Evaluation of the INSCHOOL 3 Joint Project of the European Union and Council of Europe

Date of publication:	May, 2024
Prepared by:	Strategicus Consulting
Authors:	Ghica Gheorghiu
	Eliza Lupașcu
	Radu Florea
	Adela Lazăr

Table of contents

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIMA	Agency for Integration, Migration, and Asylum (Portugal)
BG	Bulgaria
CCD	Teaching-Staff Resource Center (Romania)
CJRAE	County Center for Educational Assistance and Resources (Romania)
CoE	Council of Europe
CNEI	National Center for Inclusive Education (Romania)
CZ	Czechia / Czech Republic
DGES	Directorate General for Higher Education (Portugal)
EC	European Commission
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EU-MIDIS	European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
HU	Hungary
INSCHOOL 3	Inclusive Schools Making a Difference for Roma Children Project (cycle 3)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategy
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PT	Portugal
QIE	Quality inclusive education
RO	Romania
SK	Slovakia / Slovak Republic
ToR	Terms of Reference
TEU	Treaty of the European Union
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1. Executive summary

The third cycle of the "Inclusive Schools: Making a Difference for Roma Children" (INSCHOOL) project, implemented between December 2021 and May 2024, is a collaborative effort between the European Union and the Council of Europe to enhance the educational inclusion of Roma children and other marginalized groups across six European countries: Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, and Slovakia[1]. This evaluation report examines the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, drawing on data from interviews, focus groups, and a thorough review of project documents and monitoring data.

The primary goal of this evaluation was to assess the INSCHOOL 3 project's impact, focusing on its relevance to beneficiary needs, effectiveness in achieving its objectives, efficiency in resource utilization, and sustainability of its outcomes. The evaluation aimed to provide actionable insights for future initiatives in inclusive education and Roma inclusion, ensuring alignment with European standards and principles.

Roma children across Europe face significant educational challenges, including low participation rates in early childhood education, high dropout rates, and segregation within school systems. According to the 2021 survey by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), a substantial portion of Roma children live in poverty and face discrimination in various aspects of life, including education. These systemic issues highlight the urgent need for inclusive education reforms.

The INSCHOOL 3 project was highly relevant to the needs of Roma children and other marginalized groups, and its objectives were well-aligned with European standards and the specific contexts of the target countries and addressed critical challenges such as segregation, discrimination, and low educational attainment among Roma children by aiming to improve the policy frameworks in the selected countries. The project's design, informed by previous cycles and comprehensive needs assessments, ensured that it addressed the most pressing issues in each country, building a valuable knowledge base for future evidence-based policy making and practices aimed to improve the inclusion of Roma children in mainstream educational systems:

- its objectives and activities are directly tailored to address the specific contexts and needs of the target countries.
- contributes to broader European policy goals and societal objectives, supporting the design and implementation of national inclusive education policies.
- is aligned with European standards, promoting evidence-based solutions to combat segregation, fostering capacity building and awareness-raising among stakeholders.

The needs of the target groups were identified through a detailed overview of the common challenges faced by the target countries, including the underperformance of Roma children in school, low enrolment rates, high dropout rates, and the persistent issue of segregation in educational settings.

The project's relevance extends beyond the immediate target groups, as inclusive quality education and the integration of marginalized communities have broader societal implications.

---

[1] Full implementation of the project included Czechia, Portugal, Romania and Slovakia. Bulgaria and Hungary took part only in the project's international component activities.

a) Relevance

The evaluation considers the INSCHOOL 3 project highly relevant and well-suited to address the pressing needs of its main beneficiaries: Roma students and children at risk in pre-school and compulsory education across six target countries.

Stakeholders recognise the significance of the project, building upon previous achievements. The project aligns with EU and Council of Europe policy agendas, emphasising equality, human rights, and inclusion. Specific examples include influencing desegregation policies in Czechia and addressing school segregation in Romania.

The project tailored activities to tackle unique challenges in each Beneficiary country. Policy guidance and technical support was provided for Ministries of Education to ensure systemic impact.

The INSCHOOL 3 project prioritised **gender-sensitive dimensions and human rights principles**. Discussions among national stakeholders covered concepts like inclusive education, educational desegregation, democratic citizenship, and intersectionality. Gender equality was a central theme, reflecting a comprehensive approach to addressing inequalities.

The project made several references to the European Court for Human Rights rulings, ensuring adherence to human rights standards. Tangible changes were aimed at within target communities, leveraging human rights perspectives for advocacy and policy efforts.

b) Effectiveness

The INSCHOOL project managed to actively engage all stakeholders in the target Beneficiary countries, even in Bulgaria where there was lack of concrete commitment to join the project cycle 3.

Active collaboration with the relevant State authorities resulted in addressing educational inequalities faced by Roma children, development of concrete policies and influencing legislative frameworks related to segregation, providing practical guidelines for school desegregation, supporting development of National Desegregation Strategies, supporting young Roma role models,

The activities within the international component and sessions within the Peer Policy Platform enhanced skills for inclusive education policymaking, as well as facilitated cooperation, knowledge exchange, and understanding of standards. Furthermore, these activities inspired participants and highlighted successful strategies.

Overall, the INSCHOOL project has made significant strides in addressing educational inequalities and promoting inclusive education across participating countries. Challenges persist, but the commitment to sustainable efforts remains crucial.

c) Efficiency

Despite limited resources (reduced team, budget, and duration), the project delivered substantial benefits in terms of enhanced capacity, improved policies, and increased awareness about inclusive education.

Some project activities, such as technical support and capacity-building workshops, aligned well with initial resource allocations. However, other activities, like mapping institutional needs and the international mapping study in Portugal, did not yield expected outcomes efficiently.

Some delays occurred in key activities, impacting overall project timeliness. While some delays were justified due to external factors, better anticipation and management were required.

Decreased financial resources affected awareness-raising activities (publications, visibility actions, conferences).

In conclusion, the INSCHOOL project demonstrated adaptability and commitment to fostering inclusive education. However, addressing timeliness, economic efficiency, and operational challenges requires improved planning and execution. Detailed data on resource utilisation and outcomes would enhance evaluation.

d) Sustainability

Changing deep-rooted perceptions is a crucial step towards sustainable policy reforms and for their practical implementation, and the project made significant steps in this direction. The partnership between the Council of Europe and European Union was recognised as a key strength and competitive advantage for the project. The combined expertise, resources, and political leverage of these institutions can contribute significantly to the sustainability of inclusive education reforms and the project's impact.

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the research conducted by the evaluation team, the report concludes that **the INSCHOOL 3 project is highly relevant** due to its alignment with pressing educational needs, its strategic approach, and its focus on long-term, sustainable change. The INSCHOOL 3 project has fostered significant dialogue and exchange of best practices among the participating countries, enhancing the capacity of each to address the complex issue of Roma educational integration more effectively.

One of the key insights that emerged from the evaluation is the need to continue including a regional/multi-lateral component addressing inclusive education and segregation, which could bring significant added value to the INSCHOOL initiative. This approach facilitates the exchange of ideas, best practices, and successful strategies across different countries and cultural contexts.

Any potential follow-up initiative should combine policy reforms and capacity-building activities. While policy reforms would provide the strategic framework and guidelines necessary for systemic change, the practical interventions would operationalise policies, demonstrating their effectiveness and providing tangible benefits.

The evaluation also recommends the improvement of project planning, optimization of resources towards critical activities that directly contribute to project outcomes, ensuring that these are not under-resourced.

Strengthening of project management processes is crucial to enhance economic and operational efficiency in the execution of activities, including the detailed design of the plan of activities and a monitoring plan. Moreover, a more comprehensive monitoring plan would be beneficial for measuring relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of actions, and especially for determining if the impact was achieved through the implementation.

There is a necessity for further integration of educational desegregation into national education policies. It would also be necessary to secure sustained funding, establish monitoring mechanisms, and conduct periodic evaluations to ensure policy alignment with evolving educational needs and priorities.

Finally, fostering strategic partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, and community stakeholders are needed as well as promoting coordinated efforts to leverage resources, share expertise, and implement inclusive education practices effectively across different regions and communities.

2. Introduction

2.1. Purpose and scope of the evaluation

This evaluation concerns the Joint Project of the European Union & Council of Europe "Inclusive Schools Making a Difference for Roma Children" (INSCHOOL), cycle 3, implemented between 11/12/2021 and 31/05/2024, with a total budget of 1,000,000 EUR. The project is co-funded by the EU (70%) and Council of Europe (30%) and implemented by the Council of Europe.

The purpose of this final evaluation process is to **assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the INSCHOOL's intervention - in order to learn from and adjust any future actions in the area of quality inclusive education with the focus on Roma inclusion**.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) outlined the parameters of the evaluation exercise conducted in selected locations in Czechia, Portugal, Romania and Slovakia. Given that an evaluation for the first and second cycles of INSCHOOL Project was already carried out, covering the period between May, 2017 - June, 2021, this evaluation focused exclusively on the third cycle of implementation (December, 2021 - April, 2024).

The evaluation report intends to contribute to the orientation and development of the Council of Europe and European Commission's activities in the field of Roma inclusion in general, and of its quality inclusive education in particular.

The evaluation aims to help draw lessons learned at policy level regarding relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, of the inclusive approach and the overall model proposed by the INSCHOOL Project as a potentially multipliable and effective one in each national context.

Additionally, in carrying out the evaluation, the evaluator paid attention and reported on intersectionality with gender equality, taking into consideration the needs of women and men concerning the promotion of quality inclusive education. Furthermore, the evaluation paid particular attention on the principles of Human Rights Approach: equality (ensuring equal opportunities for all), non-discrimination (addressing barriers faced by marginalized groups), participation, transparency, and accountability.

2.2. Project Context and Background

Within the European Union reside approximately 6 million Roma, most of them holding citizenship of an EU Member State. However, a significant proportion of the Roma population lives in extremely poor socio-economic conditions, facing severe social exclusion, discrimination, and segregation. Their restricted access to education, difficulties in entering the labor market, and limited access to healthcare and housing result in lower income levels, poorer health outcomes, and an overall lower quality of life compared to non-Roma Europeans.

The European Union has developed a robust legal framework to combat discrimination and promote the inclusion of Roma people, underpinned by key legislative instruments and policy initiatives. At the core of this framework is the Treaty on European Union (TEU), which enshrines equality, respect for human rights, and the rights of minorities as fundamental EU values. Complementing the TEU, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU explicitly prohibits discrimination based on various grounds, including race and

ethnic origin. The Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) is particularly significant as it prohibits racial or ethnic discrimination in multiple sectors such as employment, education, healthcare, and housing, and introduces the concepts of indirect discrimination and positive action.

Building on this legal foundation, the EU has implemented several policy frameworks aimed at addressing the socio-economic challenges and discrimination faced by the Roma community. Initially, the Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 focused on promoting equal access to education, employment, health, and housing for Roma people. This strategy laid the groundwork for more comprehensive efforts to tackle Roma exclusion and discrimination.

In October 2020, the European Commission adopted the **EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation**, which outlines a new, ambitious 10-year plan. This framework emphasizes fostering equality, inclusion, and participation, and continues to prioritize the key areas of education, employment, health, and housing. The framework has spurred several initiatives, including the INSCHOOL project, which focuses on improving access to education, the EU4Health program aimed at enhancing health outcomes, and the HERO pilot project to facilitate housing and employment opportunities for Roma.

At the same time, the Council of Europe has reinforced these efforts through its **Strategic Action Plan for Roma and TravellerInclusion (2020-2025)**. This plan aims to reduce educational segregation, promote inclusive education practices, and address broader socio-economic challenges faced by Roma communities across Europe. The Council of Europe works closely with the EU, as seen in the third phase of the Roma Integration program launched in May, 2023. This program focuses on mainstreaming Roma issues into public policies, supporting socio-economic integration, and strengthening the institutional capacities of governments in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

Jointly, these frameworks and initiatives reflect a concerted effort by both the EU and the Council of Europe to ensure that Roma people have equal access to rights and opportunities, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

2.3. Description of the intervention

The main aim of the third cycle of the INSCHOOL project was to **reinforce its commitment to improving the access, participation and performance of Roma and children at risk of marginalization and exclusion in pre-school and compulsory education**.

The project had the following specific objectives:

1. Ensuring that National education policies, coordination structures, recovery and resilience plans, and operational programs are in line with European standards and practices on Quality Inclusive Education and continue to meet the relevant thematic enabling conditions under 2021/2027 EU fund programs.

2. Supporting National level evidence-based solutions promoting changes in inclusive education policy and practice, and acting to reduce and prevent further segregation of children in educational settings.

3. Strengthening the capacity, competences and awareness of education institutions, schools, EU funds managing authorities and civil society on inclusive education.
4. Raising and promoting the awareness of the general public about the meaning and benefits of inclusive education.

The key planned activities were:

ACT 1: Mapping of institutional needs - identification of needs, relevant processes and policies of public authorities and coordination bodies.

This involved identifying the needs, relevant processes and policies of public authorities and national coordination bodies related to inclusive education in each of the 6 target countries. Given that the project was building on previous INSCHOOL efforts, the needs mapping would help develop a joint vision and roadmap for strategic interventions tailored to each country context. Depending on the country, memorandums of understanding could be drawn up with Ministries of Education to formalize the cooperation. At least 2 needs assessments and 2 roadmaps of priorities and actions were expected outputs.

ACT 2: Technical and operational support to Ministries or Education, relevant education and social inclusion authorities, EU funds managing authorities and national public coordination bodies.

