



**Ethnic Differences in Education and Diverging Prospects
for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe**

**A comparative investigation in ethnically diverse communities
with second-generation migrants and Roma**

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS IN DOMESTIC CONTEXTS:
THE CZECH CASE**

**Authors: Ela Klementová
Radim Marada
Michal Nekorjak**



I. Introduction: the framing of public and political discourses

Speaking of the Czech public and political discourse over the past ten or fifteen years, the issues of minority rights and ethnicity have predominantly arisen in direct relation to the so-called “Roma problem”. While the permanent presence of other non-Czech ethnic and national communities and individuals in the country has been acknowledged, their problems, characteristics, views, etc. have comparatively been much less the focus of policy debates, media coverage, academic research, civic activism, internet discussions and most likely also private conversations among individuals.

When these other ethnic or national minorities become an issue – and here, we especially refer to the media – they have for a time been articulated within and through largely stable, generalized frames. **Slovaks** (by far the largest national minority in the country) are basically not an issue as a minority group with special characteristics, problems, needs or claims. Their presence in the country is by and large seen as completely unproblematic, a view assisted by the inherited closeness of the Czech and Slovak languages and the common presence of Slovaks among the country’s intellectual, cultural, business and political elites, as well as other factors related mostly to the relatively recent historical experience of a shared state of Czechoslovakia. The **Polish minority** (located especially in northeast Moravia) has also been largely presented as unproblematic, even if already construed in the context of minority rights (education in the native language, their own libraries or the official naming of public places in Polish in locales where the percentage of Poles exceeds a certain number). Reports and talks concerning the occasional problems or conflicts with the Polish minority or Polish immigration seldom reach and appeal to audiences beyond the northeast Moravian region, perhaps with the exception of the issue of temporary immigrant workers employed (for lower wages than the same skilled Czech workers would expect) in firms close to the Czech-Polish border. The various small **expat communities** (US, UK, Dutch, Italian, Hungarian, etc.) are mostly seen and depicted as a contribution to the country’s cultural diversity and, especially in the case of Westerners, as contributors to the country’s economic wealth and as cultural civilizers of a sort. That is, these communities and individuals are perceived and presented outside the political (minority rights) context, and the focus is mostly on lifestyle habits (like national cuisines) and individual strategies of accommodation in a foreign country. What is specific about their media portrayal is that, unlike other immigrant or ethnic groups, their

members are usually allowed to speak for themselves, which also contributes to the general acknowledgement of differences inside these communities.

Somehow specific and more ambiguous attention – although certainly not as widespread and intensive as in the case of the Roma minority (see below) – has been paid in the public discourse to the presence of the two largest immigrant communities in the country (besides the Slovaks), the Vietnamese and the Ukrainians. The **Vietnamese** are often presented as an example of successful integration, especially with respect to the second-generation immigrant youth and their educational achievements. On the other hand, the Vietnamese are also perceived as a relatively closed and self-separated community, which also contributes to their uncomplicated minority status: “When they fight, they do it among themselves”. The problematic side appears through the issue of illegality, related to their publicly visible (almost representative) involvement in street vending: the problems of smuggling, fake branding of goods, etc. The **Ukrainian immigration** has almost exclusively been represented by the image of immigrant construction workers (in the case of men) and housekeepers or nannies (in the case of women). The on-average more direct experience with the Ukrainians (as colleagues at work or in households) contributes to a more understanding attitude towards them as an immigrant community among the general public, also given the fact that the jobs they take in the Czech Republic often (or in the general image) contrast with their former professions in their economically struggling home country (academics, state officials, etc.). The problematic aspect of the Ukrainian immigration publicly appears less in the form of labor market competition (“willing to work for less money, and thus taking jobs from the Czechs – like the Poles”) and more in relation to the illegal presence of some of them in the country, which in turn is associated with organized yet informal networks and often illegal activities (the so called “client system”) exploiting and helping to reproduce their status as unauthorized immigrants. Some movies and TV series also add to this the stereotypical picture, with the portrayal of Ukrainian men as low-ranking mafia members (e.g., the bodyguard of a mafia boss or a man who performs dirty work) – and less frequently, of Ukrainian women as prostitutes.

As stated above, the general position of the **Roma** community, their typically low socioeconomic status and the problems they face or represent have in the past two decades been by far the major trigger for public and political discourse on minority rights and ethnic relations. The close and intense association of the “Roma problem” with public reflections on

these more general issues was particularly accentuated by the first wave of Roma emigration to Canada (and subsequently to the UK) in the second half of the 1990s. Another spectacular event which has increased public and political attention toward the “Roma problem” within the context of human rights (and directly related to the issue of discrimination in education) was the legal case, *D.H. and Others versus Czech Republic*¹ (running from the year 2000), and the final 2007 verdict on this case of the European Court of Human Rights declaring violation of the “nondiscrimination protections” in the European Convention on Human Rights. This rule convinced the Czech state of the existence of discriminatory practices against Roma within the Czech educational system, and the international attention it attracted (like the Roma emigration waves before and afterwards), made it an even more salient and sensitive issue in the domestic context.

