

**Republic of Montenegro**  
**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE**  
**-School inspectorate-**  
**Podgorica 2**  
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## **PRIMARY EDUCATION OF ROMA CHILDREN IN THE REPUBLIC OF MONTENEGRO**

Education of Roma children in our Republic mostly takes place at primary schools located in the region of the following municipalities: Podgorica, Nikšić, Ulcinj, Bar and Rožaje. This is because the majority of Roma citizens are congregated in these regions.

It is essential to distinguish two categories of Roma children from two groups, namely the native Roma children, meaning those who have lived in the above regions for decades, and refugee Roma and Egyptian children, who mostly arrived from Kosovo and Metohija after the war conflict had broken out.

Education of native Roma children in the above cities is organized after the curriculum of regular primary schools, and they are integrated with other schoolchildren in the same classes. In other words, native Roma children are integrated with other children who attend regular primary education.

Organized primary education of native Roma children mostly takes place in Podgorica at the Primary school "Božidar V. Podgoričanin" and in Nišić at the Primary school "Mileva Lajović Lalatović". These are the cities where the majority of children from this population live.

After having a direct insight we established that, for instance, during school year 2001 / 2002 129 Roma children were attending primary school "Božidar V. Podgoričanin" in Podgorica, of which 46 at the main school, that is 44 in the first cycle (1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> grade) and 2 in the second cycle (5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade) and 83 pupils at three branch schools located in the refugee camp Vrela Ribnička. Native Roma children are generally at the main school (46 pupils) while at the branch schools in

Vrela Ribnička (83 pupils altogether) exclusively refugee Roma children attend school and are all distributed in two classes of the 1<sup>st</sup> grade and one class of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

Teaching at branch schools is in the Serbian language following the existing Primary school curriculum, which is partially reduced and adapted to the abilities and potentials of the children of refugee Roma.

It is noticeable that the first and second grade pupils' attendance is at good level, especially at the first grade, and then there is sudden attrition in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and even more in higher grades. An illustration to this is the fact that there are only two children in the second cycle, one in the 5<sup>th</sup> and one in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, while there is none in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

At Primary school "Mileva Lajović Lalatović" in Nikšić 40 Roma children attend primary school, of which 32 are in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade and only 8 in all other grades (2<sup>nd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>). It is also interesting to mention that 16 of the 32 children who had attended the first grade left school during the school year while the other 16 successfully completed the first grade, or at least have been transferred to the second grade without completing the first grade. It is expected for the following school year 2002/2003 that 39 Roma children will enter the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of primary school and will be distributed in 6 classes of regular teaching. Thus, they will be integrated with other pupils in classes according to their skills, knowledge and abilities.

Native Roma children attend classes more regularly than the refugee Roma children. The former regularly attend school, and practically do not miss classes, without excuse, and when they start being absent then they leave school. One of the most usual reasons for their leaving school is moving to other places or leaving abroad.

These students have acquired incomplete, weak and poor knowledge, while their abilities are insufficient. On the scale from 1-5 their maximum achievements are 2, rarely 3. Last year two Roma children, attending primary school, repeated the class, one was in the 5<sup>th</sup>, and the other in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. As a rule, children who repeat a class, stop attending school, because their parents would not let them attend the same class again.

Native Roma students, who attend the main school, have successfully integrated into the classes, and their discipline is rather good, depending on age and class. They are also involved in extra-

curricular activities including remedial instruction, various after-school clubs and sections and other extra activities. They diligently take care of the school furniture and equipment. There are no conflicts between those children and other pupils in the school.

At the branch school, located at Vrela Ribnička, which is part of the primary school "Božidar V. Podgoričanin", there are 83 students altogether, distributed in two classes of the 1<sup>st</sup> grade and one of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

Before they started attending the 1<sup>st</sup> grade, they had attended the same grade the year before, or they had been included in the project of *i n f o r m a l e d u c a t i o n* which served as preparatory for formal instruction and turned out to be successful and practical. This education, as preparatory, had been organized by UNICEF and certain humanitarian organizations, which equipped the classrooms (10 classrooms), space, provided outfit and equipment, supplied the 1<sup>st</sup> grade pupils from the refugee camp with footwear and clothes.

Various age groups of students were included in informal education, even those who had attended one or two grades in Kosovo.

This year also a generation of pupils is being prepared in informal education, in order to start attending the 1<sup>st</sup> grade next year. We believe that the following year more than 100 Roma children will be enrolled in primary school "B.V. Podgoričanin". This form of education, namely the preparation of pupils, proved to be good and practical, the evidence of which may, for instance, be the last year achievement of 1<sup>st</sup> grade pupils at branch school.

One of the major problems is that Roma pupils at branch school miss a lot of classes or leave school. Last year, for instance, pupils of the class section I-6 missed 643 classes, and from section I-7 585. The teachers were forced to visit the camp, pupils' homes and shacks, to persuade the children to attend classes regularly.

However, this helped only partially, and from two 1<sup>st</sup> grade classes that we had last year (with 24 pupils in each), this year we formed only one 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class with 31 pupils. The same trend has continued this year, and 5-6 pupils have already stopped coming to school regularly. By the end of the school year, from three classes of refugee Roma at the branch school, only 10 children have finished the grade successfully, while the majority has not completed the grade or had left school in the meantime. Motivation of those children for education is very bad,

or completely absent. Many of them had a tendency of taking school materials and equipment home; therefore the teachers were forced to forbid taking the equipment out of school.

The general observation is that these children (both at the main and branch school) after enrolling certain grade of primary school ask for a certificate that they are regular students, in order to obtain healthcare and financial support from Bureau of Social Insurance.

### **OTHER OBSERVATIONS**

- Motivation of pupils for education is very bad.
- Motivation of parents for pupils' achievements and learning is insufficient.
- Relationship between children of native Roma and other pupils are harmonious.
- Intolerance and fights among children of refugee Roma is present depending on place where they come from, on their religious affiliation, nationality and similar, since they declare differently according to their religion and nationality.
- Native Roma children are supplied with clothes, footwear, school equipment etc, by their parents, while refugee Roma children are supplied with the above by UNICEF and humanitarian organizations which prescribe curricula for informal education, equip classrooms (10 such classrooms have been equipped) and provide the teaching staff, financing the expenses of their education.
- Native Roma children and refugee Roma children have frequent conflicts.
- Refugee Roma children from branch schools do not take bags, school equipment, books, and outfit, because there is a possibility of transfer of property.
- Children of both origin, normally take care of school furniture and equipment, although native children are much more responsible and friendlier than the refugee Roma children.
- Children of native Roma are involved, together with other children, in remedial instruction, after-school sections and extra activities (choir).

**NOTE:** At this moment we do not have information on how many Roma children attend primary schools in our Republic.

**In Podgorica, 13.10.2001.  
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**The observation has  
prepared by school inspectors**

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