The project would provide expert support, policy guidance, research, data collection, peer-exchanges and publications to assist education and social inclusion authorities in reviewing, adapting, implementing and monitoring their national inclusive education, Roma inclusion and social inclusion policies and programs. It would aim to strengthen the work and capacity of national public coordination mechanisms on inclusive education through expertise, training, exchange of knowledge and dialogue.

The support would promote use of Council of Europe standards, tools like the *Index for Inclusion* methodology, human rights instruments and the EU's policy, legal and funding frameworks around the European Education Area and Roma Strategic Framework. At least 2 national policies were expected to be adapted/revised, with proposals drafted on desegregation and recommendations made for operational programs to better address QIE and Roma inclusion.

ACT 3: Research, analysis, and collection of data

To support evidence-based policymaking, the project would conduct research and analysis to generate data and knowledge on promoting quality inclusive education. This included analysis of policy/legal frameworks and regional/multi-lateral assessment of recent forms of educational segregation practices.

At least 2 policy/legal analyses were expected, along with proposals for desegregation policies/legislation. An international mapping study would look at good practices from legal, policy and educational perspectives on addressing different types of educational segregation.

ACT 4: Online resource centre with educational and policy information on inclusive education and a multilateral policy and peer exchange platform

An online platform would serve as a resource centre providing educational methodologies, school practices, policy solutions, training materials and other resources

related to inclusive education and desegregation. It would facilitate remote learning and training on QIE.

The platform would also enable a multinational policy exchange and peer learning forum for policymakers, education specialists and other stakeholders to share good practices, discuss reforms and enable regional/multi-lateral cooperation around QIE. Profiles of participating countries, reports from platform meetings and informational materials were expected outputs.

ACT 5: Expert seminars and consultation activities on developing solutions for quality inclusive education and desegregation

This activity involved organizing participatory meetings, roundtables and seminars with relevant experts and consultants from various levels, in order to develop sustainable policy solutions for quality inclusive education and desegregation.

The purpose was to bring together diverse stakeholders in a consultative process to devise strategies and action plans for promoting desegregation and preventing further educational segregation in each of the 6 target countries.

ACT 6: International training program for policy and education professionals

A comprehensive training program would be developed on quality and inclusive education and desegregation, based on European QIE standards, human rights instruments, EU policy/legal frameworks and the results of training needs assessments.

A training manual and modules would specifically target policy actors and education specialists. The program was expected to include at least 2 residential training seminars along with training reports and participant evaluations.

ACT 7: Study and thematic visits on quality inclusive education, desegregation and Roma inclusion

Regional/multi-lateral study visits would promote deeper understanding of QIE concepts and facilitate learning from innovative good practices in education policy and implementation amongst participating countries and institutions.

The visits would enable exchange of expertise and solutions around specific needs identified by the countries. At least 2 such international/thematic visits were planned, with analytical reports capturing conclusions and recommendations from exchanges.

ACT 8: Ambassadors for Inclusive Education promote QIE and INSCHOOL at national and international levels

Building on a previous INSCHOOL initiative, a number of "Ambassadors for Inclusive Education" would be appointed to raise public awareness about the benefits of inclusive education. These ambassadors with positive personal/professional experience in education would promote QIE values nationally and internationally.

ACT 9: Communication and visibility of the project

National promotional strategies would be developed, with the project providing grant funding to support the ambassadors' awareness raising and educational activities with stakeholders like schools and civil society.

ACT 10: Inclusive education conference

Towards the end of the project period, a major European conference on inclusive education was planned to take present the project's implementation progress and

impact, to enable exchange among the participating stakeholders from the 6 countries, discuss and decide on strategic directions for further interventions and to promote successful practices and experiences around quality inclusive education and desegregation. It is expected that, following the conference, a report compiling the key conclusions and the strategic directions of the interventions discussed at the conference, to be publicly disseminated.

Overall, the action involved a comprehensive approach combining policy support, research, capacity building, exchange of practices, public awareness efforts and provision of technical resources and tools - aimed at promoting inclusive education reforms and desegregation solutions across the 6 participating countries.

The project's logic model

The initiative involves the engagement of national and international experts, trainers, educators, and Inclusive Education Ambassadors. Funding is sourced from EU and national allocations to support inclusive education policies and programs. Essential materials and tools include policy documents, research studies, and training resources.

Activities focus on policy development and coordination, research and analysis, capacity building, and public awareness:

- National education policies are adapted and revised to align with European standards, incorporating recommendations and principles from European strategic frameworks.
- Research and analysis efforts produce reports and policy briefs that offer evidence-based solutions for inclusive education and desegregation.
- Capacity-building initiatives include organizing training events and peer exchanges for educators and policymakers.
- Public awareness campaigns are conducted by Ambassadors for Inclusive Education to promote the benefits of inclusive education to the general public.

These activities result in various **outputs**:

- National policies are adapted or revised, recommendations for operational programs are developed, and national working groups are established or reconvened.
- Research efforts produce analytical reports and international studies on good practices for desegregation.
- Capacity-building activities include training events, study visits, and the development of an online training module on QIE.
- Public awareness campaigns generate visibility activities and national promotional strategies.

Immediate outcomes include increased knowledge of education, social inclusion, and Roma inclusion authorities on quality inclusive education standards, desegregation processes, and methodologies. The capacity of national public coordination bodies to effectively promote and coordinate measures based on inclusive education values and practices is strengthened. Participation of relevant target groups and stakeholders, including those from vulnerable groups, in policy development processes is enhanced.

Intermediate outcomes ensure that national education policies, coordination structures, recovery and resilience plans, and operational programs align with European standards on QIE. Evidence-based solutions support and promote changes in inclusive education

policy and practice, addressing the reduction and prevention of segregation of children in educational settings. The capacity, competences, and awareness of education institutions, EU funds managing authorities, and civil society on inclusive education are strengthened. The awareness of the general public about the meaning and benefits of inclusive education is increased and promoted.

The **long-term impact of the initiative** is to promote inclusive education reforms and policy solutions that align with European standards and principles for QIE, thereby improving access, inclusion, participation, and performance of Roma and children at risk of marginalization in compulsory education.

2.4. Evaluation methodology

The scope of the evaluation was set for the period from December 2021 to April 2024. The evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of INSCHOOL interventions at policy level (Czechia, Romania, Slovak Republic, and Portugal) and through the project's international component (Czechia, Romania, Slovak Republic, Portugal, Bulgaria, and Hungary), focusing on the creation of a model and potential for sustainable policy solutions in inclusive education and social inclusion of Roma children.

The evaluation would contribute therefore to the orientation and development of Council of Europe and European Commission's activities in the field of Roma inclusion in general and of its quality inclusive education in particular.

The evaluation would also help draw lessons learned at policy level regarding relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, of the inclusive approach and the overall model proposed by the INSCHOOL project as a potentially multipliable and effective one in each national context.

The focus of the evaluation's objectives is set within the following parameters:
   a) The relevance of the intervention in the project countries.
   b) The effectiveness of its support to the design and promotion of inclusive education policies in line with European standards and principles for quality inclusive education.
   c) The efficiency of the delivery of results concerning the national inclusive education policies vis a vis the resources used, and time needed to produce these.
   d) Sustainability of the strengthening of the capacities, competences, and awareness on inclusive education to continue in the aftermath of the project and in the long-term.
   e) To identify lessons and recommendations that the Roma and Travellers Division of the Council of Europe and the relevant partners at the European Commission, as well as other stakeholders of the project should learn and take into consideration in their future actions.

Therefore, the approach addressed specifically the key evaluation issues presented in the terms of reference and included cross-cutting topics. The evaluation also identified key lessons from project implementation for its possible follow-up and activities required to further consolidate results - to be used by the Council of Europe (COE) and its cooperation partners - through the following activities:

- measuring and analyzing the progress of project activities, as well as their relevance to the proposed objectives;
- examining and assessing organizational aspects, in terms of coordination and management, as well as risk management (identification/response);
- performing a systematic overview of the results, achievements, key challenges and lessons learned to date, and providing recommendations with the aim of actively and positively influencing future efforts;
- analyzing thoroughly the institutional environment, and measuring the existing and potential synergies and complementary roles of other actors (relevant authorities working in the education sector, donors, private sector, government counterparts etc.) in providing support or managing common initiatives;
- examining the overall sustainability of the initiative and factors that enhance or undermine long-term sustainability of positive interventions.

The assignment was of retrospective/summative nature, using a change-oriented and a gender-sensitive approach. It encompassed a simple research methodology, covering multiple layers of information by using a mixed-methods approach to answer the evaluation questions. Furthermore, the study provides evidence-based data and forward-looking recommendations and adjustments.

The data collection phase of the review provided a mix of quantitative (from desk research) and qualitative (from research) data. Data triangulation was used to ensure the validity of the findings and to provide a clearer understanding of the main issues.

Desk research (secondary data analysis): this phase included a thorough review of project documents[2] and monitoring data provided by the project team, as well as other relevant documentation of the Council of Europe and European Commission e.g.: Council of Europe's Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025), relevant for the period of the evaluation etc., outreach and media materials, public announcements, policy papers, media reports, publications, general literature, etc.

Online interviews (primary data collection and analysis): data collection focused on gathering relevant information, opinions, suggestions and challenges faced by the stakeholders involved in the project (key informants suggested by the project team in Strasbourg). Data was gathered using **semi-structured, individual or group interviews involving 33 people**, covering all project target countries and institutions involved in activities i.e. project team, CoE and EU representatives, inclusive education ambassadors, educational advisors, ministry representatives, national working groups, study visit participants, experts, trainers/trainees and other stakeholders. All interviews were organized as online meetings using Zoom.

Limitations and difficulties encountered during the evaluation

Due to the short timeline (one month) of the whole evaluation process, data collection included only interviews (individual and group), as well as a selection of focus groups, all of them were carried online. An online survey was not possible to be deployed, for the same time constraints reasons.

---

[2] See Annex 2: Key documentation consulted.

The evaluation team conducted a thorough and rich documentation review, which greatly helped to gather the relevant data needed for the assessment of evidence-based policies.

During the inception period of the evaluation, despite meticulous preparations that included sending e-mails to all key project stakeholders, certain online meetings could not be arranged for various reasons.

Since the project review timeline included a period of holidays in certain countries (1st of May, 5th of May - Orthodox Easter, 8th of May, 9th of May etc.) the consultant team anticipated that some of the initial planning for data gathering could suffer from the unavailability of certain stakeholders, and therefore online interviews and meetings were planned before or after these holidays. Nevertheless, as expected, some of the stakeholders either declined or did not respond to the invites sent by e-mail, despite the support received from the project team.

Efforts were made to reach out to all key stakeholders who had either declined or not responded to the initial invitations, with the kind help of the CoE team. However, it was possible to organize only a limited number of online meetings[3]. Regrettably, certain key respondents from public agencies and governmental bodies could not be interviewed.

At the moment of the final evaluation, a M&E structure (or the logical framework) filled-in with fresh, measurable data related to the project indicators (and specific targets) was not available. Therefore, no specific figures - connected strictly to the project and its significant outputs and outcomes, which could have been usable by this evaluation - were available for analysis.

---

[3] Focus groups: 1 out of 4 planned; group interviews: 6 out of 8 planned; individual interviews: 14 out of 16 planned.

3. Evaluation findings

3.1. Relevance

[To what extent is the project suited to the needs of the beneficiaries? Evaluate if the project design is appropriate for achieving expected results]

Based on the desk review and the analysis of data collected during the interviews and focus groups, as well as on documents that were pointed by the interviewees, the evaluation team considers **the INSCHOOL 3 project as being highly relevant and well-suited to address the pressing needs of its main beneficiaries** - Roma students and children at risk of marginalization and exclusion in pre-school and compulsory education across the target countries.

As highlighted in the project description, the needs of the target groups were identified through a **comprehensive assessment of the social, political, and economic contexts in the beneficiary countries**. The document, as well as the research presented in the context section of the report, provide a detailed overview of the common challenges faced by these nations, including the underperformance of Roma children in school, low enrolment rates, high dropout rates, and the persistent issue of segregation in educational settings. However, the mapping study on institutional needs in Portugal showed evident shortcomings of the system, which were afterwards contested by the partners. Furthermore, the evaluation could not estimate how the needs assessment studies could influence the policy making level, during the life of the project; it also raises questions about the project's initial planning.

The project's objectives and activities are directly tailored to address the specific contexts and needs of the target countries, while also contributing to broader European policy goals and societal objectives - with a strong focus on supporting the design and implementation of national inclusive education policies aligned with European standards, promoting evidence-based solutions to combat segregation, and fostering capacity building and awareness-raising among stakeholders.

The relevance of the project is further reinforced by the findings of various European surveys, monitoring bodies, and human rights organizations, which have consistently highlighted the issue of segregation and the need for inclusive education reforms. As stated in the project description: "*Based on the data available in relation to the problems in ensuring inclusive education in certain EU member states, European Semester analyses, relevant judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and findings of CoE monitoring bodies, and the achievements of the previous phases of the INSCHOOL Joint Program, six countries have been identified as proposed beneficiaries of the INSCHOOL 3 project*".

During the interviews, one topic came up frequently: the importance of the practical interventions at school and community level. While its importance is clear, this report also points out that **the sequence of interventions is critical in reaching deep and making a lasting effect**, and also the obvious - the size and layers of an intervention is proportional with its resources. Accordingly, the project has to prioritize the activities which produce more sustainable results. Aligning the intervention objectives with the identified needs, with resources that the project had, particularly in addressing the

sensitive issues of segregation and discrimination, is a difficult task. As acknowledged by an interviewee: "*addressing this issue (segregation) is challenging, especially in a political context, where there are real threats involved. I understand the policy-makers' position. Some of them might have felt that if they had included a focus on the Roma community, the project might not have succeeded as intended*".