In the preceding paragraph, we explicitly and repeatedly refer to the “**Roma problem**”, as this is the **predominant general frame** within which the depiction of the Roma as an ethnic minority enters the Czech public and political discussions on all levels and in all major arenas: policymaking, the media, academic research, social activism, internet chats and blogs, and to be sure, private conversations among individuals. In general, in all of these arenas, among the majority and often also among themselves, the Roma as a community or minority have been perceived and represented as a “problem”, whether sympathetically or adversely.

The more **specific contexts** within which Roma-related issues of minority rights and ethnic relations appear in the Czech public and political discourse include the following:

Welfare and social benefits: Roma are widely and generally perceived as proportionally the major beneficiaries of social welfare, which is mostly associated with the relatively high unemployment and fertility rates among the Czech Roma. It is especially in this respect that NGO representatives and public advocates of Roma call for more efficient state policies (focusing on employment and education opportunities in particular), which would lift a larger part of the Roma beneficiaries out of this position. “Targeting causes rather than effects” is the major catchphrase here. On the other hand, it is the widespread image of Roma as typical

¹ For a detailed description of the case, see (Goodwin 2006). Summarized accounts can be found, e.g., at the following websites: <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/justice/litigation/czechrepublic> (The Open Society Justice Initiative OSJI “acted as co-counsel before the Second Section of the European Court of Human Rights and then before the Grand Chamber.”), http://www.pili.org/dadel/D.H._and_others_v._Czech_Republic or http://www.romea.cz/english/index.php?id=servis/z_en_2006_0061.

abusers of the social welfare system that supports the strong and ethnically colored aversion against Roma among the general public (as massively represented, for example, in various internet forums, chats, blogs, etc.) as well as the calls for less generous welfare policies or stricter control of the beneficiaries. The mainstream media take a more distanced and sensitive stance in this respect, yet especially the tabloids at times powerfully contribute to creating the public image of Roma as typical abusers of the system.² Given the widespread anti-Roma sentiment among the general public it does not come as a surprise that many state and local officials also seem to share it, albeit not publicly. Lately, there have been at least four cases of politicians (typically at the local level) who in their electoral campaigns addressed the issue of abusing the welfare system in direct relation to Roma – and (also typically) they were successful in their run for office. All of them have faced a rather harsh critique by the national media (sometimes paradoxically including the tabloids) and they also have been opposed and criticized from within their own political parties.

Petty crime in general: Related to the former context is the image of Roma as those who are inclined to commit petty crimes beyond cheating on the welfare system (stealing, etc.), and again, this view is mostly articulated through various internet platforms, letters to editors, informal discussions, etc. Here the media, as well as politicians with supposedly anti-Roma sentiment, take an even more careful stance. The notable exception in this respect was a public accusation against Roma parents of “not sending their children to schools, but sending them to steal instead” by the former government Minister for Human Rights and National Minorities (sic!) in spring 2008. The Minister met with harsh criticism from the media, and shortly afterwards, advocacy NGOs urgently asked for an apology, which she had already issued in the meantime. Symptomatic about this case was the Minister’s explanation stressing that by no means had she spoken about the Roma community or Roma ethnic groups in general, but had only addressed particular cases of this problem with and in some Roma families. Yet even some journalists and politicians sometimes tend to reproduce the general

² It is not only the specific language that frames this issue and reproduces a widely shared reputation and depiction of Roma as undeservedly benefiting from welfare policies, but also the use of visual images. It was a symptomatic coincidence that as we were working on this text at the Prague Airport, one of the Czech major commercial TV channels reported, as the headline said (the sound was off), on the “reform of social benefits” while illustrating the issue by picturing only Roma families as they collect social benefits in a respective office. Moreover, the moving pictures were evidently taken from a short circuit camera installed in the office (it is illegal to shoot documents and take photographs in these places), which may easily make the otherwise ordinary act look as something rather suspicious. Yet it also suggests that many state and local officials (especially of a lower or middle rank) share the general negative view of Roma as social beneficiaries as they do not hesitate to provide (most likely anonymously and illegally) such pictures to a commercial TV station.

image of Roma as troublemakers, for example, by freely using the phrase “socially non-adjustable co-citizens” which was coined publicly during the 1990s and soon acquired the pejorative meaning of an ironic, politically correct label for Roma.

