

**Report of the Government of the Czech Republic
on general measures related to the execution of the judgment
of the European Court of Human Rights
in case no. 57325/00 – *D. H. and Others v. the Czech Republic***

In its judgment of 13 November 2007, the Grand Chamber arrived at a different conclusion than the Court's Second Section, finding the placement of 18 applicants in special schools discriminatory, on the basis of ethnic origin, in respect of the exercise of the right to education (Article 14 of the Convention taken together with Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 to the Convention). In the Grand Chamber's opinion, there was indirect discrimination, i.e. a situation where a neutrally conceived measure (the possibility to place a child in a special school for children with a slight mental disability) had a disproportionately strong effect on members of one group, in this case Roma pupils, while it was not possible to explain this effect by the compulsory use of the testing of the children by experts or by the parents' consent with the placement. The Grand Chamber has also noted that the Roma are a disadvantaged and vulnerable group that requires special protection. According to the Grand Chamber, the procedure of placement to special schools did not include safeguards such as would have ensured respect for Roma children's specific needs arising from their disadvantaged situation.

The Grand Chamber has also noted that the Czech Republic pays attention to the difficult issue of education for Roma children and that certain measures have been adopted, including the abolition of special schools by new Act No. 561/2004, on pre-school, primary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (the School Act), as amended, the introduction of teacher's assistants, preparatory classes, and courses whose purpose is to complete education, as well as the dismantling of formal barriers between the completion of education at a primary school of any type and the possibility to continue at a general secondary school.

In principle, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (hereinafter referred to as "the Ministry of Education") agrees to a debate on whether the already adopted measures are sufficient from the point of view of the wider aim pursued, i.e. the integration of all children into the main education system, unless this is prevented by serious difficulties, and from the point of view of the execution itself of the Court's judgment in the case of *D. H. and Others*. In compliance with the Court's case law, the education sphere does indeed provide a considerable margin of appreciation to the individual States and a number of useful measures to enhance the education of Roma children and their ability to integrate into the society – measures that the Government intend to carry out and that will be described in the following – clearly exceeds the narrow framework of the execution of the Court's judgment. This also holds true for Recommendation No. R (2000) 4 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member states on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe, mentioned by the Court, and other recommendations of the Council of Europe, some other intergovernmental organisations, and also some non-governmental organisations.

The Government of the Czech Republic perceive the issue of education for Roma children as one of the key points when addressing the Roma's social inclusion and this issue cannot be dealt with in isolation. Measures adopted in the education sphere are carried out in the context of other steps in the areas of social work, housing, and health care.

The current situation of Roma children in the area of education in the Czech Republic is caused by long development and the problems arising from this situation are deeply rooted.

Despite the absence of statistics based on ethnicity (for details please see the next chapter), from non-governmental organisations' estimates and specific cases of some children who have graduated from primary schools it can be deduced that Roma children are often not very successful at school. The above sources also indicate that particularly those Roma children who live in an environment of socially excluded locations or an environment at risk of social exclusion tend to be academic underachievers. The Ministry of Education and the Government are making efforts to address this situation even without any direct connection to the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *D. H. and Others*. Between 1999 and today, a number of measures have been carried out, motivated by efforts to increase the openness of the Czech education system and to set up support mechanisms for improving Roma children's academic achievements. Details on the already executed measures are included in an appendix to this document. As regards the systemic measures, we have in mind in particular the curricular reform initiated in 2005, which provides each school with an opportunity to design its educational programme according to the needs of the children and the community from which the children come to the school. Other measures have rather the nature of an affirmative action in respect of the Roma population and socially disadvantaged children.

The Czech Republic is one of the countries that are involved in the implementation of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005 – 2015) – an initiative of twelve countries of the Central and South-eastern European regions, which brings together the governments, international institutions, and the Roma civil society in the process of the initiation of activities to strengthen social inclusion of the Roma as a priority of the regional and European political agenda; exchanges of experience; Roma's involvement in the decision-making that concerns them; and the use of international experience and expertise with the aim of accelerating solution of the difficult issues of Roma integration and increasing the public's awareness of the situation of the Roma living in social exclusion through a society-wide discourse. The Decade's objectives are being pursued in the areas of education, employment, health, and housing. The education of the Roma is also the subject matter of the interdepartmental Concept of the Integration of the Roma Community, adopted by the Government of the Czech Republic, from which tasks for all departments, including the education department, arise. The objectives of the concepts in the area of education aim at supporting socially disadvantaged Roma children's academic achievements in the main education system, and supporting them in achieving qualifications, thereby creating preconditions for them to find a better place in the labour market.

