

How To Educate Roma Children?

Steps in building a more efficient organization for the education of the Roma ethnic minority

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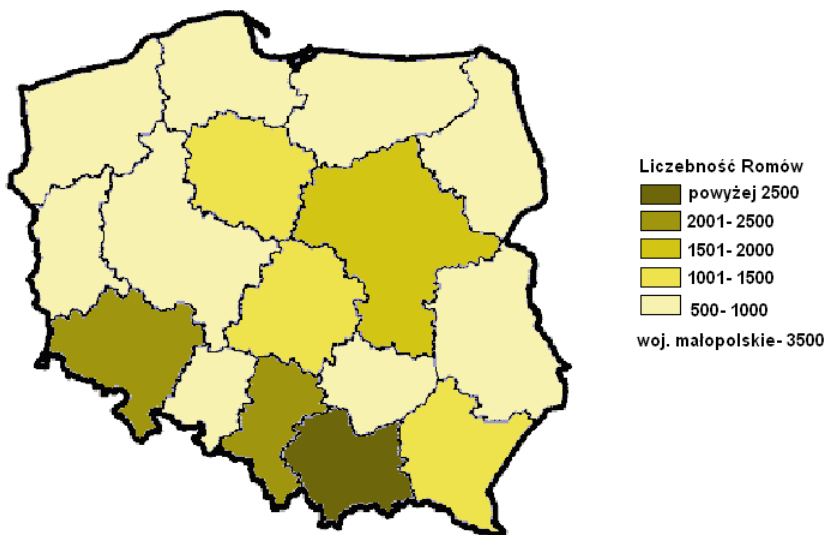
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Introduction

The Roma are an ethnic minority arousing much interest and controversy in contemporary Polish society, which is still almost ethnically uniform. The National Census of Population and Housing in 2011 reported that as much as 93.9% of the Polish population is a homogeneous society with a Polish national identity, and according to the estimates of the Ministry of Interior, the number of Roma in Poland is 20,750, with their highest concentration, a total of 3,500 people, in Malopolska voivodeship (Lesser Poland province). Most Roma living in Lesser Poland are struggling today with the social and economic problems that cause low levels of living and strained relations with the majority community, creating evidence of social exclusion. The key to solving these issues is the education of Roma children in order to raise the levels of education of the Roma community in the future and thus improve their situation in the labour market. Equally important is the education of Polish society in the fight against stereotypes and prejudices which hinder integration.

Fig.1 The population distribution of the Roma ethnic minority in Poland in 2012 (according to estimations by the Ministry of Interior)



Source: Elaborated by A. Świątek based on data from Ministry of Interior



Step 1 A diagnosis of the situation and identification of needs

The first step in the effective implementation of education for Roma children is to identify their economic, cultural and social determinants. A diagnosis has to be made at state level for the planning of large-scale activities (the organization of education, amount of resources, their distribution, etc.), but also on a small scale, by the teachers and other educational staff to plan activities to help a particular group of pupils which may have specific problems and needs. Roma children could be considered to be pupils with special educational needs, therefore before starting to work with them, a diagnosis of the conditions of their situation should be made, which would then plan ways to help.

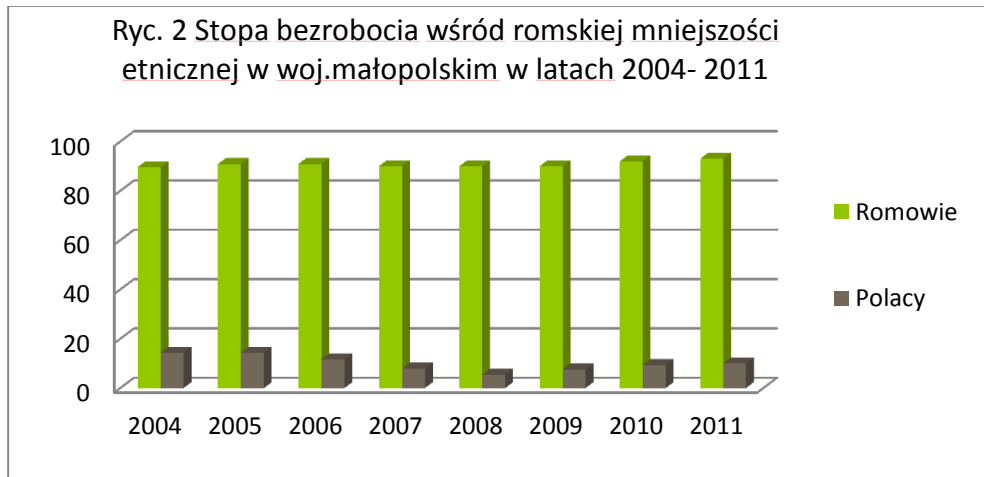
Economic conditions

The Roma are an example of a social group that has not kept pace with economic development of the modern world. It should be noted, however, that economic problems cannot be applied to the entire Roma population. The Roma community in Poland, as well as in other European countries, is diversified internally. Each group differs, among others, in the perception of principles and relationship to the value of work (Paszko 2007). Not all Roma are ineffective in the labour market. Some of them have an entrepreneurial attitude and they effectively run a legitimate business activity (Osuch, Dwojak, 2009b). It is therefore important to plan activities addressed to Roma locally, taking into account the specific situation of a particular group of Roma. The basic value, which determines success in the modern labour market is a high level of education, yet the majority of adult Roma has completed only a few years of primary school and this is also associated with a poor knowledge of the Polish language. A report prepared by the Association of Roma in Poland on behalf of the National Labour Office shows that one third of Roma in Poland has not completed primary school, while only 0.8% of the population under study has a university degree (Paszko, Sulkowski, Zawicki 2007) (Osuch, Dwojak, 2009a).

The ineffectiveness of most Roma in the labour market is confirmed by their high unemployment rate (Fig. 2), which, to make matters worse, has not been reduced despite the advances made by the state government. For example, the level of the unemployment rate among the Roma population in Lesser Poland between 2004 and 2011 remained constantly at around 90% of the Roma, while the unemployment level of the Polish majority was significantly lower. The experience gained through the implementation and evaluation of the "Programme for the Roma community in Poland," conducted in the years 2004 - 2013 showed, that the only sphere of action which might bring an improvement in the economic situation of the Roma is not emergency financial assistance, or even the organization of subsidized jobs, but an improvement in the level of education which could enhance their position dramatically on the labour market.



Fig. 2 Unemployment rates among Roma minority in Lesser Poland in the years 2004-2011



Source: Elaborated by A. Świętek on the basis of data of Polish Ministry of Interior and Polish Statistical Office

Currently, as a result of such a high unemployment rate, as much as 80% of the Roma population is dependent on the state social support networks. The effects of this are poor living conditions and increasing crime (Matulayová, 2001). For Roma work is a boring and not very profitable activity, and they prefer rather short action, often one-off and profitable (Paszko 2007) (Osuch, Dwojak, 2009b). The specific approach of the Roma to work reflects the more unconventional activities, which they were engaged in the past: music, metalwork, production of spoons, spindles, bowls of wood, sieves and combs as well as horse trading (although at times this was not always carried out in a fair manner - they knew the tricks by which during sales the horse looked younger and healthier), coppersmithing, bear taming and divination (Paszko 2007). Besides divination and music-making, all other traditional Roma professions have disappeared (Osuch, Dwojak, 2009b).

During the communist dictatorship, the authorities forcibly assimilated Roma who were evading work and conducted extensive settlement and productivity action, which resulted in the fact that most of the Roma received social housing and a job. Wandering was forbidden and compulsory schooling for them was introduced (Sulkowska-Kądziołka 2007). Despite opposition from the Roma, the majority of them complied with the activities of the authorities, abandoned peripatetic life, took simple jobs and began to send their children to school.

The collapse of communism has brought a strong deterioration of the socio-economic situation of the Roma. Due to poor education, they were the first to be dismissed when employment was being cut, and finding a new job on the capitalist market was almost impossible for them. This situation resulted firstly from their low level of education, but also from the lack of acceptance by the Poles as well as the negative attitude to work from the Roma (Osuch, Dwojak, 2009b).

Today, Roma cannot hold on to their traditional activities, as currently there is no demand for their goods and services. The only traditional Roma profession, in addition to divination, which remains on the market today is trading, so most working Roma trade used cars and clothes, which are very often imported from abroad. This activity is facilitated by their contacts with the representatives of their group in other European countries (Paszko, Sulkowski, Zawicki 2007). They represent, however, a significantly smaller group of those legally employed. Most



Roma still work in the grey zone, or some of them do not work at all so that the Gypsy population in Poland is at constant risk of long-term unemployment (Osuch, Dwojak, 2009b). In this case, it is not difficult to understand that the purchase of textbooks or school supplies is of little interest for them, not to mention participating in school trips, yet these would be such a good opportunity to become familiar with Polish children. The material things which Roma children miss include: clothing appropriate to the season, means of transport to school and living conditions which would allow their own study corner (Kwadrans, 2007). In southern Poland it is also a popular phenomenon of Roma parents to apply for a certificate of the child's disability and inability to learn, in order to obtain family allowances (Wężowicz, Ślósarczyk, 2007), which is one of the main sources of income (Osuch, Dwojak, 2009a). Unemployed parents, unable to fund the education of their children, and not capable of helping them in school, will make them share their fate in future and contribute to the large group of unemployed. These problems of a lack of education, and the closely related unemployment, could be seen as being inherited (Osuch, Dwojak, 2009b).