Living in ghettos and miserable conditions: Obviously, this context is not unrelated to the issue of social welfare and benefits and also to the issue of crime and public disorder. It has attracted stronger public attention, especially through media-reported cases of severely deprived neighbourhoods (typically housing projects) within smaller cities in the north west of the country and inhabited predominantly by Roma, and more recently also through state sponsored, semi-academic research on “ghettoization” publicized by the media.³ In acknowledgement of its scale, the Czech authorities have earmarked two billion Czech Crowns (approximately 80 million EUR) for the period of 2007-2013 to tackle this very problem.

Roma emigration: As suggested above, this was the first articulate and politically dramatic context within which – under international pressure – the issue of ethnic relations and human rights, in direct relation to the Czech Roma community, became at once an urgent public and political concern in the second half of the 1990s. It attracted the attention of the media to the “Roma problem” as one of the topical issues of Czech public and political life, and it compelled politicians to take the issue seriously, yet it also provided the ground and opportunity for an open polarization of the non-Roma Czech majority around the Roma issue, quantitatively in favour of anti-Roma sentiment. Since then, the prevalent view voiced among the majority has been: “If they want, let them go.” It is difficult to estimate whether the widespread anti-Roma sentiment escalated in 2009 when Canada re-introduced a visa for Czech citizens (with an explicit reference to the Czech Roma immigration). Yet many of the Roma’s public advocates (besides political representatives and most of the media) opposed this step by the Canadian authorities exactly in anticipation of this very consequence.⁴

³ The research project was conducted by the GAC agency, and it has identified around three hundred “ghettos” inhabited by Roma population in the country of approximately ten million inhabitants. These deprived neighbourhoods are of different kinds, ranging from larger inner city areas (especially in larger cities like those in which we have conducted our research), through housing projects (especially in middle size cities) to outskirts of smaller towns. The project estimates around 80.000 people living in these neighbourhoods in total, yet it should be noted that particularly in the inner city ghettos of larger cities (and partly also in the housing projects) it is not only Roma who live here. The average estimate of Roma living in the Czech Republic is around 250.000.

⁴ There are no reliable statistics available as to how many Czech Roma have left the country to apply for asylum in other countries. The common estimation is, however, that before re-introducing the visa requirement for

Minority education: We have already mentioned this context above. It has been since the much-publicized *D.H. and Others versus Czech Republic* case was launched in the beginning of the 2000s, and especially after the verdict of the ECHR against the state, that the issue of education of minorities has become publicly visible throughout the mainstream media, working its way onto the political agenda. To be sure, many of the representatives within the NGO and advocacy sector have until recently blamed the Czech government and its legislators for not doing enough in this respect – to some extent with the exception of 2007-2009, when the Ministry of Education declared the education of minorities as one of its priorities.⁵

Despite the advocates' criticism, it has been in the context of the ensuing public debate on minority (Roma) education that more information started to be provided by the state authorities about the previous and more recent legislature and programs designed to improve the position and prospects of Roma within the Czech educational system: the Education Act of 2005, which implemented the Framework Educational Program, providing basic schools with the opportunity to introduce specifically designed (Roma-oriented) multicultural teaching techniques, courses or programs into their curricula and extra-curricular activities; transformation of the former Special Schools into Basic Practical Schools (with the aim of improving the chances of children with mental or behavioural disorders for further – vocational – schooling and in the labour market⁶); the establishment of pre-school educational programs especially in socially deprived (often Roma populated) urban areas; establishing and financially supporting the institution of teaching assistants at schools in these areas (that is, Roma teaching assistants at schools predominantly attended by Roma pupils); the annually announced “Program of the Ministry of Education for Support of Education in Languages of National Minorities and Multicultural Education”; the National Action Plan of Inclusive Education accepted by the government in January 2010; etc.

Czech citizens in mid 2009, approximately 3.000 Czech Roma had arrived in Canada to seek asylum over the previous years.

⁵ The Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, Ondřej Liška (Green Party), replaced the former Minister (also from the Green Party) in the same government and during the same term after her one year in office. Yet the whole government was brought down by the opposition's non-confidence vote in the Czech Parliament in spring 2009, one year before the next regular parliamentary elections.

⁶ Yet just this has been one of the major targets of criticism coming from journalists and NGO activists. They have repeatedly and stridently pointed out that the problem consists exactly in the fact that the basic practical schools continue to be disproportionately attended by Roma children, and thus institutionalizing the highly unlikely or fictive fact that while among the non-Roma population it is only 2-3% of kids who show “mental and/or behavioral disorders”, it is 27-28% among the Roma children.

With regard to public and political discourse, however, it is symptomatic that information about these legislative measures and government sponsored or initiated programs has been provided to the public by the state officials and/or political representatives (and also by school teachers and principals) rather hesitatingly. Rather than being advertised (seeking public support) or advertising the state's good will in the direction of improving educational chances of Roma children, they have primarily been used simply as a defensive mechanism under the pressure of the third sector representatives and journalists advocating Roma interests. Speculatively, we may ascribe this hesitance to the fact that these measures have not yet brought the expected effect and to the apprehension that a more massive public advertisement of these steps would rather decrease than increase the popularity of the political representatives and state administration.

