



INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS
MAKING A DIFFERENCE
FOR ROMA CHILDREN

INSCHOOL3

“Inclusive Schools: Making a Difference for Roma Children”

Feasibility Study on a
School Desegregation Intervention
in the Slovak Republic

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This study was commissioned by the European Union and Council of Europe Joint Project “Inclusive Schools: Making a Difference for Roma Children” ([INSCHOOL](#)). The main objective of the Project is to support the design and implementation of national inclusive education policies and innovative inclusive education practices in the Czech Republic, Portugal, Romania and the Slovak Republic, in line with European standards and principles for quality inclusive education. The project was implemented between 2017 and 2024 and its third cycle focuses on 4 main components. The first component included technical assistance and cooperation to relevant national public authorities in the process of design, implementation, monitoring, and review of relevant education and/or Roma inclusion policies. The second focused on the development of evidence-based solutions as a support tool to relevant stakeholders and project partners in policy making for quality inclusive education and Roma inclusion and developing solutions for the educational desegregation. Capacity-building of relevant stakeholders with a focus on strengthening the human, institutional and organisational capacities through education, training, peer-exchanges and raising awareness about the benefits of inclusive education among the general public and relevant education stakeholders formed third and fourth component respectively.

Building on its experience and know-how developed, the third cycle of INSCHOOL Project offered targeted support to the relevant authorities from Ministries of Charge of Education and Roma inclusion mandated institutions. This was done, among other, through mapping of institutional needs carried out in the relevant implementation countries, but also through capacity development and technical support actions supporting policy adoption/adaptation and/or desegregation efforts. As part of the support within the first component of the INSCHOOL Project related to technical assistance, and upon request of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Roma Community, the INSCHOOL project commissioned the delivery of the Feasibility Study on a busing as School Desegregation Intervention in the Slovak Republic to support desegregation efforts through piloting a busing programme in the country.

The purpose of the research assignment on busing is to gather information on localities/cases where busing is an appropriate desegregation tool and has the potential to improve the educational conditions of Roma children and their inclusion. By improving the educational conditions of Roma children, which includes cases where children are educated in a two-shift operation near the Roma community and where transportation by bus to the nearest schools is possible, would improve their educational conditions and ensure possible inclusion within the ethnically heterogeneous classes.

The analysis also aims to provide a specification of cases, where busing is relevant for Roma pupils in specific localities. These mostly ethnically homogenous primary schools¹ attended by children from Roma communities where transfer to other schools can offer an improvement in the quality of the educational process as well as intercultural encounter. We refer to schools with concentration of Roma students who can benefit from busing as potential sending schools: some sending schools are small and hard to sustain economically, while others are much larger.

Structure of the report

This introductory chapter is followed by review of relevant desegregation experiences and pertinent lessons learned. *Chapter II Lessons on Educational Desegregation and School Busing that Should Not Be Ignored*, as its name suggests, reviews the contexts related to school-desegregation and zooms in on lessons, related to school

¹ Throughout this text the term ‘primary school’ is used as a translation of the Slovak term ‘základná škola’. Sometimes this type of schools are also called in English ‘elementary schools’. Sometimes different English terms are used to describe the stages of education and the types of schools, i.e. the term ‘primary schools’ can be reserved only for the schools operating in primary education excluding those operating in lower secondary education. In this usage ‘základná škola’ is referred to as a ‘basic school’. In the context of Slovakia we use primary school in the same sense it is used by Eurydice, i.e. “Primary and lower secondary education are a 9 year long single structure system (primary education lasts 4 years, lower secondary education lasts 5 years). Primary and lower secondary education takes place at primary schools (základné školy), where children start to fulfil their compulsory school attendance at the age of six.” Slovakia Overview [WWW Document], Eurydice. URL <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/slovakia/overview> (accessed 4.9.24).

busing as a desegregation measure. This way, it serves as a departing point of the feasibility study. It is worth mentioning that a number of the reviewed lessons, were learned the hard way and this makes them particularly valuable.

Chapter III The School Segregation Status Quo in Slovakia and the Need of Change is a review of the current situation of the school segregation in Slovakia, particularly from normative and law-enforcement point of view. The chapter also presents conclusions based on some landmark cases related to educational segregation.

