

Including the excluded:
Meeting diversity in education



Example from Romania



The case study has been carried out through a joint effort by the Ministry of Education, UNICEF, UNESCO CEPES, the University of Bucharest (Department of Pedagogy), the Institute of Education Science, various Romanian schools and other institutions and NGOs.

Anca Butuca (coordinator), Mircea Badescu, Romulus Brancoveanu, Emil Paun, Dan Potolea, Adina Ecaterina Vrasmas, Traian Vrasmas, Catalina Ulrich, Raluca Slamnescu

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UNESCO
Combating Exclusion through Education
Division of Basic Education
7, place de Fontenoy
75352 PARIS 07 SP
France
Tel: 33-1-45 68 11 95
Fax: 33-1-45 68 56 27
E-mail: s.vayrynen@unesco.org
<http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/sne>

"The key challenge is to ensure that the broad vision of Education for All as an inclusive concept is reflected in national government and funding agency policies. Education for All ... must take account of the need of the poor and the most disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health; and those with special learning needs."

(Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments.
Expanded commentary on the Dakar Framework for Action, paragraph 19)

The World Education Forum, held in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000, recognized that Education for All cannot be achieved without the inclusion of millions of children who are currently excluded from education. Education for All is also about quality, and all young people attending centres of learning should be able to learn and achieve their individual educational goals.

Inclusive education is a movement which challenges exclusion policies and practices. It has gained ground over the past decade and is now the favoured approach to meeting the needs of all learners in mainstream educational settings.

This paper presents one of the two case studies which took place within the framework of the "Education for All Year 2000 Assessment" in Romania and Uganda. These case studies provide an account of the efforts of the two governments to address marginalization in and exclusion from education. The case studies review developments in inclusion, including policies and strategies to increase participation in education for children who have been, or continue to be, excluded or marginalized.

The case studies also aim to demonstrate that inclusion in education is possible even when resources are limited. A number of key factors for a successful shift towards inclusive education can be identified from the two studies:

- political commitment;
- cooperation and collaboration at all levels between everyone concerned;
- identification and mobilization of existing resources;
- developing a common vision;
- continuous staff training;
- partnerships in decision-making and implementation at local level;
- support for learners and teachers within communities;
- flexibility in implementation and the curriculum.

UNESCO is committed to working in collaboration with other international organizations to achieve the goals set in Dakar, especially by supporting countries to develop education policies on excluded and marginalized groups.

I hope that these case studies will stimulate and encourage readers to consider carefully the current policies and practices addressing the needs of learners who, for any reason, experience barriers to learning.

Jacques Hallak
Assistant Director-General for Education, a.i.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	7
1. INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 Romania: the national economic and educational context	9
1.1.1 Destructuring (1990)	9
1.1.2 Stabilization (1991-1992)	9
1.1.3 Restructuring (1993-1995)	9
1.1.4 Comprehensive educational reform (November 1996 onwards)	10
1.1.5 The current education structure	10
2. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION	11
2.1 Inclusive education in Romanian law and practice	11
2.1.1 Regulatory aspects	11
2.1.2 Raising awareness by dissemination of information	11
2.1.3 Projects, special initiatives and new models	11
2.2. Economic and financial issues affecting the inclusion of all children in basic education	12
2.2.1 Calculation of costs	12
2.2.2 Cost-effectiveness of implementing community-based alternatives to institutional care	13
2.3 Inclusive education policies and schools	13
2.3.1 The impact of educational reform on developing inclusive education policy	13
2.3.2 Inclusion activities and projects developed by mainstream schools involving children with special educational needs	14
2.3.3 Relaunching education in rural areas: equal opportunities for all children	16
2.4 The protection of children in difficult situations	16
2.4.1 Reform of childcare protection institutions	17
2.4.2 Children in foster or professional care	17
2.4.3 Children with special educational needs, including disabled children	18
Case study one:	
A SCHOOL FOR ALL, EDUCATION FOR EVERYONE – INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS	19
1. Introduction	19
2. The inclusion of children with HIV-infection in School No. 37 in Constanta	19
2.1. The school	19
2.2 The inclusion experience	19
2.3 Strategies and methods used in the inclusion process	20
2.4 Positive elements in the success of the children's school inclusion	20
2.5 Evaluation and impact	21
2.6 Perspectives and lessons learned	21
3. The inclusion of children with disabilities at School No. 43, 'Dimitrie Sturdza' of Iasi	21
3.1 The school	21
3.2 The integration experience	21
3.3 Strategies and methods used in the inclusion process	22
3.4 Strengths contributing to the success of the children's integration	22
3.5 Evaluation	22
3.6 Opinions on the inclusion experience	23
3.7 Perspectives and recommendations	23

4. School No. 22 of Timisoara	23
4.1 The school	23
4.2 The inclusion experience	23
4.3 Main lessons	25
5. School No. 18 of Timisoara	25
5.1 The school	25
5.2 The inclusion experience	25
5.3 Common aspects of Schools Nos. 22 and 18 of Timisoara	26
5.3.1 Evaluation	26
5.3.2 Perspectives	26
6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS	27
 Case study two:	
THE SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION OF ROMA CHILDREN	29
1. Policies addressing the Roma populations in Europe	29
2. The Roma – an ethnic minority in Romania	29
3. Providing equal chances and schooling for the Roma children	30
4. The Roma minority and the reform of education in Romania	31
5. School policy measures initiated by the Ministry of National Education	31
6. Schooling for the Roma population in Romania	32
6.1 1992 census data on the Roma population	32
6.2 Policy initiatives and educational realities	33
7. Other positive initiatives	33
7.1 The Foundation for an Open Society	33
7.2 The schooling programme in Mangalia	33
 REFERENCES	36
 Table 1: Structure of financing sources for education	12

FOREWORD

The term ‘inclusive education’ is relatively new in Romanian pedagogy but much of the educational practice in Romania puts this philosophy into practice.

The special education sector is mainly responsible for the adoption of inclusive education principles in Romania, with integration having been practised for some years. Before 1989, special classes had been operating within mainstream schools (and were even provided for in the 1924 Law on Education). Similarly, the school speech therapy network had been working with children with speech impairments in both mainstream and special classes.

This perhaps explains why a number of education experts see inclusive education relating specifically to children with special educational needs (SEN), ignoring other marginalized groups such as children and adults living “on the edge”, at the margins of society and very able children.

This paper gives a picture of the educational inclusion of a variety of potentially marginalized young people – e.g. children with SEN, children in foster families or child care institutions, children who are HIV-positive or children from ethnic minorities (e.g. Roma).

The paper provides information about legal and regulatory changes, together with the educational policy developments favourable to inclusive practices (e.g. curriculum design, institutional adequacy, etc.). There are examples of specific action taken by teaching staff and social work professionals.

This diversity is the result of the joint work of a team of expert authors, including staff from:

- the Ministry of Education;
- UNESCO;
- UNICEF;
- UNESCO CEPES;
- the University of Bucharest (Department of Pedagogy);
- the Institute of Education Science;
- various Romanian schools;
- other institutions and NGOs.

This review is useful because it offers ideas for further research and discussion. It not only provides a diagnosis of the current situation, but also identifies strengths and weaknesses in approaches to inclusive education, and highlights new areas of interest for consideration.

The most serious weaknesses are:

- the persistence of conservative and rigid practices;
- too little and inadequate training of teachers;
- institutions which segregate students still operating;
- poor dissemination of information, especially about new projects and their results;
- an inefficient and inconsistent coordination and comparison of initiatives.

The potential facilitators for the development of inclusive education in Romania include:

- the openness and wish to change manifest at both strategic (the government ministries concerned) and practical (teaching staff, social work professionals) levels;
- the legal and regulatory framework in force and the reform measures already adopted;
- the successful completion of a large number of initiatives and projects;
- the nature and structure of compulsory schooling in Romania, which is rigorous but not selective and usually combines primary with lower secondary school – an important asset in the transfer of inclusive practices (Vrasmas *et al.* 1996);
- the comparable size of counties and a well-structured organization of the School Inspectorate. The inspectors are important facilitators in developing communication, and in planning and implementing inclusive educational policies at county level (*idem*).

A close analysis of the general picture points to several strategies for action:

- Develop strategies and policies to promote inclusive education, through the joint action of authorities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- Involve authorities, raising their awareness of the advantages of inclusion, not only because of its positive contribution to individual and community development, but also the lower costs of inclusive practices compared with segregated institutions.
- Renounce cosmetic change in favour of structural change.
- Enlist community support, helped by the consistent promotion of inclusive education.
- Initiate and conduct adequate training of staff (head teachers, teachers, social workers) in inclusive education, addressing all three dimensions (cognitive, instrumental and expressive).
- Use inclusive practices to include all marginalized groups.
- Refine the approach in order to have inclusion understood as a continuing global process: from physical inclusion (through the common use of classrooms and materials and the decreasing of physical distance), functional inclusion (as participation in a common learning process), to inclusion in the school community (as participation in school life and extra-curricular activities) and finally to social inclusion (as the assuming of active roles).
- Develop databases of successful initiatives and human resources.

This review highlights the flexibility and openness of the Romanian education and child protection systems and their potential for facilitating the inclusion of potentially marginalized children. The legal and regulatory framework complies with the international children's acts, and the social policies – although still lacking in structure and coordination – are favourable to inclusion. There is no deliberate discrimination, just the need to improve practice through better support and dissemination. Negative attitudes and custom are the greatest barriers to inclusive education, and these must be changed if inclusive education is to become a reality.

Anca Butuca
Study Coordinator

1.1 Romania: the national economic and educational context

Romania is a medium-size European country, situated in south-east Central Europe. It has a population of 22,526,096 and is the thirteenth largest country in Europe. More than half the population (55%) lives in towns. There are 25 towns in the country with a population of more than 100,000, and there are eight cities with a population in excess of 300,000.

Romania has a mixed population with a range of ethnic minorities including Hungarian (8.9%), German (0.4%), Ukrainian, Serb, Croat, Russian, Turk, Roma and so on. In total they comprise 10.9% of the population.

In a society moulded by several decades of harsh totalitarian rule and isolation, development has inevitably been slow. The severe hardship experienced by the Romanian people has affected all aspects of economic and social life in the country. Prior to December 1989, the economy was based on state and cooperative ownership, as private ownership was effectively illegal. The economy was characterized by excessive centralization and rigid planning. In 1990, the government adopted a strategy of transition which combined a carefully paced reform of state enterprises with a phased approach to price liberalization. The government worked hard to keep inflation under control and to stop the decline in production and the displacement of labour, as well as trying to ease the attendant social costs.

However, in spite of these changes and the richness of the country's natural resources, since 1989 the economic crisis in Romania has become more acute. The GDP has declined by 30% since early 1990, while inflation has increased to over 200%. The economy has been characterized by falling employment: over the last decade, over 1.3 million jobs have been lost, self-employment has grown and the number of non-paid household workers has increased.

