quality remedial programs and academic support;
- Lack of intercultural programs;
- Lack of involvement of Roma parents and the Roma community in general to the life of the schools;
- Lack of standard tools of measurement by which school might assess the academic progress of Roma students;
- In countries where the development of school development plan, school based pedagogical program or quality assurance program is required these documents do not address the specific problems of Roma students properly;

*The systemic environment of the schools:*

- National education development strategies and specific policies fail to address the problems of Roma students;
- Lack of financing measures making pre-school programs available for Roma children;
- Lack of support for the development of preschool outreach programs in Roma communities;
- Lack of the system of allocation of financial resources that targets extra support at the school in need;
- Financial "incentives" maintaining segregation, lack of financial incentives for mainstreaming;
- No resources set aside to cover the cost of the development of required training programs, instructional materials and intercultural/multicultural programs;

- The existing curricula are overloaded leaving very limited space for the use of developmentally-approach pedagogical methodologies and for adjustment to the specific needs of Roma students;
- Not appropriate offer of training programs offered for teachers educating Roma children;
- Lack of appropriate pedagogical support services offered to the schools serving Roma children;
- Lack of anti-bias and anti-discrimination training for teachers and school managers;
- Lack of high quality instructional materials on Roma literature, culture and history;
- In the requirements of different quality assurance systems, such as INSET accreditation, textbook approval, qualification requirements for teachers, etc. the aspects related to the education of Roma students are not incorporated;
- Lack of effective anti-discrimination regulation;
- Lack of monitoring of discriminatory treatment, mediation and conflict prevention in education;
- The system of testing and placement of students into special education is inadequate and possibly biased;
- Lack of reliable education statistical system providing information about the progress of Roma students in the education system;
- Lack of a national assessment of the achievement of Roma students that informs policy makers;
- Lack of external evaluation of school programs serving Roma students;

*Non-educational measures connected to education provisions:*

- Delivery of non-education services, such as meals, personal hygiene, health, social support, etc.
- Lack of community based recruitment mechanisms to pre-school and primary education;
- Lack of local co-operation networks of schools, other public service providers, local authorities and NGOs aiming at combating the complex sets of obstacles to school success of Roma children;
- Low influence of human rights advocacy on the educational management and policy decisions;

### **3. Policy frameworks and policy objectives**

#### *3.1 Conceptualization*

In simple cases the appropriate identification of policy problems already makes possible the determination of concrete policy objectives. For example, if the problem we identified is high dropout rates among Roma students in primary education it can be directly transformed into a policy objective: reducing the dropout rate. According to the incremental approach to educational policymaking we do not need more; if the identified problems are prioritized they can be handled and targeted in a gradual and incremental manner. However, the experience of the countries of the region in the nineties show that in our case this approach does not offers the desirable impact on the educational chances of Roma students. This failure of the “easy way” can be explained by two reasons:

- At a certain level of complexity of the “problem world” incremental developments do not produce that critical amount of changes that results in visible (that is: measurable) improvement of the service outcomes. The results of these interventions are obviously neutralized by other problems that remain untouched. This means that the more complex problems we face the more comprehensive policy is required.
- The other problem lays in the nature of the transition process; in traditional centrally managed educational system the institutions typically lack the built-in mechanisms of self-improvement. Incremental changes are effective only if the institutions and the actors of the system are able to adjust their connected activities accordingly on their own. For example, if a new curriculum is introduced, autonomous schools with appropriate internal school improvement mechanisms and capacities adjust the organization of teaching or the principles of assessment. If these mechanisms and capacities are lacking – this is the case in most countries of the region – the external “messages” (policy expectations, services, information, instructional materials, financing, etc.) should strengthen each other’s impact. Again, this calls for a rather comprehensive approach to policy development.