On the other hand, the continuing (if not mounting) problems related to the education of Roma children, despite all the legislative but also concrete grassroots efforts of schools, NGOs and local authorities, have to some extent negatively affected the attitudes of those otherwise devoted to the task of improving the educational chances of Roma children. What we can sense behind the above mentioned rhetorical slip by the former Minister for Human Rights and National Minorities accusing Roma parents of sending their children to steal rather than to attend school is a feeling of resignation and frustration, which can occasionally be identified (although articulated in less drastic words) among local activists.

As is clear from the preceding account, while the Roma-related public discourses on human (minority) rights and ethnic relations get articulated in various arenas, the arenas' dominant representatives often find themselves in opposition and severe disagreement among each other. Here, we especially speak about the conflicting views of political representatives (state officials), journalists, civic activists (advocates of human and Roma/minority rights) and the general public. And these all are joined by another dissonant voice, coming from the teachers. Briefly speaking, not to exceed the expected length of this part of the report, politicians and state officials claim that policies targeting the problems widespread in or typical for the Roma community are numerous and well designed, but they are not properly implemented at the local level. To the contrary, civic activists and advocates (and partly, also journalists) usually see the state policies in this respect as insufficient in scope and wrongly aimed at the effects rather than the causes of the problems in question. Meanwhile, a large part of the general

public tends to oppose any policies perceived as specifically designed for Roma as undeserved and vain.

II. Contribution of our research regarding the debates about policy measurement

Since the 1990s, the segregation of Roma pupils in the Czech educational system has been symbolized by their concentration in Basic Practical Schools. Both public debates and many accepted or planned policy measures focus on these pupils.

Let us remember that putting children into Basic Practical Schools is based on an examination carried out by an expert in a specialized pedagogical-psychological centre (see Katzorová et al. 2008). In case the child is found to not have the appropriate predisposition towards attending common basic school, he or she can be placed into specialized institution with trained pedagogical staff. These schools, however, provide less demanding, substandard education, which limits the possibility of future educational success. Already during the Communist regime, the proportion of Roma pupils in these types of schools was high. Nevertheless, after 1989, the number of non-Roma pupils in these schools declined significantly. Research commissioned by the Ministry of Education (GAC 2009) found out that approximately 30 percent of Roma pupils attend Basic Practical Schools, whereas for children from non-Roma families, this proportion is far lower (approximately 2 percent).

Measures striving for change can be analytically divided into those aiming at eliminating “*system failures*”, and those intended to restrict *unjustified assigning* of Roma pupils into Basic Practical Schools. The main *system* measures focus on objective (and controllable) definitions of reasons for putting certain children under the custody of special education in Basic Practical Schools. So that the system measures cannot be evaded and manipulated, a rule has been introduced that mandates parents’ explicit consensus when placing their child into a Basic Practical School. Thus, since the 1990s, the rules that allow for the systematic and involuntary segregation of Roma pupils into Basic Practical Schools - which was the main reason the Czech Republic was designated as a country where the right to an equal education is infringed - have been gradually transformed.⁷

⁷ Despite this fact, there are still potential ways to evade this measure, and even a paradoxical situation occurs when pupils and parents themselves struggle for unjustified placement into a Basic Practical School. This happens in those cases when pupils, due to disciplinary problems, expect to be excluded from common basic schools and to be put into a preventive-corrective institution. In such cases, a pupil can try to pretend to be suffering from a learning disorder and/or a minor mental handicap and start attending Basic Practical School, thus staying with his or her family.

In parallel with the above mentioned prevention of unjustified placement of Roma pupils into the system of special schools, a policy of inclusive education has gradually been established. Its premise is the support of children with so-called special educational needs in common basic schools. However, this does not refer solely to Roma children, but, in general, to children endangered by social exclusion, physical handicaps, etc. This focus on inclusiveness has been present in the educational system for several years. Nevertheless, its principal support and a more significant orientation also towards the issues of social exclusion started to be accentuated only in recent years, primarily at the beginning of 2009. Concurrently, there are two strategies - a traditional approach that favours the education of children in specialized institutions with trained staff, and a newer one, which prioritizes the integration of such pupils into common schools. At present, there exists a certain tension, which is manifested above all by the fact that Basic Practical Schools are not motivated to participate in supporting inclusive education, as they find such an approach *competitive*. It means that they try to persuade the parents to send their children to their facilities.⁸ A significant motive for applying such actions comes from within the system of school financing based on the number of pupils, which can cause serious problems to schools in long-term demographic decline. On the other hand, however, we cannot reduce this „fight for pupils“ solely to the question of money. As we have discovered, teachers are strongly convinced that a special educational system makes sense and a number remains sceptical about the possibility of integrating all children into common basic schools. This scepticism is practically confirmed in cases when a pupil is transferred from a common basic school to a Basic Practical School in the higher grades (6th-8th grade) on the basis of his or her serious behavioural and disciplinary problems as these pupils often dispose of very poor level of attainments. In other words, many factors, including the perception of what a low IQ is and what consequence it has for the education of children, how a common basic school should work (i.e. its orientation towards achievement), and what the mission of specialists and specialized schools is, play an important role in teachers' conduct (and not only for those from Basic Practical Schools with their specific interests). This „cognitive dimension“ of the whole problem cannot be omitted when reflecting upon changes in the educational system and the introduction of inclusive strategies. To conclude, we emphasize