Despite these conditions, the education system in Romania delivers an impressive public service. It sustains a well-developed structure for delivering education and shares many of the positive characteristics of education in developed countries. For example, it has high participation rates, low repetition rates in basic education and strong subject-based teacher training. Structural changes are now under way which

will improve the quality of teaching, learning and the education structure in Romania.

The main stages of educational reform are outlined below.

1.1.1 Destructuring (1990)

Occurring right in the middle of the school year, the sudden break with the old political system had a major effect on educational practice. The chief instruments of communist education (e.g. political indoctrination, over-centralization, and abusive control of individuals and institutions) were removed. This was within a context of national confusion and disruption.

The legislative confirmation of changes which had already taken place took place in May 1990. This was the first attempt to rationalize the sweeping changes that had taken place: compulsory schooling was reduced to eight years; secondary education was diversified; class sizes and teaching loads were reduced; intensive foreign language teaching was introduced.

1.1.2 Stabilization (1991-1992)

During this time, priority was given to defining a legal framework that would re-establish the education system. One very important step in implementing reform was the enactment of the new Constitution in November 1991. Article 32, which embodies the right to education for all, has also been important in establishing the guiding principles for reform, stating as it does the need for free access, diversification of education supply, better quality, equality of opportunity, additional private education provision and alternative school operation.

1.1.3 Restructuring (1993-1995)

During this period, Romania began restructuring its education service. The World Bank conducted its first exploratory missions to support government efforts to reform the education system and an EU-Phare financed VET reform programme was initiated. The reform programme for pre-university education, financed jointly by the government and the World Bank (US \$50 million) began in October 1994, with the following goals:

- development of a new curriculum;
- restructuring the teacher training system;
- development of new school books for all subjects and classes;
- reform of assessment and examination systems;
- defining new employment standards by means of a new tripartite collaboration between the government, employers and trade unions;
- educational management reform.

This period was also particularly important for changes in the legal framework; the Education Law was passed in 1995.

1.1.4 Comprehensive educational reform (November 1996 onwards)

The Ministry of National Education is now undertaking comprehensive reform of education in Romania which aims to enable schools and other educational institutions to provide a modern and efficient education service using the available human and material resources. The reform has six major elements (Marga, 1999):

- The development of a new national curriculum, and the reorganization of the levels in, routes through and forms of education.
- A change in the character of education in Romania; problem-solving, innovation and scientific research will be the basis of university education.
- Enabling educational bodies to meet the real needs of society through the development of new curricula and qualifications, consultation, improving expertise and undertaking scientific research.
- The development of infrastructure, and the linking of educational bodies to national and international systems of communication.
- The modification of school and academic management through decentralization, developing the autonomy of educational institutions and global financing.
- The implementation of joint international curriculum and research, to be based on operational compatibility and clear performance criteria.

1.1.5 The current education structure Pre-school education

Pre-school education is designed for 3 to 7 year old children and provides both day care and nursery experiences. For the older children, there is an increasing emphasis on preparation for formal schooling.

Provision is in both public and private institutions; there are also alternative educational approaches, including Waldorf, Montessori and Jena Plan. Access to pre-school education is universal; classes in nursery schools are mixed gender and organized by age. The average class size is 15 (within a range of 10 to 20). The non-compulsory nature of pre-school education, negative population growth rates and shrinking revenues of certain classes of employees, along with high unemployment amongst women since 1989, account for a drop in the number of enrolments in kindergartens. In 1998/1999, the total enrolment in pre-school education was 621,641 children in 12,795 centres.

The education system

Primary education is compulsory for children aged 7 and over, but children may be enrolled in primary school after the age of 6 if their parents wish it.

In 1996/1997 the participation rate for 7 to 10 year olds was 96.7%. Of the current total of children in primary school, 94.6% learn in Romanian, 4.8% in Hungarian, 0.5% in German and 0.1% in other languages. Romania has a high level of enrolment in primary education. One determinant of this success is the policy of providing child allowances through schools for pupil attendance.

In **lower secondary education**, there were 1,532,170 pupils attending 7,583 institutions.

The participation rate among the lower secondary age cohort (11 to 14 year olds) has increased substantially from 86.15% in 1992/1993 to 94.3% in 1996/1997; gender parity has been fairly consistent.

In 1998/1999, **upper secondary education** high school education: vocational school (2-4 years) and apprenticeship (1-3 years) is provided by 1,307 institutions; the education participation rates of 15 to 19 year olds indicate low aggregate rates (61.1%) but approximate gender equality (62.3% for females and 59.9% for males).

Non-compulsory education continues at **post-upper secondary education**: post-high school and, for men, technical school (1-3 years).

Higher education provides courses ranging from those lasting three years at university colleges to doctorate studies.

The drop-out rate ranges from 0.8% at primary and lower secondary level, through 4.1% at high school and 5.4% on vocational education courses. The highest drop-out is for apprenticeships at 7.9% (1996/1997).

Educational and social policies and educational institutions themselves have, since 1990, rated inclusion amongst the top priorities for social reform. Developing inclusive education is seen as a fundamental way of achieving non-discriminatory attitudes and practices, open communities and an inclusive society. It is part of education for all and the process of building towards a modern democratic society. This approach demands that society helps to find solutions and that the state enacts and enforces policies to meet the special needs of individuals, families and communities.

2.1 Inclusive education in Romanian law and practice

Since 1990, Romania has been committed to following the principles underlying education for all, particularly inclusive education. There have been three areas of theory-based and practical activity, aiming respectively to:

- harmonize the educational policy and regulatory framework for children's education and welfare to ensure that it complies with child legislation;
- promote and implement the principles and values underlying the legislation (education for all, non-discrimination, equality in diversity, equal access, participation and integration of all children) through a variety of means;
- develop new initiatives and innovative projects aimed at education for all; use them as models to disseminate the values and practices of inclusive education.

2.1.1 Regulatory aspects

In 1990, the Romanian Parliament ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Subsequently, the domestic legislation was amended to comply with the Convention and to support inclusive education. Several other international conventions on child protection have also been ratified.

2.1.2 Raising awareness by dissemination of information

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (translated 1990), the Jomtien Declaration and the Salamanca

Statement and Framework for Action (translated 1995), supported by UNICEF as a part of the National Programme of Integration of Children with Special Educational Needs, were very important in raising awareness of and developing inclusion in Romania. They were responsible for the first initiatives on inclusive education involving children with special needs.

2.1.3 Projects, special initiatives and new models

Practical action to achieve inclusive education started as early as 1990, within the context of the social, cultural, political and economic reform described above. Key initiatives include the following:

1. Projects developed through the joint action of the Ministry of Education and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and/or other institutions. For example, the National Network for the Integration of Children with Special Educational Needs (RENINCO), instigated by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with UNICEF Romania.
2. The training based on the UNESCO 'Teacher Education Resource Pack: *Special Needs in the Classroom*'. Courses were held in:
 - Bacau, for 30 teachers and head teachers of special schools and residential children's homes;
 - Brasov, where this initiative merged with a project developed by Kindergarten No. 34 to integrate children with hearing impairment;
 - Bucharest, where the University Department of Pedagogy initiated an experimental training course for 28 special schoolteachers, the school speech therapy network, psycho-pedagogical support centres and mainstream schools;
 - Craiova – the Resource Pack became a part of the regular training curriculum for special schoolteachers in the county of Dolj;
 - Iasi, where 21 teachers from both mainstream and special schools managed to work together with good results, in spite of initial misgivings about the group structure;
 - Timisoara, where the resources were used together with materials from the pilot integration projects already in operation.
3. The importance of promoting the principle of "including the excluded" became a priority for universities, too. Training projects at both pre-service

From hospital-home to school

The Educational and Emotional Therapy programme was started in September 1997 in Craiova, by the Dolj branch of Salvati Copiii (Romanian Save the Children). They were asked to develop the programme as a result of changes taking place at the local hospital-home. The programme is based on the fact that full social integration means the integration of learners and, that in order to accomplish this, children need emotional support.

Following an assessment of their medical records, the first ten children were selected for inclusion in the programme. During the first four months they have been learning to dress themselves, to participate in structured play, to count and to write. As a result of an evaluation made in September 1998 by a special commission in Dolj, it was decided that the children could be sent to the special school in Filiasi. Another ten children joined the programme and they are now preparing to become pupils too.

The longer term goal is to enable children to go to a mainstream school, with the full support of the four teachers who are helping them every day through their love and professional skills.

and in-service levels have been initiated, some of them being developed through collaboration between different academic centres (e.g. University of Bucharest and University of Cluj). Based on the development of new approaches of schooling for children with disabilities, initiated by the Ministry of Education with UNICEF support after 1993, a TEMPUS project on integrated education (a master's degree course) was undertaken between 1995–1997. The main partners were four Romanian universities (Bucharest, Cluj, Iasi and Timisoara) and four Western European universities (London/Birmingham, Copenhagen, Malaga and Bologna).

4. In 1997, the Childhood Protection Department was set up as a government agency responsible for the enforcement of children's rights. The Department has worked through a network of County Boards to develop family-based alternatives to the more traditional residential provision and to give non-discriminatory assistance to all families.

5. A large number of NGOs has developed projects on inclusive education. A survey conducted in 1996 by UNICEF and the Childhood Protection Department identified no less than 400 NGOs acting in the social services sector, most of which use foreign funds to finance their projects.

2.2. Economic and financial issues affecting the inclusion of all children in basic education

2.2.1 Calculation of costs

The costs of education are calculated on the basis of data supplied by the Ministry of Education, the National Board of Statistics and the Ministry of Finances.

Table 1
Structure of financing sources for education

Sources of finance in 1997	Percentage of total spent
State budget	73.35
Local budgets	13.97
External credits	1.81
Fees	10.67
Social contributions	0.20

2.2.2 Cost-effectiveness of implementing community-based alternatives to institutional care

Analysis of data from a survey conducted in 1996 by UNICEF and the Childhood Protection Department shows conclusively that it is better for children and families, and also less expensive for the government, to support the inclusion of children in the community rather than providing for them in institutions. This approach helps to ensure that these children will eventually become productive members of society.

The study shows that long-term institutional care can be especially detrimental to the health of very young children; it causes harm to children because in residential institutions they do not generally have the opportunity to experience warm and close relationships with trusted adults. The resulting insecurity and attachment difficulties contribute to serious developmental delays in some children.

Several studies (e.g. Zamfir *et al.*, 1996) indicate that between 10-40% of all children placed in institu-

tions require government care during their entire lives. Those fortunate enough to leave child protection institutions require government assistance (e.g. training for employment, economic support, entry to the programme for the homeless and in some extreme instances, even the cost of institutional care) to enable them to be truly included in the society.