Educational policy often builds on different rather complex policy models such as lifelong learning, social cohesion or human resource development. These models serve several purposes: they are based on sound conceptualization of the problems and they connect the social and economic goals of education with the required educational outcomes that serve these goals, as well as with the policy tools designed to promote the required outcomes. If we recall everything we have learned about the obstacles to educational success of Roma students in the previous sections we should assume that we couldn’t spare the stage of the development a “user friend” policy concept. In order to be able to do this we should return to the problems we identified in terms of service outcomes (participation and learning outcomes). The *reasons* for educational problems of Roma students - that are exercise their influence partly via the characteristics of the educational provisions, partly via the effects that are external to the education system - are related to four overlapping broad societal contexts. These are the following:

- *Interethnic relations, the characteristics of the minority group*: socio-economic status, socio-historical status, language status, demographic characteristics (numbers and distribution), formal and informal institutional support in media, education, public administration, religion, culture, etc. We can hardly find any educational problems of Roma students behind which we cannot find reasons that are rooted in the ethnic disparities that can be described by these variables.
- *Minority rights*: the level to which the principle of free choice of identity prevails. This context refers to the problems that are related to the students’ right to get access to their mother tongue and culture. Also, it includes the self-organization of Roma communities in connection to their influence on the determination of the content of the education of Roma students.
- *Human rights*: all kinds of discrimination, in positive terms: the conditions of inclusion of ethnic groups. As it was mentioned earlier, discrimination is not unacceptable only because of widely shared values but also it has a detrimental impact on the achievement of Roma students, therefore, it is one of the sources of serious educational deficiencies.

- *Equity in education*: access and the quality of educational provisions. This context refers to the extent to which educational provisions are able to compensate for different societal disadvantages (e.g. socio-economic, territorial, gender or those that are related to individual abilities or ethnic affiliation). In other terms, it refers to the quality of education, as it is recently understood.

### 3.2 *The four types of policies*

In the previous decades educational policy developed adequate tool-kits in order to address the problems in each above described contexts. In other words: each sets of problems already has their adequate policy responses. These policy frameworks are the following:

- *Affirmative action*. In order to deal with problems rooted in the characteristics of interethnic relations a widely used (and much debated) policy is the use of affirmative measures. This policy is aiming at compensate for the disadvantages of a marginalized minority group by the different types of preferential treatments and developmental supports. This policy is based on the notion that individuals belonging to a certain minority suffer the disadvantages that hit the entire minority group. Even if the reasons for these disadvantages are already ceased (e.g. the segregation in the United States or the caste-system in India) their hereditary impact is still impose a detrimental influence on the chances of the members of the group. (As it will be seen, affirmative action is not identical with quotas.)
- *Minority education programs*. The exertion of minority rights (that are ensured by several international conventions and by the domestic legislation of most countries of the region) require education provisions that ensure access to the language and culture of students who are affiliated to the respected minority group, as well as the assertion of the connected rights in language usage and cultural autonomy. (In several countries this legislative framework is complete in the case of national minorities but constrained in the case of Roma.) These programs are defined in terms of the language of instruction and the cultural content of education.
- *Anti-discrimination and multicultural policies*. These policies are aiming at eliminating any kinds of discriminatory treatment of students with minority affiliation and at creating the conditions of an inclusive environment for them. Although, in the practice the two components of this policy framework often separated they definitely refer to the two sides of the same coin. These type of policy contains three major components: (i) assertion of the prohibition of discrimination in education, (ii) the reintegration of those students, who's separation is considered to be illegitimate (mainstreaming), and (iii) creation of a multicultural inclusive environment in education. (e.g. regulation, monitoring, anti-bias training, multicultural education, etc.);
- *Quality improvement*. Strengthening the equity of the education of students with minority affiliation can be served by ensuring their access to educational services and by improving the quality of their education. Of course, quality is a quite diffuse category. In relation to the education of minorities four aspects of the problem deserves our attention. High quality education is that provision (i) that is open to the entire target group, (ii) that is differentiated, adjust to the needs of all children, (iii) that adjusts to the expectations of the respected target group towards education and

(iv) that adjusts to the changing expectations towards education of individuals and the entire society.

If we return to the problems in relation to the achievement of Roma students we can assume, that – to different extent in different countries and in the case of different Roma groups – all of these policy frameworks are relevant. A detailed (obviously country based) analysis will show that one can hardly find any problems in the education of Roma students that is not related to the quality of their education. Also, most research evidences prove, that the whole scale of discrimination (from overt and institutionalized segregation to the hidden and self-fulfilling biased expectations of teachers) plays an outstanding role in the lagging behind of Roma children. Although, the same applies to the disadvantages that are rooted in the status, demography and institutional support of Roma minorities, more typically these inequalities influence the achievement as “external effects”. The minority education program provision is in a special position among these policy frameworks. It is well documented that certain minority education programs well serve the development of Roma children. Especially, it is obvious in the case of pedagogical effectiveness of bilingual education in contrast to the rather typical situation, when Roma children are going through on a forced and early language shift process before their language competencies in their mother tongue are fully developed. Also, the appearance of the Roma culture in the content of education may strengthen the children’s self-esteem and motivation. However, providing access to such programs should be based on the demand of the parents and the children.