To mitigate these challenges, the project adopted a multi-faceted approach, combining policy-level interventions with practical support for educational institutions and stakeholders.

The project's relevance extends beyond the immediate target groups, as inclusive quality education and the integration of marginalized communities have broader societal implications. An interviewee emphasized this point, stating: "*When we created this training curriculum, we had a very strong emphasis on equity of education, bringing the benefits of equity in education that there are beneficial for the entire society and how that drives positive change in social cohesion and economic development*".

The relevance of the INSCHOOL 3 project is further reinforced by its **alignment with the priorities and perceptions of various stakeholders**, including public authorities, educational institutions, and civil society organizations involved in the project's implementation.

According to the informants, **the project's objectives and activities resonate with the stakeholders**, as they recognize the significance and value of the initiative. A respondent stated: "*The project naturally build upon the achievements, know-how and contacts developed during the pilot and second phase of the INSCHOOL Project, as well as contacts and policy-level dialogue established with the selected six countries*".

The project's relevance is also underscored by its **alignment with broader European Union and Council of Europe policy agendas**, such as the European Education Area's strategic priority on improving quality, equity, and inclusion in education[4], the EU Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion, and participation[5], and the Council of Europe's Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025)[6].

The project aligns with article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union (TEU), which emphasizes equality, respect for human rights and the rights of minorities. The INSCHOOL project's efforts to combat educational segregation directly support these values, by promoting the inclusion of Roma children in mainstream education.

Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights prohibits discrimination on various grounds, including race and ethnic origin. The INSCHOOL project, through its various initiatives i.e. training, policy advocacy, and resource development - works to eliminate discriminatory practices in education against Roma children, thereby upholding this fundamental right.

The Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) prohibits discrimination in several key areas, including education. The INSCHOOL project's activities, such as the establishment of desegregation policies and the creation of supportive educational resources, are

---

[4] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0452_EN.html.
[5] https://www.eumonitor.eu/9353000/1/j4nvk6yhcbpeywk_j9vvik7m1c3gyxp/vlh9a9xmjtyt.
[6] https://edoc.coe.int/en/roma-and-travellers/8508-council-of-europe-strategic-action-plan-for-roma-and-traveller-inclusion-2020-2025.html.

practical implementations of the principles of this directive, promoting equal educational opportunities for Roma children.

By fostering inclusive education practices and influencing policy changes (e.g. the desegregation policy in Czechia), the project directly contributes to the objectives of the EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation (2020-2030) which has a three-pillar approach: equality, inclusion, and participation. The project's focus on educational inclusion aligns with the EU's priorities on ensuring Roma children have equal access to quality education, which is one of the four key areas (education, employment, health, and housing) targeted by the EU Roma frameworks[7].

The Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025) of the CoE outlines the Council's commitment to promoting the rights and inclusion of Roma. The INSCHOOL project supports this by developing and implementing policies that tackle educational segregation and by fostering cooperation between various stakeholders, including governments and NGOs, to support Roma inclusion in education[8].

The Council of Europe's various recommendations, such as those on improving access to education for Roma children, are operationalized by the INSCHOOL project through concrete actions like training programs and policy advocacy. These efforts help reduce discrimination and promote social inclusion.

Specific examples of alignment:
- the project successfully influenced the creation and publication of a desegregation policy in Czechia, which mandates municipalities to develop desegregation plans and takes legal action against non-compliance.
- the INSCHOOL project has played a pivotal role in the issuance of a new Ministerial Order in Romania, adopting a methodology for addressing school segregation in pre-university education. This policy incorporates indicators from the Index for Inclusion, promoting inclusive education practices and addressing segregation at the school level.

This policy change directly supports the EU and Council of Europe's objectives of fostering equality and combating discrimination in education.

Furthermore, the project's design and implementation approach have been informed by the specific needs and contexts of the target countries. As a discussion partner explained "*Addressing issues of existing educational segregation will require a specific analysis of the policy and legal practices of member states. This intended outcome will aim to engage in research and analysis in order to develop suitable solutions for desegregation and prevention of segregation, either through policy or legal amendments*".

By tailoring the project's activities and interventions to the unique challenges and contexts of each beneficiary country, the project's relevance is further strengthened, as it addresses the specific needs and priorities of the target groups and stakeholders.

---

[7] https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/roma-eu/roma-equality-inclusion-and-participation-eu_en
[8] https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/-/european-union-launches-the-third-phase-of-its-roma-integration-programme-in-partnership-with-the-council-of-europe; https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/adopted-texts

One of the key design elements tailored to address the identified problems is **the project's focus on policy guidance and technical support for Ministries of Education**, relevant education and social inclusion authorities, and EU fund managing authorities. The project provided support to "education and social inclusion authorities in the process of review, adaptation, implementation and monitoring of national inclusive education, Roma inclusion and social inclusion policies and programs through expert support, policy guidance, research, data collection, peer-exchanges, dialogue, publication production, study visits, etc."

This policy-level intervention has been the path the project chose as being decisive in ensuring the sustainability and systemic impact of the project's efforts, as it aims to align national policies and programs with European standards and practices on quality inclusive education.

As the INSCHOOL 3 project nears its completion, it is crucial to consider its relevance and lessons learned for the next programming period, ensuring that the gains made are sustained and built upon.

Integration of gender-sensitive dimensions and human rights principles

The integration of gender-sensitive dimensions and human rights principles was an aspect of the INSCHOOL 3 project that was easily identified. An examination of the materials produced during the project, including studies and publications, highlights the emphasis on these principles. Notably, the training materials and agenda incorporated the Reference Framework of Competencies for Democratic Culture, which prioritizes gender equality and non-discrimination as core values. This demonstrates the project's commitment to fostering an inclusive educational environment.

The Peer Policy Exchange Platform for national stakeholders involved in education policies underscored concepts and values such as quality inclusive education, educational desegregation, democratic citizenship, inclusion, anti-discrimination, and intersectionality. The inclusion of gender equality as a core value within these discussions indicates a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of inequalities and the importance of addressing them through policy and practice.

Support for policy-making was bolstered by the involvement of highly skilled experts who were deeply aware of the integration of gender-sensitive dimensions and human rights principles. The project was underpinned by a robust understanding of human rights standards, as evidenced by references to the European Court for Human Rights rulings. This expertise ensured that the project not only met high standards of gender equality and non-discrimination but also aimed to make tangible changes within the target communities, leveraging human rights perspectives to inform advocacy and policy efforts.

3.2. Effectiveness

[Evaluate the achievement of project outcomes. What were the strengths and weaknesses at the policy level?]

Project stakeholders from **Bulgaria** confirmed the initial desk research findings, pointing as the most pressing issues affecting the education system (relevant for the current project) primarily revolving around three key issues: lack of inclusive education, segregation in schools, and dropout rates among Roma students.

Bulgaria was not directly (at policy-makers level) involved in this project, but the Council of Europe has actively tried to engage the decision-makers to include Bulgaria. With a successful involvement of the NGOs and due to the negotiations with the central authorities, now **Bulgaria is interested to join the INSCHOOL project, should the project continue**. The NGOs in Bulgaria that have been involved in various activities (two international study visits, and the international training program) strongly support participation in this project.

The project, despite Bulgaria's late involvement, raised awareness among officials about the importance of inclusive education and desegregation. Training and capacity-building activities were organized for stakeholders, including school principals and young Roma people.

The INSCHOOL 3 project contributed in **Czechia** to addressing several serious needs related to the education of Roma children and those at risk of marginalization and exclusion.

Support from the CoE and collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and its partners resulted in the creation of a **robust desegregation policy**[9] characterized by one of the interviewees as "*a massive step forward*".

Also, during the project implementation, a Memorandum between PAQ Research (INSCHOOL Project Educational Advisor), the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the National Pedagogical Institute, and the Agency for Social Inclusion to ensure coordinated efforts has been signed, creating the premises for coordinating and creating the support to ensure the application of the new policy and the framework for improvement the policies: "*The memorandum of understanding formalizes the commitment of key institutions to work together on desegregation*".

Another relevant activity conducted by PAQ Research and supported partially by INSCHOOL has been the creation of the **desegregace.cz website**, providing comprehensive guidelines for school establishers on how to desegregate schools and adjust catchment areas to promote inclusivity, that serves as a crucial resource for municipalities and schools, providing practical steps and methodologies for desegregation: "*The desegregace.cz website has been an invaluable resource for municipalities*".

The INSCHOOL 3 project in the Czech Republic made notable steps in addressing the educational inequalities faced by Roma children. Through comprehensive policy development, coalition building, and targeted advocacy, the project has proved its commitment to inclusive education. However, the challenges highlight the need for sustained efforts and resources to ensure the long-term success and impact of these initiatives.

---

[9] https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-education-ministry-presents-measures-to-combat-the-segregation-of-romani-children.

The coordination of the work and INSCHOOL support in **Portugal** took place through the National Working Group (NWG), established in June 2022. The NWG is composed of representatives of different entities of the Ministry of Education (Directorate-General for Education, Directorate-General for Schools), and of the High Commission for Migration (Observatory of Roma Communities, Support Centre for Roma Communities, Network of Schools for Intercultural Education), as well as of representatives of Roma NGOs.

The collective feedback from various stakeholders - including policy-making trainees, representatives from national working groups - and the analysis of the project's implementation in Portugal are summarized by the following positive insights:

Strong legal framework: The Portuguese law is inherently inclusive, supporting the creation of heterogeneous classes. This provides a robust legal foundation for implementing inclusive education initiatives.

Effective organization and qualitative input: The Council of Europe was commended for its excellent organization of the INSCHOOL project and the high-quality input provided. This facilitated the smooth execution and positive reception of the project.

Positive feedback from participants: project activity reports, as well as participants, including trainees from the policy-making group and representatives from the national working group, reflected positively on the qualitative benefits of the project. This indicates that the project has been successful in enhancing participants' understanding and appreciation of inclusive education.

Support for young ambassadors: the project has effectively supported young Roma role models, enabling them to learn and gain autonomy, which is crucial for the sustainability of future action plans. The inclusive education ambassador initiative supported through grants the promotion of young Roma role models.

Promotion of inclusive education awareness: the Roma Role Models sessions have been successful in promoting the importance of education among Roma children and youth and fostering discussions on inclusive education among teachers and educational institutions.

On the other hand, there are some weaknesses which need to be considered:

Political instability: the political instability in Portugal, with a resigning government and upcoming elections, has created uncertainty and affected the implementation of the INSCHOOL project. **Changes in government could lead to shifts in priorities**, particularly if a right-wing government is elected, potentially reducing interest in inclusive education.

Institutional barriers: the dissolution of the High Commission for Migrations and its replacement by AIMA has **disrupted the established partnerships and created uncertainty** about the new agency's commitment to the Roma community and inclusive education.

Bureaucratic limitations: representatives from DGES faced **significant bureaucratic challenges and a lack of acknowledgment** from the Ministry of Education regarding the need for educational inclusion, hindering progress.

Far-right movements: the rise of far-right movements spreading **philosophies of hatred in schools** poses a threat to the objectives of the inclusive education program, potentially counteracting its efforts.

The education system in **Romania** faces multi-layered challenges that need to be addressed to improve access, participation, and performance of Roma and marginalized children in education.

The project has been reported as being a success by most participants, mentioning among the most notable results: influencing the legislative framework (articles in the education law, secondary legislation developed by Parliament, methodologies etc.). The opinions of the interviewees made this very clear: "*Segregation is a subject that, when discussed in an institutional setting, must be seen as it has been defined. We can then discuss the steps that have been taken with great courage by the Ministry of Education*"; and also: "*The fact that segregation was not mentioned for decades in the Ministry of Education's legislation is again a reality (...). In the 2011 education law, you will not find articles or directions addressing the segregation phenomenon. However, this time, in the Law no 198 of 2023, you will find a chapter dedicated to the specific phenomenon of segregation*".

These results are good grounds for sustainability and provide a "larger umbrella" for the development of future initiatives. The respondents agreed that the project addressed the Romanian inclusive education priorities at a high degree, with the exception of the "Raising and promoting the awareness of the general public about the meaning and benefits of inclusive education" objective. "*The main reason for the absence of significant impact on the general public's awareness is the lack of financial resources allocated to such an awareness-raising campaign*" mentioned one of the respondents. The evaluation team believes that while this objective is commendable, it was too ambitious given the limited financial resources available. Therefore, it is reasonable to consider the increased awareness at the policy-making level as an acceptable and significant result.

The general interventions of the INSCHOOL project in **Slovakia** were designed to support the public authorities, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport and Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, to develop their strategic policies on desegregation in line with the expectations of the country's commitments under the Recovery Resilience Plan and different funding mechanisms. In this respect, the activities focused on supporting the development of a National Desegregation Strategy, contributing towards the developing of the methodology and monitoring system for desegregation, and a feasibility study on busing as a desegregation measure in education.

In June 2023, the INSCHOOL project commissioned an analysis on the Feasibility Study on Busing as a Desegregation Measure in Education in Slovakia. The review of the draft report on busing interventions in the Slovak Republic shows that there is strong potential for further interpretation of collected data; the expert working on the study suggested that deeper analysis could yield new insights into effective policy development and implementation strategies. **Any transport-related school desegregation effort should be linked to the rationalization of the school network**, as suggested in various strategic documents over the past decade. Despite these recommendations, none have materialized by the end of the project due to political implications and the highly decentralized nature of the education system in Slovakia[10]. There are schools that have

---

[10] Recent information suggests that the busing study will inform the launch of funding calls for busing with the budget of 6 million EUR, with the main objective of desegregation.

been ethnically segregated since their inception, often established near marginalized Roma communities as "container schools". In this case, residential segregation mirrors educational segregation.