Chapter IV: A Quantitative Review to Inform a School-Desegregation Intervention presents the findings of an extensive analysis that outlines possible school-demographics-changing options. Apart from its potential to support stakeholders to design optimal school-demographics-changing scenarios per location, the quantitative analysis suggests a *Typology of the clusters of sending and receiving schools, which is based on indicators from three main and some supplementary sources which were put together in a common dataset including geographical layers: 1) indicators on primary schools constructed on the basis of data from the Ministry of Education; 2) indicators concerning localities inhabited by Roma from the Atlas of Roma Communities and 3) various municipal-level data from the national census from 2021.*

Chapter V: Recommendations is the core outcome of the feasibility study. It constitutes of a list of recommendations, each of which applicable on its own merit. Yet their optimal effect should be sought in implementing them in their entirety. Recommendations have been derived on the basis of our quantitative and qualitative research and on selected literature from Slovakia and elsewhere related to segregation and desegregation policies.

The final Chapter VI: Conclusions is brief guidebook to the results of the feasibility study. Just like the recommendations, each concluding remark has its own weight. But the added value of the set is significantly higher than the cumulation of the individual components. Against this shared common nature, the concluding chapter is organized differently from the recommendations' one. In the last chapter the takeaways from the feasibility study are presented as a chain of consequential policy approaches. A purposeful effort has been made to support the stakeholders of the upcoming desegregation process to comprehend the need of systemic effort.

The finding of a field research that took place at several locations where busing could be applicable are presented in *Annex 3: Case studies: reporting findings of qualitative research activities at 5 locations in Slovakia* Findings are summarized into categories representing key challenges that a busing program will encounter, which correspond to potentially relevant components of a comprehensive intervention for desegregation of primary schools

Limitations responsibilities and contributions

This limited in scope, resources and timeframe study has been initiated with a very specific objective: to inform about the prospects of busing as a specific school desegregation intervention. Addressing this specific task required a strong focus on logistics and geographic accessibility of primary schools while keeping in mind multiple factors that can critically affect the success of any busing programme.

Nevertheless, the significance of neither the study nor its separate parts should be overstated. The assignment was completed by four researchers based in three different countries, working on various parts of the study. The review in Chapter II, prepared by Iordan Iossifov, has been limited to lessons and experiences examining the potential of school busing as desegregation measure. The assessment of the current school-segregation situation in Slovakia, Chapter III, prepared by Martina Thominet, is a snapshot as per the first quarter of 2024.

To complete the list with the contributions and responsibilities, the chapter on the quantitative study, Chapter IV, was delivered by Boyan Zahariev and The Recommendations, Chapter V and the Conclusions, Chapter VI, were drafted by Iordan Iossifov with contributions by Boyan Zahariev. The later prepared also Annex 2 and Annex 4. The case studies (Annex 3.) are drafted by Martina Thominet. The limitations of the field research, among others - in terms of locations, number and type of respondents, assign to it an illustrative function. Some of the findings can be used to inform interventions at other locations but their relevance to the local context needs to be checked. This list will not be complete without mentioning the external contributions, namely the feedback to parts of Chapter

II, that resulted from individual or group interviews. The specific contributors are acknowledged at the respective sections in each chapter. Last but not least, Professor Branislav Pupala reviewed the first draft of the study, provided feedback and supplemented certain parts of it.

Finally, we need to draw the attention to some important limitations of our study. Best efforts were made to make data as relevant and up-to-date as possible and data processing as reliable as possible. However, we must keep in mind that sources of large data come with a time lag, which can sometimes be significant. In our case only data from the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth (Ministry of Education) are more regularly updated, while data from the other sources come with certain periodicity. With more than 2,500 institutions the Slovak network of primary schools is quite large and contains a variety of schools. Even within a period as short as half a year, process such as establishment of new schools, school closures and restructuring are likely to occur within a network of this size. In addition, the number and distribution of students is far from constant. To the best of our knowledge, data on geolocated schools have until now have not been used in Slovakia in conjunction with municipal-level data from the Atlas of Roma Communities and the national census. The experimental nature of the data analysis inevitably raises the risk of inaccuracy or misinterpretation. In any case, the latest data available was used – a process which was greatly supported by the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities (Office of the Plenipotentiary, Plenipotentiary Office) and the Ministry of Education. While the aggregate data and trends could hardly have been affected by such considerations, we cannot guarantee the full accuracy of any data concerning specific schools or locations. Even in the unlikely event that such accuracy could be fully guaranteed, whenever decisions of such importance as the ones related to large transfers of students and desegregation measures are to be taken, we recommend using data from centralized sources only as a supplement to thorough local feasibility studies involving data updates and verification as well as comprehensive stakeholder consultations.

