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# **THE SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF IMMIGRANTS AND THE ROMANIAN ETHNIC GROUP AND THE PROBLEMS WITH THEIR SITUATION IN SLOVENIAN SCHOOLS AND IN EDUCATION**

Nevenka Podgornik<sup>1</sup>

## **Abstract**

The social exclusion of Romani in Slovenia is complicated and multi-dimensional. The Romani are a marginalized social group, their social position is distinctly inferior to the majority of the population, as in the material sphere as with education, the profession and the employment opportunities. Because of their low socio-economic and ethnic status, the Romani do not attain the same possibilities of integration in the educational system. In Slovenia, like in the other states of the EU, the problems with the lower education level are present with the immigrants too. The article exposes the educational and the employment opportunities for Romani and the immigrants in Slovenia.

**Key words:** immigrants, Romani, Slovenian schools, education, employment, inclusion

## **The situation of the immigrants and of their children in the Slovenian educational system**

In the last years in Slovenia, the migration movement from foreign countries has grown stronger. Compared with the period from 2000 to 2004, in 2006 the number of immigrants augmented for 2,5 times, or slightly more than 20.000. Among them the citizens of Slovakia are prevailing all the countries in the EU, in 2006 there were 25,8 % of them (SURS, Meddržavne selitve po državljanstvu, Slovenija, 2007). For Slovenia, like for all the EU members, is typical for the immigrants to have a lower educational level. Among the active workers that come to Slovenia in 2005, the majority (60,9 %) has finished elementary school, 30,6% had secondary school education and only 6,3% of them had a higher education. According to a research comparing the educational structure of the immigrants and the entire Slovenian population, quoted

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by Mojca Medvešček (2007), the educational structure of the descendants of immigrants from ex-Yugoslavia is slightly lower than the educational structure of the entire population. The analysis of the educational structure of 84.909 citizens, immigrant's descendants, that took part in the research, showed us that the immigrant's descendants have an educational structure comparable to the one of the majority of the population and so, a higher educational structure than the immigrants.

Mojca Peček (2005) establishes that the Slovenian school legislation is contradictory in itself. From the aspect of general principles, the school legislation is about the school justness, the principle of equal possibilities with the right of each other's individuality, but it denies it on the realization level. Within the school system them immigrant's children are not getting the necessary attention from the department and the politicians, consecutively neither from the teachers.

For the inclusion of all the students, the role of the teacher is fundamental, that's why the response of Slovenian teachers to immigrant's children from ex-Yugoslavia, presented in a research done by Irena Lesar (2005), is alarming. The results of the research shows that Slovenian teachers feels less responsible for the school achievements of an immigrant child that for the success of other children and that they don't feel responsible for a successful social inclusion of an immigrant's child in the class. The teacher's feeling of irresponsibility for immigrants children, recognized in the research, requires an emphasize of the relations inside the educational system, a necessity to sensitize the teachers for what the children need and a qualification for intercultural education. It's well known that a mono-cultural school system (such in Germany) does not provoke a reduction of the educational possibilities just of immigrants children, but also of local children.

Mojca Medvešek (2006) estimates that the Slovenian educational system, which transmits from generation to generation just the predominant 'Slovenian' culture without considering other cultural and ethnic groups present in Slovenia in big numbers, is very problematic. The author quotes the results of the PSIP research (The perception of the Slovenian integration politics) which show us that the immigrants and their children have different experiences in the educational system, from positive to negative ones. Above all, the research proves the incompatibility between what the educational system offers and what the immigrants and their children want and need. There is more and more immigrant's children that are being treated differently in schools because

of their ethnical appurtenance; they are indirectly discriminated by the teachers, the rest of the classmates, coming from a different ethnical group, do not accept them. At the same time the educational system does not offer to the majority community an adequate knowledge of the ethnical heterogeneity of Slovenia's inhabitants, of their cultural and linguistic characteristics, of the concept of a Slovenian nation that includes all the citizens in the Slovenian society, and consequently, of a knowledge that would enable the development of respect for ethnical and cultural differences (Medvešek 2006: 124).

Foreign children or persons without a Slovenian citizenship living in Slovenia have the right to an obligatory elementary school education on the same conditions as Slovenian citizens, but there is only one International elementary school in Slovenia (Ljubljana) that has also an international kindergarten. In 2006 there was 114 scholars from 41 countries attending this international school and there was 30 infants in the kindergarten. The others, from all the 4.562 children of foreign nationals (data from December 2006), were integrated in the regular elementary education. This children have only one supplemental hour of Slovenian language per week. That is really not enough, especially because their low results are attributed to their language deficiency, which they cannot compensate during the educational process.