The report underlines that because of the high cost of institutional care, it could be more cost-effective for the state to supplement salaries or “even to pay one of the natural parents to remain in the home to care for the child”. However, the report notes that even if the government were to provide such a financial incentive for families which kept their children out of institutions, the child and/or the family would need intensive supervision and specialist services. Although this would incur additional staff costs, it would save money on the upkeep and depreciation of equipment and institutional buildings. In the long term, it would support the increased productivity and economic independence of children at risk.

'Caminul Philip': A house for everybody

'Caminul Philip' is an NGO which, since 1997, has been running educational programmes and social services to support disadvantaged children from one of the poorest areas in Bucharest – the Ferentari district. The children involved include Roma children, children who are over school age who abandoned school for reasons of poverty, children with physical disabilities and street children. The main objectives of all the projects are: to reduce school drop-out; to reduce the illiteracy rate; and to help families to help their children.

A cost/benefit calculation shows that the foundation has spent US \$25 per month on supporting a child in school. This buys school supplies, food, clothes and footwear. This contribution has facilitated the educational integration of each child, a child who otherwise would have been lost to school and eventually, perhaps, to society. The projects have proved that they can also determine changes in attitude towards the situation of these children, and their work represents real ways to eradicate poverty through education.

2.3 Inclusive education policies and schools

2.3.1 The impact of educational reform on developing inclusive education policy

Over the last few years there has been reform in the curriculum, assessment and certification, special education and teacher training.

During the school year 1999/2000, the new national curriculum is being introduced across the education system in all pre-university education. The curriculum is based on the role of schools in the socializa-

tion and personal development of their pupils. There is a core curriculum and the school-based curriculum, which represents 30% of curriculum time and is for individual learning programmes agreed with parents. There are also new systems for pupil assessment and the evaluation of school performance. The school-based curriculum is determined against the following criteria:

- human and material resources in the school;
- student interests;
- prevailing conditions in the school;
- local community requirements.

Each school has considerable autonomy in deciding the balance of curriculum subjects and how projects should be managed. The aim is to empower schools while increasing their accountability.

Teacher training reform has included:

- setting teacher training goals and developing a new teacher training curriculum;
- drawing up occupational standards for education professionals;
- updating teacher training to take account of curricular reform;
- developing the innovation and research potential of teaching staff;
- creating active partnerships between formal and informal education institutions and ensuring they operate compatible curricula.

From the point of view of educational reform, implementing the strategic principles of inclusion means to:

- reinforce individual development by the provision of differentiated education and educational pluralism to build up “competent individuals, critical, resourceful and open to argued dialogue”;
- enforce equality of opportunity for all children and young people and implement inclusive education criteria for children with special needs;
- reorganize the high school system to meet the needs of both the labour market and the students;
- stress the quality of the educational process and curriculum;
- develop education in disadvantaged areas, particularly in rural communities;
- set up and support psycho-pedagogic support and professional guidance centres in each county;
- lobby for the adequate financing of education nationally and for disadvantaged areas in particular;
- develop second chance education programmes;
- involve local communities and local government in developing inclusive education programmes.

2.3.2 *Inclusion activities and projects developed by mainstream schools involving children with special educational needs*

The national system of education includes a strong network of educational institutions for children with special needs. Although it might seem that the existence of two seemingly parallel networks – mainstream and special – could be an obstacle to achieving inclusive education, both networks in fact share the same objective – i.e. the social integration of children.

The convergence of the two “different” networks is illustrated by specific activities carried out jointly by educational institutions from the two sectors. In the school year 1998/1999, over 1,000 disabled children of pre-school age were included in mainstream kindergarten; that is, one third of the total number of disabled children enrolled for this school year and going to kindergarten.

The schools, the Inspectorates and the Ministry of Education have initiated a number of activities aimed at inclusive education, including:

- joint activities (arts, physical education, manual skills, sports clubs and contests, cultural events);
- the adoption of the mainstream school curriculum by a number of special schools;
- ensuring that everyone has the same conditions for sitting general school graduation and high school admission examinations – important factors in increasing the disabled children’s self-confidence;
- the provision of vocational training, including joint training activities in mainstream vocational schools for a number of children with learning difficulties;
- the setting up of special groups or classes in mainstream kindergartens and schools, but using a differentiated curriculum;
- wherever possible, the transfer of children with special needs to the mainstream educational network.

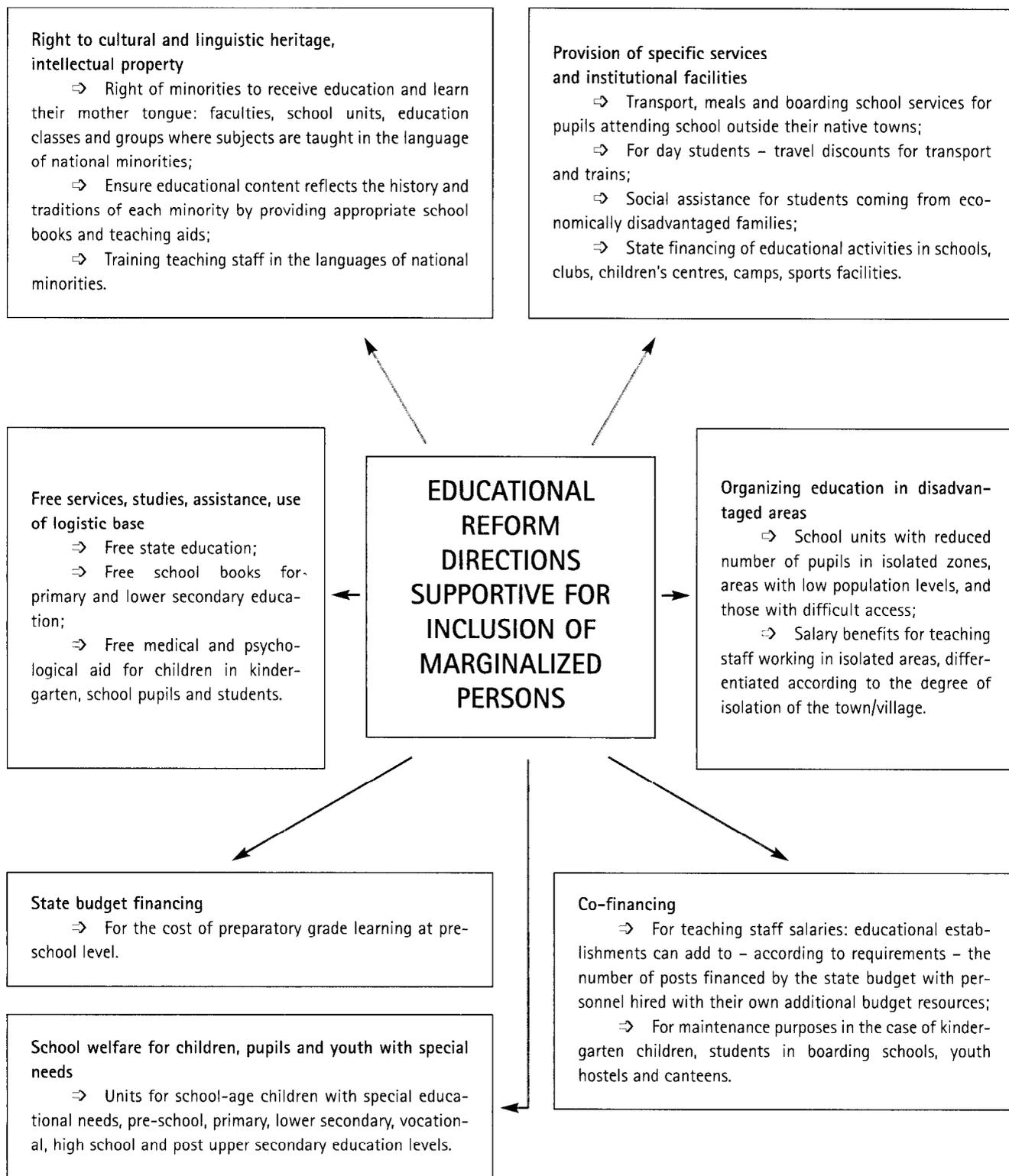
The psycho-pedagogical assistance provided for children and teachers has been an additional source of support for inclusive education.

New teaching posts have been created to help meet the needs of inclusive education. These are:

- support schoolmaster;
- support teacher;
- special education teacher;
- teacher psychologist.

In order to consolidate the progress of new policies, practice and outlooks promoting the educational inclusion of children with special needs, further targeted action is being taken:

- training teachers to provide specialist support – through courses of inclusive education held in Bucharest, Cluj, Timisoara; Braila, Ionesti, Iasi and Sibiu with UNICEF and RENINCO support;
- the Complex Assessment Board’s continuous work with parents of children with learning difficulties;
- education of public opinion about the recovery and performance potential of children with special educational needs if given adequate support and specialized assistance.



The inclusion of children with special needs in ordinary schools

In September 1997, the Dolj branch of Salvati Copiii (Romanian Save the Children) began a project to include children with physical disabilities, but no learning difficulties, into mainstream schools. Partnership agreements have been signed with three schools in Craiova. Every school accepted five children together with the classroom assistants appointed to help children and teachers in the classroom. Special platforms/ramps have been designed to facilitate wheelchair access in the school.

The project assessment pointed out that the intellectual level of the 15 children included in the programme increased and that they experienced more opportunities to include themselves both actively and creatively in society as a whole.

2.3.3 Relaunching education in rural areas: equal opportunities for all children

Almost half of all school pupils live in rural areas but often do not have the same access to and quality of education as their urban peers. There are fewer resources available in rural areas than in urban centres and there is a marked difference in student achievement between urban and rural areas. Teacher migration to the towns, which has increased since 1990, is a key factor in the decreasing quality of education in rural areas. In 1996, most of the 15.6% unqualified teachers were working in rural areas and there were 112,390 teachers working in rural schools, compared to 181,911 in urban schools.

Other factors affecting education in rural areas include: very limited material resources, inadequate communication systems and poor access to information, especially through the use of modern technology (computer, fax, telephone).

Statistics show that in 1996, 8.2% of children between the ages of 7 and 14 in rural areas did not attend school, whereas the non-attendance rate for children in urban areas was 5.7%. Urban workers spent 4.3% of their income on their children's education, while rural workers spent just 2.2%. Although Romania has signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children in rural areas are seen as a valuable source of labour.

The children in rural areas who do not attend school are not enrolled in the first place. The reasons for this situation are generally social and economic:

- the difficult financial situation of many families;
- the isolation of villages;
- the distance from home to school;
- parents keeping children at home to undertake farming work;
- unhygienic conditions;

- inappropriate school premises;
- insufficient or inadequate allocation of funds to schools;
- the absence of an adequate infrastructure for the transport of pupils over long distances.