⁸ This includes more than just verbal persuasion. Some Basic Practical Schools establish preparatory classes for children of pre-school age that are intended to help them to adapt to the environment of (not only Practical) basic schools more easily. In doing this, they (indirectly) arrange for parents to eventually enroll their children in these very schools. Another important mechanism is the interconnection of a portion of pedagogical-psychological counseling centres with particular schools. If a school establishes such a counseling facility, it makes it possible for the school to record better diagnostic and counseling activities while educating children. However, a negative consequence can be seen in the fact that such a facility tends to recommend to the parents that they agree with enrolling their children in a particular Basic Practical School.

that if both system approaches (inclusive and specialized) exist concurrently, it does not only signify problems. For parents, ideally, it means that they will have the opportunity to choose how their children will be educated in cases where they require a supportive approach.

In our research, we also focused on schools where Roma pupils prevail but that do not belong to the system of Basic Practical Schools. We found that both types of schools are relatively similar, above all in three aspects:

- a) In comparison with non-Roma schools, both school types provide substandard education (although Basic Practical Schools offer lower quality education).
- b) Roma pupils do not carry on with further education, regardless of what type of school they attended.
- c) At present, the segregation of Roma pupils takes place at both school types on the basis of very similar mechanisms.

These conclusions indicate that it is worth conceiving of the issue of the exclusion of Roma pupils in a more complex way, and the whole debate should not be restricted only to the functioning of Basic Practical Schools. Segregation mechanisms in the Czech educational system are based on the interconnection and concurrence of several heterogeneous actants – the attitude of the majority towards Roma populations, the strategies of particular schools, the educational strategies of Roma and non-Roma parents, the setting of the educational system (marketization and introduction of market principles in the 1990s), and urban structure, to name just a few.⁹ This implies that the question of segregation and inequality in education – at least in the case of our researched schools – cannot be restricted to the problem of the setting of educational system and it cannot be expected that its (technical) modifications can bring about more than just partial, even if significant, results.

To conclude this section, we highlight some under-investigated issues, which we suggest would contribute to an increase in the reflexivity of measures aimed at reducing inequalities in the Czech educational system:

- *Barriers to subsequent education at high schools*

⁹ We described this segregation mechanism in detail in *Being Caught in Marginality: educational market, “Roma Schools” and Reproduction of Social and Spatial Inequalities* (Nekorjak, Souralová, Vomastková 2011).

In comparison with their parents and grandparents, Roma pupils in larger numbers finish their basic education but on the other hand, in significant numbers they do not start or they do not finish education at high schools. The drop out rate is extremely high but the circumstances constituting critical moments in the subsequent education are not well known.

- *Education of Roma pupils at schools where these pupils represent a minority*

Since attention is paid above all to Basic Practical Schools, it is not very well known how the process of education of children attending common Basic Schools proceeds. They may face other specific kinds of obstacles. On the other hand, among children could be found those from families seeking to secure their children with better future and social position through the educational system.

- *Mapping successful strategies for going through the educational system*

In the context with the previous point, it is not known, how some Roma families successfully cope with the situation of social exclusion and how they support their children. Some of them are also successfully supported/assisted by NGOs. But examples of both types of successful cases are not well explored.

- *Evaluation of instruments used by NGOs to support the education of pupils from socially excluded Roma families*

During the two decades, a large number of NGOs (but also state institutions, policy measures etc.) target the problems of Roma social exclusion and the related problem of education. It seems to be useful to conduct an “audit”, i.e. enumerate and evaluate rather fragmented strategies and practices.

III. Policy recommendations in the domestic context

The following recommendations result above all from the findings that we encountered during our research – i.e. we react specifically to the problems mentioned in the previous text. Put differently, these recommendations do not cover all possibilities that could be suggested. Also we do not mention those measures which are already widely practiced – for example the support of establishing pedagogical assistants and pre-school education of Roma children.