To sum it all up, what is needed is a package of policies that have four overall strategic goals:

- Promoting access to education by compensating for the different kinds of disadvantages that are rooted in the positions of the Roma minority in the interethnic relations.
- Ensuring minority education programs for those who demand it.
- Elimination of all kinds of discrimination in Education, reintegration of those Roma students who are educated in a segregated setting, inclusion and mainstreaming.
- Ensuring high quality (differentiated) education that opens opportunities for all Roma children.

These broad goals will provide proper orientation for the strategy aiming at improving the education of Roma children but definitely will not drive concrete action. However, when applying the above described policy frameworks, the concrete policy objectives that are aiming at solving the problems identified in terms of educational outcomes and the overall goals of the four types of policies can be well connected.

When setting concrete policy objectives there are certain “rules” that are worth to follow. These are the following:

- As it was already mentioned, there is a hierarchical relationship among the different levels. It is better to determine objectives in terms of the improvement of educational outcomes to which objectives can be attached in relation to classroom interactions,

the operation of schools and the systemic environment of educational service delivery.

- The expected outcomes should be determined, favorably in a measurable way. (It is not always possible.)
- The different objectives should be coherent. Contradictory objectives exterminate each other's impact.
- The target group should be clearly identified (e.g. Roma students, all students in a school, a certain group of schools or teachers, etc.).

#### **4. Implementation strategies**

Former experience shows that the most effective implementation strategy combines the different top-down measure with bottom-up ones. On the following pages the general top-down tools and the specific tools of the four policies types, as well as the conditions of bottom-up implementation will be briefly described.

##### *4.1 The tools of top-down implementation*

Top-down implementation aims at changing or influencing the behavior of different actors of education in accordance with certain objectives. One of the reasons of the failure of Roma education policies in the previous decades was the rather traditional approach to implementation. This approach is characterized by the overestimation of the effectiveness of regulation (actors will act according the regulation automatically when it is issued), implementation exclusively via bureaucratic mechanisms by administrative decisions, etc. These implementation projects were necessarily resulted in huge implementation deficit.

In order to avoid the failure of previous policies our implementation strategies should be driven by our view on the capacity and willingness of the different actors (teachers, directors, schools, textbook publishers, etc.) to work according to the objectives we set. With a certain level of simplification we may say, that there are four possible cases in this matter:

- If the capacity and willingness of the actors is high we should not do anything else than reformulating their mandate. This is the rare situation in which implementation by regulation only (e.g. by a new curriculum) may be effective.
- If the capacity of the actors is low but their willingness is high – apart from modifying their mandate - the implementation should heavily invest to capacity building programs (i.e. in-service training) and to the improvement of professional support services.
- If the capacity of the actors is high but their willingness is low – apart from modifying their mandate – implementation should be emphasize the persuasion of the actors and may operate with different incentives.
- If both the capacity and the willingness of the actors are low the implementation may fail without the extensive use of each policy tools.

In order to demonstrate the difficulties what any Roma education policies definitely face during the implementation process let us recall a few the expectations of the different OSI

network development projects towards teachers. We expect them not to be influenced by biased expectation during their everyday routine work, to consider the teaching of Roma and other disadvantaged children a high prestige professional challenge, to be able to use the entire tool-kit of differentiated and developmental pedagogy, to be able to refresh the syllabus in a multicultural manner, support the children in overcoming the learning difficulties generated by their different mother tongue, to co-operate with other teachers of the school in facilitating the learning of individual children, as well as in improve the professional quality of the operation of the school, to be able to bridge over cultural gaps when co-operating with Roma parents, and finally, to share the underlying values of all these expectations. Probably it is not an exaggeration to say that the huge majority of teachers are not able and not willing to meet all these expectations. And of course, this applies to almost all other actors of the education system.