The Training Course in Budapest

The primary aim of the International Training Course on Education Policy Making, based on inclusive values and data, was to enhance the skills and knowledge of participants regarding inclusive education practices, with a specific focus on addressing the educational needs of Roma children. The training sought to equip policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders with the tools and methodologies necessary to promote inclusive education and effectively tackle issues such as segregation.

The Training Residential Seminar focused on the conceptual and practical dimensions of equity and social justice in education, and gathered nearly 40 participants in Budapest, Hungary. The main tenets of the Reference Framework of Competencies for Democratic Culture[11], including intercultural aspects of inclusion, were central to the training.

The training course in Budapest was successful in achieving its objectives, providing participants with valuable knowledge and practical tools to promote inclusive education. The Participants highly appreciated the quality of the training such as:
- significant improvements in the understanding of inclusive education practices (practical tools and methodologies directly applied in work).
- noticeable impacts at policy level (participants from various ministries were able to incorporate the knowledge gained into their policy frameworks).
- opportunity for networking and cross-national collaboration.

The highly positive feedback from participants underscores the importance of tailored, needs-based training programs and the role of international collaboration in addressing educational challenges.

The Study Visit to Strasbourg

The first International Study Visit on "Council of Europe Standards and Tools on Quality and Inclusive Education" was held from 26 to 27 October, 2022 in the Council of Europe premises in Strasbourg and aimed to enhance the knowledge of participants regarding existing Council of Europe and European Union standards, tools, and pedagogic practices on quality inclusive education, non-discrimination, and the right to education. The study visit welcomed 28 participants from Bulgaria, Czechia, Portugal, Romania and Slovakia.

The written report, as well as feedback received from participants and the project team were **overwhelmingly positive**. One of the participants stated: "*The study visit facilitated cooperation and exchange of good practices and useful advice between different participants from different countries, helping us to realize that our problems (…) are similar. It was extremely useful to get to know experts with many years of experience in this field from different countries and institutions (…)*".

The main benefit highlighted was the **enhanced understanding of international policy and legal frameworks, tools, recommendations, and guidelines available for national use**. Participants appreciated the opportunity to learn from other countries,

---

[11] https://www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture.

understanding the challenges they face and what solutions have been effective. Notably, issues surrounding segregation and desegregation measures garnered significant interest due to their complexity and relevance.

Participants also valued the opportunity for in-depth dialogue and initial cooperation exchanges secured for the future, particularly with the National Agency for the Roma.

Key recommendations from the study visit include:
- Organizing more national-level events related to quality inclusive education and Roma inclusion.
- Extending the duration of international exchanges to focus on specific measures that have contributed to positive changes at the national level.

The event in Strasbourg provided a platform for participants to present, discuss, and learn from each other, showcasing policy and legal frameworks, conceptual approaches, and practical examples supporting the social and educational inclusion of Roma children. The event successfully facilitated exchanges with various Council of Europe institutions and secretariats, deepening participants' understanding of the European Convention on Human Rights and relevant case law on the right to education and non-discrimination.

The Study Visit to Lisbon

The study visit to Lisbon, conducted as part of the INSCHOOL project, aimed to provide participants with firsthand experience of inclusive education practices and policies in Portugal, country that had made notable progress in implementing inclusive education policies. The country's approach to reducing school dropouts and promoting educational inclusion has been recognized as a model worth examining and replicating.

Considering the written report, as well as the feedback provided by the interviewed participants, this visit was **appreciated as very inspiring**, and important for sharing knowledge and strategies among different countries to enhance inclusive education for Roma and other marginalized communities.

The study visit facilitated the establishment of networks with stakeholders from other countries, enabling the exchange of strategies and insights: "*This has been an excellent networking opportunity. We've established new contacts with Slovakia, Romania, and Portugal, which will help us better understand and address common challenges*".

The visit inspired Romanian participants to revise their approach to desegregation based on observed successes in Portugal: "*It has been a priority in Romania, and this project has shown us that more can be done. Even though we are aware of these issues and attempt many initiatives, we often see no results*".

Czech participants highlighted the influence of the visit on their national policies, particularly the adoption of inclusive education strategies and the **involvement of Roma communities in educational initiatives**: "*Due to the infringement threat from the European Commission, changes have been gradual. A pivotal benefit from the INSCHOOL activities was a shift in thinking*".

The study visit to Lisbon proved to be a transforming experience for the participants, providing valuable insights and fostering international cooperation. As one informer revealed, the experience managed to change visibly the attitude of the participants towards inclusive education. The lessons learned emphasized the need for committed leadership, regulatory flexibility, continuous support, and community involvement in

driving inclusive education reforms. The networking opportunities created during the visit are expected to contribute significantly to the sustainability and effectiveness of inclusive education policies across the participating countries.

The Policy Peer Exchange Platform for national stakeholders involved in education policies

The Policy Peer Exchange Platform, as outlined in the concept note, is an initiative designed to foster collaboration, learning, and exchange of good practices among stakeholders involved in inclusive education policies across several countries, including Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Portugal, Romania and Slovakia.

The platform targets stakeholders within the INSCHOOL participating countries, including education policymakers, researchers, practitioners, civil society organizations, academia, and specialized education profiles such as teacher training centres and inspectors. Additionally, it is open to Roma Contact Points, EU funds managing authorities, and other actors engaged in the design, implementation, monitoring, and review of national strategies and EU fund programs promoting inclusive education.

The Policy Peer Exchange Platform would be a significant step towards fostering inclusive education across participating countries. By facilitating the exchange of knowledge and good practices, the platform aims to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders to implement effective and equitable education policies.

It is therefore an important initiative that aligns with the broader goals of the INSCHOOL project. It provides a collaborative space for stakeholders to learn from each other, develop competences, and promote inclusive education policies that are essential for the social and educational inclusion of Roma children and other marginalized groups.

All these are commendable and significant initiatives, but it should be noted that **the platform did not manage to reach its full potential in the time of the evaluation and within the project, as it was launched in March, 2024.** Two meetings of the platform took place near the project's conclusion, their topics being directly targeted to the requests by Ministries of Education.

Necessary resources and support should be identified to make the platform fully operational and maximize its potential impact.

The Mapping Study

The Mapping Study performed within the INSCHOOL project aimed to identify and analyze the existing conditions, policies, and practices related to inclusive education in the participating countries, providing thus comprehensive data on the segregation of Roma students and to identify promising practices to combat this segregation. The primary objective was to support desegregation and the inclusion of Roma children by gathering evidence and offering actionable recommendations for policymakers and educational institutions. The study collected data on the extent and nature of segregation in various educational contexts, focusing on the practices and policies in different countries.

The main findings, according to project stakeholders, were the following:
- the study found **significant levels of segregation in schools**, particularly affecting Roma students. This segregation often led to unequal access to quality education and limited social integration.

- there was a **notable lack of support services for marginalized students**, including educational mediators and specialized teaching resources. This gap hindered the ability of schools to effectively address the diverse needs of their student populations.
- while some inclusive education policies existed, there were significant gaps in their implementation. The study highlighted the **need for more robust policy frameworks and better enforcement mechanisms** to ensure compliance.

The mapping study provided a detailed and evidence-based understanding of the current state of inclusive education. The insights gained from the study informed the development of targeted interventions and policy recommendations within the INSCHOOL project. These informed actions aimed to address the identified gaps and challenges, that eventually will contribute to more inclusive and equitable education systems in the participating countries.

Stakeholders agreed that **the study will serve as a foundational tool to understand the landscape of inclusive education**, focusing particularly on the challenges and needs of marginalized groups, including Roma students. This comprehensive analysis is crucial for tailoring interventions and informing policy recommendations, and it shaped other activities within the INSCHOOL 3 project:

- training courses were developed based on the findings of the mapping study; these courses included both in-person training sessions i.e. those in Budapest, as well as online modules.
- the study facilitated the sharing of promising practices and provided new tools to analyze and intervene in segregation, shows what can be useful for other countries and adapted to the local needs. This expanded the competencies of participants, enabling them to design better policies and strategies.

In conclusion, the INSCHOOL project has made significant steps in advancing inclusive education across selected countries. It's important to note though, that certain aspects have somewhat limited its overall effectiveness. The Policy Peer Exchange Platform, a potentially valuable tool for fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing, has not yet reached its full operational potential, having only been launched in March 2024.

Additionally, efforts to raise awareness about inclusive education have primarily reached key stakeholders, rather than extending to the broader general public as initially envisioned. These factors have slightly constrained the project's ability to fully achieve its objectives, particularly in terms of widespread public engagement and maximizing regional/multi-lateral collaboration. Nevertheless, the project has still made substantial progress in areas such as policy development, capacity building, and promoting evidence-based solutions for inclusive education.

3.3. Efficiency

[Assess the resource utilization against the project outputs. Was the project cost-effective?]

The project's cost-effectiveness can be analyzed through the lens of its outputs and the impact achieved - relative to the resources utilized.

The project budget for INSCHOOL 3 totaled €1,000,000, funded through a combination of a €700,000 grant from the European Commission and a €300,000 financial

contribution from the Council of Europe. The budget was allocated across various categories, with a significant share directed towards human resources, travel, other costs and services, and administrative expenses.

The project delivered substantial benefits in terms of enhanced capacity, improved policies and increased awareness about inclusive education, achieving more than expected with limited resources (reduced implementation team, limited budget and limited duration - according to various stakeholders).

The project combined research, policy-level interventions, capacity-building activities, and practical support for educational institutions, approach that addressed knowledge gaps, attitudes, and practical challenges at various levels.

At the same time, from the efficiency point of view, there are inconsistencies in the conversion of resources into outputs and outcomes across different activities. Some activities - such as technical support and capacity-building workshops - show better alignment with initial resource allocations, while others i.e. the mapping of institutional needs and the international mapping study, do not.

The mapping study on institutional needs in Portugal showed evident shortcomings of the system, which the local authorities did not concur. Therefore, considering the initial research did not fully yield the intended outcome, we consider it may affect the project's efficiency.

The project has experienced delays in several key activities, which impact the overall timeliness (e.g. the development of the online resource centre and the education ambassadors). While some delays are justified due to external factors and the complex nature of the intervention, the delays of implementing various activities should have been anticipated and better managed.

The online resource centre has been included in the project to facilitate better understanding and application of inclusive education methodologies and practices and serves as a peer exchange platform; its late development impacted the efficiency of the project, stretching human and time resources to fill the gap.

A knowledge base, policy support expertise and tools have been made available, but it requires more to have an operational platform: technical infrastructure, content management, user engagement and community building, management, promotion etc.

Data available at the time of the evaluation, as well as the interviews conducted during the evaluation, reveal that the activities involving the Ambassadors for Inclusive Education did not effectively reach the general public, in order to raise awareness about the benefits and value of inclusive education. An earlier involvement and a more coordinated activity would have further contributed to the awareness on QIE and the INSCHOOL project.

The awareness-raising activities have also been affected by the decrease of the allocated financial resources (publications: 68.75%, visibility actions: 37.93%, conference/seminars: 72.20%). Some budget adjustments were necessary for implementing the project i.e. human resources (which includes national and international expert fees) increased costs due to the extended duration of the project).

Other adjustments, related to inclusive education activities, impacted the fourth objective, shifting its direction from raising awareness of the general public, to raising

awareness and changing attitudes among key stakeholders regarding the importance of inclusive education and addressing segregation.

In conclusion, **the INSCHOOL project demonstrated adaptability and commitment to its goals** to support to foster inclusive education, achieved significant results in enhancing educational capacity, improving policies, and national level, evidence-based solutions support to promote changes in inclusive education policy and practice.

However, there are **notable issues with the timeliness of certain activities**, the project facing challenges in economic and operational efficiency which should be addressed through improvement in planning and execution. For a more detailed analysis, specific data on resource allocation, budget utilization, and the direct outcomes of each activity would be necessary to fully evaluate the cost efficiency and timeliness of all project components.

3.4. Sustainability

[Discuss the likelihood of the project's impact continuing after its conclusion. Evaluate the sustainability of capacity building efforts.]

The third cycle of the INSCHOOL project aimed to address the systemic challenges faced by Roma and other marginalized children in accessing quality inclusive education. The project achieved notable successes in raising awareness at the policy-makers level and among NGOs and experts, generating knowledge products, and initiating policy interventions, as outlined by the participants to the evaluation research.

Changing deep-rooted perceptions is a crucial step towards sustainable policy reforms and for their practical implementation, and the project made significant steps in this direction. It **generated valuable knowledge products and evidence-based solutions** to support inclusive education policies and practices. Many interviewees highlighted the mapping study and the busing study in Slovakia as examples: "*(...) the mapping study combined very useful tools on desegregation, and I consider that the research is really unique in terms of what it brings on the table in terms of knowledge*" stated and interviewee, while other stated: "*(...) the busing study done in in Slovakia is another kind of knowledge product which we may clearly showcase*". These knowledge products may serve as valuable resources for policymakers, educators and stakeholders, supporting sustainable and evidence-based solutions for inclusive education.

Cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Commission is critical for ensuring sustainability of the action. The cooperation between the two was recognized as a key strength and competitive advantage for the project: "*A partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission brings added value to the interaction with the stakeholders and leverage in discussing inclusive education. That is why this partnership between the Commission and the Council of Europe is really, really important - both institutions have the necessary tools to enact this type of strategic changes*".

The combined expertise, resources, and political leverage of these institutions can contribute significantly to the sustainability of inclusive education reforms and the project's impact.