Educators and teachers need to be aware of the economic conditions of their pupils and try to identify problems. One should begin from self-observation and interviews with the child and his/her parents. By showing interest and concern for the pupil, the teacher builds the pupil's and parents' trust, so that any actions taken are effective. The teacher's attention, recognizing and responding to adverse events on a regular basis, increases the chances of a child pursuing educational requirements. For example, if a Roma schoolchild does not do their homework, the first cause must be sought in their material conditions. It is possible that the pupils have not done their homework, because they do not have school supplies or textbooks as well as their own study corner at home. In this situation, the opportunity to do their homework in school should be arranged and the necessary materials provided (for example, try to get funding from the school or social assistance to subsidize school supplies).

Cultural conditions

Apart from economic determinants, an important factor contributing to the education of Roma children, which must also be diagnosed by educators, are cultural factors. They generate children's behaviour at home and at school.

In their daily lives, Roma people are guided by the principles of the orally transmitted code called *romanipen*. Breaking the rules of *romanipen* means that a Roma is considered "unclean", which may result in different consequences for him/her, and the maximum penalty could be even exclusion from the community. Roma children are raised by their parents in a spirit of respect for Roma principles of life, which may differ greatly on certain issues from the rules of the majority society. Roma, due to notions of cohesion groups, often do not allow non-Roma to know the rules, therefore it is so important to observe Roma pupils, talking to them and searching for the causes of their behaviour in school and beyond. The type and degree of restriction in compliance with the rules depends largely on the Roma group the pupils belong to. For example, in Poland the least restrictive Romani rules are followed by Bergitka Roma (Carpathian Roma), which is the poorest and least respected group among the Roma society and who have been associated with a sedentary life for centuries. Because of their greater openness, it is a group most willing to cooperate in the field of education.

However, there are certain Romani rules respected by almost all Roma. Below are listed the ones that should be recognized by teachers, because they have a big impact on the functioning of Roma children in schools:

- non-territorial, nomadic existence



Even if the group of Roma which school children come from is a settled group, a high level of absenteeism of children may be due to long trips by families to visit their relatives in other cities and even other countries. The key here is to identify the causes of absenteeism and hold discussions with parents on the necessity of regular attendance at school by Roma children and explain the continuous nature of education and its importance.

-social structure

Roma form an ancestral community. "A unit derives its prestige and position in society, and often also the possibility of achieving higher economic status from the membership of a particular family" (Nowicka, 2007). Therefore, a great deal of attention is paid to kinship ties, which are the basis of the social system. Roma rules require the members of the community to show mutual respect, especially for the elderly. This principle implies complete subordination to the parents. The subordination to the parents of Roma children and the elderly family may be the cause of some unexplained behaviour of Roma pupils in the school, including the abandonment of education. It is important, therefore, to establish a good school contact with Roma parents, gaining their trust and belief in the necessity of education.

An important cultural feature resulting from *Romanipen* is the nature of marriages. Romani marriages are monogamous and endogamous, that is celebrated only within their own group. If it happens otherwise, it is stigmatized, and the partner must live according to the principles of Roma. Marriages take place early - girls can be married at the age of 14-15 and boys at the age of 14-17 years (Milewski, 2001). Parents, therefore, expect the girls graduating from gymnasium (lower secondary school) to behave as an adult woman, to start a family, and not to be "wasting time learning." According to the hierarchy existing in the Roma community, a woman has a much lower position than a man; their role is limited to being a mother and wife (Nowicka 2007). The girl at the age of puberty, after the first menstrual period, is considered to be a woman who can get married and this is what is intended for her. Marriages are usually arranged by an agreement between the parents of young people, but even today so-called 'kidnapping' still happens, if the young Roma male snatches the girl of his choice and the relationship is consummated – the parents of the girl, according to the tradition should recognize this relationship (Milewski, 2001). Kidnappings are can be a reason for the supervision that families place on adolescent girls while in school, the cause of their frequent absences and non-participation e.g. in school trips. It is important, therefore, to assure the parents about the safety of Roma girls in the school and teaching family education (in the field of conscious planning of family life).

The greatest value to the Roma families is children. A Gypsy proverb says, "A lot of kids -a lot of luck" (Ficowski, 1985). Treating children as their greatest gift and lack of using contraception almost always results in Romani families having many children. The large number of children from very low income families and the poor quality of housing is one of the main problems of Roma children in Polish schools, as they do not have the resources nor the conditions for learning. Another issue is that the education of children in Polish and Roma families is significantly different and also is the source of much Polish-Roma strife. Roma believe that it is best for children to stay with their parents, so regardless of whether they leave for a few weeks' journey to visit the family or beg outside in bad weather, the parents always take their children with them, resulting in the absence of children in school. On the other hand, Roma children are allowed to become independent much earlier - for example, five-year and six-year-old children are sent alone to do shopping (Milewski, 2001). In the view of the Poles, this is an extreme irresponsibility while according to the Roma - it is teaching independence from an early age. It is important, therefore, to know and understand the rules in force in education within Roma families, the acceptance of some of them, and to try to convince the Roma parents to change those that may endanger the safety and future of their



children. It is essential to carry on conversations with their parents, to listen to their complaints, not to criticize the principles of their culture, respect them and propose a solution which is acceptable, always putting the child's welfare at the forefront of this conversation. Expressing a common concern for their child's future is the best way to work with Roma parents.

Another issue which must be addressed is the Roma attitude towards education. According to Nowicka (2007) many adult Roma underestimate the importance of education: "it's enough when you learn to write, sign up or read something" - that is the end of the ambition of most parents. In her other article, the same author points to a number of problems that Roma children face in school as a result of negligence within the family home, "a child who until the age of seven hasn't had a book, a notebook, a pencil, a coloured pencil or brush in his/her hand and cannot even pick up these items requires additional effort" (Nowicka, 1998). This is also confirmed by other authors. Kolska (2008) cites a statement of a mother of one of the pupils: "What is the school for her? The girl knows how to cook, can take care of home, can switch on the TV. What more do you need?" (Kolska, 2008). In addition, according to the school authorities, many Roma consider school to be "an institution like the police, the municipal authority, or prison" (Kolaczek, Talewicz-Kwiatkowska, 2007).

An important principle is the rule requiring the Roma to speak the Romani language. Roma groups adhering to this principle teach Roma children only the Romani language at home, so that Roma children starting school might not know the language of the majority. The only advice in this situation is to treat children as bilingual and explain to them about this type of education. All previously cited rules affect the behaviour of Roma children in schools. It should therefore be ensured that school is not viewed by the parents as a place where Roma children are not required to comply with its rules. Otherwise, Roma cannot send their children to school in the name of preserving their cultural identity, and the school will be regarded as a threat and a tool of acculturation.

Rules of purity

Roma comply with the code on the rules of purity of food and behaviour (in particular women and against women). Particularly curious, from the point of view of Polish customs is "unclean" food. Food that is considered to be "unclean" is not suitable for human consumption, and this may happen, for example, when it has had some contact with a woman's lower body parts (e.g. it is touched by a skirt) which is considered to be "unclean", or will be washed in a bowl in which women's underwear was washed once. The principle of purity applies to a woman in the literal sense (she cannot prepare meals during childbirth and menstruation) and moral (she is required modest clothing, including a long skirt covering the legs, and not wearing makeup) (Mróz, 1986). Until the time to marry, a girl should be "clean", which should be respected by the group. Any suspicion otherwise may result in bad publicity and she will never get married and start the family (Staniszewski, 2004). As a result, Roma girls drop out of school, for fear of being accused of impurity or being kidnapped by a Roma male (as was mentioned earlier it is one of the still existing methods of getting a wife) or more often because they get married very early or become pregnant (Kwadrans, 2007) (Osuch, Dwojak, 2009a).

The rules of purity for the Roma also prohibit them taking work that is considered to be 'dirty', e.g. in the fields, cleaning streets, but also all professions related to the interior of the human body and blood (such as being a doctor or nurse), and this should be considered when planning the organization of school practices or vocational training for adult Roma.



Rules prohibit the Roma referring disputes to the non-Roma authorities, so even when Roma children are victims of some nasty behaviour from their peers, they often do not want to talk about it with teachers. In this situation the teacher should clearly communicate to all the children which rules apply in school.

Religion

In matters of religion Roma remain pragmatic. They usually adopt the dominant religion of the population that lives there. So it is in the case of Polish Roma, the majority of who are Catholics. Religiosity of Roma varies locally, as it is dependent on the degree of assimilation with the Polish population. The closer the relationship, the more the Roma religion is practiced, by sending their children to religious education and receiving the sacraments, of which the most important among Roma is baptism (Bartosz, 2004b). They also often receive their First Holy Communion. The Roma rarely celebrate church weddings as the traditional gypsy wedding is important for them. In turn, the funeral of Polish Roma cannot be done without a Catholic priest, and the confession of sins and cleansing is very important to them. To profess the same religion can be an important field for integration among pupils in school. In order to build a sense of integration, Roma children should be involved in school events of a religious nature (e.g. the organization of Christmas Eve in the class). This will allow all pupils to see that there are elements of culture and traditions that unite them.

Social conditions

The last group of conditions resulting from and deeply linked to the economic and cultural determinants are social factors. Poor financial situation, noticeable differences in the behaviour and customs of the Roma are the cause of prejudice and intolerance, causing the reluctance of Roma parents and their children to attend school. The second important feature of the local Roma community that should be recognized by teachers and educators is the attitude towards education, which may have a decisive impact on the implementation of compulsory education for Roma pupils.

Roma parents who are less interested in education are often dominated by the belief that the values and education in Polish schools are a tool of acculturation, which will result in the assimilation of the Roma community into Polish society, to the extent that it will be absorbed by it, and finally completely disappear. However, many authorities of the Roma community believe the opposite, and they indicate education as the only way for Roma to escape from poverty and social exclusion (Nowicka 2007). It is therefore necessary to organize lectures on culture covering the cultural elements of all the national and ethnic groups to which students belong in the class. It is important to remember not to oppose the cultural characteristics of the groups, and to see their diversity as part of the wealth of the region.