When carrying out and updating the concepts in the field of social integration of the Roma who are living under socially excluded conditions or conditions at risk of social exclusion, documents and information from a 2006 report of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Council of the Government for Roma Community Affairs (Analysis of Socially Excluded Roma Communities and Absorption Capacities of Entities Operating in this Domain) are used; in these, specific socially excluded locations, locations at risk of social exclusion, and the specific problems that people in these locations face, are identified.

The following chapters deal with the planning of further measures. However, factual limitations constraining the State's activities in the area in question, and therefore the limits of the envisaged measures, are mentioned as well. In this regard it is necessary to remark that it is very difficult to foresee the real impact of the Court's judgment in the case of *D. H. and Others*. In reality, in order to achieve specific results it is always necessary to take into account specific cases, which the judgment, however, intentionally omits. The future will show

what results in the legal, pedagogical and social areas can be reached despite the particular generalizations on which the judgment is based to a significant extent.

Eventually, it is necessary to mention that the present report results from numerous consultations with Czech non-governmental organisations which displayed interest in participating on framing measures aimed at improvement of the situation in education of Roma children.

A. BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE MEASURES AIMED AT ADDRESSING THE CURRENT SITUATION

The first precondition for carrying out the various measures aimed at modifying the current situation and also at designing effective preventive measures is to collect information about the Roma children's situation in the education system in the Czech Republic. However, this information is not available in the Czech Republic at the moment; in the past period no data based on ethnicity was collected. In 2008 surveys were initiated in this area. Initial results will be known at the end of the first trimester of 2009. Further measures, mentioned below, will be specified and modified on the basis of these results. The results of the surveys will then be continuously used in formulating the integration and compensation policy in the area of education in respect of the Roma children who have special educational needs.

The first survey is based on **sociological research aimed at analysing the forms and causes of the segregation of children from socio-culturally disadvantaging environments.** The survey will be carried out by a non-governmental organisation, on the basis of a contract with the Ministry of Education, at 100 primary schools close to socially excluded locations and locations at risk of social exclusion. These locations are mainly inhabited by the Roma.

The results of the survey will contain information on the education of the Roma children who live in these locations. The objective of the survey is to gather well-founded information and statistics on the process of educating these pupils, especially at primary schools, to compare this data with the data on the process of educating pupils in the majority society, and to identify the factors that determine the inequalities in this domain. When carrying out the subsequent steps we shall then focus on influencing in particular these factors. The outputs from the research will also provide information about the already provided specific support, which the pupils in monitored schools are receiving. The results of the survey will offer a clear picture of the situation and development in the education of socially disadvantaged Roma pupils; this will be done by comparing the education trajectories and the education chances of Roma v. non-Roma pupils.

Then there will also be **an analysis of teachers' individual approach to pupils with special educational needs**, which will also include the gathering of data on the number of pupils of Roma ethnic origin who are educated within "ordinary" educational programmes and programmes for pupils with special educational needs. The survey will be carried out by a non-governmental organisation, on the basis of a contract with the Ministry of Education, at 90 primary and secondary schools.

The gathered data will help to assess the extent of the necessary support for pupils from these schools for including them in the main education system and their opportunities, and it will also provide the necessary information for a further assessment of the effectiveness of the follow-up measures. Another objective of the analysis is to survey the actual current situation at primary and secondary schools, i.e. in what manner the teachers are coping with

the necessity of applying appropriate approaches to pupils with special educational needs. The analysis will be carried out and assessed at the end of the first trimester of 2009.

On the basis of the data on Roma pupils' situation in the area of education in the Czech Republic, which we will have available from the results of the above analyses in March 2009, new or modified current measures will be carried out to create a real chance for the re-inclusion of the children from Roma families which are excluded from the main education system in consequence of a social disadvantage, and to prevent their leaving the main education system. **The measures will be based on a description of the situation, and the forms and causes of the inequality of the Roma pupils identified in the area of education, if any inequality is found.** Specific measures will also be carried out with regard to the number of children from socially excluded Roma locations, who are being educated in the education system under standards for children with a slight mental disability.