Concluding, the project has made important steps towards sustainability by targeting the education system at policy level, generating a systemic change. However, it is crucial

to extend these efforts to the practical level, targeting schools and communities, to ensure lasting and comprehensive impact.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the research conducted by the evaluation team, the report concludes that **the INSCHOOL 3 project is highly relevant** due to its alignment with pressing educational needs, its strategic approach, and its focus on long-term, sustainable change. The project's design, which addresses policy reforms, ensures that it is well-equipped to address the complex and pressing issue of segregation in education.

The project has fostered significant dialogue and exchange of best practices among the participating countries, enhancing the capacity of each to address the complex issue of Roma educational integration more effectively. As these member states continue to develop and implement policies aimed at reducing educational disparities, the insights and strategies derived from INSCHOOL 3 will remain an asset in guiding future efforts to ensure all children have access to quality education in an inclusive environment.

The international study visits facilitated valuable networking and collaboration opportunities, although the Policy Peer Exchange Platform has yet to reach its full operational potential to further support these efforts.

Considering the activities and resources invested, we come to the conclusion that the INSCHOOL 3 project has achieved significant outputs relative to the budget allocated.

The investment in human resources ensured that the project had the necessary expertise and administrative support to achieve its goals. This allocation facilitated effective project management and implementation, resulting in various successful activities such as training courses, policy support, and international exchanges.

4.1. Recommendations

1) Include a regional/multi-lateral **component which should build on the achievements of the INSCHOOL initiative in any future interventions.**

   The inclusion of regional/multi-lateral component addressing inclusive education and segregation can bring significant added value to the INSCHOOL initiative. This approach facilitates the exchange of ideas, best practices, and successful strategies across different countries and cultural contexts. The key benefits of incorporating an regional/multi-lateral component are: knowledge sharing and learning, enhanced capacity building, elevated standards and benchmarks, strengthening networks and partnerships, increased visibility and influence.

   Moreover, the component should also preserve the momentum, to keep the issues on the agenda of the policymakers, including the newly elected ones, and also to counter the challenges of (raising) politically unfavorable contexts.

2) **A follow-up initiative should combine policy reforms and practice (school/ local) level intervention.**

   Policy reforms provide the strategic framework and guidelines necessary for systemic change. However, without practical interventions, these reforms may remain theoretical and not translate into real-world improvements. Practical interventions operationalize policies, demonstrating their effectiveness and providing tangible benefits.

Implementing practical interventions provides valuable feedback and insights that can inform and refine policy reforms. This iterative process ensures that policies are responsive to real-world challenges and are continuously improved based on practical experiences.

Policies that are not followed by practical actions tend to be ignored over time. Practical interventions ensure that policies remain relevant and actively contribute to the intended outcomes, preventing them from becoming mere documents without impact.

3) **Address challenges in economic and operational efficiency through improvements in planning and execution:**
    - Improve project planning: conduct more thorough initial needs assessments (including more in-depth stakeholder consultations to align project goals with stakeholder expectations and needs), and develop more realistic timelines for all project activities - taking into account potential external factors and complexities inherent in the project's international and multi-faceted nature.
    - Optimize resource allocation: prioritize resources towards critical activities that directly contribute to project outcomes, ensuring that these are not under-resourced.
    - Enhance execution and management: strengthen project management processes to enhance efficiency in the execution of activities, including the detailed design of the plan of activities and a monitoring plan. Enhance coordination between different project activities to ensure that outputs from one activity effectively feed into others, particularly in areas like research and technical support which directly impact policy interventions.

4) Advocate for further integration of **educational desegregation** into national education policies. Secure sustained funding, establish monitoring mechanisms, and conduct periodic evaluations to ensure policy alignment with evolving educational needs and priorities.

5) Foster **strategic partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, and community stakeholders**. Promote coordinated efforts to leverage resources, share expertise, and implement inclusive education practices effectively across different regions and communities.

5. Additional lessons learned

Based on the challenges and achievements outlined in the documents, other lessons can be drawn to enhance the sustainability of future initiatives:

The importance of realistic scope and targeted interventions.

The project achieved its main objectives, by realistically limiting to a number of countries (mainly four countries, Czech Republic, Portugal, Romania and Slovakia, and certain activities in another two countries, Bulgaria and Hungary) but it has been challenged by the resources and timeframe. A continuation should also prioritize the implementation in a limited geographical reach (for example in the countries where the project has been already implemented), for enacting the achieved results.

The importance of adequate staffing and capacity.

"... *this entire ambition of the project, which is very relevant, had its own constraints, which was the budget and limitation of management personnel, making difficult to achieve these ambition goals with such limited resources*".

This lesson highlights the need for realistic planning and resource allocation to support the project's ambitions effectively.

The importance of internal monitoring system to feed internal reporting and external evaluations:

Although the documentation provided by the CoE (activity reports, minutes, agendas etc.) and examined by the evaluation team was very diverse, many of these documents could not cover or fill in overall project progress reports and fresh indicator data.

An internal project monitoring system would facilitate tracking and assessing the progress of the project in achieving its specific objectives, and is accessible for internal and external evaluations.

Therefore, it is recommended that an M&E structure i.e. a progress indicator plan (indicator tracking table), updated on a quarterly basis, should be used, and substantially revise the structure and approach of the project in terms of monitoring.

Setting up a detailed framework for monitoring, evaluation (and learning) for the project would also help. This structure must include the monitoring strategy, detailed indicator information for monitoring (definitions, units, disaggregation, baselines and targets), and an indicator tracking table.

Ongoing support is needed:.

Without it and the necessary support, "*it is very likely that the ministry will not have the technical capacity (and will) to manage everything that is needed and provided by the current* legislative *framework (which itself needs a lot of support to become operational)*".

Political stability is essential for the successful implementation of educational projects.

Frequent changes in the ministries' staff or shifts in policy priorities can disrupt ongoing efforts, making it difficult to maintain momentum and achieve long-term goals. A stable political environment allows for consistent policy implementation, which is crucial for initiatives like INSCHOOL 3 that require sustained efforts over time. Alternatives are to be sought, for the case that this will not occur (support to the technical level, monitoring mechanisms identified by the respondents).

The importance of local community engagement.

Engaging local communities ensures that the specific needs and challenges of marginalized groups are addressed effectively. By involving parents, teachers, and local authorities, projects can gain valuable insights and foster a sense of ownership and commitment among stakeholders. This grassroots approach helps in creating tailored solutions that are more likely to succeed.

Sufficient financial resources.

Financial constraints can significantly impede the progress of inclusive education projects. Adequate funding is necessary to conduct comprehensive awareness campaigns, provide training, and implement support services. Without sufficient resources, even well-planned initiatives can fall short of their objectives. The INSCHOOL 3 project found that ambitious goals require corresponding financial investment to achieve desired outcomes.

Comprehensive training and support.

Continuous training and support for educators are vital for the successful implementation of inclusive education practices. Teachers need to be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to address the diverse needs of their students. Ongoing professional development ensures that educators can stay updated on best practices and refine their approaches to inclusivity. "*The quality education needs permanent support, especially in a country where many children are 'forgotten' by the system and invisible*".

Coordination among stakeholders.

Collaboration among different stakeholders is key to the success of inclusive education initiatives. By coordinating efforts, government agencies, educational institutions, NGOs, and international organizations can create a unified strategy and pool resources effectively. This collective approach helps in addressing complex challenges and ensures that all stakeholders are aligned in their efforts to promote inclusive education.

Investing in quality education emphasizes the importance of inclusivity and equity.

"*We need to raise awareness of the need to invest in quality education for all children and for each one individually*". This means not only providing universal access to education but also ensuring that each child's unique needs are met. Tailoring educational approaches to individual needs can help address disparities and promote a more inclusive learning environment. Investing in quality education for all children yields long-term societal benefits. Educated individuals are more likely to contribute positively to their communities and economies. They tend to have better health outcomes, higher earning potential, and increased civic participation.

Annex 1: Terms of reference

**EVALUATION of the INSCHOOL 3 Joint Project
of the European Union & Council of Europe**
March 2024

A. Introduction

This evaluation concerns the Joint Project of the European Union & Council of Europe "Inclusive Schools Making a Difference for Roma Children (INSCHOOL), cycle 3", implemented between 11/12/2021 and 31/05/2024, with a budget of 1.000.000 EUR. The project is co-funded by the EU (70%) and Council of Europe (30%) and implemented by the Council of Europe.

The purpose of this final evaluation process is to assess relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of INSCHOOL interventions in order to learn from and adjust any future actions in the area of quality inclusive education with the focus on Roma inclusion.

The present ToR outlines the parameters of the evaluation exercise to be conducted in selected locations in the Czech Republic, Portugal, Romania and the Slovak Republic. Given that evaluation for first and second cycles of INSCHOOL Project was already carried out, covering period between May 2017 - June 2021, this evaluation will focus exclusively on the third cycle of implementation (December 2021 - April 2024).

B. Evaluation background and context

Since 2010, the Roma inclusion priority has been increasingly present on the policy agenda of the European Union and Council of Europe. In this context, both the European Union and the Council of Europe have identified education as a key element to foster social inclusion. Furthermore, the project was inscribed in the policy agenda of the Council of Europe, in support to the Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025) - priority 5.3 Supporting access to inclusive quality education and training. While a number of measures and initiatives have already been implemented enabling progress in reducing early school dropout and improving early childhood education, important challenges remain, in particular to eliminate segregation in education through inclusive education. As regards the relevant EU framework, European Education Area`s has as its strategic priority 1. improving quality, equity, inclusion and success for all in education and training, and the EU Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion and participation supports the achievement of the sectoral objective to increase effective equal access to quality inclusive mainstream education.

Within that framework, the INSCHOOL project's general objective/impact is to support the design and implementation of national inclusive education policies in the Czech Republic, Romania and the Slovak Republic and to promote the inclusive education policy solutions in Bulgaria, Hungary and Portugal, in line with European standards and principles for quality inclusive education, thus enabling improvement in the access, participation and performance of Roma and children at risk of marginalization and exclusion in pre-school and compulsory education. The project was launched in May 2017, and included practice level interventions in schools from spring 2018. The second phase of INSCHOOL was implemented between October 2019 and 30 June 2021.

Throughout 2020, the implementation was affected, but not interrupted, by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns of schools. The third phase of INSCHOOL, which was initiated in December 2021, will come to an end on 31 May 2024.

The expected intermediate outcomes /specific objectives of the current cycle of the project are:

- National education policies coordination structures, recovery and resilience plans and operational programs are in line with European standards and practices on Quality Inclusive Education (QIE) and continue to meet the relevant thematic enabling conditions under 2021-2027 EU fund programs.
- National level evidence-based solutions support and promote changes in inclusive education policy and practice and address the reduction and prevention of further segregation of children in educational settings.
- The capacity, competences and awareness of education institutions, schools, EU funds managing authorities and civil society on inclusive education are strengthened.

The awareness of the general public about the meaning and benefits of inclusive education is increased and promoted.

The target groups of the Project are public administration institutions (elected and appointed officials), educational institutions, national coordinative entities, education professionals, teachers, school administration, EU fund managing authorities and civil society organizations.

The final beneficiaries of the Project are students, Roma students, parents, the community of learners, as well as the state authorities in charge of educational policies whose capacities will be reinforced by the Action.

As part of the technical assistance/evidence-based solutions, the project provides tailored support depending on the educational legal and policy developments and needs expressed. The outputs include secondary legislation stemming from pre-university law review, Inclusive Education Conference and drafting the functional documents for the National Centre for Inclusive Education (Romania), development of a training course curricula (Portugal) and the commissioning of the bussing study as a desegregation measure (Slovak Republic). The project also contributed to the creation of structures gathering all relevant stakeholder to support educational policies development /adaptation (Czech Republic).

In terms of support to capacity development objective, the project organized 3 major activities. Two international study visits took place and included approximately 70 relevant educational authorities from the countries of implementation and beyond. The visits aimed at supporting the know-how, exchange of best practices and adaptation / revision / introduction of quality inclusive education policies and practices. Similarly, an International Training course on Education Policy Making Based on Inclusive Values and Data took place with a 3-day residential training and 8 online modules for 45 participants. Furthermore, the INSCHOOL project is currently finalizing one mapping Study: trends and pathways towards educational inclusion that will be relevant for quality inclusive education across Europe.

In support of the implementation of fourth objective, 12 Inclusive Education have been engaged and have carried out awareness raising activities in 4 countries of implementation and Bulgaria.

C. Evaluation purpose

The evaluation report will contribute to the orientation and development of Council of Europe and European Commission's activities in the field of Roma inclusion in general and of its quality inclusive education in particular.

The evaluation will help draw lessons learned at policy level regarding relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, of the inclusive approach and the overall model proposed by the INSCHOOL Project as a potentially multipliable and effective one in each national context.

Additionally, in carrying out the evaluation, the evaluator will pay attention and report on intersectionality with gender equality, taking into consideration the needs of women and men concerning the promotion of quality inclusive education. Furthermore, the evaluation will put pay particular attention on the principles of Human Rights Approach: equality (ensuring equal opportunities for all), non-discrimination (addressing barriers faced by marginalized groups), participation, transparency, and accountability.

D. Evaluation objectives

The focus of this evaluation's objectives is set within the following parameters:
- The relevance of the intervention in the project countries;
- The effectiveness of its support to the design and promotion of inclusive education policies in line with European standards and principles for quality inclusive education.
- The efficiency of the delivery of results concerning the national inclusive education policies vis a vis the resources used and time needed to produce these.
- Sustainability of the strengthening of the capacities, competences, and awareness on inclusive education to continue in the aftermath of the project and in the long-term.
- To identify lessons and recommendations that the Roma and Traveller Division of the Council of Europe and the relevant partners at the European Commission, as well as other stakeholders of the Project should learn and take into consideration in their future actions.