Many Roma parents do not understand the need for continuity in the learning process and the fact that it lasts so long. Roma would like education to have an immediate effect. A continuous education system interferes too much with trips which can last several months, to their families who live far away. The average school attendance of Roma children in Lesser Poland is quite high compared with other regions (up to 75%). Even those gifted children attending school often end their education at a lower stage, as poor housing conditions prevent them from learning at home and doing homework. It is important, therefore, to monitor continuously the absence of Roma children in schools, to know the cause and deal with those that may be the fault of the school (fear of children from very difficult lessons, intolerant peers, breaking the rules of their culture).



Another reason for the problems of Roma children, caused by the parents, is a very low level of education mentioned in the previous section, and the associated lack of a tradition of education among the Roma. Uneducated parents, even if they are in favour of education, are often illiterate and are therefore unable to help their children when learning activities that they enjoy. For these parents, the prevailing view is that the maximum level of their children's education can be a vocational school because it will give them a job. A sense of inferiority by parents is transmitted to the children who grow up in the knowledge that they have no opportunities to achieve these qualifications and work in the way that Polish children have. This is confirmed by the responses of Roma children in the survey conducted by Wężowicz-Bochenek and Ślósarczyk (2007) in gymnasium in Łososina Górna (a village in the Lesser Poland). When girls were asked about their plans for their future, and specifically the professions they would like to go into in the future, they indicated a hairdresser, a beautician and a clerk, while the boys would like to become a car mechanic or a bricklayer. 67% of the respondents were planning to continue their education after lower secondary school (only 17% of them in comprehensive schools). Only 10% of respondents plan to go to university, only girls and surprisingly those who after graduating gymnasium would like to choose a vocational school (Osuch, Dwojak, 2009a).

Therefore, Roma children need the support of their teachers in the learning process and planning their educational path. After the children determine their aspirations for a future profession, activities should be organized within school which will indicate to the pupils how they can achieve the necessary education to do this. The educational opportunities of local schools (including vocational) are worth analysing and presenting to pupils, as this can also motivate pupils to continue learning and to show them the potential opportunities that can result from their efforts.

A major problem at the beginning of the educational path is when Roma parents do not send their children to a nursery school, so that when at school they do not even know letters and numbers, not to mention reading, writing or counting, and they lack basic knowledge about the world, which a child of that age would normally have. For many Roma children they have little or no command of the Polish language when starting school (Nowicka, 1998). Not sending their children to nursery school is dictated, not so much by a concern for the welfare of the child, but is due to a lack of financial resources. After the fall of communism, when governments no longer fully finance the functioning of nursery schools, Roma parents stopped sending their children there as this was now an additional cost (Kwadrans, 2007). It is therefore necessary to take action at national and local level to organize pre-school for Roma children in order to prepare them adequately for primary school. Important characteristics of Roma children to be considered when organising education and teaching, are group cohesion, the habit and the need for intimacy, emotional spontaneity and lively temperament, willingness to share, their tendency to 'live in the moment', and their basic emotion, which is fear. Staniszewski (2004) adds to these characteristics the following: strong intra-ties, being brought up in a spirit of respect for tradition and a code of customs, respect for the older members of the community and far-reaching adjustment to their decisions, even in the most intimate and private affairs (Staniszewski, 2004). These characteristics should be taken into account when working with Roma children, focusing on integrating Roma children with their school peers. A lack of openness is one of the causes of the problems of integration of Roma children in the school. Acceptance of Roma children in Polish schools is one of the most important conditions for the implementation of their school duties and educational success. Firstly, since they feel a lack of acceptance and do not want to expose their children to discomfort, Roma parents do not want to send them to school, and secondly because they experience reluctance and difficulties, the children themselves will have no motivation to go to school. Moreover, attending school is a more difficult task for them than their Polish peers as they must first deal with their lack of knowledge and language skills. Additionally, because of the prevalence of social distance between Poles and Roma (Jasińska-Kania, 2009), caused on both sides by negative



stereotypes, the problems of integration are considered by most authors as the most important educational problems of Roma children in Polish schools. A stereotypical, negative image of Roma in the Polish consciousness is confirmed by numerous studies conducted among Polish adults and adolescents.

According to studies on the attitudes of Poles towards the representatives of minorities, including the Roma, conducted by A. Jasińska-Kania (2009), more than 70% of adult Poles were in favour of returning Roma to Poland, giving them Polish citizenship, employing them in their workplace, making friendships with them, or have them live in their neighbourhood. Only half agreed, however, to the Roma taking leadership positions in the workplace, and less than half agree that Roma should be elected as members of local authorities, or marry members of their families. According to B. Wężowicz-Bochenek and I. Śłosarczyk (2007), 84% of Polish pupils were in favour of a permanent influx of immigrants into Poland, but for the most their approval depended on the nationality of the visitor -among these 84% only 19% of people do not wish Roma to immigrate. As for the direct question of tolerance, less than half of the respondents considered themselves to be tolerant towards the Roma, a quarter answered "no", and the rest had no opinion. Analogous results have raised the question of the acceptance of the Roma within a class. 20% of respondents, however, believe that the rest of the class would not accept it. When considering a school exchange only 3% of respondents would welcome Roma at their homes and 59% would not host Roma pupils. This is due to stereotypes. In response to a question about the association of characteristics of selected nations, in the case of the Roma, the most common association was theft (Śłosarczyk, Wężowicz-Bochenek, 2007). Unfair stereotypes of the Roma existing in the consciousness of Polish society regardless of age, has remained the same and has not changed despite the facts which undermine it. Positive "cases" are treated as exceptions that prove the rule (Mróz, 1986). What should be noted, however, is that prejudices do not exist solely from the Poles to Roma, but also vice versa. The evidence of this can be seen by the use of a pejorative term "gadzio" used by Roma against all "non-gypsies". Prejudices deepen the difficulties of Roma children in education and make them reluctant to go to school. According to sociometric research conducted by the authors in several villages in Lesser Poland voivodeship, in integrated Polish-Romani classes, Roma children are excluded or in the best case isolated by the rest of the pupils. However, they indicate that people they would most often like to stay with, as being their Roma friends or colleagues.

All the above conditions must first be recognized by teachers and educators working in the Roma environment. In addition to talking to the children, their parents and carrying out self-observation, valuable information can be provided by the use of a survey that teachers can carry out in their own classrooms.

Below there are some examples of research tools - two survey questionnaires for Polish-Romani integration classes. These questionnaires can help teachers to diagnose the educational circumstances of their pupils. The first questionnaire is directed to non-Roma pupils and the second one for Roma pupils. The primary objective of the study of non-Roma children is to determine their degree of tolerance towards Roma colleagues. In light of research conducted in several classes in Lesser Poland, it turned out that with the increasing proximity of social relationships (in this case - the adoption of a pupil of a different nationality to the pupil's home), the degree of tolerance decreases and Roma are the nations least likely to be seen at home by the other pupils.

The second questionnaire is aimed at children. In this questionnaire Roma pupils are asked indirectly about their family situation, access to school supplies, support of the teachers and parents in the learning process, and also about a sense of acceptance in the classroom. In both questionnaires, the final question was: "With whom would you most like/not like to sit on the bench?" This used the technique of sociometric research by J Moreno applied in



pedagogical research. Pupils answering questions indicate the three classmates for whom they wish or do not wish to remain in close social relationships (in this case the joint sitting on the bench). Based on pupils' responses, one can distinguish persons most popular in the class ("sociometric stars" - most often mentioned positive), those rejected (usually indicated negatively) and isolated persons (not seen by the rest of the class - not indicated by almost anyone neither positively nor negatively). In the case of Roma children often a couple or group of children agree (showing mutual positive attitude), due to a strong cohesive group of Roma children. The answers to these simple questions provided the teachers with valuable information about the relationships within the class teams.

Survey

This survey is aimed at primary school pupils. The survey is anonymous. The survey deals with education and tolerance. All information submitted by you will be used only for research. Your honest feedback is very important and helpful to me.

Selected response should be marked "X" in the appropriate box or circled "Yes" or "No".

1. Gender female male

2. Nationality.....

3. Number of siblings

4. What is the level of education of your parents?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| mother | father |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tertiary | <input type="checkbox"/> tertiary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> secondary | <input type="checkbox"/> secondary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> vocational | <input type="checkbox"/> vocational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> primary | <input type="checkbox"/> primary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> none | <input type="checkbox"/> none |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know |

5. Who would you like to be in the future.....

6. What are your interests?.....
.....
.....



7. How do you participate in school?

	Yes	No
- participation in school government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- participation in class government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- taking part in competitions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- going to extra activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- playing team games	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- playing in the band	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- singing in the choir	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- another activity (what?.....)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Do you have problems in school with:

	Yes	No
- solving tasks in mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- writing stories in Polish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- exercises during PE lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- drawing at art lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- lessons on the environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Do you have all the school supplies you need in your house? Yes / No

10. Do you turn to teachers for help if you have any problems in school? Yes / No

11. Do teachers help you if you ask them for help? Yes / No

12. Do your parents help you if you need help with homework? Yes / No

13. Do your parents encourage you to learn and go to school? Yes / No

14. Do your parents regularly attend the parent-school? Yes / No

15. Do your parents work?

Yes No only one parent is working

In what occupation do they work?

.....

16. Are you tolerant? Yes/ No

Why?.....

.....