We have to stress that not all Roma pupils are educated in ethnically segregated schools. Unfortunately, exact numbers are not known and it is almost impossible for us to provide here at least any qualified estimation. What should be kept in mind in discussion on segregation of

Roma pupils in the Czech educational system is the fact that we can distinguish its three modes:

- functional segregation (high proportion of Roma pupils educated in specialized Basic Practical Schools),
- spatial segregation (segregation between the schools or/and within schools),
- combination of both previous types.

Here, we do not present specific measures for particular modes of segregation as those instruments could be used for more than one type of segregation. Moreover, we have to mention that in the Czech Republic the within-school segregation into separated classes does not seem to be an actual problem, although it may arise in the future.

1) Support for integration¹⁰

The integration strategy is aimed at the (a) assisted replacement of a pupil from a school with the predominance of Roma pupils (Basic Practical Schools as well as common basic schools) into a school where majority pupils prevail. However, it is also used to indicate cases of (b) replacement between Basic Practical Schools and common basic schools with a majority of Roma pupils in both facilities. Currently, these activities refer to rather a small number of pupils, as integration is a relatively new idea, which is exacting at the same time, since it is necessary to persuade the children, parents and teachers at schools between which the replacement is accomplished. As we have already mentioned, schools do not wish their pupils to leave, because of the financial resources that they would lose as a result of a successful integration. A possible solution could come from addressing the financial interests of schools actively participating in integration, especially with regard to sufficient financial compensation for a pupil leaving for another school; for example, this compensation could be related to the cooperation between both institutions. This collaboration would ensure a transfer of information and experience with a particular pupil and the selection of an appropriate strategy for his or her further education. The second problem is the issue of the competencies of teachers at common Basic Schools in working with children requiring a

¹⁰ In the Czech Republic the term *re-integration* is also used for the strategies we describe here although it is not clear why this term is accepted because it does not correctly denote the situation when pupils with no prior experience with mainstream education are transferred from ethnically segregated schools.

specific approach. This dilemma can be partially mitigated by the measures described in the third paragraph. .

Measures targeting the problem of segregation beyond the most problematic and highly discussed Basic Schools/Basic Practical Schools dichotomy are not still broadly discussed in the Czech Republic (both publicly and by experts). We strongly do not recommend measures based on the quotas or any similar kind of “social engineering” missing support or at least toleration of affected teachers and parents. It seems to be more effective, initially, to work out strategies and methods for individual integration of selected children and convince broader public that guided ethnic mixing in schools may be possible.

2) Diagnostics

The current system of pedagogical-psychological examination is based specifically on determining IQ, and although the existing tests are declared to be „cultural bias free“, it seems that they are not necessarily „poverty bias free“. In other words, the possibility that social disadvantage is, in the process of IQ measuring, transformed into embodied low mental disposition has been discussed. On the other hand, the tests used are likely to predict the success/failure of pupils in the current Czech educational system. In any case, it is worth carrying out a reassessment of the tools and methods currently utilized. Another measure that can be taken into consideration - especially within the context of integration - is repetitive testing during the course of education at Basic Practical Schools. We can assume that in some cases the competencies of children can improve over time, as regards their success at common basic schools without the need of special assistance.

3) Further education of teachers, transfer of knowledge and fusions of schools

The educational system currently in place at the faculties of education does not put enough emphasis on obtaining competencies in working with children with special educational needs, as the existing curriculum was based on the fact that these very pupils will be taught by specialists. The policy of inclusive education may require a change in such an opinion and is more demanding as regards the pedagogical competencies of all teachers. The enhancement of teachers' abilities to educate children with specific needs can be supported by these changes

in curricula at the faculties of education, in order to create enough space for them to acquire these competences.

A greater dilemma occurs in case of teachers who have already finished their university studies. Here an opportunity exists for making use of the competences of teachers from the Basic Practical Schools, who are able to provide their colleagues with useful advice about how to educate those who lag behind and need special didactical and psychological approaches in order to improve their school performance. Eventually, the collaboration of teachers from both institutions and the tighter liaison of the organizations as wholes could represent a path towards better and durable practices of inclusion and integration of socially-culturally disadvantaged children and children with special educational needs. Another advantage of this measure, aside from the better inter-collaboration of the schooling organizations, is that the practices of integration and social rehabilitation co-realized by Practical schools would foster a better image and higher levels of trust in Practical schools as such and in their work methods. This is important in light of the fact that there have been some declarations suggesting the closing of all Basic Practical Schools. Understandably, the teachers from these schools felt threatened and underestimated. In case of enforcing such an intention, it would definitely be worth considering the idea of integrating those teachers into the larger educational body as needed professionals.