E. Evaluation scope

The evaluation will cover the period of INSCHOOL implementation between December 2021 and April 2024. . The impact, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability of the INSCHOOL approach, where interventions are coordinated at policy levels (Czechia, Romania, Slovak Republic and Portugal) and through the project's international component (Czechia, Romania, Slovak Republic, Portugal, Bulgaria and Hungary) as a model and a possibility for sustainable policy solutions on inclusive education and social inclusion of Roma children, will be assessed.

F. Evaluation criteria and questions

The following evaluation questions have the aim to guide the evaluation process. The ToR evaluation questions can be refined jointly between INSCHOOL management team and the evaluators.

Questions related to the relevance:

- To what extent is the project suited to the needs of the beneficiaries?
- Is the project design appropriate for the achievement of expected results? The project appropriately assesses the priority areas that the project seeks to address?

Questions related to the effectiveness:

- To what extent have the general objectives and related project outcomes been achieved?
- What have been the strengths, weaknesses, and possible recommendations for the future at policy level?
- What have been the main achievements and/or shortcomings from the policy coordination and cooperation in promoting quality inclusive education?
- What are the main achievements and shortcomings from the cooperation with the Ministries of Education, governmental bodies, and policy makers?
- What progress has been made towards the achievement of the social and educational inclusion of Roma children?
- What is the added value of the INSCHOOL project support at policy level?
- To what extent is the effectiveness of the intervention higher due to the fact of being implemented by the Council of Europe?

Questions related to efficiency:

- Were the international level activities of the project cost efficient vis-à-vis the inputs and outputs produced?
- Was the project support provided at policy level efficient in terms of time invested and the result produced?
- Questions related to sustainability:
- To what extend will the international level activities learnings, know-how and best practices be continued after the project implementation?
- How sustainable is the policy level technical assistance and capacity building support provided in the countries of implementation?

The evaluation report should include lessons learned, good practices emerging from the project interventions and recommendations.

G. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation will follow Council of Europe Evaluation guidelines and Code of conduct for evaluation), by respecting its evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods that are human rights based and gender sensitive.

The data collection and analysis methods used by the evaluator should be sufficiently rigorous to assess the subject of the evaluation and ensure a complete, fair and unbiased assessment. There should be sufficient data to address all evaluation questions; there should be logical and explicit linkages between data sources, data collection methods and analysis methods. The Evaluation Reference Group (whose mandate is to advise the evaluation team on matters related to the evaluation) will facilitate the evaluation team's access to relevant information and to provide feedback on findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

Proposed evaluation process:

For the purpose of this evaluation, the Council of Europe's main interlocutor will be the INSCHOOL Coordination Team of the Roma and Traveller's Division of the Council of

Europe. Together with the contracted evaluator they will be responsible for carrying out the evaluation process and producing the final evaluation report.

Evaluation phases:

- Inception Phase - This phase refers to a period of desk research implying the review of relevant documents and sources of information provided and to be further identified by the consultant/s. During this period the content of the field interviews and surveys will be elaborated and the necessary arrangements (logistics and appointments) for the interviews will be made. The consultant will produce a concept note/inception report, defining the methodology and providing a refined evaluation matrix.
- Data Collection Phase - This is a phase involving data collection to be carried out online in countries where interventions are coordinated at policy levels (Czechia, Romania, Slovak Republic and Portugal) and through the project's international component (Czechia, Romania, Slovak Republic, Portugal, Bulgaria and Hungary): collecting relevant data and documents, conducting interviews, surveys, meetings with relevant stakeholders etc.
- Reporting Phase - After the evaluation team will analyze the collected data, a draft outline report will be prepared and discussed with the project team from the side of the Council of Europe. The draft report will also be quality checked by DIO before it is disseminated further. A possible meeting of the reference group could be organized to discuss the findings of the report and relevant inputs could be incorporated in the Final Evaluation Report.

The INSCHOOL Team will support and provide the necessary administrative support / arrangement during the process with due respect to the impartiality and objectivity of the work of the Evaluator/s.

Methodological tools (to be revised and finalized in coordination with the Evaluator/s and based on the final list of evaluation questions):

The evaluation will use the methods listed below which should answer the proposed evaluation questions. The list of methods to be used could be subject to discussion, based on the proposals made by the Evaluator/s, and are subject to a final agreement by the project team.

- Document Review: the Evaluator will carry out a document review at the beginning of the Contract, both from the documents provided by the Council of Europe as well as further identified as relevant for the subject. The following documents will be particularly assessed:
  - INSCHOOL Project documentation (DoA, budget, studies, previous evaluation report etc.)
  - Reporting documentation (Educational Advisor reports, event reports, technical assistance related documents and studies, progress reports, financial reports)
  - Relevant documentation of the Council of Europe and European Commission (e.g.: Council of Europe's Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion 2020-2025 relevant for the period of evaluation etc.);
- Semi-Structured Interviews: semi-structured interviews / (policy/ministerial level)) will be carried out with different relevant stakeholders (indicative names and

contacts to be provided). The Evaluator/s should take into consideration the proposed list below. The final list of interviews and targeted stakeholders to be decided jointly by the project team and the Evaluator/s:

- The INSCHOOL Project management team members in Strasbourg;
- The Council of Europe experts who have been working with the Project (Educational Advisors, trainers, experts, consultants etc.)
- Representatives of the National Working Groups, Ministries of Education counterparts etc.

- Surveys: surveys will be conducted to reach out to capacity building activity participants or another target group in accordance with the country-level activities or international activities conducted in the duration of the project. The final list of contacts will be provided to the evaluators by the project team.

H. Evaluation Work Plan

The deliverables that the Evaluator will be accountable for producing are:

- Technical proposal including:
    - Evaluation plan with proposed timetable of activities/events;
    - Refined evaluation matrix.
- Draft Evaluation Report - shall comply with the Quality Assurance Checklist and reviewed by the Evaluation Reference Group (whose mandate is to provide feedback on the report in terms of factual accuracy and feasibility of recommendations. The draft reports will also be quality checked by DIO. The draft evaluation report should contain summative findings covering all of the questions identified in the evaluation matrix. The recommendations should also include, where appropriate, indications on additional tools to be used for more effective / meaningful project impact.
- Final Evaluation Report - the draft Final Evaluation Report shall fully take into consideration the written feedback, clarifications and comments provided by the INSCHOOL management team, the DIO and the reference group.

Practical arrangements

The evaluator will be responsible for the dissemination of all methodological tools such as questionnaires and surveys. The relevant Council of Europe staff will provide relevant contacts and facilitate this process to the extent possible while preserving impartiality and credibility of the process.

The INSCHOOL Project Management Team, upon selection, will share a list of documents / studies and reports available, as well as relevant contact information. An induction meeting will be arranged to discuss the project information and follow-up meetings will be scheduled upon request from the evaluator.

I. Timeframe for the evaluation process

The indicative timeframe for the evaluation process is set to finish by end of May 2024:

Deliverables and other key-steps	Deadline
Adoption of the evaluation plan and process	20 March 2024
Desk research phase - review and assessment of relevant data and documentation	5 April 2024

Deliverables and other key-steps	Deadline
Data collection phase - collection of data and evidence (interviews, surveys etc.)	5 May 2024
Draft evaluation report	10 May 2024
Feedback, comments and suggestion provided on the first draft evaluation report	15 May 2024
Final Evaluation Report	31 May 2024

J. Budget and payments

The budget of the Evaluation is set at maximum 25,000 €. A Financial Proposal should be submitted together with the Evaluation Proposal.

K. Qualifications of the evaluator

The criteria for selecting the evaluator are:
- At least 10 years of proven record in designing, managing and leading evaluations in the context of international cooperation;
- At least 5 years of experience in applying standard evaluation principles, qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods;
- Technical competence in the field of education, social inclusion of disadvantaged groups, including the Roma in Europe would be an asset;
- Experience with similar assignments in Romania, Czech Republic, Portugal, the Slovak Republic or the region;
- Any language proficiency relevant for the countries targeted by evaluation would be considered a plus;
- Knowledge of the role of the Council of Europe and of the European Commission and their programming tools; human rights-based approach and gender sensitive approach would constitute an asset
- Independence and absence of conflicts of interests.

L. List of appendixes
- Evaluation Matrix Template
- Council of Europe Code of conduct for Evaluators
- Quality Assurance Checklist for Inception Reports
- Quality assurance checklist for Evaluation Reports
- Council of Europe Evaluation Policy

Annex 2: Key documentation consulted

Advisory meeting notes / minutes / agendas

Country brief specific recommendations

Project description

Description of Action (including annexes)

Grant agreements (including addendums)

Final evaluation report of INSCHOOL cycle 2

Bussing study Slovakia

Inclusive Education Ambassadors - Inclusive schools Making a difference for Roma children (coe.int)

Videos of the INSCHOOL Inclusive Education Ambassadors - Inclusive schools Making a difference for Roma children (coe.int)

Documents pertaining to the International Training Program in Budapest

Mapping Study: School Segregation of Roma Communities: Trends and Pathways Towards Educational Inclusion

Peer Policy Platform minutes, agenda

INSCHOOL resource hub on the website

Study visit in Strasbourg - reports, agenda, concept note

Study visit in Lisbon - reports, agenda, concept note

Educational advisors' reports

Experts' reports

NWG Portugal - Members Contact Details

NWG Slovakia - Národná pracovná skupina (NPS)

Steering Board meetings: agendas, reports

Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025)

Compendium of the training course "Education Policy Making Based on Inclusive Values and Data"

Index for Inclusion - A guide to school development led by inclusive values

Interim financial report EAC A06 2021

Interim report EAC A06 2021 2771-8848-3845.2

Annex 3: List of interviews

The individual and group interviews were organized online, using e-mail invitations and the online meeting app Zoom. Online interviews were scheduled and deployed between April 22 - May 13, 2024 and involved all 4 members of the evaluation team.

The CoE staff in Strasbourg supported the process by notifying stakeholders on the incoming interaction with the evaluation team.

As regards the stakeholders who took part in semi-structured interviews these include:

- 5 members of staff of the Council of Europe and European Union implementation team.
- 3 INSCHOOL Educational Advisors
- 2 INSCHOOL Inclusive Education Ambassadors
- 17 national authorities and ministerial contact points (including those who took part in the international component activities of INSCHOOL).
- 6 Experts involved in INSCHOOL project (studies/research, trainings sessions development and expertise).

Annex 4: Interview guides

INTERVIEW GUIDE IG1

PARTICIPANTS • EXPERTS • WORKING GROUPS

1. Please describe briefly how you / your organization relates to the INSCHOOL 3 project.

2. From your point of view, how does the project address the inclusive education priorities of your country? What positive changes has it generated at institutional level?

   In your opinion, how is the approach of this project different from other similar initiatives?

3. What are, in your opinion, the most notable results obtained within the INSCHOOL 3 project?

   What obstacles or difficulties have you encountered in carrying out your activities and how have they been overcome?

4. Please describe the information/consultation/reporting mechanisms used by the Council of Europe regarding the INSCHOOL 3 project in relation to you / your institution.

5. To what extent is the effectiveness of the intervention higher due to the fact of being implemented by the Council of Europe?

6. What is your perception on the social and educational inclusion of Roma children?

7. How do you assess the results achieved by the project in terms of impact and sustainability, and what suggestions do you have for them to remain viable?

   How sustainable is the policy level technical assistance and capacity building support provided in the countries of implementation?

8. What are your expectations regarding the future of this project and the activities initiated by it, after the end of the current funding?

   What sources of funding are realistic to ensure the continuation of project activities?

9. If this is the case - what are the most important lessons learned at this stage of the project?

INTERVIEW GUIDE IG2

PROJECT STAFF • INSTITUTIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

1. Please describe the project and its components. What are the needs addressed by this project and how overall and at national level? What major changes have occurred in the needs *initially* addressed by the project?

   How did the project components cover the identified needs?

2. Is the project design appropriate for the achievement of expected results?
   In your opinion, how is the approach of this project different to other similar initiatives?

3. What are, in your opinion, the most notable results obtained within the INSCHOOL 3 project? How were the project results generally measured? What obstacles or difficulties have you encountered in carrying out your activities and how have they been overcome?

   To what extent has the project been able to achieve its objectives? What positive changes has it generated at institutional level?

4. What have been the main achievements and shortcomings from the policy coordination and cooperation (Ministries of Education, governmental bodies and policy makers) in promoting quality inclusive education? What is your perception on the social and educational inclusion of Roma children?

   How can the performance achieved by the project be improved? What measures have been taken to improve performance?

5. How do you comment the level of involvement of the relevant educational actors in the project activities?

6. To what extent is the effectiveness of the intervention higher due to the fact of being implemented by the Council of Europe?

7. How do you assess the results achieved by the project in terms of impact and sustainability, and what suggestions do you have for them to remain viable? What are the risk factors you identified?

   How sustainable is the policy level technical assistance and capacity building support provided in the countries of implementation?

8. What are your expectations regarding the future of this project? How will be continued the international level activities learnings, know-how and best practices?

   What sources of funding are realistic to ensure the continuation of the project activities and which of these have already been addressed?

9. If this is the case - what are the most important lessons learned at this stage of the project? How has the project been integrated into the other complementary initiatives at national and European level?