Consequently, when designing the implementation of Roma education policies the use of all these five policy tools should be incorporated into the targeted special governmental programs and/or into the components of the systemic environment of education with which government policies are operate with: financing, regulation, management, teacher training, teaching materials, curriculum, assessment and examinations, information system, research and development.

When assessing the possible alternative tools, four technical aspects are worth to be used. These are:

- *Impact*: forecasting the influence of the different tools. It can be easier if we already have former experience to turn to, for example evaluated domestic developments or such examples abroad. We should ponder: who will be the beneficiaries or the losers of the usage of the different tools. For example, if we deploy additional resources for the increased compensation of teachers educating Roma students other teachers may feel that money was taken away from them. Also, if the average level of the salary of the teachers is extremely low such increment does not necessarily work as incentives.
- *Cost-effectiveness*: assessing the costs against the expected outcomes. Three matters fall under this aspect: the actual cost of the proposed changes, the impact on the overall financing of education and effectiveness of the system of resource allocation.
  - (i) In general, the cheaper solution is the better solution. However, it may turn out that the cheaper tool does not result in measurable impact; therefore, it is nothing more than wasting money. For example, publishing resource materials for teachers is a relatively cheap tool but its impact is not comparable to the effectiveness of a 30 hours training program.
  - (ii) Sometimes relatively high implementation cost may pay back in the medium or long run by reducing the core cost of education service delivery. For example, as it was demonstrated by the financial analysis of the Special School Initiative<sup>5</sup> the costs of the reintegration of Roma students into mainstream schools saves money on the long run because regular service delivery is much cheaper than that of special education.
  - (iii) The appropriate way of allocating resources is essential. All of the possible mechanisms have their advantages and weaknesses, too. For example, the regular system of public financing of education in

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<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Levin: Costs and Effects of the Step by Step Roma Special School Initiative. Report prepared for the Open Society Institute. November, 2001.

Hungary hardly makes possible the targeted and direct funding of school level developments, therefore, the extra funding deployed for the improvement of the education of Roma children does not used according its original goals.

- *Feasibility*: mapping out the possible obstacles. We should scrap even the cheapest solutions with the highest possible impact if the obstacles to their use are too big. For example, there are no doubts about the pedagogical added value of employing Roma teachers but in most countries there are no available Roma educators with the required qualification. Theoretically, in their case we may consider to relax up the rigid employment criteria but it may compromise our expectations towards the quality of teaching. (A possible compromise used by the Step-by-Step Special School Initiative is the use of Roma teacher assistants.) It may happen, that we are forced to withdraw excellent solutions because of the resistance of the clients, strong interest groups, the actors of education or political parties.
- *Sustainability*: making sure that the developments will be build in to the ordinary system of service delivery and/or the impact will be long-lasting enough. For example, social support aiming at reducing the financial burden of education on families (such as meals, free textbooks or scholarship schemes) may well serve the improvement of the achievement of Roma children or the reduction of their dropping out rate. However, if these support measures are phase out all of these developments may disappear. Separating developments from the regular process of teaching and learning can cause similar problems. Very often excellent extracurricular programs are organized leaving behind only temporary results because of the failure of building them into the day-by-day pedagogical practice of the school.

#### *4.2 The specific tools of the four types of policies*

As it was mentioned earlier, the four types of policies designed to address the different underlying reasons of the school failure of minorities use different sets of policy instruments. There are certain tools that are quite widely used – or at least, are well known – in the countries of the region, while others never were used.

##### *4.2.1 Affirmative action*

These policies operate by two different kinds of instruments: *preferential* and *developmental* support. The most typical preferential measure is setting quotas for the members of the minority group; in our case it might be setting aside a certain proportion of university places for Roma students. When filling up the quotas the entrance requirements can be lowered deliberately but more typically they are lowered automatically because the members of the granted group are competing with each other only. Another way of offering preferential support is launching support schemes that made available only for the members of the minority group. The Roma scholarship schemes and tuition fee support schemes introduced in several countries of the region are falling under this category. In most cases even the eligibility requirements are “adjusted”. The developmental affirmative action works with various forms of support programs without any preferential treatment. For example, in order to enhance general secondary or higher education admission preparatory courses are organized and offered for Roma students that are aiming at prepare them to compete with non-Roma students at equal

terms. In this case the same admission criteria and thresholds apply to all students. (Although, this is the declared goal of the widely organized Roma “catching up programs” they did not prove to be effective.) Former experiences show that the best results can be achieved by the combination of the two sets of policy instruments.