The researchers state that the language is precisely the biggest obstacle for the Romani, other immigrants and their children. At the school beginning, the mastering of Slovenian language by the Romani scholars and immigrants children is very poor, they cannot express themselves very well, they tend to answer just with single words, they form phrases that way, they confound the gender, etc. (Stvarnik 1998). The linguistic differences among children from different social classes are an important factor of scholar efficiency. The researchers state that a lot of the differences rising among children from different social classes and social environments can be explained to a great extend by unequal verbal abilities. The language is an obstacle for the reception and understanding of the educational contents, because the Romani grow up in a Romanian speaking environment and a lot of them do not hear Slovenian language until they enter the school or kindergarten. They do not have the possibility to get the necessary basic education in their native language.

### **Educational achievements of Romani children**

The data, quoted by *The strategy of Romani education in the Republic of Slovenia* (2004 : 10), about the inclusion of Romani children and adults in educational and training programs show us that the Romani still do not attain a proper educational level. However the number of Romani

children entering the kindergarten and elementary schools and children that attend the elementary school regularly is increasing. According to the Ministry of School and Sport's data, in 2008 there were 1658 children included in the elementary school educational departments and 139 children in the adapted departments. It's not possible to determine the percentage of school-age children, because their actual number is only estimated. There are from 7.000 to 12.000 of them living in Slovenia. Compared to other children, the Romani scholars attain very low results and a lot of them also redouble the year. A lot of these children fulfill all of their scholar duties, but they do not finish elementary school's last year. They quit the school in 6, 5 or 4 grade. Most of them, especially girls, they quit school right after finishing the obligatory education, if not before. According to this data there is a low number of Romani students and scholars, which is characteristic.

The low learning results of Romani children and the big number of Romani children in the adjusted programs, compared to the number of all the school-aged children, directs our attention to the children's classification, influenced by their school failure and behavior problems, without recognizing and admitting other causes for their failure (social-economic status, lack of language knowledge, culture,...). Without a doubt the Romani in Slovenia are one of the most stigmatized and discriminated groups.

Avsec (1999: 107) warns us that we often hear complaints about Romani children in schools of being problematic, aggressive, violent, inactive, inadaptable, educationally neglected and that they terrorize and have a negative influence on non-Romani scholars, etc. But we do not ask ourselves enough how a Romani child feels and experiences in a group of foreign coevals. And if we put ourselves in his shoes we can see a series of factors that indicates discrimination, deprivation and a violation of children's rights.

In accordance with a low educational level of Romani, there is a high percentage of unemployed workers (95% of unemployed Romani adults have only the 1<sup>st</sup> scholar degree, most of them did not finish elementary school). According to a research, quoted by Smerdu (1999), the educational structure of the parents shows that only 10,3% of them finished elementary school, 71% did not finish it and 15,7% were without elementary school. 3,2% of the parents had vocational and incomplete secondary school. The educational deficit is visible in particular with the mothers. The educational structure is closely linked to the parents occupational structure.

There was 89% of unskilled workers, 7% of semiskilled, 4% of qualified and only one highly qualified worker. It was the same with the parents employment. 56% of the parents was unemployed, 3,6% periodically employed, 27% employed regularly and 13,6% employed in a foreign country. Smerdu states that the children of employed parents go to school more regularly (Smerdu 1999: 114). We conclude that parent's education and employment have a big influence on the living conditions and educational possibilities of a child.

The people accountable in Slovenian Republic are aware of the unjust situation of Romani in our country and they try to solve and improve the situation of Romani children in the Slovenian elementary schools by adopting new documents (Directives to adapt the elementary school's program to Romani scholars, Directives to carry out the program for the 9-years elementary school for Romani scholars, Supplement for the kindergarten's curriculum for work with Romani children).

The earlier practical work showed that children integrated in a department with non-Romani children achieved better results than children integrated in departments meant only for Romani children. The separation of Romani and non-Romani children leads to a negative accentuation and marking of their differences and strangeness, which increase the segregation of Romani scholars and at the same time make it impossible for them to preserve and express the multiculturalism, their own identity as Romani that we have no right to change or erase.