17. Would you like to be in your class only with people of your nationality? Yes / No



18. If you were to host a pupil of another nationality during school exchange, **would you like him/her to be:**

	Yes	No	I don't know
German	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Russian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Czech	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Slovak	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jew	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Roma	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
British	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Italian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
French	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
American	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nigerian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
other.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

19. Are Roma pupils treated in your school the same as Polish children? Yes/ No
 Why?.....

20. Who would you like to sit next to on the bench in school? Enter the names of three pupils in your class in the order of who you would most like to sit next to.

21. Who wouldn't you like to sit next to on the bench in school? Enter the names of three pupils in your class in the order of who you wouldn't most like to sit next to.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.



Survey

This survey is aimed at primary school pupils. The survey is anonymous. The survey deals with education and tolerance. All information submitted by you will be used only for research. Your honest feedback is very important and helpful to me.

Selected response should be marked "X" in the appropriate box or circled "Yes" or "No".

1. Gender female male
2. Nationality..... Polish Romani other (which one?).....
3. Number of siblings
4. What is the level of education of your parents?

mother:	father:
<input type="checkbox"/> tertiary	<input type="checkbox"/> tertiary
<input type="checkbox"/> secondary	<input type="checkbox"/> secondary
<input type="checkbox"/> vocational	<input type="checkbox"/> vocational
<input type="checkbox"/> primary	<input type="checkbox"/> primary
<input type="checkbox"/> none	<input type="checkbox"/> none
<input type="checkbox"/> I don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't know
5. Did you attend to nursery school? Yes/ No
6. Who would you like to be in the future.....
7. What are your interests?.....
.....
.....
8. How did you spend your free time?
9. Where did you spend your last summer holidays?
10. Do you have problems in school with:

	Yes	No
- solving tasks in mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- writing stories in Polish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- exercises during PE lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- drawing in art lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- lessons on the environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Do you have all the school supplies you need in your house? Yes / No
12. Do you turn to teachers for help if you have any problems in school? Yes / No
13. Do teachers help you if you ask them for help? Yes / No
14. Do your parents help you if you need help with homework? Yes / No



15. Do your parents encourage you to learn and go to school? Yes / No

16. Do your parents regularly attend the parent-school? Yes / No

17. Do your parents work?

Yes No only one parent is working

In what occupation do they work?

.....

18. How do you participate in activities at school?

	Yes	No
- Acting in school self-government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Take part in competitions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Perform function in class self-government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Go to extra activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Playing a team sport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Dancing in a team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Singing in the choir	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Other classes (please, specify	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

19. Do you learn foreign languages? Yes / No (if yes, which one?)

20. Are among your friends/colleagues people from other nationalities? Yes / No

If so, which one?

21. Would you like to be in your class only with people of your nationality? Yes / No

22. Do you feel accepted by your class? Yes / No

23. Whom would you like to sit next to in school? Enter the names of three pupils from your class in the ranking who you would like to sit next to most.

.....
.....

24. Whom would not you like to sit next to in school? Enter the names of three pupils from your class in the ranking who you would not like to sit next to most.

.....
.....
.....

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.



Step 2 Creation of regulation and organization of education

Once the educational situation of Roma children is determined, the second step is the analysis and adaptation of regulation for the effective organization of the education of Roma children taking into account the identified concerns and needs.

The organization of education for Roma children in Poland is governed by Polish law constituting the law on national and ethnic minorities, as well as international agreements. Basic records on national and ethnic minorities in Poland are included by the following:

- Polish Constitution of 2 April 1997, providing citizens equality under the law, freedom to maintain and develop the language, customs, culture and traditions of minorities, the right to establish cultural and educational institutions in order to maintain the identity, non-discrimination in political, social and economic life, the right to education, which is compulsory until the age of 18, and free public schools.

- Act of 7 September 1991 on the education system, containing rules of compliance with compulsory education. When the pupil's unexcused absence is for more than 50% of classes in a month this obligation is deemed not to be fulfilled. School heads are responsible for the control of compulsory education. The heads receive a list of school-age children who should attend their schools from the local authorities, according to the zoning of pupils at lower levels of education (primary and secondary).

School heads verify if all the children on the list attend their or any other school, and when they detect a child who is not attending school, they try to contact the parents. If after a meeting of representatives of education (the head, teachers, counsellors or psychologists) with pupils' parents, they still do not send their child to school, the head reports the case to the authority supervising the school. If the intervention of local authorities does not work, the case is referred to the family court. This is obviously the last resort, because school staff endeavour to convince parents of Roma children to send them to school. In the case of consistent refusal, the law can compel parents to bring their children to school. The court has the power to impose fines on parents not pursuing compulsory schooling or the use of restraint (even bringing the child to school). If the court finds that children not attend school due to the fault of parents, they can be placed in an educational centre, through which they will pursue compulsory education.

- The Regulation of the Ministry of National Education and Sport of 3 December 2002 on the conditions and the way in which the schools and public institutions perform tasks enabling the maintenance of national, ethnic, linguistic and religious identity of pupils belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups. The Regulation requires schools and public institutions to maintain and develop a sense of identity by learning the minority language, history, geography and culture of the country of origin, and to teach art or other extracurricular activities. Learning a language in accordance with the Regulation should be done in schools with classes conducted in the minority language (except the subjects: Polish, geography, history, society), bilingual schools, schools where the minority language is an additional subject (3 hours per week), or in inter-school forms of language teaching, if there is a lack of sufficient numbers of pupils or teachers in a single school. The most common way to implement the teaching of minority languages by schools (92% of units) is to teach it as an additional subject (Sawyer, 2007). In addition to the language, the Regulation highlighted the history and geography of the country of origin of minorities, ordering their teaching within the curricula and textbooks. However, this Regulation is hardly implemented in schools with Roma children.



- Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language of 6 January 2005. This Act sets out specific tasks for which funds are provided from the state budget in the form of targeted subsidies. These include: publishing of books and magazines in Polish or the language of minorities, support for television and radio programmes implemented by the minority, running clubs and theme libraries, promoting knowledge about minorities, and finally, the education of children and young people effected in various forms.

- the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 14 November 2007 on the conditions and manner of the tasks implemented by pre-school, schools and public institutions to allow maintenance of their national, ethnic and linguistic diversity of pupils belonging to national minorities and ethnic communities speaking a regional language. This Regulation draws attention to the education of the Roma minority in a unique way: "schools take if necessary, additional measures aimed at maintaining and developing a sense of ethnic identity of Roma pupils, and supporting the education of these pupils, in particular, they run remedial classes" (...) "the school can hire a teacher as an assistant of Roma education. Roma education assistants provide support to Roma pupils in contacts with the school and interact with their parents, and the school "(Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 14 November 2007).

All the above regulations constitute the legal framework for the operation and acquisition of public funds for the education of Roma children in Poland. Polish law also implements the international agreements signed by Poland (we have this list, but we do not quote them in detail).

The organization of education of Roma children in Poland

Educational activities of state authorities towards Roma have been taken in Poland for the first time in the mid-1960s. One of the elements of the national plan of "civilizing" of Roma people was, after stopping the convoys, the start of the enforcement of compulsory education. Roma viewed this strong interference of the state in their daily life as repression and they spoke out against it actively. A strong educational administration forced on them the implementation of compulsory education, primarily through the threat of financial penalties. Roma of all ages, from seven year olds to teenagers, usually married, became the first year pupils at primary schools (Milewski, 2004). The result was a very negative attitude of the Roma to school and lessons: they did not study, systematically cut classes, did not do homework, and often repeated the class. Roma, who at the commencement of the enforcement of compulsory education had a dozen years, went to school only up to the age of maturity, and did not even learn to read and write. Many Roma children were directed to psychological tests, similar to those which have been used for Polish children, and therefore not adapted linguistically and culturally to the Roma. Poor management of test results caused the transfer of a significant percentage of Roma children into special schools (Milewski, 2004).

In the transition period, the social situation of the Roma community has definitely worsened, which has had a direct negative impact on their education. In the communist period, pupils received free school meals, textbooks and basic school supplies. After the fall of communism, the Roma are no longer as subsidized by the state (Kwadrans, 2007). The constraint of compulsory education has also weakened, so that the number of Roma children in Polish schools has fallen dramatically. At the end of the 1980s, in response to the problems of Roma pupils making the adjustment to Polish schools, in the south of Poland Roma classes were formed, founded by a priest, Stanislaw Opocki (now the National Chaplain of the Roma). Initially, they were informal Sunday schools where Roma children were catechized, taught to read, write and count (Milewski, 2004). The increase in the popularity and visible progress made by Roma children, prompted teachers cooperating with the priest to develop a specific curriculum and submit it to the Ministry of National Education (Milewski, 2004). The programme was

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approved in 1992 and was implemented in Roma classes as a pedagogical experiment. This plan was "a special three-year primary education for Roma" (Kwadrans, 2007). The plan envisioned a programme of teaching children in exclusively Roma grades, which provided children and parents with a sense of security. The programme intended that within three years the pupil would reach the standards of the Polish public school, and most of all learn the Polish language, reading, writing and counting. Classes were conducted in Polish, but Romani was a vehicular language. Those developing the curricula have focused not only on catching up knowledge and skills, but equally on the achievement of educational goals. After graduating from school, children were to move to Polish primary schools and learn in integrated classes, or to continue their education at a programme specially arranged for them, in the case of children who did not cope well at Polish school (Milewski, 2004). The decision about whether a child has to attend Roma classes or a regular public school was the responsibility of their parents.