4) Enhancing of legitimacy and mainstreaming

It is generally known that the extent of the social distance, together with the xenophobic or even racist attitudes toward Roma populations make up part of the everyday life experience in the Czech Republic. Thus, the problematic status of the Roma minority in the Czech Republic is one of the circumstances that can complicate the implementation of a policy of inclusive education and the reduction of inequalities in the educational system. It is worth pointing out that, above all, this agenda was initiated in response to external pressures from international institutions and NGOs – neither the Ministry of Education nor pedagogues or academic experts were the primary initiators of change. Another problematic aspect of this kind of policy is the fact that after accepting the first conceptions and planning other measures, a certain decline in interest occurred after the new minister settled into office, and this agenda is no longer a priority.

It is difficult to imagine that new measures could be introduced successfully if they lack the necessary support and recognized legitimacy. The lack of legitimacy seems to be critical,

especially in the case of teachers. Thus, measures of inclusive education should be accompanied by the endeavour to garner support on the part of teachers, who are its main actors. It is not only the successive change in the attitude of majority to Roma that is important, but it is also imperative to persuade teachers about the advisability of such changes. In addition, it is necessary to consider the fact that the Czech educational system has been continuously reformed in the last 20 years, and very often, these reforms have not been completed. Therefore, the policy of inclusive education may be perceived as another set of useless obligations that do not solve anything.

Further, we have indicated that the inclusiveness/exclusiveness of the Czech educational system depends on the conduct and attitudes of parents, and according to our findings, the „white-flight“ phenomenon (children from majority families leave schools when the number of minority children increases) is significantly established. For this reason, we should consider enforcing measures that can positively influence the cultivation of civic solidarity with marginalized out-groups such as the Roma along a long-lasting horizon. This discourse is typical mostly for the NGOs involved, in creating a more general, eventually civic view on the inclusiveness of a society, which would bring about benefits for everybody. They endeavour to show and persuade that the benefits of inclusive education are profitable and salubrious for all participants and for society as a whole. It should be taken into consideration to set up grant schemes for NGOs to fund their work with media outlets (provide them with information and stimulate public debate). At present, it is still common for the media to spread biased and stereotyped news when it comes to Roma (as well as with other ethnic groups and immigrants). In short, it is hardly possible to change the *functioning* of the school system in a desirable way without mainstreaming the leading ideas and the rationality of the reasons for change.

Examples of good practices

1) Centers for inclusive education (CPIV)

Centers for inclusive education (CPIV) were founded by the Ministry of Education and the Institute for pedagogical psychological counseling (IPPP) in order to cooperate with the directors of schools and enter into the endeavor to create conditions that furnish adequate education according to the possibilities of the pupils. The main tasks of the organization include tracking pupils and setting up the right to equal access of education for those who

need supportive measures in learning. The activities of the centers focus on the agency of schools, teachers and other pedagogical employees. The target group is children with specific leaning/educational needs. The CPIV were created at the central level, but act relatively autonomously at the regional level, at so-called districts.¹¹ Participation in the project is voluntary and the schools themselves define what they consider to be the major problems they face and would like to resolve. Subsequently, the CPIV team, in cooperation with different professionals and invited consultants, sets up a particular plan, consisting of training and counseling that is provided to the pedagogical employees. Therefore, the strategy of the CPIV is primarily the work with the teachers and their teaching methods, which are expected to procedurally offer the benefits of better performance, well being and inclusion for children with special educational needs or at a social/cultural disadvantage. In their conception, no particular ethnic, national or social group is explicitly targeted, “The inclusion is expected to cover everybody”. Employees of the organization consider the platform beneficial for schools that are willing to face and deal with their problems, which might not always be the case, according to their experience. This can lead us to reflection upon a better system of motivation for schools, which would stimulate educational institutions to participate and implement similar projects. This could include, for instance, a form of extra salary remuneration for the teachers who take charge of such an initiative.

The project of CPIV is intended to continue until 2012, if not prolonged, and as it might be wasteful to lose an already coordinated and relatively experienced team at the scale of the region, they could prospectively transform into an agency for the oversight and inspection of the abovementioned practices. As an inspecting institution in charge, they should act primarily as supervisors and counselors. Moreover, the position of the institution may be considered advantageous for this role because of the following reasons: The CPIV have a foundational interconnection with the government and the central administration of the Ministry of Education. This also includes the legitimacy to suggest non-committal proposals on legislative changes in the field of education. A good communication with the relevant non-governmental actors (offices, counseling centers, etc.) might help to facilitate the communication between the stakeholders and contribute to harmonizing the encounter of their needs. Homogenization of the system of evaluation of educational outcomes would certainly be a welcomed measure as well. Nowadays, each school is obliged to provide its own

¹¹ In Czech Republic, there are fourteen districts in total and CPIV have bases in nine of them. They enter into cooperation with fifteen schools annually.

evaluation of the education it provides, but each of them does so on an individual basis. Consequently, the results are scattered and impossible to compare or process statistically.