### **The strategy of educational and social politics**

Besides all the documents for the rise of the educational level and a better social inclusion of Romani children, we are starting with a nursery education for Romani children. This preschool education is executed by the *Kindergarten's law*, which determines the rights of the Romani community in the article n<sup>o</sup>7, and in the principles it defends equal possibilities and a consideration of the differences among children (Ur. l. RS št. 12/96).

In 2002 the Professional council accepted the *Supplement for the kindergarten's curriculum for work with Romani children* with the intention of offering 'help to the leading and professional workers in the kindergarten by creating the conditions for realizing the Romani children's rights to equal possibilities' (Supplement for the kindergarten's curriculum... 2002: 3). In the document there are exposed parts and competences of the professional workers in the educational process of Romani children. The written principles take into consideration the Romani's rights to diversity, to speaking in their own language and to

preserve their Romani identity. In this document the kindergarten is defined as 'an environment where everyone has equal possibilities to become a part of an activity and everyday life, regardless of the gender, physical and mental constitution, national citizenship, cultural origins, religious belief, etc.' (Supplement for the kindergarten's curriculum... 2002: 4). The professional workers have a duty to pass the values and methods for a different perception and understanding of other cultures and people of different races.

The principle of collaboration with the parents stimulate the establishment of more cooperative relations between an educational institution and the parents, which means a good investment for the work and progress on different life spheres of the Romani.

In the document there is also mentioned a positive practical work of introducing Romani assistants into kindergartens with Romani children, which is starting to get enforced in some Slovenian kindergartens.

*The ordinance of normative and cadre conditions for the performing of preschool education (1997)* is positively discriminatory for the Romani, for it defines that that the Department of Romani children can be formed when there is at least 5 children enrolled, while in the other departments of the first-age period there has to be at least 9 children in homogeneous and 7 children in heterogeneous departments, in the second-age period departments there has to be at least 17 children in homogeneous and 14 children in heterogeneous departments.

Elementary school's education of Romani community members is performed in accordance with the general *Law of elementary schools* and other directives. The law states that children of Slovenian citizens, whose native language is not Slovenian, must have school courses of their native language and culture and also courses of Slovenian language.

*The program of arrangements to help the Romani in the Slovenian Republic* from 1995 was assigned by the Ministry Of Education and Sports in individual collaboration with the communes to ensure the inclusion to educational programs to Romani children at least two years before entering the school. The Ministry Of Education and Sports gives financial support for school's initiatives to encourage the Romani children's integration, among other things the extended stay in school, researching camps, activities of interest and other activities. It assures also the performing of professional exercises to develop the education and instruction of Romani children in the kindergartens and also schools.

Beside some appropriate prepared guidelines for the adaptation of the educational program to Romani children, there should have been a group of experts created to prepare a specific method of teaching the Slovenian language to Romani scholars, but we did not find any information of a group like that starting to work till this day.

The Ministry Of Education and Sports vows *The program of arrangements to help the Romani in the Slovenian Republic* (1995: 2) to ensure the means for school meals for Romani scholars and the support for buying appropriate and quality school requisites, to assure a scholarship to every Romani student who will decide to study pedagogy and to finance the researches that will contribute to the understanding of Romani children's problems with the integration in the educational processes. The state also ensured the means for the first exercise book for teaching Romani language. The Ministry also assures additional means for subsidized school meals for all the scholars and increases the subsidy for school meals to all the schools for half of the registered Romani scholars (Report about the Romani's situation in Slovenian Republic, 2004: 27).

The Council of The Republic of Slovenia for General Education adopted the directives for the adaptation of the program for Romani scholars and prepared a program of supplementary education for Romani children. Besides these provisions *The Act of organization and financing for education* (1996) ensures the means for the preparation and subsidized prices of textbooks and teaching aids for elementary schools, for national community schools, for the education of Slovenian citizens and immigrants abroad and for Romani and a part of the means from the state budget for the elementary school education of Romani. The Ministry Of Education also determines special norms and standards for Romani children's education (among other things: teaching commitment of professional workers, criteria of advisory service formation, libraries, technical service, administrative-accounting services and criteria for departments and groups formation, for expenses evaluation and standards for the equipment and space).