Despite a great deal of satisfaction of Roma pupils and their parents with this new mode of teaching, and a significant improvement in attendance and learning outcomes, many Roma activists were against Roma classes. The main complaint was the creation of "Gypsy ghettos" (Milewski, 2004). According to some authors, the formation of Roma classes were intended to separate Polish children from the Roma, which could be a germ of an idea for creating racial segregation and discrimination in education. Therefore, since 2003, separate Roma classes have been eliminated (Wądrzyk, 2008). Today, there are no longer any Roma classes in Polish schools. This is consistent with the intention of the creators of the programme, who did not want Roma classes to become a permanent model of education for Roma children in Poland, but a temporary form of assistance in adapting to education in Polish schools (Milewski, 2004). The decision to complete the elimination of Roma classes was also strongly supported by the head of the Association of the Roma in Poland and was approved by the Ministry of Education. As a result of this decision, currently all Roma children attend integrated Polish-Roma classes. This decision, however, met with fierce opposition from Roma parents and the heads of schools in which Roma classes existed, frequently say that their cessation took place in the name of misguided tolerance and took away the chance of a normal education away from Roma children.

Also noteworthy is a lack of consistency in the views of the Polish government on Roma nursery schools, which in some ministerial circles are considered to be a very good idea to eliminate the problems of children, even before they go to school. In parallel with the work of the Ministry of Education, which began the cessation of Roma classes, (but did not have a new concept as to how to help Roma children in integrated classes) this issue was also discussed at the Ministry of the Interior, which is responsible for ancillary activities in relation to the representatives of national and ethnic minorities in Poland. The Ministry applied the concept of the "Programme for the Roma community in Poland," which became an effective tool of education for Roma children in Poland.



Step 3 Creating a tool for the implementation of the right to education of Roma children

The first state programme, which met the implementation of minority rights, included both in Polish and international law, as well as the need for assistance to the Roma in Poland, was the "Programme for the Roma community in Poland" created by the Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with other ministries, and Roma representatives. The programme was introduced in 2004 for all Poland, preceded by a trial version in the Lesser Poland voivodeship, under the name "Pilot Government Programme for the Roma Community in the Malopolska Province for the Years 2001 to 2003" (website of the Ministry of Interior). The creators of the programme were: the Ministry of the Interior, the territorial government of Lesser Poland, Roma organizations (Roma participation in the development and implementation of the programme is one of the basic conditions for its success) and non-governmental organizations (website of the Ministry of Interior). The implementers of the programme were the "representatives of the Roma community, local governments (the basic units on which the programme is based are municipalities), and non-governmental organizations, which are close to the problems of the Roma society (Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, the Foundation for Rural Development, the European Institute for Democracy, Stefan Batory Foundation, the Bureau of Citizens Advice of the Association of the Centre of Social Information, Polish Children and Youth Foundation" (website of the Ministry of Interior).

The overall objective of the programme was to achieve equal levels and opportunities between Poles and Roma in areas such as education, employment, health, hygiene, housing conditions, and the ability to function in civil society. The specific objectives of the programme in the field of education, which has been recognized as a priority element of the project, are: "to increase the completion rate, improved attendance and learning outcomes of Roma children and youth and to facilitate continuing education in secondary schools" (website of the Ministry of the Interior). To achieve these objectives, as part of a pilot programme in 2001-2003, and then nationwide, the following actions are taken:

- financial supporting of learning in "zero classes" and the possibility of its extension,
- introduction of compensatory classes, enabling gaps to be overcome,
- enable homework being done at school under the supervision of a teacher,
- organization of interest groups to enhance the elementary knowledge of the world, which Roma children lack,
- organizing classes devoted to the culture and traditions of the Roma,
- conducting educational and integration classes for children and young people to promote tolerance and to adapt to the new environment of the Roma,
- encouraging children to participate in contests and competitions at school and sporting events,
- establishing clubs where children can spend time under the supervision of teachers,
- organization of psychological and educational assistance for parents and children,
- organizing educational activities for Roma adults
- organization of training courses for youth and adults,
- organizing meetings with parents on school duty and obligation to teach children,
- organizing summer vacation in an inclusive camp for Roma and Polish children,
- to allow the participation of Roma children in summer and winter camps,
- the employment of Roma parents who will bring in and escort children to and from school and look after them during field activities, trips and events,



- supporting their stay in nursery school,
- supporting the purchase of textbooks, teaching aids and school supplies,
- co-financing of transport of children to schools,
- co-financing of feeding children in school
- co-financing of pupil's insurance against accidents (website of the Ministry of Interior).

The pilot programme tried to implement these goals, and was carried out in the districts of Limanowa, Nowy Sącz, Nowy Targ and the Tatra Mountains in the years 2001 - 2003 in Lesser Poland. This area is home to approximately 3.5 thousand Roma (more than 10% of all Roma living in Poland). During the programme, its creators and implementers wanted to gain experience and improve it so that it would be the basis for a national programme for the Roma population. In many schools in southern Poland these activities have been carried out successfully and showed a deep sense of introducing the proposed activities throughout the country. Of course one cannot talk about full success yet. This two-year trial showed, however, that change is possible.

On the basis of the pilot programme, the "Programme for the Roma community in Poland" was created. This programme began in 2004 and was scheduled until 2013 across the entire country with the possibility of continuing in the following years. Its scope includes the case of education, the fight against unemployment, health, living conditions, crimes against ethnic peoples, the support and promotion of Roma culture, knowledge about the Roma in Polish society, and knowledge of the changes taking place in Poland among the Roma. The activity area was then extended in comparison with the pilot programme. In addition to all actions taken under the pilot programme, it also introduced "aesthetic education of children and youth through direct contact with the art of Roma youth, helping young people to develop their artistic talents, develop a system of scholarships for Roma students, the development of a system of grants for artistically talented Roma children and youth, development of textbooks and curricula for the Romani language, development of textbooks on the history and culture of the Roma "(website of Ministry of the Interior).

A very important new initiative that was implemented after the introduction of the programme in 2004 was the creation of positions within schools for a supporting teacher and a Roma assistant. With the experience of the pilot programme, special attention was placed on carrying out the nationwide programme on pre-school education and the treatment of Roma children, as foreign and bicultural. The state and local governments as well as NGOs are responsible for financing the programme for the Roma and some supporting resources are derived from European funds. The state budget funds for the programme come from the special reserve, which is at the disposal of the Ministry of the Interior. They are supplemented "by the local government as well as international and national organizations interested in supporting the Roma" (the website of Ministry of the Interior). The procedure for obtaining funds begins in the middle of each year, when the Minister announces an open competition for those involved in the programme (these include local government units, non-governmental organizations or other entities engaged in public, such as universities, educational institutions, churches or media) (the website of Ministry of Interior). Then the operators submit an application to the provincial governors, and after consideration, the Minister decides to award a grant. When the Finance Act comes into force, the Minister sends funds to the provinces, where they go to the applicants. If the proposals are of a national character, they are transferred directly from the Minister. In the case of education, the Minister of Education is involved in the allocation of budget subsidies while a provincial superintendent is a consultant. If, during the year, the resources for the planned activities are no longer available, applicants can apply for it within 1% of the reserves of the general subsidies. Each year, public money of about 12 million (3 million euros) is spent on the programme. Additional funds from the



European Union are obtained under the Operational Programme Human Capital-"Roma Component" on the basis of a call for proposals. The projects adopted are financed by the European Union at 85%, while the remaining 15% comes from national resources (the website of the Ministry of the Interior).

"The programme for the Roma community in Poland" has become a tool for the actual implementation of the education of Roma children in Poland, thanks to the wide range of help, and above all, because of the creation of the necessary positions of a Roma assistant and a teacher to support Roma education, which will be described in more detail in the next step.

Step 4 Facilitation - supporting Roma children in compulsory education

A necessary condition for the achievement of education for Roma children is direct support from the adults in the school. Therefore, the programme created two special positions: Roma assistants and support teachers who work every day with children in school. Facilitation of the education of Roma children is only the fourth step in the way to successful education of Roma children.

The role of supporting teacher

Supporting teacher - (understood here in the broader context of integrated classes in Polish education system) - a graduate from special education (five-year master degree studies or of three-year bachelor's degree and two-year master degree). Possible specializations: surdopedagogy (education of children and young people hard of hearing and deaf), oligophrenopedagogy (pedagogy of moderate and severe intellectual disabilities), tyflopädagogik (pedagogy of visually impaired). In the integration classes of mainstream primary and lower secondary school, the teacher's specialty does not really matter. In special education and therapeutic classes special educators with a particular specialty are hired.

Integrated classes - classes of up to 20 pupils, with a maximum of five pupils with learning difficulties or social maladjustment. Classes with Roma pupils are integrated classes.

In the case of single Roma pupils in the school, only the head teacher notes that fact in their documentation. If they do not have problems, Roma pupils attend regular classes. At the request of the parents or legal guardians (also at the instigation of the Roma assistant) a pupil may be directed to a counseling service in order to determine an individual curriculum or to assess their degree of disability, which gives rise to a referral to the integrated class. In practice within Roma minority communities, groups of Roma children attend integrated classes.

Special educator - in addition to the lessons in integrated classes (with a supporting teacher) individual sessions with pupils are conducted (2 hours per week), after a decision is taken (determining an individual programme) following psychological counselling (individual rehabilitation).