Box 2.

### **Counter arguments against preferential measures**

Since affirmative action is directly targeted at certain minority groups this is the most “consensus-sensitive” type of the policy frameworks that might be incorporated into a Roma education strategy. Therefore, it is worth to get familiar with the most powerful counter arguments that in the nineties resulted in the reconsideration of the affirmative policies in most of the states in the United States of America. The three major arguments are the following:

- Preferential measures reduce the chances of students who are not affiliated to any minority groups; therefore, they do not meet the requirements of fairness.
- By the reduced thresholds they impose a damaging impact on the quality of educational services.
- Protection does not improve the competitive competencies of the students with minority affiliation, therefore, it does not contribute to their integration to the mainstream society and makes them dependent on preferences.

The public discussion mainly driven by these arguments resulted in two types of policy responses: the “color blinded” answer was abolishing all forms of affirmative action, while the “color conscious” policy answers rather sifted from preferential measures to developmental support.

It can be often heard in the countries of the region that affirmative action is “dead” in the US. Such references are based on an invalid comparison (for example, because the recent positions of Roma in the region are better to be compared to the positions of Afro-Americans in the sixties) and in most cases serve the rejection of the deployment of additional public resources to programs aiming at improving the education of Roma students.

#### *4.2.2 Minority education provisions*

These policies develop the conditions of such programs and make them available for those who demand them. The five basic types of minority education programs are: (i) *mother tongue education* (the language of instruction is the language of the minority with the exception of teaching the language of the majority), (ii) *bilingual education* (both languages are used, most often certain subject are taught in the minority language while others in the language of the majority), (iii) *language teaching education* (the language of instruction is the majority with a certain number of lessons for the minority language), (iv) *intercultural education* (the education of both languages and culture in mixed groups) and (v) a whole range of *extracurricular programs* (Sunday schools, minority language classes not integrated into the curriculum, cultural study groups and activities,

etc.). The first three program types differ in terms of the language of instruction, the last two in the way, how they are organized.

One of the characteristics of the education of several countries in the region is the extremely high level of separation. In these countries the education of minorities rarely organized in integrated settings. Therefore, separation of Roma students is often communicated as generous minority education provision. It is important to note that creating of the conditions of any of these programs (trained teachers, textbooks and other instructional materials, the required supply of in-service training programs and pedagogical services, etc.) require deliberate development. These conditions are more or less at the disposal of schools educating national minorities but rarely given for those educating Roma students. Also, the specific costs of such programs are higher that most education financing systems in the region does not recognize.

#### *4.2.3 Anti-discrimination and multicultural policies*

Since these policies are designed to serve a rather complex set of goals, their instruments are not less complex. The primary condition of asserting the prohibition of discrimination is the prohibition itself. Although, at the constitutional level discrimination is declared to be prohibited in all countries it is not properly incorporated into the regulation of education. (Even the definition of discriminatory treatment is not defined in most cases.) Effective prohibition should be matched with sanctions and with specific procedural rules that protect the victims of discrimination. Due to the defencelessness of the victims internal and independent monitoring mechanisms are required that disclose such cases. Despite of the efforts of domestic and international human rights advocacy organizations these mechanisms are very weak in each countries of the region. As a consequence, huge proportion of Roma students are educated in segregated schools or classes or placed in special education regardless of their abilities.

As far as the reintegration of Roma students is concerned we should be aware, that human rights and policy advocacy is its important but not the only condition. If children are directed to unprepared mainstream schools (“rigid integration”) their achievement will not necessarily improve. Development in the host school is equally important if one aims at ceasing the pedagogical impact of segregation and not only the overt violation of the students’ rights. Multicultural education has its potential in creating an inclusive environment for Roma students that proved to be effective in several countries. In Eastern Europe the most widely dispersed programs address the multicultural renewal of the content of education. So far these programs work in isolated island of education without influencing the content of mainstream education. One of the rare programs in the region that attempted to combat the teachers’ stereotype-based expectations by anti-bias training is the Step-by-Step Special School Initiative.