In the continuation all the key documents classify the Romani among the most vulnerable groups of our community, with the biggest risk of poverty and social exclusion. *The national action project of social inclusion for the period 2005 – 2010* mentions and places among the key challenges the rise of employment levels for the Romani community. There is especially stated the program of The Ministry of Culture of The Republic of Slovenia, designed for the protection of cultural rights of minority and ethnical communities, because a creative cultural life

contributes to a social cohesion. In the chapter about the prevention of discrimination, the respect of cultural differences in all the spheres of social life is on top of all the long-term goals.

The sphere of the Romani inclusion into the educational process includes also the enforcement of the right to respect the Romani language and culture.

Besides the quoted statements, the action plan for the period 2004 – 2006 has already pursued the following goals:

- To ensure the conditions to attain the learning standards that are necessary for further education (the lowering or deviation from learning standards is not acceptable for the Romani);
- The inclusion into a bigger community so that the education in the curriculum ensures the principles and the values of equality in accordance with the social equity (casting away the prejudices, getting closer to universal values);
- To encourage the education of Romani adults (The national action project... 2004: 26).

*The national action program for employment 2004 (NAP)*, among all the structural problems of individual target groups, mentions the Romani situation to whom the state of employment market is not favorable. It is necessary to dismiss the causes of unemployment and to continue the rearrangement of means designed for passive forms of help into active measures. The action program anticipates that in the future Slovenia will stimulate the activity of non-governmental organizations in the field of education and, among other things, even in the field of intercultural education. The NAP states that, in the chapter about the integration and the fight against discrimination in the employment market, this field is an important factor for the strengthening of the social cohesion. At the presentation in Brussels the Slovenian NAP 2004 was estimated as a good groundwork for performing the politics for an effective execution of the European strategy of employment in practice and at the same time it is a groundwork for a successful acquirement of funds from the European social fund and an experiences exchange and good practices with other European countries (Klopčič: 35-37).

For the first key challenge of the social inclusion in Slovenia in the field of unemployment *The collective memorandum about social inclusion (2003)* mentions the redirection of the activities from inactive forms of help to active forms, especially the ones that eliminate the causes of unemployment, the most important among them are a low educational

level and unsuitable professional qualifications, and the problems with job searching. Beside that, there should be employment possibilities even for the most vulnerable groups that are confronted with a train of social exclusion problems and are the most distant from the employment market.

The augmentation of the money invested in the population's education remains one of the most important long-term politics for preventing poverty and social exclusion. There is a special attention designed for developing and expanding the culture of lifelong learning.

The inclusion of young people in the educational process is augmenting, but the decrease is still relatively high, especially with lower vocational training. Taking into account that every individual who drop out of school before getting a suitable job, lowers his employment chances, the lowering of decrease in secondary schools is still one of the key strategies in the fight with social exclusion (The collective memorandum about social inclusion, 2003: 13-14).

The object of the *Action program for employing workless Romani 2003 – 2006* (2003) is to raise the employment possibilities of Romani and to lower the number of workless Romani with the following measures: the inclusion of young workless Romani in elementary and vocational school, the inclusion of adult Romani in programs for subsidized workplaces (in collaboration with Romani associations and local communities), creating public works (for help with studying) to lower the school decrease, employing Romani counselors in the office of The Employment office (The collective memorandum: 17).

The most part of the Romani has a low educational level and problems in daily communication. Because of an insufficient knowledge of the Slovenian language the Romani children have problems entering the kindergarten or elementary school, where the Romani language is not known and there is no proper textbooks at disposal. Like we already stated that is also the reason for the large number of Romani children attending elementary schools with an adapted program.

The European commission stimulates the Republic of Slovenia to make more efforts in including the Romani children in the regular education.

Among all the attempts to improve the Romani situation not recognized as successful, we mention *The Law of the Romani community* (2007) . It is another document that manages other's rights without their participation and not considering their needs and requests. In spite of

the fact that this law was not adopted, the parliament of the Republic of Slovenia adopted it in March 2007, although it does not solve two of the most important problems that concern the Romani: schooling and including the Romani into society. The simulations of the law's implementation in everyday life did not take place.

The Office of Legislation of the Republic of Slovenia warned The Office for National Minorities, who prepared the law, that the bill does not explicitly manage actual rights, which should be conferred by the respective law to the Romani community or to their members. The bill merely enumerates or defines the fields where the members of the Romani community should have special rights. In the Office of Legislation's opinion this does not mean their definition but only a gradual limiting (Trampuš, 2006).