There is clearly an urgent need to develop education in rural areas, and, together with other government-coordinated rural development programmes, the Ministry of National Education (MEN) is currently establishing an initiative to ensure a quality elementary education in the rural environment with improved access to secondary education. The main objectives of the programme will be to:

- rationalize and expand the rural schools network;
- equip rural schools to a reasonable level;
- supply school libraries;
- improve the transportation network;
- establish distance-education systems;
- open school canteens;
- attract qualified teaching staff back to rural schools.

2.4 The protection of children in difficult situations

One of the objectives of inclusive education in Romania addresses children in difficult situations, who are one or more of the following:

- in residential care;
- in foster care;
- adopted;
- living as a street child;
- abandoned;
- delinquent;
- partially deprived of a family.

There are several key principles informing the reform of childhood protection in Romania, which

was initiated through an urgent government order in March 1997. These principles include the need to:

- give priority to the child's best interests when considering any protection measure;
- apply non-discriminatory procedures in granting equal access to legal protection to any children whose development, safety or physical/moral integrity are endangered;
- decentralize decision-making and delegate responsibilities to local authorities;
- improve local institutions to enable them to provide more efficient services;
- encourage family-based alternatives to the institutional care of children with special needs;
- raise the awareness of and involve local government, local communities, etc., in developing such alternatives.

2.4.1 *Reform of childcare protection institutions*

The implementation of the childhood protection strategies demanded the development of new institutions at both national and local level. The Child Protection Directorate and the State Secretariat for the Handicapped were established at national level (as government agencies), while Child Protection Boards and public specialized services for child protection were set up in the counties.

In the autumn of 1998, the Child Protection Directorate initiated a project: "The Reform of the Childhood Protection System: 1999–2001", working jointly with the local authorities and in cooperation with a number of international and foreign organizations (including the World Bank, FDSCE, UNICEF, USAID, EU/PHARE, the Spanish Government and the SERA Foundation). The project aims to ensure the enforcement of children's rights through higher quality services. All the objectives and measures in this project have a clear impact on the development of inclusive education in Romania.

There are three components:

1. The first component targets the development of a community-based network of childcare services aimed at preventing unnecessary and prolonged institutionalization, identifying family-based alternatives and raising the quality of care provided by residential institutions through an individualized, family-based approach to children's needs.
2. The second component aims to help the street children through a wider and more diversified set of services facilitating their family and social inclusion.

3. The third component focuses on institutional reform, raising public awareness and monitoring and evaluation. It aims to enable the central and local institutions to implement the new childcare system more effectively.

Consequently, the institutional reform of childcare aims to:

- provide the general framework for the convergence of mainstream and special education, particularly through setting up integrated special education structures. This process has already begun and is winning increasing support against the existing segregation;
- continue to improve the quality of living conditions and education in childcare institutions;
- open residential institutions to the community and ensure that disadvantaged and disabled children interact with other children in the community;
- develop and disseminate family and community-based alternatives to residential care;
- provide support to families in difficult circumstances to fight abandonment, strengthen family ties, overcome crises, and to stimulate and improve the potential of family life;
- ensure the availability of temporary care for children in foster and substitute/professional families;
- provide professional assistance to families in crisis where there is the possibility that they will abandon their children;
- provide counselling and consultation services to families both at home and in specialized units;
- set up community shelters for children temporarily without family;
- educate the young for family life and strengthen their potential for independent living;
- provide therapy and day care for adults and children who have difficulty in coping with a new family structure (one-parent families);
- make permanent efforts aimed at the family (re)integration of children.

2.4.2 *Children in foster or professional care*

Romanian legislation has recently created a new area of childcare provision, that of foster or professional care. Financial support (child allowance) is given to all those who act as foster or substitute/professional parents. This proves a much better and very efficient alternative to residential care, as confirmed by the latest available data: the number of children in foster/professional care increased from 17,044 in 1998 to 23,731 in 1999.

2.4.3 *Children with special educational needs, including disabled children*

Providing care for children with special needs was one of the top priorities in the first years after 1990, and continues to be so. In 1991, the government set up the State Secretariat for the Handicapped, responsible for developing care policies and coordinating the activities of all institutions for children with special needs. Initially, there were emergency measures to improve the provision of health care, diet and clothing, but changes to education are now also taking place. For example, there are more educators and care personnel, and a broader range of higher quality educational methods and aids are available.

The national strategy developed by the State Secretariat for the Handicapped focuses on the social inclusion of disabled persons, and has several objectives relating to inclusive education. It aims to:

- include an increasing number of disabled children in mainstream education (at least 20% by 2002 and 50% by 2005);

- develop the network of recovery and rehabilitation units to give all disabled children access to specialist, individual health rehabilitation and social inclusion programmes (by 2002);
- develop provision for the adoption and foster care of disabled children;
- develop a network of day-care centres for at least 2,000 people, by 2002.

The government introduced financial incentives to assist in implementing the programme. For example, it increased the child allowance for disabled children to double that for children without disabilities, is providing a salary to support staff and has provided free transport in urban areas.

There is a strong legal framework which embodies the right of disabled children to an education and aims to provide disabled children with decent living conditions and education in a mainstream educational environment.

CASE STUDY ONE

A SCHOOL FOR ALL, EDUCATION FOR EVERYONE – INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

1. Introduction

One of the major strands of the development of inclusive education is restructuring mainstream schools to enable them to meet the educational needs of a greater diversity of children.

This case study examines four Romanian mainstream schools which initiated and developed inclusion programmes after 1990 and were supported by UNICEF Romania. They are situated in three different regions of the country and are typical urban schools. There is one school in Constanta, one in Iasi and two in Timisoara.

Each school has 1,000-1,500 students across both primary and lower secondary classes, with pupils attending classes in two or three shifts.

Across the four schools, one third of parents are educated to higher education level and have professional occupations, while the remaining two thirds have a basic or intermediate education and are employed in the manufacturing or service industries – e.g. manual workers, technicians, office personnel, etc. Only a low percentage of the parents are unemployed.

The schools are managed by the Board of Directors, the Teachers' Council and the head teacher and although there is a level of discontent over funding levels, the teaching materials and other educational resources are considered to be good or satisfactory. There is also some dissatisfaction over the shortage of classrooms.

The teachers in the four schools are all qualified, most of them having been trained during the last decade. All the schools provide the usual in-service training opportunities. They have good results, demonstrated either by a very good performance in subject competitions and sports contests, or by a high percentage of admissions to high schools.

The interview schedule used in the research mostly yielded data on each institution, the history of the inclusion programme, the impact assessment and the views of those involved. The head teachers were interviewed and completed a written questionnaire, and a number of teachers, students and parents were also interviewed. This information was supplemented with other information and data from various documents made available by the schools. In the two schools in

Timisoara, additional data from previous assessments carried out by UNICEF Romania in cooperation with the Ministry of Education were used.

The study focused on the following disadvantaged groups:

- children who are HIV-positive – the proportion of children who are HIV-positive in Romania is the highest in Europe;
- disabled children;
- children totally or partially deprived of family support.

2. The inclusion of children with HIV-infection in School No. 37 in Constanta

2.1 The school

The school has 1,326 children in 45 classes, of which 21 are primary and 24 lower secondary. There is a teaching staff of 67, of which 21 are schoolmasters and 44 teachers.

2.2 The inclusion experience

The school is located in the immediate neighbourhood of *Casa Speranta* – a family-type residential institution for children with HIV/AIDS, set up in 1991 as the first organization offering an alternative to the institutional care of HIV-positive and abandoned children. *Casa Speranta* operates according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It aims to prove that a new child-focused, family-oriented and community-based model of care is a strong and viable alternative to the traditional institutional one. Documentation of this process is an important aspect of the work.

At present, 25 children aged 5 to 11 live in *Casa Speranta*. This group includes children with and without HIV, as well as children with special educational needs – including those who have severe learning difficulties and have had a long stay in an institution. There are both boys and girls, and they are from various ethnic and religious groups.

In 1994, one particular child reached school age. He happened to be HIV-negative and was admitted to School No. 37, his nearest school, without any

argument. In the following year, six other children – this time HIV-positive – reached school age. As expected, the school showed some reserve about admitting the children, feeling that “they may not be up to it, they might find it too difficult because they have not been to kindergarten, they may need special care”. The *Casa Speranta* staff made a strong argument: “Our children have the right to go to school, they have their satchels, they are ready ...”.

Casa Speranta supplied basic information on HIV and AIDS to the school management, teaching staff and some groups of parents. However, the pupils’ parents were worried and some even threatened to remove their children from that particular class. The teacher let them choose: “If you do not want your child to be in this class, you are free to choose another class or another school!”. The commitment of *Casa Speranta* personnel and the firm and consistent attitude of the school teaching staff could not but bear fruit and eventually the children became full members of the school community.

2.3 Strategies and methods used in the inclusion process

- Training the teaching staff and the parents about HIV-infection and AIDS.
- The contribution and dedication of the *Casa Speranta*, the county health board and the specialized hospital of Constanta were a significant factor in the success of the work.
- Providing both students and parents with an accurate and relevant knowledge of AIDS-related issues, particularly on blood transmission as the only hazardous way of transmission in communities of children.
- Identifying people to assist in the inclusion of the children at school.
- Adopting flexible criteria when grouping children by classes (heterogeneous, but also homogeneous when so expressly required by a member of the teaching staff).
- Using appropriate teaching strategies – e.g. a combination of stimulation and cooperative learning.

2.4 Positive elements in the success of the children’s school inclusion

The role of responsible parents played by the substitute family (*Casa Speranta*) and the holistic care it provided were essential. Key factors were:

- the provision of a needs-focused care, aimed at developing a family environment based on mutual respect;

- the provision of stimulating experiences and activities to enable children to construct their self-image and develop social skills;
- the quality of pre-school teaching provided by the *Casa Speranta* in-house kindergarten (Montessori approach);
- supplying children with the necessary materials and other learning aids;
- providing experiences of satisfactory relationships between children with and without HIV and between children and adults;
- creating contact opportunities between *Casa Speranta* and the community – e.g. visits by children and adults.

Casa Speranta had become a member of the neighbourhood before the children began attending the school (although this was not a simple matter either). Then, by passing *Casa Speranta* daily, the children and parents living in the neighbourhood, as well as some of the schoolteachers, came to know its personnel and the children living there, which helped them to satisfy their curiosity and diminish misgivings and reserve. Teachers from the school, and local children and their parents were invited to *Casa Speranta* to take part in various events.

The *Casa Speranta* children are “seen home” every day by their school friends, who often enter the Casa’s courtyard and sometimes visit the children who live there. During weekends and holidays, the school sports facilities are open to all children in the neighbourhood, which also helps to foster mutual knowledge and understanding.

The school’s contribution

The school has adopted a modern and democratic approach to the organization of the classes, based on the heterogeneity of the children’s social origin and intellectual abilities. For instance, the structure of classes includes an equal distribution of children from professional families among parallel classes; the same principle is applied to distribution by ability.