Annex 5: Evaluation matrix

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Measure(s) / Indicator(s)	Data collection Instrument(s)	Data Source(s)	Data Analysis[12]	Evaluator(s) Responsible
Relevance	To what extent is the project suited to the needs of the beneficiaries?	How were the needs of the target group(s) identified and prioritized? Were there any specific challenges in aligning the intervention objectives with the identified needs? If so, how were they addressed? How is the project perceived by its stakeholders? Does it have relevance beyond target groups?	Relevance of the project in the country context. Relevance of project activities, outputs and outcomes. Relevance of project to the needs of beneficiaries. Alignment of project objectives with identified needs.	Desk research. Individual interviews.	Document review. INSCHOOL project management. Coordination Team of the Roma and Traveller's Division of the Council of Europe.	Textual analysis. Qualitative data analysis: narrative and thematic / deductive. Transcripts of interview recordings, conceptualization & segmentation. Analytical grids for interviews.	Team leader. Senior evaluator 1.
	Is the project design appropriate for the achievement of expected results? The project appropriately assesses the priority areas that the project seeks to address?	What were the specific design elements tailored to address identified problems? Were there design features that were modified or adjusted during implementation	Initial impact and reach of the intervention.	Desk research. Individual interviews.	Document review. INSCHOOL project management. Coordination Team of the Roma and Traveller's	Textual analysis. Qualitative data analysis: narrative and thematic / deductive. Transcripts of interview recordings,	Team leader. Senior evaluator 1.

[12] Data analysis is summarized on the last page of this document.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Measure(s) / Indicator(s)	Data collection Instrument(s)	Data Source(s)	Data Analysis[12]	Evaluator(s) Responsible
		to better address the identified problems? Identify changes that affect relevance for the next programming period.			Division of the Council of Europe.	conceptualization & segmentation. Analytical grids for interviews.	
Effectiveness	To what extent have the general objectives and related project outcomes been achieved? What have been the strengths, weaknesses, and possible recommendations for the future at policy level?	Provision of specific examples of how project outputs and outcomes have been achieved. What external or internal factors influenced the achievement or non-achievement of specific outcomes?	Assess progress in terms of major achievements, outputs and key challenges. Measure the success of the project in reaching final beneficiaries.	Desk research. Individual interviews.	Document review. INSCHOOL project management. Council of Europe experts involved in the project. National Working Groups. Ministries of Education from target countries.	Textual analysis. Qualitative data analysis: narrative and thematic / deductive. Transcripts of interview recordings, conceptualization & segmentation. Analytical grids for interviews.	Team leader. Senior evaluator 1. Senior evaluator 2. Junior evaluator.
	What have been the main achievements and/or shortcomings from the policy coordination and cooperation in promoting quality inclusive education?	Examine the strategic planning and the capacity to adapt to a changing environment. Were there deviations from the anticipated progress, either positive or negative? How were	Progress made and premises for achieving the outputs and stated objectives (against indicators set out), identifying risks.	Desk research. Individual interviews.	Document review. INSCHOOL project management. Council of Europe experts involved in the project. National Working Groups.	Textual analysis. Qualitative data analysis: narrative and thematic / deductive. Transcripts of interview recordings,	Team leader. Senior evaluator 1. Senior evaluator 2. Junior evaluator.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Measure(s) / Indicator(s)	Data collection Instrument(s)	Data Source(s)	Data Analysis[12]	Evaluator(s) Responsible
		these deviations managed?			Ministries of Education from target countries.	conceptualization & segmentation. Analytical grids for interviews.	
	What are the main achievements and shortcomings from the cooperation with the Ministries of Education, governmental bodies, and policy makers?	What is CoE's position as a catalyst for change? How were stakeholder relationships managed to create a collaborative environment?	Perceptions of stakeholder collaboration and partnership effectiveness. Assess the quality of partnership(s) established and support provided.	Desk research. Individual interviews.	Document review. INSCHOOL project management. Council of Europe experts involved in the project. National Working Groups. Ministries of Education from target countries.	Textual analysis. Qualitative data analysis: narrative and thematic / deductive. Transcripts of interview recordings, conceptualization & segmentation. Analytical grids for interviews.	Team leader. Senior evaluator 1. Senior evaluator 2. Junior evaluator.
	What progress has been made towards the achievement of the social and educational inclusion of Roma children?	What specific contributions did the project make to ongoing education reforms? Assess whether the project is built on the appropriate know-how, and has supported the achievement of the desired impact.	Contribution of project towards institutionalization of practices. Availability of monitoring mechanisms. Indication of key areas of national capacities developed.	Desk research. Individual interviews.	Document review. INSCHOOL project management. Council of Europe experts involved in the project. National Working Groups.	Textual analysis. Qualitative data analysis: narrative and thematic / deductive. Analytical grids for interviews.	Team leader. Senior evaluator 1.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Measure(s) / Indicator(s)	Data collection Instrument(s)	Data Source(s)	Data Analysis[12]	Evaluator(s) Responsible
			Availability and usefulness of monitoring reports on progress towards targets.		Ministries of Education from target countries.		
Efficiency	Were the international level activities of the project cost efficient vis-à-vis the inputs and outputs produced?	-	Coverage and outreach of project deliverables. Efficient use of project resources.	Desk research. Individual interviews.	Document review. INSCHOOL project management.	Textual analysis. Qualitative data analysis: narrative and thematic / deductive.	Team leader. Senior evaluator 1.
	Was the project support provided at policy level efficient in terms of time invested and the result produced?	-	Efficient delivery of results (efforts towards support on inclusive policies vs. invested time).	Desk research. Individual interviews.	Document review. INSCHOOL project management.	Textual analysis. Qualitative data analysis: narrative and thematic / deductive. Analytical grids for interviews.	Team leader. Senior evaluator 1.
Sustainability	To what extent will the international level activities learnings, know-how and best practices be continued after the project implementation?	To which extent are the outcomes of the project likely to continue producing effects after the end of its funding? How were project outcomes designed to be sustained beyond the project duration?	Sustainability and replication.	Desk research. Individual interviews.	Document review. INSCHOOL project management. Coordination Team of the Roma and Traveller's Division of the	Textual analysis. Analyze threats & opportunities facing future lack of donor support. Qualitative data analysis: narrative and thematic / deductive.	Team leader. Senior evaluator 1.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Measure(s) / Indicator(s)	Data collection Instrument(s)	Data Source(s)	Data Analysis[12]	Evaluator(s) Responsible
		Capacity to obtain and manage new funding from other sources for follow-up or new activities.			Council of Europe. Council of Europe experts involved in the project. National Working Groups. Ministries of Education from target countries.	Analytical grids for interviews.	
	How sustainable is the policy level technical assistance and capacity building support provided in the countries of implementation?	What external or internal factors (challenges) may hinder the sustainability of project outcomes? What efforts were made to address these challenges?	Perception of stakeholders on positive changes in areas targeted by the project.	Desk research. Individual interviews.	Document review. INSCHOOL project management. Coordination Team of the Roma and Traveller's Division of the Council of Europe. Council of Europe experts involved in the project. National Working Groups.	Textual analysis. Qualitative data analysis: narrative and thematic / deductive. Analytical grids for interviews.	Team leader. Senior evaluator 1.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Measure(s) / Indicator(s)	Data collection Instrument(s)	Data Source(s)	Data Analysis[12]	Evaluator(s) Responsible
					Ministries of Education from target countries.		
CoE added value	What is the added value of the INSCHOOL project support at policy level?	Compatibility of the intervention with other initiatives (similar / complementary). Did cross-program synergies lead to enhanced outcomes?	Identification of added value (from key results and best practices) of CoE contributions. Synergy and complementarity with state/other initiatives.	Desk research. Individual interviews.	Document review. INSCHOOL project management. Coordination Team of the Roma and Traveller's Division of the Council of Europe. Council of Europe experts involved in the project. National Working Groups. Ministries of Education from target countries.	Textual analysis. Qualitative data analysis: narrative and thematic / deductive. Examine other donors' strategies for synergy and additional program support. Analytical grids for interviews.	Team leader. Senior evaluator 1. Senior evaluator 2. Junior evaluator.
	To what extent is the effectiveness of the intervention higher due to the fact of being	What specific strengths (and/or weaknesses) has brought the Council of	Perception of key stakeholders on CoE's role to changes in the	Desk research. Individual interviews.	Document review. INSCHOOL project management.	Textual analysis. Qualitative data analysis: narrative	Team leader. Senior evaluator 1.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Measure(s) / Indicator(s)	Data collection Instrument(s)	Data Source(s)	Data Analysis[12]	Evaluator(s) Responsible
	implemented by the Council of Europe?	Europe to the project implementation?	areas targeted by the project. Effectiveness and sustainability of support provided by CoE.		Coordination Team of the Roma and Traveller's Division of the Council of Europe. Council of Europe experts involved in the project. National Working Groups. Ministries of Education from target countries.	and thematic / deductive. Analytical grids for interviews.	Senior evaluator 2. Junior evaluator.

Annex 6: Specific country context[13]

Bulgaria

The educational landscape for Roma children in Bulgaria is concerning. According to the EU-MIDIS II study[14] (page 16), the participation rate for Roma children in early childhood education stands at a mere 66%, significantly lower than the 89% rate for the general population. This early disadvantage sets the stage for further challenges down the line.

While the enrolment rate for compulsory education is relatively high at 91%, it plummets to a staggering low of 40% for secondary education (EU-MIDIS II study, page 15). This stark drop in attendance highlights the persistent barriers and systemic issues that hinder Roma children's educational progress.

Furthermore, early school leaving is a widespread phenomenon, affecting a staggering 67% of Roma aged 18-24 years, with a striking gender disparity: 77% for Roma women and 57% for Roma men (EU-MIDIS II study, page 17). This alarming statistic underscores the need for targeted interventions to address the intersectional challenges faced by Roma girls and young women in accessing and completing their education.

One of the most pressing issues in Bulgaria is the prevalence of segregation within schools. A staggering 27% of Roma children attend schools where all their schoolmates are Roma, the highest percentage among the surveyed countries (EU-MIDIS II study, page 19). This segregation not only perpetuates social exclusion but also deprives Roma children of the opportunity to learn in diverse and enriching educational environments.

In Bulgaria, the Center for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities has been funding projects aimed at providing equal access to quality education for Roma children and preserving their cultural identity. However, low academic achievement and high dropout rates persist among Roma pupils, and discriminatory attitudes towards Roma students are described as endemic within the Bulgarian educational system.

ECRI[15] has urged Bulgarian authorities to intensify efforts to remedy the educational gap between Roma and non-Roma children. Specific recommendations include providing compulsory training on equality and non-discrimination to school teachers as part of their initial and in-service training programs.

Data from the study "Roma in 10 European countries - main results (Roma survey 2021)"[16] of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2023 highlights

---

[13] See Annex 6: References and data sources for further details on the information provided in this chapter.

[14] Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) Roma - selected findings by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

[15] ECRI Report on Bulgaria (sixth monitoring cycle) published by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI).

[16] https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2022-roma-survey-2021-main-results2_en.pdf.

several key aspects regarding the education of Roma children in Bulgaria compared to EU averages:

Indicator	EU Total	Bulgaria
Respondents who felt discriminated against because of being Roma when in contact with school authorities (%)	11	11
Children aged from 3 up to the age of starting compulsory primary education who attend early childhood education and care (%)	44	58
People aged 20-24 who completed at least upper secondary education (%)	27	28
Children aged 6-15 who attend schools where all or most pupils are Roma according to respondents (%)	52	64

The relatively higher participation in early childhood education, and secondary education completion rates are positive signs. However, the high rate of school segregation underscores the need for continued efforts to integrate Roma children into more diverse educational environments.

Czechia

In Czechia, the lack of comprehensive data on the enrolment, attendance, and attainments of Roma children in the education sector is a significant challenge in itself, hindering the development of targeted and evidence-based policies. However, the available information paints a concerning picture.

Segregation in education is a prominent issue, with Roma children often being enrolled in special classes or schools intended for children with special needs, rather than in mainstream educational settings. Estimates from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) suggest that around 42% of Roma pupils finish their education in special vocational schools, rather than completing elementary education (ECRI report on Czechia, sixth monitoring cycle[17], page 22).

The extent of segregation is further highlighted by data from the EU-MIDIS II study[18] (page 20), which reveals that around 20% of Roma pupils attend primary schools where Roma students make up more than 50% of the student body, with some schools having over 90% Roma pupils. This level of segregation not only perpetuates educational inequalities but also reinforces social divisions and hinders efforts towards integration and social cohesion.

The situation in the Czech Republic is concerning, with Roma children still disproportionately classified as "disabled" and placed in "special schools" for the mentally disabled, despite a landmark ruling[19] by the European Court of Human Rights in 2007 that found this practice to be discriminatory.

---

[17] https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/czech-republic.
[18] Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) Roma - selected findings by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).
[19] https://www.justiceinitiative.org/litigation/dh-and-others-v-czech-republic.

According to a 2016 survey[20] by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 16% of Roma children aged 6-15 who were in education attended special needs schools, compared to just 3.6% of Roma children in regular elementary schools. ECRI has strongly recommended that the authorities significantly reduce the number of Roma children enrolled in special education and ensure an end to all forms of de-facto segregation affecting Roma students in schools.

Data from the study "Roma in 10 European countries - main results (Roma survey 2021)" of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2023 highlights several key aspects regarding the education of Roma children in Czechia compared to EU averages:

Indicator	EU Total	Czechia
Respondents who felt discriminated against because of being Roma when in contact with school authorities (%)	11	16
Children aged from 3 up to the age of starting compulsory primary education who attend early childhood education and care (%)	44	51
People aged 20-24 who completed at least upper secondary education (%)	27	22
Children aged 6-15 who attend schools where all or most pupils are Roma according to respondents (%)	52	49

Overall, the data suggests that while Czechia shows some positive trends in early childhood education participation, significant challenges remain in terms of discrimination, school segregation, and secondary education completion for Roma children.