In respect of remedial measures, **an analysis of the diagnostic tools for finding the children's intellectual abilities, which are used by educational psychological centres and special pedagogy centres**, will take place. The purpose of the analysis is to gather relevant data on the validity of these tools in respect of the target group of the Roma children who undergo socialisation and constantly live in an environment of social exclusion or who are at risk of social exclusion. Subsequently to the analysis, a methodology for the staff of the counselling services will be developed for the testing of children from socially disadvantaged or culturally different environment (i.e. also Roma children). Within the methodology, particular emphasis will be placed on the necessity to base the diagnostics on the important factors influencing the results of the standard tests, to use culturally relevant tests, or, in case of need, mechanisms of dynamic testing in the context of the family environment. Further, the standards of pedagogical-psychological counselling services and special pedagogy centres will be modified (Act No. 72/2005, on the provision of counselling services at schools and school counselling facilities) and the certification procedure for these professional facilities may also be modified. The purpose of the measures is to increase the quality of the diagnostics and counselling so that it is a tool supporting the integration of socially disadvantaged Roma children into the main education system.

B. BRIEF PRESENTATION OF PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Specific measures are aimed at pre-school, primary, and secondary education, at undergraduate and postgraduate education of the teaching staff, and at increasing the awareness of Roma children's parents in the area of education. In connection with the facts found in the analyses, steps aimed at increasing the permeability of the schools that operate under the Framework Educational Programme for primary education, modified for pupils with a slight mental disability, or that carry out the Special School educational programme, which is nearing the end, and the schools that operate under educational programmes used within the main education system, will be taken.

On account of existing social and cultural differences between the majority population and the Roma, the forthcoming measures require especially responsive attitude and it is impossible to rely on unilateral steps. Therefore, these measures will be carried out in co-operation with partners at the interdepartmental, regional, and local levels, and with the non-governmental sector, including the Roma organisations whose principal activity focuses on the Roma's social integration. The support will be directed towards projects that promote

comprehensive care, including field social work, pre-school clubs and centres, low-threshold programmes, support for school and out-of-school training, etc. Also programmes geared towards compensating for disadvantages during compulsory school attendance will be pursued with the aim of integrating pupils into the main education system (support for school training, mentoring, tutoring, programmes aimed at developing linguistic competences, support for the preparation for the selection of a vocation and studies at a secondary school, etc.).

As regards the training of the teaching staff, in the past period undergraduate training programmes were launched. The majority of public universities included into their accredited programmes subjects concentrating on support for the integration of children from socially excluded Roma locations. Another plan is the preparation and implementation of further education for the staff of schools and school counselling facilities, focused on the specificities in the education of these pupils and on counselling intervention and diagnostics in relation to children undergoing socialisation in the specific conditions of social exclusion. In all planned programmes, attention will be paid to co-operation with Roma children's parents and families.

The aim of the proposed measures is to create the preconditions for providing such support to socially disadvantaged Roma children in the area of education, which will be directed at compensating for their initial disadvantage and at creating the prerequisites for their academic achievement in the main education system. Over the long term, the support will be provided particularly within the main education system, including the pre-school education level.

C. PLANNED MEASURES OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION RELATED TO THE SOLVING OF THE SITUATION IN EDUCATION OF ROMA CHILDREN:

- 1. Conduct of analyses and statistical surveys** to map the representation of Roma children in the segment of former schools for pupils with special educational needs and to define the extent of the individualisation of the teachers' approach to children with special educational needs. The analyses will be conducted in the period from October 2008 to March 2009. The results of the surveys will form a qualitative and quantitative basis for a more precise targeting of the following measures.
- 2. Transformation of the counselling system in the Czech Republic:** Putting in place a process of socio-culturally sensitive counselling, diagnostics and intervention care particularly aimed at identifying special educational needs and supporting the teaching staff in using the appropriate compensating measures, tools and methods; redesigning counselling services' methods of work towards enhancing their mobility, flexibility, and multidisciplinary way of work; redefining the standards of the counselling services and putting in place a functioning independent system of review of the conclusions of counselling examinations; developing a standardised procedure for informing children's statutory representatives about all aspects resulting from the various conclusions of the examinations carried out by the counselling services, which will ensure a truly informed consent with the conclusions of the counselling examination and clearly define the consequences arising from the implementation of the recommended measures.
- 3. Development of a National Action Plan of Inclusive Education**, in which more attention will be paid to the upbringing and education of Roma children from socially excluded locations and to the creation of inclusive mechanisms for children with special educational needs. A number of sub-measures will be executed in co-operation with other departments, local administrations, and the non-governmental sector. A newly set up

group and a cooperating wider team of experts from the non-governmental sector, Roma organisations, some other state administration authorities, the academic sphere, schools, and local administrations, are responsible for this task at the Ministry of Education. The National Action Plan of Inclusive Education is expected being prepared from November 2008 to December 2009.