It was important that the head teacher and teachers at the school saw the issue of inclusion as a professional challenge. They were happy to have the children: “of course they must come to school”; “not accepting them would be a crime, it would shorten their lives!”. The head teacher was dedicated, experienced and open to both tradition and innovation in teaching. Similarly, there were many dedicated teachers, whose training, experience and fair outlook favoured inclusion. They too were crucial to the project’s success.

2.5 Evaluation and impact

The evaluation of this experience yielded positive results. There is no longer any significant resistance to or rejection of the inclusive approach by either parents or teachers. The children of *Casa Speranta* have been accepted and receive equal treatment. They like school, have a good relationship with their peers and neither parents nor teachers exhibit any trace of discrimination against them.

The academic and general school performance of the children is normal, although they are prone to being absent from school for longer periods of time and their chances of above-average achievement are therefore lower.

No specific evaluations of the inclusion process have been carried out. The work at School No. 37 has however aroused the interest of local government, national and international media organizations and various NGOs.

In the head teacher's opinion, as a result of the project the teaching staff exhibit a higher degree of tolerance towards the children they teach and are more sympathetic to their concerns. They have a different attitude towards the assessment of students, particularly those with a health problem.

2.6 Perspectives and lessons learned

The future of inclusive education at the school looks positive and it intends to continue and develop an inclusive approach. The school management believes there is a close connection between this kind of experience and the educational reform taking place at national level.

One of the most important findings from this initiative is that it is not the pupils who are the most resistant to the inclusion of "different" children. Their opinions and attitudes mirror those of their elders – teachers and parents – who can be prejudiced against and resistant to inclusion. The project also discovered that access to school for disadvantaged children, and their inclusion into the mainstream, is dependent on parents' expectations and support (in this case, the substitute parents, the staff at *Casa Speranta*). Finally, it was found that information, communication and training were vital.

The inclusive education initiative at School No. 37 can be used locally and nationally to initiate and develop similar projects. If similar work is to take place, it should be ensured that:

- there is a continuous and extensive dissemination of information about HIV and AIDS aimed at fight-

ing people's lack of knowledge and resulting prejudice. The media's support and contribution is crucial;

- there is positive and continuous support from the parents and/or a supportive relationship between the school and the children's (substitute) family;
- the children with HIV/AIDS are assigned to classes in which:
 - (a) the teachers respond to children's needs, and, acting as opinion-formers, can prepare and maintain a climate of tolerance and acceptance in their classrooms;
 - (b) an adequate balance is kept between the teachers' and the parents' attitudes and points of view;
 - (c) each child is seen as an individual, a whole and unique person with his or her own needs, qualities and rights;
 - (d) the specific development issues relating to puberty and adolescence of children with HIV are carefully considered and acted upon.

3. The inclusion of children with disabilities at School No. 43, 'Dimitrie Sturdza' of Iasi

3.1 The school

The school opened in September 1989 and has on roll 1,500 children in 52 classes (of which 33 are primary and 19 lower secondary). There are 70 teaching staff, of which 33 are schoolmasters and 37 teachers.

3.2 The integration experience

In 1990, the school opened its first special class for children with (specific) learning difficulties. There is a new intake annually and when the children with learning difficulties reach the lower secondary classes, they enter the mainstream classes, as the school management considers that at this stage special classes are no longer the most effective way of educating them.

The teachers in the school were responsible for setting up the special class. They decided that the teacher in charge should be "tenured"; that is, he or she has to sit a senior degree examination at the end of the school year. They felt this would help to ensure the teacher's commitment. This view was borne out by the inspector's positive reaction to the teacher's work.

The school estimates that currently nearly 200 of its students (10% of the school population) have special needs.

Holt Romania – HIV/AIDS Programme

The Programme for Children and Families with HIV/AIDS has been developed and implemented in Bucharest and Constanta to:

- *prevent the institutionalization of children with HIV;*
- *de-institutionalize abandoned children with HIV;*
- *ensure that the rights of children with HIV are respected through their integration into the family unit, community and public school system.*

Due to the stigma, emotional stress and financial burden related to the disease, children with HIV are considered to be especially at risk of abandonment. Families caring for their children with HIV at home need ongoing support. Through a community-based social assistance programme, critical social services are provided to facilitate home care for children with HIV, the reintegration of institutionalized children and foster care. The key services are specifically designed for women and children. This preventative programme focuses on reducing the unnecessary institutionalization of children with HIV, while simultaneously educating a growing population of caregivers, teachers and community members.

3.3 Strategies and methods used in the inclusion process

The key strategies were:

- informing and assisting the teaching staff, the pupils and parents by various means, including the school Family Counselling Team (FCT);
- paying special attention to the students most opposed to the inclusion of children with special needs. The children with special needs were invited to join in all the class and school activities (in-school and out-of-school). The teachers were asked to make correct progress assessments on each child, define operational objectives for the “minimum” level of the continuous and final evaluation and provide all possible support in the educational process;
- providing support and counselling to the most reluctant families.

3.4 Strengths contributing to the success of the children's inclusion

- The positive attitude of the head teacher, based on both her own beliefs and her experience as a teacher in residential special schools has facilitated the integration. She also tackled this issue in a paper delivered at the conclusion of the management training course given by the PHARE Child Protection Programme.
- The positive attitude and the experience of some of the schoolteachers who had previously worked in special schools has been a great asset.

- Five teachers participated in a training course given in 1995-1996 by the School Inspectorate of Iasi which was based on the UNESCO ‘Teacher Education Resource Pack: *Special Needs in the Classroom*’ within the framework of the National Programme for the Integration of Disabled Children carried out by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with UNICEF Romania.
- The education authorities (the School Inspectorate of Iasi) have been very open and supportive to the initiative.
- The in-school Family Counselling Unit (1996 onwards) has facilitated to work with families.
- The specialist departments of the University of Iasi have shown interest.
- The technical assistance provided by the University of Iasi, the FCU and the *Special Needs in Classroom* course have helped the developments in the school.

3.5 Evaluation

Both the in-house and external evaluation showed clear positive outcomes:

- school failure and drop-out rates decreased;
- a smaller number of children from the area are now going to special schools;
- a more positive attitude towards disabled children has been developed and there is a recognition of both their potential and achievements;
- teachers have developed and are using better educational strategies and practices for all the children;

- there is a more efficient collaboration between school, family and community;
- families show more interest in the education and rehabilitation of children with special needs (the parents have free access to school and attend classes in order to assess the children's participation and results);
- there is better social integration of children with disabilities.

In addition, the teaching staff shows more tolerance and understanding of child-related issues, and teachers' views about disabled children have changed.

The psycho-social benefits to the disabled children were positive. They were all promoted to the next class and some came top. The disabled children in ordinary classes join in all school and extra-curricular activities and, when special adjustments or help are required, they have their peers' support.

The school's management learnt that:

- not every teacher can work with disabled children;
- inadequate preparation of teachers, parents and pupils will lead to the rejection and isolation of the disabled children and to educational programmes which do not match their ability or learning needs.

3.6 Opinions on the inclusion experience

Children with special needs and their parents

Children

"At first they saw me as different, not as a mainstream girl."
 "Now they are very good to me and I want them to stay so."
 "I still love my primary schoolteacher, but I am upset with my present teachers for, in their wish to stimulate me, they give me higher marks than I deserve."
 "I have many friends, we help each other, talk and visit."
 "I would like some teachers to stop using words like 'you cannot do it', 'you are finished', 'go away, I can't bear to look at you!'"
 "I advise the pupils in other classes where there are children like me to give them equal treatment."

Parents

"I could not bring myself to let her go to a special school – it felt like abandoning her!"
 "I used to be hurt when the children in the neighbourhood did not let her join in their games, but that was before her going to school."
 "I hope they will accept her at the all-round education high school and that she can make it."

The school

Teachers

"I could not believe my eyes the first time I saw her take the piece of chalk with her mouth, place it between her stumps and start writing so fast."
 "I got used to it and I make no difference between them any longer. It's a pity that some colleagues should still treat them as handicapped children."

Mainstream children and their parents

"I was surprised to see she had no hands and I offered to help when need be."
 "I discovered she was very clever and ambitious."
 "Their determination and self-reliance are admirable."
 "The first time she came to my place, my mother told me to stop being friends with her, it would make neighbours laugh to see her; later on, when she came to know my friend better, she was very sorry."
 "We spend a lot of time together, because I can learn my things from her, including her determination to succeed."

"I felt like fainting when I saw her and told the teacher to take her out of the classroom unless she wanted the children to get scared, but it was my daughter who stood up for her. Our children are better than us ..."
 "My daughter started to follow her example in her studies, but could not keep the pace with her."

Headmaster

"I wish that, in a couple of years, we did not call ourselves an "inclusive school" any longer, but a "mainstream school". The name is not important, what we do for all children is important ... "

The University of Iasi and the Psycho-pedagogical Support Centre of Iasi carried out the formal evaluations of the project.

3.7 Perspectives and recommendations

Members of the School No. 43 teaching staff have expressed confidence in the possibility of adopting and developing inclusive education in Romania. In their view, to enable this to happen, teachers should change their educational philosophy and adapt the necessary strategies and methods to meet the children's needs. Teachers have to accept that they themselves have to learn to:

- listen to each child and hear his or her point of view;
- develop a positive relationship with students;
- encourage students in making decisions;
- be open, flexible and responsive;
- see each student as a unique individual;
- help develop the potential of each student;
- believe in the students being equal members of the classroom community;
- watch themselves better, pay attention to every word they utter and be careful of how they act and behave in general. Words, deeds and feelings should go hand in hand.

Final points made by teachers are that the other children's attitude towards disabled children is very important and should be made "clever use of", in order to create a positive atmosphere which is beneficial to the socialization of each individual. The attitude of parents is also very important, as well as that of the local community.

4. School No. 22 of Timisoara

4.1 The school

The school has 1,486 children in 51 classes (of which 25 are primary and 26 lower secondary classes). There is a staff of 97, of which 25 are schoolmasters and 72 teachers.

4.2 The inclusion experience

In September 1990, a group of disabled children's parents applied to the head teacher of School No. 22, who happened to be a psychologist, to enrol their children at her school. A key role in initiating this inclusion project was played by *Speranta*, a local NGO of parents of children with intellectual and learning disabilities.

At first, the integration took the form of a special class which had eight children. Outside classes, the children with special needs mixed with the other students during break times or in the physical education classes in the courtyard. However, they spent most of

their time at school as a segregated group. A slightly modified special school curriculum was used.

In the following school year (1991/1992), the Ministry of Education approved a new teaching post to support these same children who were now distributed across five parallel classes, with two or three children in each class. The mainstream curriculum was used, although it was adapted for some subjects. From the very beginning parents were informed about and involved in the inclusion process, through various activities and meetings. There was no significant resistance or rejection from the parents. There were two cases where the educational needs of the children were not met in class. The two children were moved to other classes, where they succeeded with no special problems.