Duties of a supporting teacher (a special education teacher):

- taking care of the interests of the integrating child
- active cooperation with subject teachers
- contact with parents (guardians) of pupils - in classes with Roma this role is taken over by the Roma assistant
- assistance in solving difficult tasks (commands)
- selection of tasks in class and homework adjusted to the integrated pupil's capabilities
- control of the notes during rewriting from the blackboard and at the time of dictation by the teacher
- modification of tests and quizzes
- participation in the evaluation
- informing teachers about the possibilities of integrating pupils
- additional individual explanation of the commands and messages
- cooperation with the teacher (flow of information)
- modification of the content and requirements of the programme in collaboration with the subject teacher
- explaining incomprehensible commands during tests and quizzes
- carrying out integrating activities in the first grades
- the organization of recruitment to the first integrated classes

The role of the subject teacher in an integrated classroom

- applying demonstrative methods, gradation of difficulties and activating methods
- incorporating suggestions of a special educator (supporting teacher) concerning the capabilities of a child
- consultation with a special educator in the assessment of quizzes, tests and oral answers
- informing a special educator about prepared lessons, so they can be modified
- active involvement of integration pupils (asking them easier questions, asking for help in doing experiments)
- informing supporting teacher about projected tests and quizzes
- modification of the content and requirements in cooperation with the special educator

Supporting teachers (while teaching Roma pupils) are people helping Roma children in school, both during and after the lesson. These are people of Polish origin with a pedagogical education. They monitor the progress made by the children, help with their homework, conduct remedial classes, which supplement their gaps in knowledge, and their struggle with language barriers. These teachers, are prepared in terms of content and practice to work with Roma children through training organized in the framework of the "Programme..." and are employed by the schools in which Roma children are learning. Teachers treat children as foreigners and bicultural, and a lot of time is spent on individual work. Supporting teachers are characterized by features enabling them to do this specific job. These are: professionalism, "the ability to pick out talents, the ability to motivate pupils to learn" (Szostka-Różycka, Weigl, 2008), patience, tolerance, and caring. Supporting teachers working at Polish institutions, often with children with special educational needs, are key players of Roma education apart from **Roma assistants**.

Roma assistants A Roma assistant is a person appointed by the Roma community, who understands children and young people well, who knows the problems both of the school and the environment, is courageous and open to challenges that works well under pressure, and above all, understands the need for the education of children (Szostka-Różycka, Weigl, 2008). Due to the very low level of education of Roma in Poland, the Roma assistant can be a person who graduated from primary school, but above all must be characterized by certain features. A Roma



assistant is a kind of link between the world of the Roma, and the world of a Polish school. Children may turn to them with any problems, including school issues as well as personal trouble. They often resolve conflicts among the children and ensure their safety. The assistant is also the mediator of the link between child-parents-teachers. The main task of the assistant is to ensure the attendance of pupils, and to have an influence on parents to send their kids to school regularly (Szostka-Różycka, Weigl, 2008). An assistant, therefore, must be an energetic, open and tolerant person. He/she must have educational, psychological and also organizational abilities. The effectiveness of the cooperation of the school, parents and children largely depends on their actions.

Fig. Roma Assistant of Primary and Gymnasium School in Nowy Sącz

Wioletta Wojciechowska with her pupils



Source: A. Świątek.

Other assistant tasks include: building a positive image of the school, helping teachers and educators, resolving conflicts and keeping parents informed (website of the Ministry of the Interior). The particular importance of the presence of Roma assistants in schools is emphasized by the assistants themselves as they are people who know the realities of being in a Polish school from several years ago, as, when sitting in the school bench as Romani pupils, they did not have such support. Such a sentiment is expressed by Wioletta Wojciechowska who has been a Roma assistant in the Primary and Secondary School in Nowy Sącz for six years. She said "It changed a lot. From the time we have assistants, the children have some kind of support (...). It changed a lot, because our children have more support than we had. As we approached the teacher, we were told to sit down (...). When children feel bad when they fall ill, they have problems, then the assistant is always there to even call. In our time, there was no such

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possibility." The assistant, remembers the difficulties in adapting to the Polish reality in which there was no link between the world of the Roma and the "surrounding populations." She recalls numerous conflicts arising from problems of school with parents, discrimination, learning disabilities, or their culture. Today, she says, thanks to the presence of an assistant, a common understanding between the world of the Roma and Poles will be established, at least at the basis of the school.

The tasks of the Roma assistant also cover applying for funding from the "Programme ..." depending on Roma children needs: school meals, textbooks and school supplies, transportation to school, clothing, insurance, and even trips and summer vacations. Assistants are also the organizers of the school competitions, trips, support, or can arrange day care clubs for the integration of Polish and Roma children. The multiplicity and diversity of the tasks facing the Roma assistant and supporting teachers, requires not only the remarkable features of these individuals, but also the support of a training system. At one of the training sessions for Roma assistants and supporting teachers "Roma-active part of our society", organized in 2005 in Wroclaw, one of the tasks was to determine the necessary competencies of individuals involved in these two positions. They were grouped into four categories, which should characterize all those involved in the work with Roma children:

- "- knowledge of the culture and customs of Roma;
 - the ability to create an atmosphere of safety,
 - protectiveness,
 - giving and gaining trust and respect,
 - ability to empathize;
 - social skills: communication skills, pugnacity, energy and ability to motivate and persuade others, a sense of humor;
 - ability of obtaining and giving support, tolerability, noticing the strengths of, compromise, patience, perseverance.
- "(Szostka-Różycka, Weigl, 2008).

According to the "Programme ..." **Roma assistants and supporting teachers** are the primary support staff directly involved in the education of Roma children in Polish schools, and are adequately prepared for their function. Learning in integrated classes, Roma pupils, however, work with the usual teachers for most of the time. There is, therefore, a need for further education of teachers, especially in the field of history and culture of the Roma, without which the learning and education of Romani children is very difficult.

Teacher training

Postgraduate studies in a university - offers

Postgraduate studies are a very popular and effective way for teachers to get additional qualifications (and rights) to teach another subject in school. It often happens that, due to the different practices (reform of the subsequent stages of education), the teaching hours of specific subjects are changing. In order to keep their jobs teachers must gain qualifications to teach another subject where this is required. This process is usually done in consultation with the school principal, who is responsible for the strategy of employing teachers. Unfortunately, help from the school usually ends at the training stage.

Postgraduate studies are commercial, for which the teacher has to pay with private money. It often happens that the studies are funded in whole (by EU project) or partially (by local authorities). It really simplifies the process of training. The average fee for postgraduate studies for teachers is approximately 4,000 PLN (1,000 Euro). Until



recently, post-graduate studies were divided into qualifying - giving the right to teach another subject (three semesters) and improving - to develop their own interests and skills (two semesters). Currently, there is no such division.

In Poland, there is only one university, which carries out activities in the field of education for Roma teachers. These two-semester post-graduate studies: "The situation of Roma in Poland-history, law, culture, ethnic stereotypes" have been carried out since 2004, at the Institute of Polish Philology at the Pedagogical University of Cracow. These postgraduate studies are free (funded by the "Programme ..."), and admit 30 students each year. Admission to studies is accepted on the "first come first served" basis.

Studies are aimed at people working in the Roma environment: teachers, social workers, administrators, police officers, investigators of Roma issues in various fields of science and all others interested in the Roma ethnic minority in Poland. During the studies, students acquire the necessary knowledge about the history and culture of Polish Roma, learn the basics of the Romani language, analyse the current social and economic situation of the Roma in Poland and the mechanism of the formation and functioning of the Roma stereotypes in Polish awareness.

The postgraduate studies cover the following courses:

Block I The outline of the history of the Roma (20 hrs.: 10 lectures + 10 classes)

- Who are the Roma. The origins according to the traditional approach and the modern "constructivism": Are Roma originated in India?
- Outline of the history of the Roma in Europe: the early migrations, the relationship with the environment, strategies for survival in medieval Europe, the persecution of institutional adaptation to the processes of modernization, the Roma as part of nation-states.

Block II Elements of Roma culture and tradition (20 hrs.: 5 lectures. + 15 classes)

- What it means to be a Gypsy? Elements of traditional Roma culture and its modern transformation. The concept of the world and the problem of purity/impurity. Patterns of relations with non-Roma. Patterns activity inside and outside the group. Relation to time and death. Types of leadership and transformation. Patterns of family relations and the status of women. Sustaining cultural pattern and adapting to new situations.

Block III Roma in Poland and Europe (15 hrs. classes)

- The main problems of the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, Southern Europe and Poland. What is the population of Roma, how can you trust the statistics? The communist policies towards the Roma. The economic situation of the Roma in economies under transition.
- Polish Roma. Highland and lowland Roma. History and present. Population number and its distribution. Main problems. Education of Roma children and youth. Romani "Leaders". Determinants of social marginalization of the Roma. Strategies to help the Roma community.

Block IV The processes of the Roma ethnic mobilization (15 hrs. classes)

- From exclusion to self-organization: the formation of new identities and political representation of the Roma.
- Visions of the Roma in the works of Roma intellectuals and politicians: fellow citizens, minority, scattered nation, transnational group.



- Evolution of the Roma from the objectification to the partnership. Roma at the international scene.

Block V Regulation of national minorities (20 hrs.: 10 lectures + 10 classes)

- International and Polish regulations on national and ethnic minorities.
- International, European and Polish institutions monitoring the rights of national and ethnic minorities. The effects of their actions.

Block VI Literary stereotypes of ethnic minorities (20 hrs., classes)

- The image of "the Other" in Polish literature in the 16th-20th centuries - analysis of selected literary texts presenting the Roma community (and other minorities) in ancient and modern literature.

Block VII Language stereotypes of ethnic minorities (20 hrs., classes)

- Analysis of the Polish vocabulary for axiological striking impression of tokens: "Gypsy", "Rom"

Section VIII Basics Romani (20 hrs., classes)

- Learning basic vocabulary allowing Roma to gain better contact with a national minority.