#### *4.2.4 Improving the quality of education*

The most important question that should be discussed under this heading is the identification of those policy instruments that may promote the dispersion of the culture and the methodologies of differentiated education in schools where Roma students are taught. The most typical problem in this respect is the contradictory policy expectations

towards the schools. This is manifested in the very often mutually exclusive expectations of encouraging innovation in these schools on the one hand and the pressure on the schools to meet certain performance criteria on the other. There are policies that when addressing the problems related to disadvantaged students group emphasize the renewal of pedagogical practice, therefore operate with the introduction of internal self-evaluation and school improvement and create flexible and diverse supply of all kinds of professional services and training opportunities. Other policies emphasizing educational accountability rather build on external evaluation and measurement and externally designed and targeted professional services. The real “art” of designing the use of these mainstream policy instruments (and their implications to other segments of the system) is how to put together a coherent package of policy tools that equally serve both objectives, directly target the use of these instruments at the schools that are in the need of such development? In addition, it should be done without the serious damage of the synergy and coherence of the entire system.

#### 4.3 *Scaling up school based developments*

As it was mentioned several times, there is a whole range of school-based projects in each country that addressed one or another aspect of the problem of the education of Roma students successfully. A relevant and valid approach to the matter is raising the question: how can all these developments scaled up? In other words: how can educational policy create those conditions among which the achievements of these projects can be replicated in other school educating Roma children? Former experience proves, that this multiplication does not occur automatically;

The general tools of scaling-up school based developments are the following:

- Generating market for working ideas and solutions by strengthening the professional autonomy of schools in order to allow them to better adjust to the needs of Roma children.
- Making additional resources available in order to cover the costs of innovation and extra services.
- Creating a free market of thoughts, i.e. fostering the exchange of information and experience within the education system.
- Investing into the supply of services: building coalitions, research, information systems, development, in-service training, teaching materials, etc.

Apart from these general tools there are two rather specific scaling up strategies: the policy of dissemination and the policy of systemic scaling-up. Their comparative description may support the assessment of their strength and weaknesses that are to a huge extent depend on the characteristics of the education system of the different countries:

<b>The policy of dissemination</b>	<b>The policy of systemic scaling-up</b>
The central question: what are they doing and how?	The central question: what are the conditions that allow them to do it?
The objective is the dissemination of the know-how.	The objective is to create the applicability of the know-how.
The most important tool is creating a	The most important tool is modifying the

network of co-operating schools.	systemic environment of schools.
In terms of adjusting to the local context the policy is relatively inflexible.	In terms of adjusting to the local context the policy is relatively flexible.
The impact on the functioning of the schools is direct, intensive and immediate.	The impact on the functioning of the schools is indirect, less intensive and delayed.
The number of schools involved is limited.	The number of schools involved is not limited.
Due to the project type of operation the innovation often remains isolated within the schools.	The innovation is more easily infiltrating the entire functioning of the school.
The specific costs of development are high.	Due to the use of existing institutions and services the specific costs of development are lower.
Channeling in external resources is easier, the burden on the state budget is lower.	Channeling in external resources is harder, the burden on the state budget is bigger.
Ensuring cost-efficiency is easier.	Ensuring cost-efficiency is harder.

When opting for one or the other strategy there are certain aspects to be concerned:

- *The scope of the problem*, that is, the size of the target group and the number of target institutions, the levels of education that are affected, etc. If the scope of the policy problem reaches a certain extent the systemic scaling-up strategy is better to be applied.
- *The level of decentralization*. In more decentralized systems the dissemination strategy is more feasible than the other one.
- *The maturity of support mechanisms and other conditions of school level quality improvement*. The systemic scaling-up strategy requires a mature and effective pedagogical-professional support mechanism in place that is at the disposal of innovative programs in the schools.
- *The source of resources*. If most of the required resources are provided by non-governmental development agencies only a dissemination strategy can be pursued.
- *Level of political and governmental commitment*. Due to the longer period of time and the wider use of public resources in the systemic scaling-up implementation model this commitment is essential.
- *The level of financial accountability*. Since ensuring cost-effective implementation via public agencies is harder, the accountability related concerns might provide arguments in favor of the dissemination model.

## 5. Possible next steps of country based follow-up

As it was already mentioned the purpose of this paper is to offer a draft analytical framework for the development of policies that build on the accumulated in-country experience in improving the education of Roma students. In the last section a policy development process and certain underlying values will be suggested.