After 1993, the inclusion experiment at School No. 22 became part of a pilot project for the educational and social inclusion of disabled children, which was initiated by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the UNICEF Office in Romania and UNESCO. The pilot project was implemented in Timisoara and Cluj and the head teacher of School No. 22 became responsible for the part of the project taking place in Timisoara. In the same year, the Rehabilitation Centre *Speranta* (set up by the NGO *Speranta*) started to play a significant role in supporting and developing the inclusion process in the schools targeted by the project.

At the outset of the pilot project in 1993, School No. 22 included a further 18 disabled children. The other schools and kindergartens in the project included more than 100 children at the first stage. Most of them were in primary classes.

The major positive factors contributing to the success of inclusion at School No. 22 are:

- the parents' initiative, supported by the NGO *Speranta*, which is an illustration of how parents can act as a pressure group to bring about educational innovation;
- the human and professional profile of School No. 22 teaching staff, particularly the head teacher and the psychologist, who were willing to take on this challenge. The head teacher's influence and attitude are crucial in any school;
- the openness of the county School Inspectorate;
- the contribution of the Rehabilitation Centre *Speranta* – an NGO until 1996, when it became a Centre for Special Education reporting to the Ministry of Education. The first group of eight children with special needs, and most of those included in the following years, were given community-based rehabilitation support by the Centre.

The pilot project, initiated in late 1993 in Timisoara, proved a significant asset in the development and completion of a genuine educational innovation. The information and training component of the project was also important. As a result of two years' joint action research, evaluation-review and information-training work, the project team reached the conclusion that the experience of School No. 22 was one of "inclusion" rather than "integration".

The year 1995 saw a decisive turning point for the project, attributable to several factors:

- the information and training course which took place in the summer of 1994 and which benefited from the participation of an external consultant;
- the translation into Romanian and dissemination (in June 1995) of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, with the assistance of UNICEF Romania;
- the continuous evaluation undertaken by a joint team of Romanian and English university teachers, with UNICEF assistance, at the end of the school year 1994/1995;
- the translation into Romanian of the UNESCO 'Teacher Education Resource Pack: *Special Needs in the Classroom*' and the training the trainers course which took place in August 1995. The course focused on classroom implementation of the inclusive practices promoted by the Pack. A team of teachers and the head teacher from School No. 22 participated in this course;
- the commitment and team-working of School No. 22's teaching staff, which was further intensified by the peripatetic teachers, who managed to develop a genuine partnership with schoolmasters and teachers in a short time.

The major obstacles the project faced are typical of any school inclusion experience, namely:

- the resistance to change of decision-makers and some teachers. Innovative initiatives are still looked upon with suspicion by some managers, who find them "extravagant". The team's perseverance and persuasive abilities to a large extent helped to overcome this obstacle;
- the overly difficult and overcrowded general school curriculum. It is only since the autumn of 1998 that the Ministry of Education's change of approach to this issue has begun to bear fruit;
- the evaluation and assessment system for both mainstream and disabled children is too rigid. The project team at School No. 22 managed to update the evaluation system to a certain extent by preparing a curricular typology and adopting individual educational plans, flexible curricula and continuous evaluation.

4.3 Main lessons

The legal reform process in the years 1990 to 1995 had a variety of effects. Against an uncertain background and an avalanche of changes, some initiatives emerged which proved viable and were beneficial to the education for all philosophy. Crucially, they served as pilots for implementation. It is quite certain that the adoption of a number of new and integrated special education measures could not have taken place without the successful experience of Timisoara, Cluj and other centres of innovation.

Cooperation and partnership between schools and the parents' associations are vital factors; parents have proved a strong lobbying agent in the reform of education.

The head teacher has a major role in adopting and furthering innovative practices; the strongest resistance does not come from children or their parents, but from the schoolmasters and teachers. Any attempt to initiate an innovative project should start with identifying and enlisting the support of willing teachers, followed by adequate and continuous information dissemination and training. Adapting the teaching and learning process to the needs of disabled children has beneficial results for the class as a whole.

5. School No. 18 of Timisoara

5.1 The school

The school has 1,150 children in 43 classes, of which 21 are primary and 22 lower secondary classes. There is a teaching staff of 67; 23 staff members are schoolmasters and 45 teachers. Staff benefit from an ongoing training programme and have also participated in UNICEF-assisted training courses. The school takes a pride in its pupils' high performance results in subject competitions and sports contests at both county and national level.

5.2 The inclusion experience

In the school year 1994/1995, the project initiated by School No. 22 was extended to other local schools, including School No. 18. Over the next two years, School No. 18 made good progress towards inclusive education and meets the educational needs of a large diversity of children. Currently around 10% of the pupils have special needs; they are primarily disabled and socially disadvantaged children from residential homes and there are currently 36 of them. School No. 18 has retained its standing as one of the best

schools in Timisoara and this is borne out by its pupils' high performance in subject competitions and sports contests. Physical education is much encouraged by the neighbourhood sports club, where children can practise gymnastics, swimming and chess. School No. 18 therefore responds to the educational needs of a large diversity of children.

The school speech therapy unit proved to be a strong promoter and provider of professional support for school inclusion. For over 30 years, the inter-school speech therapy programme has been supporting the inclusion of children with speech disorders. The educational role of speech therapists is similar to that of the itinerant teachers.

Other important factors were:

- a head teacher with great initiative and a wish to innovate, who had previously participated in training courses on this topic;
- the support from the Ministry of National Education and the county School Inspectorate through the provision of peripatetic teachers in spring 1995;
- the commitment of the teaching staff which was enhanced by the peripatetic teachers who managed to develop a genuine partnership with schoolmasters and teachers.

The major obstacles encountered were:

- the scarcity of material and human resources, notably specialists in education and curriculum design;
- old-fashioned methods and instruments for assessing children's development and school performance;
- a lowering of the family's expectations of school performance given the transition taking place;
- the absence of child-focused social and special protection adhering to the principle: "resources follow the child".

The main lessons learned were:

- including disabled children in mainstream education is the best way to avoid discrimination and segregation;
- a school able to meet the educational needs of a variety of children (e.g. children of average ability, very able children, disabled children, socially disadvantaged children) provides an excellent foundation for successful inclusive education.

5.3 Common aspects of Schools No. 22 and 18 of Timisoara

5.3.1 Evaluation

The final evaluation of the pilot project was conducted in 1997 by UNICEF Romania and the Ministry of Education. The evaluation team comprised Romanian and English university staff and educational managers. The evaluation of the two schools detected "the germs of a fundamental reform of educational practices in class management, curricular differentiation, curriculum-based individual evaluation of children and other areas". This inclusive approach was recognized by other national and international evaluators, who noted that the democratic and up-to-date policy adopted by the two schools yielded good results in highly flexible and needs-focused classes.

5.3.2 Perspectives

The chances are high that the inclusive education practices of these two schools, and those of others included in the project from 1993 to 1997, will continue to develop. Teachers in the two schools continue to promote inclusive education in Timisoara and the county of Timis, and have the potential to influence and disseminate information to other educational institutions. For example, in the

A parent's story

"My son has learning difficulties. He used to go to another school where the teacher did not like him because she thought he had a negative effect on the level at which she could teach. She felt that he could impair her reputation as a good teacher; she only wanted high-achieving pupils in her classes. After the first year, my son was given a certificate of an intellectual disability and was excluded from that school. His attitude and behaviour changed, he acted very strangely. Then, in November 1996, we found out about this school and brought him here. The teacher welcomed him, just as he welcomed the other new children. My son is very happy now. He says that all the children play with him and none of them call him bad names. The school speech therapist assessed him and determined the kind of help he needs. Both she and the teacher tell me now that he learns and makes progress – not very fast, but still he learns ..."

These opinions are excerpts from the evaluation report issued in January 1997.

Children's opinions

"The children play with me, none call me crazy or stupid any more."
"My school fellows visit me and we play together at my place."
"The teachers are very good to me; they explain once, twice, even three times if need be."

Parents' opinions

"I would like my son to be here as long as possible, it's the best school for him."
"At first, people were a little reticent about my child. Now they do not look embarrassed or stare any more."
"At first, the teachers complained: they were afraid that their school might turn into a special one. This fear is gone now."

Teachers' opinions

"I would like to have the means to organize classes in a more flexible way. If I had mobile desks and chairs for instance, I could set up several groups in class."
"I would like different children to do different things at different times."
"Children interact in a natural way. I am the only one who knows that this child comes from a special school."

Headmasters' opinions

"This is not totally new, there have always been children with special needs in our classes."
"We are going to make history in Romanian education."
"The system of evaluation and promotion to the next class is a continuous source of problems."

autumn of 1998, with the help of the special needs education inspector, a group of teachers from School No. 22 ran a training course for schoolmasters in general schools in Timisoara. At the same time, with the assistance of UNICEF Romania and, in cooperation with RENINCO and the Ministry of Education, a similar course was run by a team of teachers from School No. 18; this was attended by a different group of schoolmasters in Timisoara.

It is also statistically relevant that, in the current school year, the Complex Assessment Commission should direct nearly a quarter of the total number of disabled children to mainstream schools (465 children in all). This figure puts Timis above the national average. From September 1999, the Ministry of National Education has started to extend the "Timisoara model" to 12 other counties.

The efficient use of the UNESCO 'Teacher Education Resource Pack: *Special Needs in Classroom*' in the continuing training of teachers in Timisoara has resulted in the development of numerous educational resources, including videos. These can be used to prepare additional training material about the inclusive approach for mainstream schools.

In May 1999, the Ministry of Education, UNICEF and RENINCO held a workshop in Timisoara called *Disabled Children's Real Access to Education*. These initiatives are further proof of the soundness and strength of inclusive education practices in the two schools. Other general schools in

Timisoara, in Lugoj and the county of Timis seem interested to follow their example and implement inclusive practices. News of the positive experience of the two schools has even reached the neighbouring county of Arad, where a village school (Mandruloc) has developed an environment favourable to inclusive education, while School No. 5 of Lugoj has set up an NGO called *A School for All*.

6. Final considerations

The experiences of the four Romanian schools should be given careful consideration. These cases are not unique; they illustrate what is going on in many Romanian schools. Some of the experiences discussed in this paper – particularly those of the Timisoara schools – have had a strong impact on educational acts and policies. They have resulted in the inclusion of disabled children into mainstream education and the creation of peripatetic teachers in special education (1995 to 1997). The Timisoara experiences have also been disseminated through recent Ministry of National Education initiatives.

The initiative and the determination to develop inclusion experiences can only really come from head teachers with a high level of professional and managerial experience, and from committed teachers, who are able to evaluate their work with objectivity and to learn from it.

Children are not the major source of resistance. It is the adults – teachers and/or parents – who need persuading before successful inclusive educational practices can be developed.