Block IX Anti-discrimination education (12 hrs. classes)

Block X Intercultural Communication (20 hrs. classes)

Block XI Roma and the Holocaust (20 hrs. 10 hours. lectures, 10 hours. classes)

- Martyrdom of the Roma people during the Second World War (autobiographical documents and other certificates commemorating the past of Roma)
- Holocaust of the Roma in the scientific literature of the world.

Block XII Roma identity and their transformation (20 hrs. classes)

Block XIII Seminar (24 hrs. 3 seminars for 10 people).

- The seminar will end with a thesis defence related to the topic of the course

Block XIV Media representation of Roma and Roma culture (6 hrs. classes)

(the website of the Institute of Polish Philology, Pedagogical University of Cracow)

During the course, students also take classes in the field. They visit the Roma settlement in Maszkowice - a village in the province, numerously inhabited by Roma. They meet with the staff of institutions working in and for the Roma environment, learning about their objectives and work. Students also participate in cultural events involving the participation of Poles and Roma, for example, in the night of the museums in the Museum of Ethnography in Tarnów (more details on the activities of the museum in step 5).

The knowledge gained during their studies helps students understand the Roma better including their behaviour, motivations, cultural background as well as their social and economic situation in Poland. This makes it easier and increases the effectiveness of their work in the Roma environment. To get a degree, in addition to attending classes and taking exams, the students have to prepare a thesis, usually on a topic related to their professional work in the Roma environment. The new offer for schools is a proposal of the Pedagogical University of Cracow under the programme "cooperation with education". There are conferences, lectures, seminars, meetings and discussions for



teachers and activities for students, planned by the university lecturers from different faculties and courses of study. The list of concrete proposals from different institutes and departments is prepared every year and sent to schools.

For example, the Institute of Geography offers proposals for Roma education.

Name of the course	Lecturers	Group addressed	Number of hours	Date
Seminar - The issue of education and professional activity of selected minority groups (Roma)	dr hab. W. Osuch (3 hrs.), prof. UP, mgr A. Świętek (6 hrs.)	geography teachers, students candidates teachers	The cycle of seminars (3 meetings per 3 hours) – total 9 hrs.	10. 2013 - 10. 2014

Other forms of teacher training in Poland (on the example of offers in Krakow)

Professionally active teachers and educators of all types of schools can benefit from the various opportunities of vocational training and improve their competencies.

Teachers in the course of their career are involved in the process of career promotion and gaining the next steps of a career advancement (from a trainee teacher in the first year of employment, to a contract teacher, then an appointed teacher and finally to a qualified teacher). The highest degree of career advancement is a professor of education, but it is treated as an honorary title (there are only a few such teachers in Poland) rather than a realistic aim.

Most frequently teachers from Krakow and the surrounding area benefit from the opportunities available to them in the process of training and in-service in the following institutions:

Małopolska Teacher Training Centre in Krakow (MCDN - Małopolskie Centrum Doskonalenia Nauczycieli) - a state regional institution (funded by the City of Krakow) established to prepare, organize and run training courses for teachers of different subjects and different types of schools. Before the start of the next school year, the offers are sent to the main subject areas regarding training for teachers.

Participation of teachers in training is financed by a particular school. School heads have the financial means to educate teachers, depending on school size (number of pupils and teachers). In practice, the average size of gymnasium (lower secondary school) has about 8,000 PLN (2,000 Euro) per training throughout the school year. The costs of such training is about 50 PLN (13 Euro) for one hour of training for one teacher, and for a group of several teachers from the school it is about 200 PLN (50 EUR) for 1 hour for the group.

Head teachers report a need for specific activities that take place at the headquarters of MCDN in Krakow or in a particular school (if a group of teachers per school is large). MCDM is also open to suggestions for school principals on the other, not specified in the offer, training areas.

Sample topics of training offers at **Małopolska Teacher Training Centre in Krakow**:

1 Reform Programme (new core curriculum, monitoring of the curriculum, the curriculum).

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- 2 Education law (liability of the teacher, protection of personal data).
- 3 Evaluation (state requirements to schools, internal and external evaluation, project evaluation, formulation of conclusions and recommendations).
- 4 External examinations (quantitative and qualitative analysis of results, use the results to development activities)
- 5 Assessment (formative assessment, formulation of requirements, different methods of assessment)
- 6 Special educational needs (development of abilities and interests of students, adjusting requirements, individualized work with students, working with dyslexic student, documentation of psychological and pedagogical aid).
- 7 Education, care and prevention (to motivate the student to develop, difficult student behaviour, civilization threats, aggression and violence, developing of parenting skills).
- 8 Teacher competencies (methodological skills, interpersonal communication and teamwork of teachers, coping with stress and burnout, the voice as a professional tool).
- 9 Modern technologies (creating presentations, multimedia, use of e-learning platform, interactive whiteboards, issues of the "digital school").
- 10 Innovation (innovative methods and forms of work, organization solutions, examples of good practice).
- 11 Parents at the school (communication with parents, partnership, various forms of cooperation, organization of meetings with parents).

More specialized meetings are organized by methodologists of the subjects taught in schools. Such solutions for teachers of specific subjects or subject areas force the specific teaching of these subjects at the appropriate stages of education. These meetings are held in the form of short conferences, lectures and presentations.

A new opportunity in the training of teachers is a pilot project of the Centre for the Development of Education in Krakow - developed for 2013-2015, which joined 78 schools in Krakow. It was founded to develop offers of 24 problem areas on which each school is supposed to choose one, this is then allocated 25 hours of training. This project is funded by the EU under the Human Capital in cooperation with the Ministry of Education.



Examples of areas of training:

- how to help the pupil to achieve educational success?
- learning techniques and methods of motivation to learn
- working with gifted pupils
- working with pupils with special educational needs
- cooperation with local schools
- educational and vocational counselling at school.

It is planned to extend the project to the entire country.

Offers of educational publishing houses - they usually rely on meetings for teachers of specific subjects in order to present the offers of the publishing houses - especially of the curriculum and textbook, and other products items - test kits, methodological instructions for teachers, atlases, etc. At these meetings, usually teachers are given free educational packages. Teachers receive a certificate of training (usually 2-4 hours), which can be used for the purposes of promotion (statistics of participation in training courses, workshops). School directors are currently reluctant to release teachers for this type of training.

Step 5 Using the experience of the best implementers

The effective implementation of the education of Roma children is not possible without the kindness and commitment of many social activists, both of Polish and Roma origin, headmasters and teachers. In this last step examples of institutions actively pursuing the guidelines of "Programme ..." and successful in the education of Roma children are presented.

Roma nursery school in Czarna Góra

The first example of this type of facility, to be established under the programme was a Roma nursery school in Czarna Góra. It was founded in November 2001, after the start of a pilot version of the programme in Lesser Poland, through the cooperation of the local primary school and the district authorities. It is run by S. Mirga, a Roma woman with university education (Bartosz, 2004a). The purpose of the nursery school is to prepare Roma children to attend integrated classes "0", mainly through learning the Polish language. Children at the age of 4 and 5 years attend classes lasting for six hours, three times a week. They are developed in accordance with the pre-school programme, run "active methods, which aim to develop general knowledge, verbal and non-verbal communication, expand vocabulary on specific topics, develop logical thinking, dexterity, empathy (...), arouse self-confidence and opportunities "(Mirga, 2008). Workers in the nursery school try to liven up and vary children's activities.

An example is the participation of children in the "Romani Snap". "As part of a project on a housing estate in Szaflary village multi-day activities were organized for Roma children aged from 3 to 17 years, during which children have constructed 20 pinhole cameras (so-called camera obscura). Under the guidance of a professional photographer Marta Kotlarska from the Academy Snap as well as Małgorzaty Mirga - the sculptor and painter of Roma origin, connected with the Association Harangos Academy of Fine Arts, the children took photos - illustrations for Gypsy fairy tales by Jan Mirga "Where did the Roma come from" and "The stone of wisdom" . The continuation of the project is scheduled for October 2013. The task of the Roma children will be to present the



mini-workshops in school on the principles of pinhole photography and camera obscura for Polish colleagues "(the website of WSiP publishing house). The key to the success of the nursery school was a strong partnership with parents. They are constantly informed about the progress of children, ensure their safety, and often watch their work. This makes the children go to nursery school regularly and they make very good progress. This is confirmed by primary school teachers who claim that Romani children, after graduating from nursery school, are very well prepared for school, sometimes even better than some Polish children.

A primary school in Czarny Dunajec In the 1990s in Czarny Dunajec a Roma class was founded, which was then terminated and the children now attend integrated classes with Polish children. At school, there is also a special class where children with mental disabilities attend, and in other classes, there are many pupils who require high levels of educational support (Bielak, 2003). The school has been successful in working with all children through the special commitment of their employees and through cooperation with the Municipality and the Municipal Social Welfare Centre.

Two Roma assistants and a supporting teacher were employed in the school. Each year the school bought Roma children books, school supplies, art materials and devotionals for grade-2-pupils before the Holy Communion. The money generated from the programme the school subsidizes school trips, lunches and pupils' insurance (Bielak, 2003). In addition, the strong commitment of teachers means that Roma pupils began willingly to come to school. A studio (a club) was created for them equipped with computers, audio-visual equipment, musical and sound equipment as well as teaching aids and furniture (used also by the Polish children). It is a place of rest and study. The school organizes for children a variety of extra-curricular activities such as music and dance, sports, household, and compensatory classes. The classes were so attractive that older pupils also came to them. One of the most successful actions of the teachers was to organize a rehabilitation stay for eight children in Ustka (Baltic sea-side resort). The primary School in Czarny Dunajec is a model of the programme implementation, where Roma classes were successfully converted to integrated ones.