In 2002 the Ministry of Education nominated a special working group, who prepared a strategic document about the Romani's children integration with the title *Strategy for Romani's education in the Republic of Slovenia*. The most important solutions that the Strategy includes are the following:

- an early inclusion of Romani children in the educational system, at least two years before entering the elementary school. The objects are mainly the learning of Slovenian and Romani language and the socialization in the educational institutions;
- an introduction and function of the Romani's assistant, his essential task is to encourage the Romani children to overcome the obstacles (emotional and linguistic);
- adaptation of program's contents (the introducing of courses of Romani language in elementary schools as an optional subject, teaching Slovenian language, introducing a multicultural school curriculum that includes the Romani culture, history and identity);
- regular and additional training for vocational workers;
- an assurance of adequate financial support or subvention from the Ministry of Education and Sports;
- avoiding the forming of homogeneous departments where there are only Romani children;
- formation and introduction of new forms of learning aids;
- confidence restoration in the school and elimination of stereotypes and prejudices;
- avoiding directing the Romani children to programs with a lower educational standard or to adapted programs;
- in the field of adult Romani's education we have to consider the National program of adult's education in the Republic of Slovenia

until 2010 in order to raise the educational level of Romani adults with ensuring the means for a possible participation in educational programs without charge (aiming to an augmentation of employment possibilities) (Strategy for Romani's education in the Republic of Slovenia, 2004: 6).

By avoiding the formation of homogeneous departments for Romani children only, the Republic of Slovenia wants to prevent a negative practice of some European countries. The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia objects to the segregation of Romani children in the so-called pure Romani departments and the establishing of schools meant only for Romani children. They already became aware of practice like that in the Czech Republic, in Denmark and in Hungary. The causes of that are linked with the contrariety of non-Romani children's parents, who do not want their children to attend the same classes and schools as Romani coevals, because they think that these children have a negative influence on the educational process and the quality of education of their children (Škraba 2007:99).

We understand this kind of decisions as extremely segregating (equal, but separated). They still ensure them their fundamental right to education, but they put the Romani in a distinctively inferior position that renders impossible any kind of inclusion. Even the possibility to include the Romani children in the so-called pure and mixed departments, performing in Slovenia and other countries (Czech Republic, Denmark, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, Greece, Hungary and Slovakia), is not understood as a possibility for the Romani to choose, but more as a choice of non-Romani children's parents who do not want their children to attend classes with Romani children.

Otherwise in Slovenia there are a lot of models (integration, socialization and experimentation) for the education and qualification of Romani with the intention of stimulating the cultural diversity, eliminating the discrimination and improving the situation of the marginal groups. There is a group of educational and training projects to prepare the Romani for employment opportunities with which the state tries to ensure a higher educational level, the integration of the Romani community and to raise the level and quality of the collaboration between Romani and non-Romani. The educational programs (the program for elementary schools and the program for Romani's socialization and integration) are designed to illiterate Romani and to people who did not finish elementary school, regardless of their age. The program for Romani's socialization and integration includes the teaching of general knowledge in the field of

health security, hygiene standards, housekeeping, etc., which we can understand as an attempt to alter their minority and ethnical identity.

There is a lot of programs and help projects designed for the members of the Romani community, carried out by non-governmental organizations and associated society voluntary work that have a big part especially in the field of establishing intercultural relations and elimination prejudices. Let's mention the Society of allies for soft landing Krško that started with projects of work with the Romani in 2000 (Klopčič: 47). Naturally they do fieldwork in Romani community, which helps them to recognize the actual needs, to elaborate a quick estimation and to offer instant and efficacious help responses. Non-governmental organizations always develop new programs adapted to the users to attain a larger part of local community. The approaches of helping are more of an informal nature and they enable more genuine and satisfying relations between the participants and good relations are an assurance that all the persons present collaborate and participate in the helping process. Non-governmental organizations can form more easily the specific individual and groups needs because of their position in the civil society.

The Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Affairs appears in his relations with non-governmental organizations as stimulator of their development, it supports them by so-financing them since 1993. A special accentuation and a bigger stability for the financing of supplementary programs of social security, carried out mostly by non-governmental organizations, were defined with the passing of the National program of social security there. Like a lot of other countries, in Slovenia also there is a transfer of different services to the private sector and a part of this services can be carried out by non-governmental organizations. The Government promises to support the transfer of public functions and authorizations to the non-governmental sector.