A further observation concerns the parents and the NGOs, whether they are parents' associations (such as *Speranta* of Timisoara) or NGOs playing the role of substitute parents (such as *Casa Speranta* of Constanta). Their expectations of the place and role of school education in children's development, and of a school's true commitment to its mission, can be used as a basis for opening up the schools, making them more flexible and better able to meet children's needs.

A basic strategy for the development of inclusive education practices is the continuous provision of information and the on going training of teaching staff and parents in specific subjects relating to disability, HIV-positive status, children deprived of family support. Adequate preparation and support through training are prerequisites for any successful innovation.

The most productive approach to initiating and developing cooperative relationships between special and mainstream schools seems to be where teams coming from groups of schools work together, as in the cases of Timisoara. This is worth closer investigation in view of future dissemination. In all the three schools who had included children with disabilities, as in other Romanian schools having developed inclusive education practices, the teachers and head teachers have lived a professionally relevant experience in special education and they shared the common vision of bringing their experience closer to the heart of mainstream school.

The case studies in this paper also demonstrate that raising the school's level of acceptance and flexibility to enable it to meet a wider range of needs actually increases the quality of education provided to students, as it helps to make the teaching process more individualized. This objective can be achieved by the use of a whole set of modern educational strategies, i.e. heuristic learning and conversation, cooperative learning, peer learning and so on.

CASE STUDY TWO

THE SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION OF ROMA CHILDREN

1. Policies addressing the Roma populations in Europe

When they arrived in Europe about five hundred years ago, the nomad Romas were seen as intruders, and looked upon with suspicion and mistrust by indigenous populations. Over a period of time national policies began to reflect the desire to reject the Roma people. Jean Pierre Liegeois groups these policies into three distinct types:

- **exclusion policies** – the Roma are driven away through expulsion from a given territory;
- **confinement policies** – the Roma are confined to a designated area, and live in segregated family-based communities;
- **assimilation policies** – the Roma are assimilated by the dominant culture and are therefore subject to cultural extinction.

Romas are seen as a marginal group creating social problems. They are not banned but controlled, not rejected but assimilated. Since the 1970s, the Roma in Western European countries have been subject to public policies focusing primarily on integration and adjustment, rather than assimilation. The Council of Europe, and later the European Union, introduced educational models based on respect for multiculturalism. However, unlike in Western Europe, the communist countries have, since the 1950s, adopted strong assimilation policies, consistent with general national policies on minorities which banned nomadism, labelled traditional trades and occupations as parasitic, and forced the Roma communities to be dependent on social security and working places provided by a “planned” economy. All this was accompanied by a forced cultural homogenization, enforced by the state-controlled educational system.

The Council of Europe drew attention to the condition of the Roma population in both Eastern and Western Europe as early as 1969 (Recommendation 563). An important number of surveys, reports and meetings initiated by the Council of Europe emphasized that the Roma and similar ethnic groups are a positive and dynamic force in Europe.

The European Parliament adopted a number of resolutions specifically addressing the Roma populations. The Commission initiated a survey on

the schooling of Roma children in Europe; the 1987 report on *School Facilities for Roma Children* was followed in 1989 by a resolution on the schooling of Roma children, considered to be historic by the Roma communities. This resolution acknowledges the Roma contribution to the cultural and linguistic riches of Europe over the past five centuries and emphasizes the need to preserve this cultural heritage. After the ratification of the 1989 resolution the Member States have been increasingly concerned with promoting education for Roma children.

In 1991 the European Parliament granted financial support to multicultural education, a percentage of which was allocated to the Roma children. Furthermore, the numerous conventions and declarations of the United Nations clearly demonstrate its role as a supporter and promoter of ethnic minorities, including the Roma.

2. The Roma – an ethnic minority in Romania

Before 1989, about half of Roma workers in Romania were employed in agriculture. Since then, there has been economic crisis, including the disappearance of state-owned farms and the laying-off of unskilled workers. According to the Zamfir survey in 1992, 80% of the Roma population in Romania is unqualified. Of those who are qualified, only 1.8% are medium or highly skilled. Together with very frequent discrimination in the job market, this leads to a poor chance of finding legal employment. A quarter of the skilled workers have traditional occupations and three quarters work as professionals linked to the “new” economy.

As in other former communist countries, the need for the Roma in Romania to express themselves has grown after the fall of the communist regime. The new Romanian Constitution acknowledges the Roma as a national minority and grants them the right of political and autonomous representation in Parliament. Both the government and a number of NGOs have initiated a range of cultural and educational projects targeting the Roma population.

In their survey *The Roma in the 21st Century: A Work Document for a Public Policy*, Andrzej Mirga

and Nicolae Gheorghe show that, in the new European context, the Roma leaders have become aware of the specific problems faced by their people. They have started to encourage an ethnic rally of forces. The top priorities refer to:

- re-evaluation of the cultural heritage;
- redefinition and reconstruction of their identity as a minority;
- rejection of the imposed and branding name of 'gypsy'; and
- emancipation of the Roma population in general.

Granting the Roma population the status of a Romanian minority is an important step forward, but it is not enough. It has to be enforced by concrete and consistent action for their emancipation.

3. Providing equal chances and schooling for the Roma children

Most of the initiatives targeting Roma communities have been isolated and have generally considered the socio-economic difficulties faced by a large number of Roma. For example, UNDP has been running community projects dealing with poverty alleviation; ROM AID (an ecumenical organization) has provided economic development grants to Roma communities; the Civil Society Development Foundation has funded small projects run by Roma and non-Roma NGOs. Most of the projects were not supported as part of programmes designed specifically for Roma groups and there is not as yet a coherent government policy which meets the needs of the Roma population.

Elena and Catalin Zamfir's 1993 survey records that 40% of 8 year old Roma children have never been to school or have dropped out. *An Evaluation Survey of Barriers between Family and School in a District of Bucharest* (sample: 1,272 families) shows that:

- 2.3% of the Roma children from surveyed families are not enrolled for school;
- some of the children do not have identity papers, the population fluctuation is high and there are no means of tracking down children registered through temporary documents although the Law of Education provides penalties for parents who neglect their children's school attendance, it is not very clear who should enforce the law;
- Roma children's school attendance figures are much lower than for their non-Roma peers;
- 7.2% of Roma children drop-out of school compared with 1.3% of non-Roma children.

Achieving a better level of education is one of the major difficulties faced by the Roma people and is a major policy issue in Romania. Elena and Catalin Zamfir coordinated a survey in 1993, *The Gypsies – Between Ignorance and Concern*. This corroborated local events reflecting negative social attitudes and discrimination affecting the schooling of Roma children :

- There is no record in either census or school records of Roma children who live in large communities.
- Many Roma children are not enrolled for school.
- The drop-out rate is increasing.
- Roma families show a lack of interest in their children's schooling.
- The economic conditions are poor and have a significant impact on school drop-out rate.
- Racist attitudes and discrimination in schools have serious consequences for the isolation of Roma children and the drop-out rate.
- In some communities, the majority population shows increasing hostility and intolerance towards the Roma, leading to violence and the expulsion of Roma families. This in turn leads to prolonged absence from school.
- Some Roma children have difficulties in understanding Romanian when they first attend school.

The Roma people are confronted with a fundamental dilemma in relation to education: should they stick to their traditional characteristics, which help them preserve their identity but lead to "difference" and discrimination; or, do they accept the need to change and face the challenges of the modern world, which might lead to more equal opportunities but risks altering their identity?

The Roma do not have a tradition of schooling (as confirmed by the high rate of illiteracy among adults) but they are also sceptical about whether they should invest in education. Furthermore, traditional Roma communities associate schooling with the loss of ethnic identity. In summary:

- the general view of schooling is unfavourable among the Roma;
- there is a high rate of illiteracy;
- there is insufficient pre-schooling;
- the Roma language is not spoken by other pupils and teachers even in schools with a high number of Roma pupils;
- discriminatory practices and segregation still occur;
- there are high rates of drop-out;
- the enrolment of Roma children in school is significantly lower than the national average. Data provided by the first national census of the Roma

population in 1992 showed that 29.9% of the 7 to 9 year old children and 17.2% of the 10 to 16 year olds had never been enrolled for school. It was anticipated that 48.3% of the 7 to 9 year olds (at the survey date) would not complete primary level of education.

4. The Roma minority and the reform of education in Romania

Generally speaking, if a majority tries to assimilate minorities, technically by diluting and perhaps even removing the culture of those minorities, then the minorities often promote segregation as a way of protecting their cultural identity. This results in an increasingly segregated education, with little intercultural communication. Consequently, the latest reform measures in Romania have tried to replace a culture of segregation with one of multicultural education, focusing on multi- and inter-cultural programmes designed for multi-ethnic schools. However, there are a number of barriers to achieving this.

The present curricula and teaching materials contain little reference to children belonging to other ethnic groups, non-Romanian personalities or the contribution of other ethnic groups to Romanian history. Another barrier is that different ethnic minority groups tend to have separate schools (or at least separate sections in schools) and follow a different curriculum. The languages spoken and used by teachers are at least partially, and often entirely, those of national minorities in 10% of kindergartens, 8.9% of primary schools, 9.8% of lower secondary educational establishments and 11.5% of upper secondary ones. In these schools there are 23,523 teachers, of whom 20,045 are Hungarian, 995 German, 234 Slovak and 2,250 from other minorities.

Romanian educational institutions do not yet have managers trained to implement these multicultural policies and real discrimination is still common. Although 1998 marked a turning point at policy level, the Roma people have yet to see positive benefits.

5. School policy measures initiated by the Ministry of National Education

The Ministry of National Education has formulated a set of measures to address the Roma issue. It has agreed to:

- train schoolmasters specifically to teach Roma children; they should be able to speak Roma and have a knowledge of Roma history and culture;
- introduce and pilot optional classes taught in Roma in a number of classes in various parts of the country;
- support local schooling initiatives for Roma children – e.g. setting up classes of Roma children in communities with a high Roma population;
- support the use of the Roma language; the Department initiated the *Promotion Programme of Roma in School and Extra-curricular Activities* which provides communication and emotional support. It offers a means through which the relationship between children, school, family and community can be developed and can improve Roma children's ability to speak and understand the Romanian language;
- treat the schooling of the Roma as the provision of education for minority groups. Given the educational gap between the Romas and the majority population (and the other minorities as well), adopting Roma as an optional teaching language will not bear fruit unless it is supported by the allocation of financial, material and human resources;
- diversify educational and school activities, adapting them to the needs, the resources and the specific character of the various ethnic and cultural Roma groups. There is also a pledge to make better use of resources provided by communities, educational institutions, authorities and NGOs, including:
 - remedial pre-schooling (in kindergarten groups and primary education) for bilingual Roma children, those who have dropped out and others with special educational needs;
 - literacy classes for young people over school-age, those who have dropped out and who are socially excluded;
 - youth clubs set up by Roma associations, other NGOs, schools, churches and individuals;
 - additional educational support for Roma children with poor school performance;
 - flexible occupational training adapted to a minimal education (functional literacy);
 - inspector positions specializing in issues relating to Roma schooling in each county.