4. **Engineering a further transformation of the schools that educate under the school educational programmes** created on the basis of the appendix to the Framework Educational Programme for primary education **for children with a slight mental disability**. Poor academic achievements of a certain percentage of pupils educated at these schools need not actually be caused by their lower intellectual abilities; it can be a result of other circumstances, for example, a social disadvantage, or behavioural disorders, etc. Education at such schools would not then contribute to the compensation for the disadvantage of the pupils with the aim of their placement in the main education system as soon as possible, because it rather concentrates on the creation of a specific educational environment for these pupils. In such a case, their abilities and skills would not be developed to their full potential. The intention of the Ministry of Education is to create, within its powers, the preconditions for the broadest possible review of academic achievement and to gauge the current level of the educational potential of pupils educated at these schools and to put in place a system of individual educational plans and compensating measures. Within this process, more attention will be paid to the Roma pupils who are being educated at these types of schools.

5. **Creation of the Early Care Concept** for children at risk of social exclusion up to 3 years of age. More attention will be paid to Roma children and their families during the preparation and execution of the Concept. The objective of the Concept is to ensure timely comprehensive care aimed at supporting the full development of the children's potential, at the level of the development of both their personality and their cognitive-behavioural functions. In order to create the Early Care Concept, talks on co-operation with other departments involved in the issue, particularly the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the Ministry for Regional Development, will be initiated.

In the area of the upbringing and education of children at risk of social exclusion, one of the necessary prerequisites for their future academic achievement is an early and continuous integration of pedagogical intervention and social intervention. Specific measures will form a part of the National Action Plan of Inclusive Education.

6. **Continuous development of the Early Care Concept, aimed particularly at improving the conditions** of the pre-school training of children at risk of social exclusion between 3 years of age and the beginning of compulsory school attendance. Within the Concept, more emphasis will be placed on the pre-school training of Roma children. Particularly, the Concept will concentrate on the creation of the preconditions for good pre-school training of children at risk of social exclusion, focusing on compensating for their possible disadvantage even prior to starting compulsory school attendance. The proposed measures will also aim at increasing the number of Roma children in the main education system and at supporting their academic achievement at all levels of education. At the same time, great attention will be devoted to the work with these pupils' families so that the parents are able to support the education of their children (social services, services of teachers-didactics experts, tutors).

7. **Undergraduate and postgraduate training of the teaching staff** in all areas of the education system, geared towards enhancing their competences to create an inclusive school environment.
8. **Creation and development of compensating measures** aimed at compensating for the disadvantage of children at risk of social exclusion by, in particular, the following: including qualified teacher's assistants into the education process at all levels and types of schools, pursuing specific programmes focused on directly supporting the children using mentoring and tutoring, programmes for support of the teaching staff, and developing standards for the work of the teacher's assistants and a system of their methodological guidance.
9. Initiation of the **SCIE national project** – Support Centres for Inclusive Education. Within this project, expert teams will be established in all regions of the Czech Republic; they will provide methodological support to the teaching staff at all levels of the education system, aimed at the specific features of the pedagogical work with children with special educational needs, enhancing regional resources, creating a network of experts, and creating multidisciplinary teams providing support to the teaching staff, and pupils and their families. One of the objectives of the project is to pursue activities intended to infuse an element of pedagogy into the family environment. Roma children are a significant target group of this forthcoming project, which will be launched in July 2009.
10. **Emphasising the principle of respect for diversity** in the framework and school educational programmes, especially in the area of the cross-sectional theme of multicultural upbringing, and observing the principle of socio-inclusive values also in preparing methodological guidance documents and textbooks. The measure also includes the inclusion of chapters on the Roma's history and culture in the school educational programmes. The objective of the measure is to create the preconditions for the strengthening of Roma pupils' cultural identity and to increase the awareness in the area in question.
11. **Focus of the grant schemes of the Ministry of Education on the development of an inclusive model of education**, use of the Operational Programme Education for Competitiveness (2007 – 2013) for the support of activities focused on equal opportunities in the area of education.
12. **Creation of a platform** allowing society-wide discussions, sharing, examples of good practice, “**know-how**”, effective procedures in the education of children at risk of social exclusion, and children, pupils and persons from the Roma ethnic group, at the national and international levels. **Fulfilment of the principle of partnership co-operation in order to integrate the various players' policies in the area of social inclusion** at all levels (including state administration, Government's advisory bodies, the Agency for Social Inclusion, the academic sphere, local administrations, the non-governmental sector, kindergartens and primary and secondary schools, the teaching staff, etc.).