Even in the field of Romani children's inclusion into education there are non-governmental organization's innovative projects going on, that complete the contents of the performing of the strategy of Romani children's educational inclusion that passed. In 2004 The Society of allies for soft landing from Krško prepared a project for the publication of the first multilingual (Romani – Slovenian – English) picture book for children. The project of the making of a bilingual picture book is meant for the Romani community and for the general public also (ibid: 49).

The work on the project CRP "The development of models for Romani's education and training with the intention of assuring an increase of

regular employment” included also the making of a database about programs and projects, performed in Slovenia for the Romani’s training and education in order to raise their employment possibilities. A general evaluation made by the collaborators at the project says that the strategic documents, programs and the projects for the Romani’s education and training, being executed in Slovenia with the intention of ensuring an augmentation of regular employment, are designed professionally, contemporarily and with quality. But they propose a production of a long-term strategy, following the model of the international Decade of Romani inclusion 2005 – 2015 (ibid: 50).

The accessible data about the Romani community’s situation show us a deficiency of highly educated young Romani who could work as Romani leaders within the Romani Community. Some international experiences confirm that providing financial support to individuals for starting and/or continuing their studies can tear up a vicious circle – early dropping out of school and quitting regular schools, low educational level and low-paid workplaces. That is why the experts propose the establishment of a special fund for the education and training of the Romani community, which would enable them to reach higher educational levels and it would originate from the strategy for improving the Romani community’s situation (ibid: 50-51).

The basic document that arranges the education of immigrant’s children is the completed *Law of Elementary school* whose 1<sup>st</sup> act states that “... with this law the Directive 77/486/EGS of the European council about the education of immigrants-workers children (UL L no. 199 dated August 6, 1977, p. 32–33) is transmitted to the judicial rules of the Republic of Slovenia dated July 25, 1977”. The *Law of Elementary school* states that children that are foreign citizens or stateless persons who live in the Republic of Slovenia also have the right to obligatory elementary education on the same conditions as citizens of the Republic of Slovenia and that they have to have courses of their mother language and culture organized in line with the international agreements (Act 10). They also have the right to enter secondary school. The *Law of kindergartens* does not limit the children of foreign citizens, as for there is written that nursery education proceeds by the principles of equal possibilities for children and parents, considering the differences among children and their right to choose and to be different.

The *Law of education's organization and financing* (1996) mentions, among the educational objectives, the right of every person to education without discrimination or exclusion and it invites to stimulate equal educational possibilities:

- Assuring an optimal development of individuals regardless of their gender, social and cultural origins, religious belief, citizenship, physical and mental constitution;
- Education for a mutual tolerance, developing the consciousness of the equality of genders, the respect for differences and collaboration with others, the respect for children and human rights and fundamental rights, developing equal possibilities for both genders and by that developing the possibilities for a life in a democratic society.

In the May of 2007 the Ministry of Education and Sports passed the document *The strategy of inclusion of children, scholars and students immigrants in the educational system of the Republic of Slovenia*, in which there are written objects, principles and provisions for a more successful inclusion of immigrants into the Slovenian educational system. These written solutions will be carried out with projects within the new financial perspective of the European social fund – the Operative program for the development of human resources for the period 2007 – 2013.

The integration of immigrants children into the Slovenian educational system is proceeding in the form of additional courses if Slovenian language, which has a different definition and the actual practice is still not coordinated with the laws. For the immigrants children, who do not speak Slovenian language yet or they do not know it enough, there is generally one additional hour of Slovenian language a week approved, which means 35 hours a year at the most. It is the Ministry of Education and Sports who determines the number of hours individually for each child taking into account the circumstances, but the schools choose alone the mode of execution. There are no special determinations about the fact who should have this school class and what form should it take. Lawfully there is no special time intended for the learning of Slovenian language at the immigrants children's integration in kindergartens, but in the introduction of the *Curriculum for kindergartens* there is written that our attention should be focused on all the children that have a different mother language than Slovenian in order for them to compensate the deficiency in their knowledge of the Slovenian language (Strategy of children inclusion... 2007: 4).

*The strategy of inclusion of children, scholars and students immigrants in the educational system of the Republic of Slovenia* (2007) includes statements that immigrants children have more difficulties listening during classes and following other activities in the school or kindergarten and that they have even more problems integrating into the larger society which is the consequence of an insufficient knowledge of the Slovenian language (to most of these children the Slovenian language is a second/foreign language), undeveloped strategies and instruments to include immigrants children into the educational system and an insufficient participation of the children and their parents in the school and larger Slovenian environment (The strategy of inclusion of children... 2007: 4).