2) “Community schools”

Teachers working with children that come from a socially or culturally disadvantaged environment frequently report difficult and/or insufficient cooperation with parents. An inspiring idea regarding this topic can be found in the practice that converts and extends the schools into the *community centers*. This practice was put into practice in a few basic schools as well as in some nursery schools.

The principle aim is to underpin the local community and to support its development and its own resources in various aspects. The space of the school serves in this context as a natural center for information, encounters and organization of the events. The prevailing part of the activities is centered upon children, schooling and after-school activities. Children visiting the school bring in their younger or older siblings, and eventually their parents, which simultaneously serves as a way to get to know the needs of the community and potentially to create important social bonds. The community center can tailor its functioning to the specific exigencies of the community – for instance, by organizing different kinds of relevant discussions, workshops, performances, etc. These activities can take place strictly at the local level and on the condition of intensive agency and motivation on behalf of the crucial actors. Besides pedagogical employees, assistance is also needed from the side of social workers, supervisors and other professionals. In cases where the endeavor is successful, the organizational charge could eventually be transferred to various people coming directly from the community. Consequently, the community school type can become an attractive, open place, furnishing useful information about the needs of the community and its surroundings and fostering a positive image in the public’s mind, which could also facilitate communication at the school level from both sides. Unfortunately, evaluation of the impact and functioning of those schools still has not yet been elaborated.

3) Integration programmes

Some schools and NGO try to change the impact of the exclusionary functioning of the Czech educational system through the programmes of integration, i.e. replacement of Roma children from the Basic Practical schools to standard ones. The programmes/projects are based on individual approach. Mostly, teachers choose talented children whose family is addressed

with the offer of being involved in a programme. In case the family agrees, a variously long period of time begins (for instance several years), the aim of which is to prepare the pupil for entering a more demanding school. The assistance usually continues for a certain period after the replacement.

As the main issue in the Czech Republic is the segregation of Roma pupils into sub-standard specialized schools for mentally handicapped pupils, a number of programmes of integration is actually based on the transfer between schools with the high proportion of Roma pupils. It is due to the obstacles stemming from the reluctance of many “non-Roma schools” to educate Roma – mainly because of the aversion of the parents from the majority ethnic group. As well, the need to establish specific supportive programmes for some transferred pupils to assist them during the process and sometimes after the integration is discouraging for many schools. In other words, the term “re-integration” (see footnote 7) is conceived first of all as the change of the school, not as the ethnic desegregation strategy. Exact numbers are not at our disposal, but it seems that only a few facilities go beyond this narrow notion and try to replace selected pupils to school with non-Roma majority. To conclude, integration strategies are not widespread, as they are quite demanding, the participation in those kinds of projects, for both sending and receiving schools, is based only on the good will and enthusiasm of the teachers and headmasters.

Conclusion

In the above account, we have presented the major contours of the Czech public discourse related to the issue of minority education and the problems of ethnic minorities in general, and after summarizing the major findings of our part of the research project, we have suggested a set of policy recommendations aimed at the problems in question. In the last part, we have primarily focused on educational policies and programs. Yet it has already been indicated by the first section of this text that the goal of improving educational and life chances of Roma youth is a complex task requiring a coordinated action not only of different sorts of actors, but also policies oriented to a much broader range of factors and areas. Any advancement in designing the educational system will only have a limited impact in the case of children who live in deprived neighbourhoods, in an almost daily contact with petty crime, alcoholism, drug abuse and sometimes violence, sharing small cramped apartments without any private space or a desk to do homework. Relatively widespread unemployment and poverty in such neighbourhoods may also exert negative effects on pupils’ performance at school, like when

their families have other priorities than providing them with tools, books or learning equipments beyond the basic provisions by the school. Such environment easily socializes children into a world in which unemployment is perceived almost as a norm, guiding young people to an early resignation on educational and career achievements, besides shaping the daily routine in unfavourably to regular learning and assisted preparation for school.

Literature:

- GAC. 2009. *Vzdělanostní dráhy a vzdělanostní šance romských žáků a žáků základních škol v okolí vyloučených romských lokalit [Educational Disparities of Roma Pupils in Elementary Schools in Roma Neighborhoods in the Czech Republic]*. Praha: GAC.
- Goodwin, Morgan. 2006. "D.H. and Others v. Czech Republic: a major set-back for the development of non-discrimination norms in Europe". In: *German Law Journal*, vol. 07, no. 04, pp. 421-432.
- Nekorjak, Michal, Adéla Souralová, Klára Vomastková. 2011. *Uvínutí marginalitě: vzdělávací trh, „romské školy“ a reprodukce sociálně-prostorových nerovností [Caught in Marginality: educational market, "Roma Schools" and Reproduction of Social and Spatial Inequalities]*. *Sociologický časopis* (in press).