The measures have been conceived with the intention of putting in place in the Czech Republic, a system of inclusive education, in which a level playing field will be created for all children in the area of education while taking into account their special educational needs, and cultural and social backgrounds, and which will offer an effective systemic support for developing their full educational potential.

D. FURTHER COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AS REGARDS THE EXECUTION
OF THE JUDGMENT IN THE CASE OF *D. H. AND OTHERS*
(THE ACTION PLAN *STRICTO SENSU*)

The forthcoming measures and the activities in progress, which we are carrying out in connection with the execution of the judgment, are geared towards improving the inclusiveness of education in the Czech Republic, and they will be implemented on a step by step basis. Their implementation requires a broad-ranging interdepartmental co-operation and discussion. In relation to the education of Roma children, we also have to base our actions on the results of the studies in progress, because at present we do not have any data based on ethnicity.

The Government will inform the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe about the implementation and about the planned activities according to the following timetable:

- 1) April 2009:** a report on the results of surveys and initial conclusions derived from these surveys.
- 2) October 2009:** a report on the results of the examination of the methods used in the counselling services and on the measures adopted on the basis of these surveys.
- 3) February 2010:** a report on the development and main relevant conclusions of the National Plan of Inclusive Education (it is intended that the plan will include a row of measures mentioned in Chapter C of the present report and will start from results of the analysis referenced in Chapter A).

Appendix: summary of already executed measures

APPENDIX

EXECUTED MEASURES

Equal access of children, pupils, and students to education is declared in Act No. 561/2004, on pre-school, primary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (the School Act), as amended, which entered into force on 1 January 2005.

Within the system of educational programmes, **framework educational programmes for each area of education at the** primary and secondary levels and for pre-school and primary art and language education are issued on the basis of the School Act. The framework educational programmes **define** the compulsory content, extent, and conditions of education; **they are binding for the development of schools' educational programmes.** In the areas of pre-school, primary, and special education, the schools develop their educational programmes on the basis of the Framework Educational Programme (hereinafter referred to as "FEP") for pre-school education, FEP for primary education, FEP for primary education – appendix for persons with a slight mental disability, and FEP for special primary schools.

On the basis of the prescribed requirements, each school prepares its **school educational programme**, which is adjusted to suit the needs of the children, the school's pupils. At present (the 2008/2009 school year) education takes place under the above programmes in kindergartens, and under FEP for primary education in the first, second, sixth and seventh grades of primary schools (compulsory education under FEP in primary schools began in the 2007/2008 school year, gradually, and starting with the first and sixth grades at that time).

In comparison with former practice, the objectives of education have been reformulated. In addition to the mastering of important knowledge, these objectives concentrate on creating and developing vital skills (key competences). The teaching plan is conceived so that it allows for different educational models according to the pupils' needs, the school's circumstances, and teaching staff's abilities. A number of new sub-themes and cross-sectional themes have been included in primary education (FEP for primary education); they permeate the whole educational process and strengthen the educational effect on the pupils (personality education, environmental education, media education, multicultural education, and other). The definition of curricula allows for their meaningful integration.

The curricular reform creates in schools of the main education system, room for individualising education and improving the quality of work in the following areas:

- The content of education and the expected results are more connected with the needs of practical life.
- In instruction and assessment, particularly motivating and activating methods that help to develop each pupil's individual aptitudes and abilities are given priority.
- Room is created for a broader integration of pupils with special educational needs in ordinary classes in the main education system.
- Creation of a positive atmosphere at school. Schools' self-assessment has been introduced as an indicator of the results of education and a prerequisite for the school's further development for the benefit of the pupils. Also the school's co-operation with its pupils' parents is greatly emphasised.

*CONCEPTUAL DOCUMENTS AND SPECIAL PROGRAMMES CARRIED OUT IN THE PAST PERIOD
IN SUPPORT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AIMED AT THE INTEGRATION OF THE CHILDREN, PUPILS,
AND STUDENTS WHO ARE SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED OR COME FROM ROMA COMMUNITIES*

Conceptual documents and special programmes in the sphere of education are being carried out with the objective of creating an inclusive environment in schools and school facilities and supporting children's, pupils', and students' academic achievement in the main education system. They are carried out with the intention of supporting them in achieving qualifications, thereby creating preconditions for them to find their place in the labour market. Particularly the following policies are followed in the education of the Roma:

- Policy of the integration of the Roma community – a document adopted by the Government of the Czech Republic, from which tasks for all departments, including the education department, arise. The document and the subsequent tasks are regularly updated and assessed.
- Policy of early care for children from socio-culturally disadvantaging environments (see below).
- The Czech Republic is one of the countries that carry out programmes within the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005 – 2015). The Decade's objectives are being pursued in each country through their respective national action plan, in which each country has defined its tasks in the areas of education, employment, health, and housing. In the coming years progress in the meeting of these objectives shall be monitored and assessed. In addition to the individual governments, important international institutions are also involved in the initiative.