In the continuation the strategy mentions insufficient legal basis that would enable a better planning of the integration procedure of immigrants children into the Slovenian educational system. Based on that we would be able to ensure the means for supporting mechanisms that would enable their integration. The strategies and instruments for the inclusion of immigrants children into the educational system remain unformed. The supporting mechanisms are unclearly elaborated for a successful inclusion of immigrants children (a systematic disposition, additional professional help, education and training for the professional workers in the educational institutions);

There are unfinished normative and professional basis for the adaptation on the program level (objectives, learning standards) and on the level of knowledge assessment (how to evaluate the children's progress in Slovenian language and other courses); the time estimated for the child's adaptation period to the Slovenian educational system and environment and the social position of the child remains indeterminate; unfinished strategies and unformed instructions for the work of the entire educational and teaching personnel with immigrant's children (not just for counselors and Slovenian language teachers) and a lack of methodical and didactic knowledge for the work with this target group. The participants come across professional workers with a lack of adequate professional knowledge and skills for a quality and stable collaboration with the parents immigrants (strategies for communication with the parents immigrants, strategies for the inclusion of the parents immigrants into the kindergarten and school environment,...); adequate education and material with examples of work with the parents immigrants; an insufficient knowledge of important linguistic elements and the immigrant's culture with which we could avoid eventual misunderstanding or we would be able to establish contacts more easy with the parents and stimulate them to collaborate; the pedagogical

worker's insufficient knowledge and skills for encouraging an international communication between the Slovenian parents and parents immigrants and an insufficient financial support to help with the communication with the parents immigrants (a lack of financial support for a translator, for the preparation of bilingual invitations, instructions, messages...) (The strategy of inclusion of children... 2007: 5).

The insufficient knowledge of immigrant's children of the Slovenian language is also influenced by the number of hours meant for the teaching of the Slovenian language as a secondary language which is not clearly defined and in most of the cases it is even insufficient; there is no suitable lesson plans and teaching instruments for teaching the Slovenian language as a secondary language; the profile of the teacher that have classes of the Slovenian language as a secondary language, it is not defined, that is why the teachers mostly do not have the proper knowledge and frequently do not even have the proper formation (teachers of other subjects, social workers, pedagogues, etc.); the trainings where the teachers should get the proper methodical-didactic knowledge to teach the Slovenian language as a secondary language are not systematically organized. And also, there is no proper education and training for the kindergarten's professional workers to work with preschool children that do not speak Slovenian; the teachers of other subjects that teach immigrant's children also, they do not acquire during their studies the proper knowledge and communicational skills to facilitate the attending of their classes for these children (The strategy of inclusion of children... 2007: 5-6).

The evaluation of the importance of the preservation of the immigrant's children's language and culture and their unequal evaluation in comparison to the language and culture of the Slovenian environment remain problematic. Namely:

- unfinished strategies for the immigrant's children's integration into the Slovenian cultural environment and a simultaneous consideration and preservation of their language and cultural origins;
- the pedagogic worker's lack of knowledge or of interest in discovering the basic elements of the language and the cultural environment of where the immigrants come from (expressing an interest for another language and culture has an important influence on the immigrant's children's self-image and his motivation for learning, and with the new contents even the knowledge of Slovenian children would enrich);
- an insufficient knowledge of appropriate methods for stimulating the intercultural communication among the children in a group, in the

class (each child should have the possibility to present the basics of his cultural origins).

The strategy also mentions a low level of integrative readiness of the Slovenian community to integrate the immigrant's children and their parents into the school and the larger environment (The strategy of inclusion of children... 2007: 6). The socio-cultural sensibility for individual and community's needs is essential for achieving the social inclusion and inter-culturality that ensure a structural integration on different levels, an informal network integration and a positive influence on the diminution of prejudices and discrimination.