The Ministry of Education has also seen through legislation on Roma education.

6. Schooling for the Roma population in Romania

According to Miroiu (1998), in educational terms the Roma fall into two major categories – excluded and marginal – and they escape from these categories only rarely. The blindness to the discrimination against the Roma, which is the youngest, as well as the fastest growing ethnic group in Romania, has both short and longer term consequences.

6.1 1992 census data on the Roma population

In 1992, the official number of Roma was 409,723 (1.8% of the total population). However, the Ethnic Federation of Roma in Romania claims that the real number is 2.5 million (10% of the population), a figure adjusted by credible observers to 1.5 million. Of these, approximately 1 million (4.6% of the population) maintain a traditional way of living. Most of them live in Bucharest (500,000–600,000).

The average age of marriage is 17 years for girls and 18 for boys. Half of the Roma girls become mothers before the age of 18 and the birth rate is 5.1 children per woman compared with a national average of 1.9. Seven per cent of Roma children do not have a birth certificate.

Forty-three per cent of the Roma are under 16. In the last 16 years (up to 1992), the Roma population in Romania has increased by 80%. Eighty-nine per cent of Roma women have no qualifications and 32% of the male “heads of family” are unemployed.

Thirty-five per cent of Roma women and 27.3% of the men did not graduate from primary school. Only 4.5% graduated from high school. Overall, only half of the children aged 7 to 10 attends school regularly; 40% of Roma children under the age of 8 do not attend kindergarten or school. Seven per cent of Roma people are in higher education, in comparison with 12% of other ethnic groups.

Taking into account this data, it is easy to assume that the reason for the low education participation rate is the nature of the Roma people and their beliefs: failure to adapt, self-marginalization, the incapacity to integrate themselves into the “normal” community. On the other hand, there is a second explanation relating to the groups that protect Romas’ interests, which focuses on victimization. Each rationale has biases: the first one envisages forced assimilation or exclusion; the second, segregation in order to maintain the Roma cultural identity.

The educational strategies follow a line of reasoning based on the negative social factors affecting participation and achievement:

(a) exclusion of, or simply the lack of reference to, the Roma population from curricula and textbooks;

(b) ghettoization, whereby it is accepted that the cultural “difference” of the Roma should be maintained, but within their own closed community; and

(c) silent assimilation by accepting the Roma in schools; forcing them to attend school while also forcing them to enter the majority way of life and thinking.

The costs of non-integration in education are high. Romania currently has the highest percentage of Roma in Europe, and, given the Roma birthrate, this percentage will continue to grow. Action to integrate the Roma might include:

- strategies for integration focusing on difference. The American multicultural model would be useful as it is applied to a wide range of ethnic groups;
- research, information and documentation about the Roma people; the development of qualitative research, including that which focuses on women and children, who are often neglected by researchers. One of the roles of the research is to substitute the fictions and stereotypes about the Roma with a real and objective image, thereby disproving the stereotypes and prejudices, and reducing the levels of intolerance;
- schools where teaching is in the Roma language represent one solution, but they can contribute to increasing segregation. As this minority is widely spread geographically, multiculturalism or interculturalism (treating Roma as a distinctive cultural group beside the others) are the most desirable approaches. This implies that information about the culture, traditions and history of the Roma community must be included in syllabi and textbooks;
- training of school inspectors, principals and teachers in how to integrate Roma children into the education system;
- using integration and the continued attendance of Roma students as criteria for the assessment of educational institutions;
- affirmative policies for Roma students on entrance to vocational schools, high schools, post secondary education, colleges and universities;
- the encouragement of Roma teachers and other professionally successful members of this group to embrace, protect and promote the group to which they belong;
- the inclusion in school regulations and university charters of precise sanctions against discrimination

and offensive behaviour towards Roma pupils, students and parents.

6.2 Policy initiatives and educational realities

Although the “right” policy exists, there is still inequality of opportunity for Roma students. Although there are many “correct” initiatives, they are often badly implemented and lead to inappropriate action. A “correct” image of educational policy regarding the Roma exists, but there is also a hidden one within the specific context of schools and classrooms.

For example, the Roma minority has the right to use the Roma language in teaching (as a mother tongue), but the infrastructure and other factors make this impossible in most cases. There are few appropriate textbooks, the curriculum needs to be revised, there is inadequate and inappropriate training for teachers and so on.

In communities with a large number of Roma, the pressure of both Roma and non-Roma NGOs has persuaded some schools to design “local curricula” which recognize and value local community traditions and culture, including those of the Roma people. Primary school students have the right to choose between different optional courses: however, the main options for Roma children seem to be music and dance, the argument being that “they are very good at singing and dancing”. This is true, but this approach merely reinforces prejudice.

The labels teachers and non-Roma students use towards the Roma have a great impact on Roma children’s self-concept and on the quality of their life in school. Instructional practices also reflect “wrong” realities in the presence of “right” policy initiatives. Most of the time, instruction is teacher-centred, with little interest in or focus on individual abilities, interests or needs. Most of the teachers have an authoritarian teaching style which gives children little responsibility for, or control over, the learning process. This tends to mean that their motivation for learning comes either from the family or from their own desire to succeed. Fierce competition is also encouraged despite there being a theoretical principle of cooperative learning in the classroom.

Taking into account this brief description and the data about Roma history, most of the reasons that make Roma students under achievers and/or drop-outs are quite clear:

- labelling;
- bias;

- stereotypes;
- irrelevant curriculum;
- poor self-concept and self-esteem;
- lack of support from families and teachers;
- teacher-centred instruction;
- lack of motivation for individualized instruction;
- lack of remedial teaching.

“If I am Roma, at least not to show that I am a Roma.” (Roma boy, aged 9.)

“It is not the same to be a Romanian or a Roma. It is more difficult for us.” (Girl, aged 10.)

7. Other positive initiatives

Alternative pedagogies and structures are developed and promoted by governmental or non-governmental organizations¹ in order to solve the “Roma children problems” in school.

7.1 The Foundation for an Open Society

Since spring 1996, Roma education has been one of the most important elements of the Foundation’s activity. The aim was (and still is) to develop models, working through a network of key institutions including schools, kindergartens, school inspectorates and universities. It is intended that the models will be integrated into the education system, providing Roma children with a better chance of succeeding in education.

The main objectives of the Foundation’s Roma education strategy are to:

- stimulate the reform of educational institutions (kindergartens, primary schools, vocational schools) to enable them to meet the needs of the Roma population;
- facilitate the professional development of Roma teachers and their involvement in the education of Roma;
- support the development of educational materials with Roma content;

1. NGOs effective in developing Roma education strategies and programmes: ROMANI CRISS Bucharest – Roma Centre for Social Intervention and Studies; ROMROM Foundation Caracal; PHOENIX Foundation, ROM AID, UNDP, ROMA WOMEN Association Timisoara, AVEN AMENTZA Foundation Bucharest, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ROMA Association Timisoara, ROMA GENERAL UNION Hunedoara, etc.

- improve the chances of Roma children of achieving in school;
- support Roma individuals to reach higher education.

Main programme components are:

- kindergarten programme (to prepare children for school integration based on “Step by Step” approach, and with the involvement of local authorities and local NGOs);
- school development in Roma communities. The programme supports the shift from monocultural to multicultural education through training programmes for school managers and teachers and the introduction of Roma language, history and culture into the school curriculum. A network of 12 schools from Roma communities was established to support them in improving what they were able to offer the Roma and in becoming accountable to the community.

The main areas of work are as follows:

Intercultural education: the most important goal of intercultural education is a positive re-evaluation of differences. The first step intended to awaken the interests of the community in finding out the truth about different groups.

Educational management: partnership and school development in Roma communities; both aim for the active involvement of all participants in their own process of cultural change. The development of educational management in Roma communities includes the organization and functioning of a school and methods for attracting partners from the community. This is an important part of enabling a school to identify and meet the needs of all the children in its community.

Classroom management: focuses on cooperative learning. The aim is to motivate teachers to develop challenging and effective learning activities and to persuade them to use instructional strategies and methods which increase children’s participation and performance.

Parental involvement: improving the relationship between school, parents and students by training “contact parents” to involve other members of the community in the school.

Oral histories and Roma culture: all the students, regardless of race or ethnicity, have a rich folklore. When they study their own traditions, they learn about themselves and others, how they are the same and different; they are all experts in the class. This is highly motivating, especially for those with weak academic skills. Oral histories are filled with students’ enthusiasm and with their writing, talking and interacting about a subject in which they are firmly grounded and powerfully engaged.

Vocational training for drop-outs: to ensure the availability of vocational training and remedial teaching for drop-outs. This programme requires new ministerial regulations, school curriculum development and teacher training.

Support for Roma teachers: professional development through training courses, exchange programmes and workshops in the development of educational materials. The programme will enable Roma students to prepare for entrance in pedagogical colleges or in universities, which will result in more Roma teachers trained.

Publishing of books with Roma content: the books will have topics like Roma history and culture and the Roma language, or will take the form of reading books in Romanian or Roma.

Scholarships for Roma students: Roma students will continue to receive scholarships for higher education, and training courses will be organized for Roma high school students who are candidates for university entrance. Those in receipt of a grant will be asked to undertake voluntary work in the community.

Expected outcomes, some already evident, are:

- pre-service and in-service training programmes for teachers and principals on topics such as: Roma history and culture, intercultural education, remedial teaching, school management in communities with a Roma population, classroom management in multicultural settings;
- pre-school orientation programmes for parents and children where kindergarten is not available;
- new methodologies for vocational schools to help them to help children who have dropped out of education to complete their compulsory education in parallel with vocational training;
- the establishment of a Roma teachers’ professional association;
- educational materials on the Roma language, history and culture (teacher guides, booklets, literature);
- intercultural education materials;
- reading books with Roma content for both Roma and non-Roma children;
- an increased number of Roma university students.

7.2 The schooling programme in Mangalia

The project has been initiated by the Roma Ethical Federation in Mangalia in partnership with Salvati Copiii (Save the Children), Association “Romani Criss”, City Hall of Mangalia and the Intercultural Institute in Timisoara. Financial support is provided by the Council of Europe and UNICEF.

The aims of the project are to:

- achieve rehabilitation in school of the children who have given up school (in the primary classes) and of the ones who have never attended school;
- develop minimum abilities in reading and writing and use of the four basic rules in mathematics;
- promote reintegration in the state education system of the best pupils selected by tests recognized by the School Inspectorate.

The expected outcomes are:

- removal of illiteracy for most Roma children;
- raising the awareness of parents of the role of the school in their children's development;
- re-evaluating schools in Roma communities;
- addressing the effects on primary education of a lack of communication in the family.

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