Long-term experience shows that the best results in the meeting of the objectives of inclusive education – achievement of full participation of all the persons receiving education – can be obtained if early care is provided to the children prior to the beginning of their compulsory school attendance. In 2008 the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports submitted to the Government of the Czech Republic an updated version of the Concept of a Project for Early Care for Children from Socio-culturally Disadvantaging Environments (hereinafter referred to as "the Concept"), which the Government adopted in its decision No. 564 of 14 May 2008. The aim of the Concept is the execution of measures for the target group of children from socio-culturally disadvantaging environments and compensation for the disadvantages that children from this target group have in the area of education prior to the beginning of compulsory school attendance. Children from Roma communities form a significant part of the target group.

The objective of the Concept is, in particular, to increase the number of Roma pupils in the main education system and to improve their academic achievements; for the family, the child, and society, these are the prerequisites for social integration. The programmes and early care measures are to be carried out so that they contribute to raising the developmental level of the children in the areas that are at risk due to biological, social, and psychological factors. Another important objective is to provide an opportunity for the coexistence of children from the majority society and from a different cultural environment.

The Concept is being executed using the following tools:

1. Under Section 47 of the School Act, a municipality, a union of municipalities, or a region may establish **preparatory classes of primary schools for socially disadvantaged children in the last year prior to the beginning of compulsory school attendance**, in the

case of whom it can be expected that placing them in a preparatory class of a primary school will equalise their development. This class can be established if at least seven and a maximum of fifteen children are taught there. The primary school's principal decides on the placing of children in the preparatory class of the school upon the parents' request and on the basis of a written recommendation by a school counselling facility. **The content of education in the preparatory class** forms a part of the school's educational programme. This means that the teachers are obligated to set out within the school's educational programme, the content of education for this class, i.e., to create an educational programme that they will follow in the preparatory class of the primary school. The content of education in the preparatory class of a primary school is governed by the Framework Educational Programme for pre-school education and forms a part of the school's educational programme. In educating socially disadvantaged pupils in preparatory classes of primary schools it is necessary to ensure appropriate methods and forms of work, i.e., such that correspond to the pupils' age, needs, experience, and interests, and to adjust education to the children's developmental, physiological, cognitive, social and emotional needs as much as possible. In the case of educating children in preparatory classes of primary schools it is necessary to create a social atmosphere and psycho-hygienic conditions comparable to those provided in kindergartens. At the same time it is necessary to take into account that the preparatory classes of primary schools are a part of the school environment and that they therefore usually have different organisational, material, and space-related conditions than kindergartens.

2. **The curricular reform** allows kindergartens to create, on the basis of FEP for pre-school education (FEP PSE), school educational programmes in which they can flexibly respond to the children's needs. FEP PSE is based, in its basic concept, on respect for individual children's needs and opportunities. For this reason FEP PSE forms the basis for developing educational programmes for children with special educational needs, whether these children are educated in an ordinary kindergarten or in a kindergarten with a modified educational programme. The teachers' efforts should, like in the case of educating children who do not have special educational needs, aim at creating the optimum preconditions for the development of the personality of each child, and for their learning and communication with others, and at helping children to be as independent as possible. Unlike the education of children in the 'ordinary population', education of children with special educational needs usually requires different conditions.* The teacher should take into account the children's natural development needs and at the same time also those conditions that stem from their special needs. Some are common to all children, others are different, depending on the nature of the child's disability or disadvantage. Teachers should provide for these conditions with regard to the developmental and personality specificities of these children, and should be trained in special pedagogy. Education of children from socio-culturally disadvantaged environments, children with a weaker family background, or children coming from a different language environment or who do not speak the language in which instruction is provided, takes place in accordance with the requirements set by FEP PSE. Diminished social adaptability of these children or an increased need of bringing them up and educating them in a specific domain requires a modification of the content and conditions of education. In kindergartens, special educational methods are applied, which enable diagnostics and stimulation of children to development.

* For example in the areas of the material environment, children's way of living, psychosocial atmosphere, organisation of education, staffing and teaching provisions, kindergarten's co-operation with the family, etc.