Primary school nr 7 in Świecie Due to the very low level of implementation of compulsory education in the school year 2002/03, shortly after the start of the programme, the school decided on a personal visit to the Roma houses to persuade parents to send their children to school (Andrys, Wisniewska, 2007). The presence of the school head at the child's home, his interest in the problems of children, meetings to explain school work, and promises to provide children with textbooks and school supplies, prompted parents to send Roma children to school. Currently, all children meet the compulsory education requirements, attending integrated classes, along with Polish children. The school attaches great importance to the proper preparation of teachers to work with children, both Polish and Roma. They participated in various forms of training mainly on the history, culture and traditions of the Roma. Their knowledge is explored, taking part in workshops - "A Roma child in school," and at the National Conference "Friendly School - Education for Roma", organized in Suwalki by the Association called "Integration". In order to obtain detailed information on a grant for Roma children and various forms of training in the field of Romology, the teachers participated in a meeting with staff from the Ministry of Education and Sports who is responsible for the implementation of the "Programme ... (...)". In 2007, two (...) teachers completed postgraduate studies in Krakow (Andrys, Wisniewska, 2007).

An important action taken by the school in 2004 was its own intra-school scheme, created by the teachers to help Roma children. Based on funds available nationwide, this scheme was a practical programme to promote the education of Roma children. The programme determines the level of Roma pupils, filling in the gaps in their



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knowledge of the Polish language, the development of children's interests, individualization of work, fighting stereotypes, and providing financial support. Financial support includes textbooks, school supplies, meals, school trips and insurance. All Roma children in the school participate in two hours of compensatory classes a week, and numerous extra-curricular activities, which include: "Fun and Games with the multiplication table", "Multiplication is fun", sports and fun activities "Matches", and preventive activities learning tolerance "Look otherwise" (Andrys, Wisniewska, 2007). In addition to the very large number activities mentioned above, one should also pay great attention to the very good contact of the teachers and the school head with Romani parents, which is the key to success in creating a support network for Roma pupils. In addition to meeting with the school head in Romani homes and frequent visits of Roma parents in school, the school conducts a survey among them in order to understand and monitor changes for their parents and possible further improvement to the education of Roma children in the school.

Romani Parish School in Suwałki - is a private institution, the operation of which is based on Roma classes, which are condemned by the creators of the "Programme ..." and do not exist currently in Poland. Nonetheless, the school meets the main requirements of the programme in the field of education. These include convincing adult Roma of the necessity and meaning of education, raising the maximum degree of completion of compulsory schooling and attendance of Roma pupils, and finally the education of Roma children, to become the equivalent Polish citizens in the future, independent of social assistance, but make a living with their work. The school was "founded on the initiative of a priest Jerzy Zawadzki and have operated since 1993 by a teacher Jacek Milewski" (Bartosz, 2004a). Lessons are conducted in Polish, and extra-curricular activities (such as singing, dancing, sports) are in the Romani language by a Polish teacher and school head at the same time - Jacek Milewski. It is the only school where the classes are run in Romani language and issues in the classroom are discussed in reference to the world, events, associations and words that are familiar with their own culture (Bartosz, 2004a), which makes learning easier. There are also numerous trips organized outside the school, in the immediate and more distant surroundings. A famous trip which is invoked in a number of speeches by Jacek Milewski, was a visit to the zoo, where one of the teenage boys was sure that they passed the ocean instead of a pond, while the second boy expected to see dinosaurs at the zoo and was disappointed by their absence and he could not believe the teacher that this species is extinct because he had recently seen one of them on TV (Wyrwich, 2003). This example demonstrates the large gaps in knowledge of the Roma children and how much work has to be done by the teachers. The school adapts to the Roma lifestyle by being open virtually all day, because morning classes (although it is hard to call them morning classes, as they start at about 11 because the children fell asleep in the earlier hours, used to sleep late at night; Hofmann, 2003) are followed by a number of extra-curricular activities, and in the evening Roma adults came to learn to write, read and count in Polish, and later there are music lessons using instruments (Wyrwich, 2003). The school employs two teachers, in addition to the school head, while the other six are volunteers. It is free. It is supported by the church, with some help of parishioners, local business and local authorities (Hofmann, 2003) as well as by Polish Children and Youth Foundation, the British Embassy and government grants from the state budget (Wyrwich, 2003). The biggest success is the fact that the first graduates already send their children to school, and education in Roma awareness is no longer an additional subject, but a regular part of their daily lives.



Ethnographic Museum in Tarnów

In addition to educational establishments, some efforts to promote education and the integration of Roma children with Polish children are also taken by other institutions. One of the most active in southern Poland is Tarnów Ethnographic Museum, a branch of the local District Museum.

Fig. The building of Ethnographic Museum in Tarnów



Source: A. Świątek.

In 1979, a great exhibition on the Roma was created and after the founding of a separate branch of the Ethnographic Museum in 1990, there is a permanent exhibition on the Roma (Bartosz, 2004a). The development of the museum and the multiplicity of initiatives, including participation in the government programme is mostly thanks to the museum's director-eminent Polish Roma expert and Roma's friend - Adam Bartosz, recently honoured by a prestigious statuette, "The Golden Gypsy Camp" for "a positive image and contribution to the development of Roma culture "(webpage of Ethnographic Museum in Tarnów). This is the only place in Poland, where documents and objects related to the history and culture of the Roma are collected. A permanent exhibition on the Roma is located in three rooms, where you can get to know the most important facts of history, and the elements of tradition and culture of the Roma people. With the use of coloured plates, documents and exhibits, we learn about wandering Roma groups from India to Europe, their number and distribution in Europe, the history of the persecution of Roma from the fifteenth century to the darkest history of the Roma during Nazi extermination and forced assimilation during the communist period. Interesting information can also be accessed on the "Gypsy Kings", modern Roma leaders, forming Roma organizations, congresses and national symbols. For an average visitor even more interesting are the elements of the Roma culture and tradition represented by colourful figures, exhibits, photographs of real old Roma wagons gathered in the courtyard of the museum. The exhibition itself, gives visitors the opportunity to gain a valuable insight into the culture and history of the Roma, and thus plays a very important role in education.



Fig. Examples of Roma costumes exposed on a permanent exhibition of Ethnographic Museum in Tarnów



Source: A. Świątek

The Museum staff, with the director Adam Bartosz, carry out numerous initiatives for the Roma community. The museum organizes regular events that provide an opportunity to meet Roma families, to share memories, but above all, gives an opportunity to explore the culture of Roma children and young people and their mutual integration, including the Poles. These events are: "Rhythms of the Year", "Gypsy Summer" and "Gypsy Autumn" (webpage of Ethnographic Museum in Tarnów). Annual, a very important event is the "Caravan of Memory Roma", created in 1996. This event is jointly organized by the Museum of Tarnów Socio-Cultural Association of Roma. After the blessing by a priest, Stanislaw Opocki, from in front of the museum "Gypsy wagons set off every year on the trail of martyrdom Gypsies from Tarnow to the village of Szczurowa, where on July 3, 1943, the Germans murdered 93 Roma" (the webpage of Ethnographic Museum in Tarnów.)



Fig. Historical Gypsy wagon in the courtyard of the Ethnographic Museum in Tarnów.



Source: A.Świątek

Travelling by coloured wagons on an attractive route for several days, setting up a traditional camps, evening dancing and lighting camp fire, participants not only commemorate the dead during the extermination (Bartosz, 2004a), but above all, stimulate their identity, revive their culture and pass it on to their children.

The educational activity carried on by the museum, which is funded under the government programme, is very important for its employees. According to an interview conducted by A. Świątek with a museum employee, Natalia Gancarz, one of the most important educational projects which has been running for over 10 years is the "Roma children in the museum." This project is aimed at the Roma children and their families, but also for mixed groups "Polish-Roma". The interviewee, identified its purpose as follows: "The project generally serves to encourage tolerance, to teach non-Roma children about Gypsies and to build among Roma children their Roma identity, to show them some things, some bring closer and some just bring to mind." The project is fully financed from the fund of the "Programme for the Roma community in Poland", while the contribution of the museum is "a contribution in the form of space, staff, exhibitions and ideas." Within the project on average 6-7 groups of school-age children come to the museum, usually in autumn or spring each year and the number is growing. Visiting groups are most often integrated Polish-Roma classrooms.

Children come to the museum from all Poland. The children who visit are from diverse groups of Roma, so they represent varying levels of knowledge about their own culture and traditions. For some, a museum exhibition is a documentation of the history and tradition they know, and for others an entirely new experience. The effect of this activity centre is to provide knowledge about the Roma culture and traditions to both Polish and Roma children, and support of tolerance and inclusion. A visit by children consists of two parts. In the first part, the children visit the museum exhibition with a guide, learning about Roma history and culture, and in the second part social activities take place. Classes are adjusted to the age of the children. The aim of the course is to familiarize the children with Roma culture and to combat prejudice. To this purpose, the older students perform common tasks

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while activities for younger children usually take the form of a play. Museum staff has prepared, for example, playing cards for children called "Peter" while matching them in pairs, they learn the words and the Romani language, and colouring books in which children colour drawings showing the Roma and Polish traditional costumes, mainly in order to demonstrate elements linking both communities. The activity of the museum has a very positive impact not only on the identity of the local Roma but is also a remarkable achievement in recording and collecting documentation and transfer of knowledge about Roma history as well being a great contribution to the development of tolerance towards Roma. At the same time all of this has a positive impact on the education of Roma children.

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Polish Constitution of 2 April 1997.

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"The programme for the Roma community in Poland"

The website of Polish Ministry of Interior

The website of the Ethnographic Museum in Tarnów

The website of WSiP Publishing House: http://www.wsip.pl/o_firmie/aktualnosci/romski_pstryk