### 5.1 The steps of policy development

There are certain practical steps that those who will be active in the process of policy development for the education of Roma students may consider to follow. Of course, the following outline of the steps of country-based follow-up is not a checklist. The process should be adjusted to the local circumstances. Among others, the readiness of the government, the wider public awareness of the problems, the actual set of information on the issue at the disposal of policy makers is worth to be considered. The following components of a possible process does compose a full policy circle, the major “to dos” of policy development will be described only.

### *5.1.1 Setting the policy agenda*

Probably the most effective way of placing the education of Roma children on the agenda of educational policy is the development a report (“green paper”) on the matter. The report may compile and analyze the available information as it is suggested in the first and second sections of this paper. The report may serve as a multifunctional tool:

- Lays down the foundations of the development of a policy.
- By driving the attention to the problems may influence the agenda of policy makers and other actors of the policy process.
- By its public discussion may influence the professional discourse and may fulfill an awareness-building mission.
- The report may support informed consultation among government agencies, representatives of the Roma community and all other stakeholders in education.
- By the compilation of the available information helps to identify those sets of information (statistical data and empirical research results) that are missing.
- By the assessment of the effectiveness of previous policies and the inventory of “what works” type of experience directly contributes to the design of new policies.

It is important to emphasize that even if the available information is poor the development of a green paper is not an additional research. It should be based on the analysis of data from all possible kinds of sources that to a huge extent are produced outside of the education system. (The information needs of the development of the report can be easily unpacked from the description of problem mapping.)

### *5.1.2 Policy formulation*

This stage is marked by the development of a strategy for the improvement of the education of Roma students. On the basis of the green paper and its discussion and thematic expert studies a group favorably commissioned by the ministry of education may draft a policy paper. The most typical components of such papers are the following:

- Inventory of educational policy problems (Preferably it is shorter than the analysis of the green paper).
- Description of overall goals and concrete development objectives.
- The outline of the possible and optional policy instruments and the proposed changes in different segments of the education system.
- A suggested implementation strategy (timeframe, required resources, implementing agencies, mechanism serving the implementation process, monitoring of implementation, etc.).

### *5.1.3 Policy consultation and adoption*

Before the finalization and the formal approval of the policy it should be discussed with all relevant stakeholders. In relation to this matters in most cases the consultation with the representatives of the Roma community is emphasized. However, due to the scope of the required changes there are hardly found any important stakeholders in education that should not be consulted if one would like to ensure successful implementation. The consultation process comprises three overlapping circles:

- Those groups that are interested in the results of educational services. Apart from the wide range of Roma organizations (not only those that by the government are regarded to be the “legitimate representatives of the Roma minority”) those groups that are interested in the labor market and social outcomes of education in general (such as chambers, NGOs, organizations of employers, self-governments, etc.) also worth to be consulted.
- The second circle is the professional discourse among the actors of the education system. It is especially important in the case of the education of Roma students, because it can be expected that the policy will go against the values and interest of several actors. Therefore, the involvement of teachers, school managers, the staff of the management of education and all kinds of service providers is the sine qua non condition of implementation.
- Since the implementation of a Roma education policy can hardly be imagined without the extensive use of public resources and because the strong anti-Roma sentiments in each countries of the region the public discussion and political marketing of the policy is not less important than the previous circles.

### *5.2 Guiding principles*

The policy development process – especially in the case of a diffuse value-environment – can be effectively supported if the actors of the process get to a consensus on certain principles. The suggested principles are the following:

- The problems to be addressed are not the problems of Roma communities but the deficiencies of the education system.
- All problems faced by Roma communities in terms of social positions, human rights, interethnic relations and the autonomy of minority groups should be considered.
- A clear distinction should be made between genuine ethnic problems, which are addressed by special school provisions and not ethnic problems, which are addressed by quality education.
- Discrimination (exclusion, segregation, detrimental treatment) in education should be prohibited and terminated.
- A certain level of separation in education based on the agreement of the parents and the children and on mother tongue or bilingual instruction is not against the overall goal of integration.
- Children belonging to the Roma minorities should have access to their cultural heritage as well as to the culture of the majority.
- In order to foster the integration of Roma the multicultural content of mainstream education should be strengthened.
- An inclusive environment that is provided by the schools, which are educating children belonging to minorities, should be strengthened.