Since 2006, on the website of Výzkumný ústav pedagogický [Education Research Institute] in Prague there has been a **Methodology Portal for the Support of the Implementation** of the Framework Educational Programmes for, *inter alia*, pre-school education. By the passing of the School Act, an obligation has arisen for kindergartens to draw up their own programme and to start working under such programme. The Education Research Institute's project transmits the experience accumulated by kindergartens, and prepares theoretical inputs, practical suggestions for the instruction and specific answers to the teachers' questions. **At this portal, the issue of the education for minorities will also be taken into account, including examples of good practice also in the education of the Roma.**

3. Within the Programme of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for the Support of the Integration of the Roma Community, projects aimed at the following topics are being implemented with subsidies from the national budget:

- educational activities for children and parents aimed at pre-school training of the children,
- support for increasing the number of Roma children in pre-school education,
- support for methods and forms of work enhancing the effectiveness of pre-school education of Roma children,
- support for further education of the teachers and assistants working with Roma children of pre-school age in the use of effective methods of educating Roma children,
- support for activities that improve the chances of Roma children's successful start of school attendance,
- support for activities geared towards involving the family in children's pre-school education, and activities creating the pre conditions for better information received by the parents in respect of pre-school education,
- support for primary schools' accompanying activities supporting Roma children in overcoming the obstacles during their compulsory school attendance, and
- development of comprehensive educational and integration projects in the pre-school training of Roma children.

4. Since 2006 the Concept has also been implemented through the System Project of the Minority Integration Centre (Development of Counselling, Education, and Support Services for Socially Disadvantaged Pupils) within the Human Resource Development Operational Programme, Measure 3.3.1 *Improvement of the quality of education in schools and school facilities and development of supporting educational systems*. Minority Integration Centres have been established in five regions of the Czech Republic.

The ESF Minority Integration Centres project (hereinafter "the MIC") aims at creating a supporting system of care for children and youth from socio-culturally disadvantaging and culturally different environments, particularly the Roma. The project concentrates on the opportunities for their integration in society, on the course of their education, on the provision of social and educational-psychological counselling, and on various types of support services, including early care.

TRAINING OF THE TEACHING STAFF FOR THEIR WORK WITH CHILDREN, PUPILS, AND STUDENTS
WITH SPECIFIC EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Study programmes offered by public higher education institutions

Universities' faculties of education offer, in **the area of the training of teaching staff**, accredited study programmes (bachelor's, subsequent master's, master's, and doctoral) and also lifelong education (learning) programmes with study modules that prepare the teaching staff (teachers, educators) **for their work with children, pupils, students, and other persons from socially disadvantaged environments, including work with Roma university students**. The programmes are running at eight faculties of education throughout the Czech Republic, aiming at, for example, the following: supplementary training within lifelong education as *Teacher's Assistant*, master's and bachelor's courses in *Special Pedagogy*, specialisation courses within lifelong education in the subjects of *Social Pedagogy Aimed at Prevention and Re-socialisation*, *Free Time Educator and Teacher*, *Educational Counselling*, *Special Pedagogy for Primary School Graduates*, *Special Pedagogy for Secondary School Graduates*, *Special Pedagogy for University Graduates*, *Special Pedagogy for Graduates of Teaching at the First Stage of Primary Schools*, *Social Pedagogy*, *Social Policy and Social Work – Social and Charity Work*, etc.

OTHER PROGRAMMES AIMED AT SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION CONCENTRATING
ON THE INTEGRATION OF CHILDREN, PUPILS, AND STUDENTS WHO ARE SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED
OR COME FROM ROMA COMMUNITIES

*Development programme for education in the Financing of Teacher's Assistants
for Socially Disadvantaged Children, Pupils, and Students*

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has been opening this programme since 2005, responding to the need to finance these assistants, who have worked at schools and school facilities in the Czech Republic since as early as 1998. The modification in comparison with the past periods consists in their systemic inclusion in the educational process, which is provided for in legislative terms in the new School Act and in Act No. 563/2004, on teaching staff and on changes to certain laws, as amended. The position of the teacher's assistant for socially disadvantaged children has been included in the education system on the basis of previous positive experience with the "pilot verification" of the work of "Roma assistants" in pre-school education and at primary and secondary schools, which took place from 1998.

The funds provided on the basis of this development programme in education are not the only possible source of financing. A juristic person operating a school may pay wages to teacher's assistants from the funds provided under the School Act from the *resources of the founder, or other resources*. The programme's target group only includes the teacher's assistants for **socially disadvantaged** children, pupils, and students.