### **Conclusion**

The Slovenian model of the Romani integration into the educational process includes some important starting-points defined in the Strategy of the Romani education. We estimate that the *Strategy of the Romani education* is a good base for the following measures and activities in the field of the Romani inclusion into the educational system on all levels. Some of the measures, envisaged by the strategy, are long-termed and, starting from their basis, it is necessary to elaborate even more detailed plans for their execution. The strategy includes all the essential elements and measures to enable the rise of the educational level of the Romani population in Slovenia and it's consistent execution would bring the desired results; the inclusion, the of the educational level and the consecutive improvement of the employment possibilities of the Romani population in Slovenia. The supervising of the inclusion process and the adopting of new and more effective solutions is necessary, in case the estimated measures do not attain the desired solutions. Besides all that, it is necessary to emphasize the making of good and better relations for the inclusion and the child's school success: teacher – scholars, school – parents, Romani children – non-Romani children.

*The strategy of Romani education* expects an interdisciplinary approach to the raise of the Romani educational level. A holistic approach, a contemporary multidisciplinary practice of Romani question's treatment and an non-racist perspective indicate a willingness for an affective problems solving and they represent a challenge and an opportunity to actualize it all. This is exactly where the actual concept of Romani education claims the shift and completion of the existing educational politics.

Regarding the educational possibilities of the immigrant's children we state that the principle of equal possibilities keeps merely to the declarative level from the immigrant's children point of view. It is a

common knowledge that Slovenia has no proper documents and practical work to respond to the immigrants and their children's needs. Let's also think about the distinctive increase of the immigrant's number in Slovenia in the last period and that these are not immigrants from the ex-Yugoslavia anymore.

The immigrant and Romani culture, language, history, customs and tradition have to find their place by an adequate widening and completion of the existing teaching programs, even in the educational system. In the case of immigrant's children and Romani children, the school equation function should be even more visible. It should enable the children, not predestinated with their origins, the education and success. Moreover, posing the question of educational possibilities for the immigrant's children and Romani children we acknowledge that the school truly does not ensure to anyone an equal intercultural and social development, because of different social parts. A higher social status ensures a better education and vice versa.

The problems of the immigrants and Romani in Slovenian schools or in the educational system require more attention that we offer in the present article. We'd like to expose that the education is vital for the improvement of the immigrants and Romani socio-economic situation, wherein we do not accept their assimilation as a solution, but their integration which does not tolerate stigmatizing, labeling, condemning and the use of prejudices.

The supervision of the execution and verification of achieving the adopted strategies (on national level) in practical work, requires a longer researching period. We suggest one-year evaluation of the achievements and a preparation of annual action plans to perform more effective steps.

## **Summary**

The review of the information about the socio-economic conditions of the Romani shows us that even in today's highly developed society they remain a marginalized group. Their social status is distinctively inferior of the status of the majority population, on the material sphere as in education, occupation and the employment possibilities. The Romani does not reach equal possibilities with the inclusion in the educational system, because of their low socio-economic and ethnic status. The Romani students achieve very low results compared to other children of their age, besides that a lot of them has to take the same year again or they conclude their schooling earlier. The distinctive bad educational results of the Romani children and the increasing number of Romani

children put into adapted programs, compared to the percentage of all the children of school age, point to the problem of the school's unsuccessfulness and behavioral problems that influence the classification of children without identifying and acknowledging other causes for their nonsuccess (socio-economic status, lack of knowledge of the language, culture,...).

In accordance with the low level of education of Romani, the educational deficiency is especially present with the mothers, the percentage of unemployed people is high. A bad education and the parent's unemployment have an enormous effect on the living conditions and educational possibilities for the child. After revising some relevant documents of the Slovenian model of Romani integration into the pedagogical and educational process we state in the present article that they comprehend some important starting-points, arrangements and activities for enabling the rise of the educational level and of the employment level for Romani people in Slovenia. An integral accession and a contemporary multi disciplinary practice of discussing the Romani question and an antiracist perspective indicate a state of preparation for an effective solution of the problems and they represent a challenge and an opportunity to put into practice what quoted.

In Slovenia, like in the other European countries, the problem with low educational levels is also present with the immigrants. The educational structure of the descendants of the immigrants from Yugoslavia is lower than the educational structure of the majority population, but the descendants of immigrants reach an educational structure comparable to the majority population, despite the fact that immigrants children do not get an adequate attention from the field and politics inside the Slovenian educational system. However, children that have a foreign citizenship or stateless children that live in Slovenia have the right to attend the obligatory elementary school under equal conditions as Slovenian citizens, but there are some defectiveness that shows up and that we point out in the article.

Discussing the socio-economic problems of the immigrants and Romani conditions, the educational system and the necessity of the social inclusion represent a starting-point that is a preliminary condition for the realization of educational and employment achievements of underprivileged groups.

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