Hungary

In Hungary, the educational situation of Roma children shows a mixed picture. On one hand, enrolment rates for Roma children in early childhood education (91%) and primary education (98%) are relatively high and close to those of non-Roma children (DoA country brief). This positive trend suggests that efforts to promote access to education in the early years have yielded some success.

However, the picture becomes bleaker as Roma children progress through the educational system. There is a sharp drop in enrolment and attendance during secondary education and the 18-24 age group, indicating a significant leakage in the educational pipeline (from INSCHOOL Revised DoA).

Moreover, segregation within schools remains a persistent challenge. According to the EU-MIDIS II study[21] (page 19), around 8% of Roma children attend completely segregated schools, while a staggering 53% attend schools where Roma pupils constitute the majority. This high degree of segregation not only limits the opportunities for Roma children to learn in diverse and enriching environments but also perpetuates social divisions and hinders efforts towards true integration.

---

[20] Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II).
[21] Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) Roma - selected findings by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

The highly centralized nature of the Hungarian school system presents an additional hurdle, as interventions and reforms often require approval from multiple stakeholders, including the Ministry, Educational Authority, and school districts (DoA country brief). This bureaucratic complexity can slow down the implementation of inclusive education policies and practices.

In Hungary, the authorities have been urged to identify and implement long-term, sustainable solutions to improve education for Roma students, addressing issues such as early school leaving, geographical and in-school segregation, and teacher shortages. ECRI[22] has recommended developing a comprehensive and efficient teacher recruitment and training program for disadvantaged areas, with financial incentives to make it more attractive. Such programs should incorporate intercultural education, non-discrimination in education, and education in active citizenship, involving Roma parents and benefiting from the support of local governments, including for private schools.

The Committee of Ministers has also called for measures to promote a spirit of tolerance, intercultural dialogue, mutual respect, and understanding among all persons living in Hungary, particularly in the fields of education, culture, sport, and the media.

Data from the study "Roma in 10 European countries - main results (Roma survey 2021)" of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2023 highlights several key aspects regarding the education of Roma children in Hungary compared to EU averages:

Indicator	EU Total	Hungary
Respondents who felt discriminated against because of being Roma when in contact with school authorities (%)	11	10
Children aged from 3 up to the age of starting compulsory primary education who attend early childhood education and care (%)	44	59
People aged 20-24 who completed at least upper secondary education (%)	27	41
Children aged 6-15 who attend schools where all or most pupils are Roma according to respondents (%)	52	44

The data reveals that although Hungary performs better than the EU average in early childhood education participation and secondary education completion among Roma, challenges in discrimination and school segregation remain.

Portugal

The educational situation of Roma children in Portugal is characterized by lower school enrolment and educational performance compared to their non-Roma peers, with Roma girls facing particularly stark disadvantages. According to data from 2016, only 42% of Roma children were enrolled in preschool, with an even lower rate of 31% for Roma girls, in stark contrast to the 94% enrolment rate for the general population (DoA country brief).

---

[22] ECRI's sixth monitoring cycle report on Hungary.

Moreover, a significant proportion of Roma children, 22.3%, leave school before the age of 15, further limiting their educational opportunities and future prospects (DoA country brief).

Increasing these challenges is the lack of reliable quantitative and qualitative data in various policy fields, the absence of assigned budgets for relevant ministries, and an over-reliance on project-based approaches that may not guarantee the sustainability of actions taken (DoA country brief). These systemic issues hinder the development and implementation of effective, long-term strategies to address the educational needs of Roma children in Portugal.

In Portugal, Roma children face various challenges, including segregation, discrimination, and high dropout rates. According to ECRI's report[23], the vast majority of Roma children drop out of school very early, often after the 5th grade, at the age of only 10-12 years old.

ECRI has encouraged the Portuguese authorities to step up education for human rights and equality, making it compulsory, and to rethink the teaching of history, particularly the history of the former colonies and the contribution of afro-descendants and Roma to Portuguese society. The authorities have also been urged to ensure that all Roma children rigorously attend compulsory schooling up to the age of 18.

The national strategy for the integration of Roma (NRIS), adopted on April 17, 2013, marks a significant step towards addressing the integration of Roma communities in key areas such as education, housing, health, employment, and professional training. This strategy follows a recommendation from ECRI's 3rd report[24] and aims to create clear, ambitious objectives with specific indicators and target values. The strategy aims for 50% of Roma children to receive at least one year of preschool education by 2016, increasing to 100% by 2020, ensuring 40% of Roma children complete compulsory schooling by 2016, and 60% by 2020, and seeks to reduce school drop-out rates by 40% in 2016 and by 60% in 2020.

According to the conclusions of the ECRI 2016 report[25], 94% of the measures outlined in the strategy have been implemented, resulting in 1,173 initiatives.

The adoption and implementation of the national strategy for the integration of Roma demonstrate substantial progress in integrating Roma communities, particularly in education. The commitment to ambitious objectives and the successful operationalization of most measures highlights the effectiveness of this strategy.

Data from the study "Roma in 10 European countries - main results (Roma survey 2021)" of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2023 reveals significant challenges compared to the EU average educational and social inclusion data:

Indicator	EU Total	Portugal
Respondents who felt discriminated against because of being Roma when in contact with school authorities (%)	11	34

---

[23] https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/portugal.

[24] https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2010-01/docl_11702_146597658.pdf.

[25] http://rm.coe.int/interim-follow-up-conclusions-on-portugal-4th-monitoring-cycle/16808b59cf.

Indicator	EU Total	Portugal
Children aged from 3 up to the age of starting compulsory primary education who attend early childhood education and care (%)	44	29
People aged 20-24 who completed at least upper secondary education (%)	27	10
Children aged 6-15 who attend schools where all or most pupils are Roma according to respondents (%)	52	2

These statistics indicate severe disparities and highlight the need for targeted interventions to improve educational outcomes and reduce discrimination against Roma in Portugal.

Romania

In Romania, inequalities in education for Roma children begin at an early age, with alarmingly low participation rates in early childhood education. According to the EU's strategic framework for cooperation in education and training, only 38% of Roma children aged 4-7 attend preschool, a figure that falls far short of the national target of 95% (DoA country brief).

The situation becomes even more concerning as Roma children progress through the educational system. While 77% of Roma children attend compulsory school, a staggering 22% do not - the highest rate among the surveyed countries (EU-MIDIS II study, page 15). This non-attendance not only deprives Roma children of their fundamental right to education but also perpetuates cycles of poverty and social exclusion.

Segregation within schools is another major challenge, with 29% of Roma children in Romania attending schools where all or most of their schoolmates are Roma (EU-MIDIS II study, page 20). This segregation limits opportunities for cross-cultural interaction and perpetuates social divisions.

Furthermore, the educational attainment levels of Roma in Romania are alarmingly low, with more than 90% failing to complete upper secondary education (DoA country brief). This lack of educational qualifications severely restricts their future prospects and opportunities in the labor market, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poverty and marginalization.

While progress has been made in Romania through measures such as providing scholarships, free transportation, and "Second Chance" programs, challenges persist regarding the educational inclusion of Roma children. According to the FRA-EU MIDIS survey[26], the share of Roma children of compulsory school age who attend school remains at 77%, and the enrolment rate drops significantly at the secondary school level, to only 34%.

ECRI[27] has expressed concern about the low rate of pre-schooling for Roma children, which stands at 38%, and the continued segregation of Roma pupils, with 29% of Roma children attending schools where all or most of their schoolmates are Roma. The

---

[26] FRA-EU MIDIS survey: "Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey" (EU-MIDIS II).
[27] ECRI Report on Romania (fifth monitoring cycle).

authorities have been recommended to evaluate the inclusion of Roma children in existing pre-school programs and to ensure the effective implementation of rules prohibiting school segregation, with a view to achieving inclusive education.

Data from the study "Roma in 10 European countries - main results (Roma survey 2021)" of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2023 highlights several key aspects regarding the education of Roma children in Romania compared to EU averages:

Indicator	EU Total	Romania
Respondents who felt discriminated against because of being Roma when in contact with school authorities (%)	11	14
Children aged from 3 up to the age of starting compulsory primary education who attend early childhood education and care (%)	44	27
People aged 20-24 who completed at least upper secondary education (%)	27	22
Children aged 6-15 who attend schools where all or most pupils are Roma according to respondents (%)	52	51

These statistics indicate that Roma children in Romania face significant barriers to education and discrimination, necessitating focused efforts to improve their educational inclusion and reduce segregation.

Slovakia

The educational landscape for Roma children in Slovakia is characterized by significant disparities and unfavorable practices for QIE. According to the DoA country brief, only 34% of Roma children attend kindergarten, a stark contrast to the nearly 80% attendance rate in the overall population. This early disadvantage sets the stage for further challenges down the line.

Roma children in Slovakia face pervasive school segregation and discriminatory practices, including an overrepresentation in ethnically segregated special schools and classes. Alarmingly, Roma pupils represent more than 50% of students in special classes and over 40% in special schools, while their share in mainstream education is only 10% (DoA country brief). This systemic segregation not only perpetuates educational inequalities but also reinforces social divisions and hinders efforts towards integration and social cohesion.

The lack of a comprehensive desegregation strategy, a shortage of professional pedagogical personnel, and limited utilization of inclusive education tools contribute to the low academic performance of Roma pupils and students (DoA country brief). These systemic deficiencies exacerbate the challenges faced by Roma children in accessing quality and inclusive education.

In the Slovak Republic, a significant number of Roma children do not attend pre-school education, which often leads to developmental delays and difficulties in learning the Slovak language, the primary language of instruction. According to survey data cited by ECRI, only 34% of Roma children aged 4-6 attend nursery school, compared to 77% of the general population.

Additionally, Roma children in the Slovak Republic face issues of segregation, with 62% experiencing some form of it, and are often placed in special education classes, despite not having disabilities. ECRI[28] has recommended that the Slovak authorities put in place the necessary conditions to ensure that all Roma children from disadvantaged neighborhoods attend pre-school education from the age of three, arrange for Slovak to be taught as a second language to Roma children who primarily speak Romani at home, significantly reduce the number of Roma children enrolled in special education, and abolish school segregation.

Data from the study "Roma in 10 European countries - main results (Roma survey 2021)" of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2023 highlights several key aspects regarding the education of Roma children in Romania compared to EU averages:

Indicator	EU Total	Slovakia
Respondents who felt discriminated against because of being Roma when in contact with school authorities (%)	11	8
Children aged from 3 up to the age of starting compulsory primary education who attend early childhood education and care (%)	44	33
People aged 20-24 who completed at least upper secondary education (%)	27	28
Children aged 6-15 who attend schools where all or most pupils are Roma according to respondents (%)	52	65

Overall conclusions

The reports and recommendations from various European bodies highlight the persistent challenges faced by Roma children in accessing quality inclusive education across multiple countries. While some progress has been made through targeted initiatives, issues such as segregation, discrimination, low enrolment rates, high dropout rates, lack of qualified teachers, and language barriers continue to hinder the educational attainment and integration of Roma students.

Comprehensive efforts are needed from authorities to address these long-standing issues, including policy reforms, teacher training programs, measures to end segregation, promotion of Roma language and culture, and increased support for Roma communities and families. Additionally, fostering a spirit of tolerance, intercultural dialogue, and mutual understanding within educational institutions and communities as a whole is crucial for creating an environment conducive to the successful integration of Roma children into mainstream education systems.

References and data sources

Country-specific context:

EU-MIDIS II (Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey) by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA):

---

[28] ECRI's sixth report on the Slovak Republic.

https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings_en.pdf

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) monitoring reports: https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/czech-republic

Description of the Action (from project documentation).

National Roma integration strategies and action plans.

EU strategic framework for cooperation in education and training: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/strategic-framework-for-european-cooperation-in-education-and-training-towards-the-european-education-area-and-beyond.html

Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Travellers Inclusion: https://rm.coe.int/coe-strategic-action-plan-for-roma-and-traveller-inclusion-en/16809fe0d0

Country-specific context:

Bulgaria:

ECRI Report on Bulgaria (fifth monitoring cycle), 16 September 2014.

Resolution CM/ResCMN(2021)1 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Bulgaria (adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 January 2021).

Fifth Report submitted by Bulgaria, received on 22 October 2021.

Czechia:

ECRI Report on the Czech Republic (sixth monitoring cycle), 1 October 2020.

Resolution CM/ResCMN(2021)18 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by the Czech Republic (adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 8 December 2021).

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts of the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action contained in the Committee of Experts' fourth evaluation report on the Czech Republic (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages).

D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic [GC] - 57325/00, Judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, 13 November 2007.

Hungary:

Resolution CM/ResCMN(2021)8 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Hungary (adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 3 February 2021).

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts of the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action contained in the Committee of Experts' seventh evaluation report on Hungary (2020) (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages).

Case of Horváth and Kiss, Judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, 29 January 2013.

Portugal:

ECRI Report on Portugal (fifth monitoring cycle), 19 June 2018.

Resolution CM/ResCMN(2020)6 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Portugal (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 17 June 2020).

Information on Portugal's signing of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages on 7 September 2021.

Romania:

ECRI Report on Romania (fifth monitoring cycle), 3 April 2019.

Resolution CM/ResCMN(2021)13 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Romania (adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 19 May 2021).

Recommendation CM/RecChL(2018)3 of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Romania (adopted on 4 April 2018).

Slovakia:

ECRI Report on Slovak Republic (sixth monitoring cycle), adopted on 1 October 2020.

Resolution CM/ResCMN(2016)6 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by the Slovak Republic (adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 April 2016).

Recommendation CM/RecChL(2019)5 of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by the Slovak Republic (adopted on 5 November 2019).