In 2006 a subsidy amounting to around CZK 70 million was distributed to pay for **330 jobs of teacher's assistants**. The number of jobs of teacher's assistants for socially disadvantaged children, pupils, and students did not change significantly compared with 2005. In 2007 the number of assistants at schools increased by around 40.

As a reason for cooperating with an assistant, the schools most often mention their effort to achieve the following objectives:

- application of teaching methods and forms of work having regard to the specific structure of pupils and their social disadvantage, i.e. improvement of the quality of the process of bringing up and educating,
- acclimatisation of pupils to the school environment, help to pupils with their integration in society,
- aid to pupils in overcoming adaptation and communication difficulties when tackling social problems in connection with the process of bringing up and educating,
- deeper knowledge of the Roma culture, history and customs,
- arrangements for the pupils' participation and interest in extracurricular activities and their involvement in special-interest groups and school's public presentations,
- prevention of pupils' academic failure during schooling, help with the elimination of upbringing and learning difficulties (truanting, including hidden truanting, unexcused absences, bullying, disciplinary problems, aggression, etc.),
- improvement in communication with socially disadvantaged families and families that neglect child care,
- co-operation in the selection of an appropriate vocation and in the choice of field of secondary education (for example, to elicit interest in the appropriate field of education and in the opportunities for pupils' future work),
- aid to the pupils in their preparations for classes,
- support for Roma families in placing their children in kindergartens, and to prevent potential unsuccessful beginnings in school attendance, which could jeopardise the educational process and, in turn, also the prospects for future life, and
- help to search for talented Roma children.

Subsidy scheme for the support of Roma pupils at secondary schools

The Ministry of Education has been running the scheme called "Support for Roma Pupils at Secondary Schools" since 2003. The funds of this scheme are earmarked for support of the education of the Roma pupils whose families face considerable difficulties related to the costs incurred in secondary education. The scheme concerns all fields of education of secondary schools and higher vocational schools recorded in the register of schools and school facilities. The funds are intended to fully or partly pay for the pupils' costs of the following items: tuition fees, meals, accommodation, travel costs, and school requisites and protective aids, including work clothes necessary for instruction. In the individual rounds of the scheme, which is opened twice a year, funds have been provided to pay for study costs of 1,300 to 2,000 secondary school pupils each time.

Support to university students from socially disadvantaged groups

Public universities may request subsidy by, *inter alia*, submitting their projects within the development programmes announced by the Ministry of Education. Each public university may, by submitting a project within a specific development programme, ask the Ministry of Education for a subsidy from the national budget to pay for a number of activities that make

education easier for university students from socially disadvantaged social groups (including university students declaring to be of Roma ethnicity):

- subsidy to the purchase of textbooks, reference books, teaching aids for their libraries (and then lend these preferentially to those socially disadvantaged students who cannot purchase them);
- subsidy to increase the scholarships granted by the university to socially disadvantaged students in compliance with the scholarship rules in the case of an onerous social situation (as a lump sum or repeatedly);
- subsidy for educational, social, psychological, and other counselling provided to these students;
- subsidy for protective aids purchased by the university and lent to these students, etc.

Financial subsidies to universities to support socially disadvantaged students (including Roma students) encourage the motivation of the universities to help to overcome those obstacles in education which are specific for students from the Roma ethnic group and also students from other ethnic minorities.

Support for inter-departmental co-operation aimed at the integration of the Roma

During 2007 the Office of the Council of the Government for Roma Community Affairs prepared a concept of a governmental Agency for the Elimination of Social Exclusion in Roma Locations (hereinafter “the Agency”), which was developed in close co-operation between representatives of state administration, regional and local self-governments, the Roma community, businesses, experts in Roma issues, ministries, the non-governmental sector, the Council of the Government for Roma Community Affairs, the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic [Svaz měst a obcí ČR] and the Association of Regions of the Czech Republic [Asociace krajů ČR].

The Agency’s objective is a transformation of the Roma locations, resulting either in their social inclusion or, at least, a considerable improvement in the quality of life in these places. The Agency is planning, in co-operation with local self-governments, to run specific cross-sectional programmes and projects in selected municipalities and cities from 2008. A programme of a comprehensive solution to social integration in excluded locations will be offered. Therefore, the municipalities will carry out, together with other partners (non-governmental organisations, schools, job centres, local employers, and the Roma community), projects in the area of support for employment, education and improvement of the quality of housing, aimed at citizens in socially excluded Roma locations.