CHAPTER II: Lessons on Educational Desegregation and School Busing that Should Not Be Ignored

Educational Desegregation as a Must

Educational desegregation is a must. By now this statement is widely accepted. Unfortunately, this and a number of all its rationales is not completely internalized and appreciated. This part of the chapter offers a brief overview of the grounds on which the imperative necessity of the educational desegregation is based. The review is organized thematically, starting with the educational grounds for the educational desegregation. Then brief elaborations on various other rationales follow, namely from human-rights, from social-cohesion, welfare and economic-growth, and from the European (and specifically: EU) perspectives.

Educational perspective

Educational segregation directly diminishes the ability of the education systems to attain their objectives. Education provisions characterised by segregation² realise neither their specific educational objectives, nor their broader social objectives. Educational segregation harms particularly the developmental chances of the learners in the segregated schools, who are typically children and youth coming from families with lower socioeconomic status (SES) and from particular minority ethno-cultural and linguistic backgrounds. “Research has identified that education systems with higher levels of school segregation reduce the opportunities of students with lower socio-economic backgrounds.”³ By now we know that the “negative correlation” between school segregation and educational attainment which is “well-documented empirical[ly] ... in the American and European sociology of education”⁴ has various *spillover effects*, some of them manifested well beyond the domain of education. Probably the most notorious impact on a growing concentration of students with minority or lower socioeconomic status (SES) in certain schools is the phenomenon of ‘*white flight*’. On one hand, it serves as a self-perpetuating factor contributing to further school segregation. On the other, it relates to the changing demographics not only of the affected schools but also of the locations to which the schools belong.⁵

School segregation has durable negative effects. Turning the focus back on segregation’s impact on the learning chances of the individual students, it is worth noting that segregation has sustainable long-term negative effects. The European Commission’s expert group on quality investment in education and training,⁶ reviewing “large literature [body] focusing on how school composition is an important determinant of individuals’ behaviour” emphasized that “high levels of concentration of low achievers undermine students’ learning opportunities and disappoint teachers and students’ expectations.”⁷ Preventing disappointment in teachers and students and respectively - providing education that projects realistic attitudes and confidence in the developmental chances of each student has been recognized as a key factor contributing to every learner’s school success as well as to educational equity and to the overall attainment of the entire school education system.⁸ Below, this theme is

² Segregation is used in this analysis as term describing the state of de facto over-representation of certain ethnic or national group similarly to the way it defined by some Slovak organizations with a reference to judgements of the ECHR: see Kováč, J. (2023) *Report on the Observance of Human Rights Including the Principle of Equal Treatment in the Slovak Republic for the Year 2022*. Bratislava: Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (p. 48).

³ (2022) Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training Final report of the Commission expert group. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union. Online: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896>

⁴ Cebolla-Boado, H., & Medina, L. G. (2011). The impact of immigrant concentration in Spanish schools: School, class, and composition effects. *European Sociological Review*, 27, 606–623. Online: [Impact of Immigrant Concentration in Spanish Schools: School, Class, and Composition Effects | European Sociological Review | Oxford Academic \(oup.com\)](https://doi.org/10.1093/eur/27.4.606)

⁵ Coleman, J., et al. (1975), “Trends in School Segregation: 1968-73,” Urban Institute Paper No. 722-03-01, Washington, DC: August Online: [ed117252.tif.pdfed117252.tif.pdf](https://www.urbaninstitute.org/publications/117252-trends-in-school-segregation-1968-73)

⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expert-groups/consult?lang=en&do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=3759>

⁷ (2022) Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training Final report of the Commission expert group. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union. Online: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896>

⁸ Crato, N., (2020) Curriculum and Educational Reforms in Portugal: An Analysis on Why and How Students’ Knowledge and Skills Improved in *Audacious Education Purposes How Governments Transform the Goals of Education Systems*. Reimers, F.M., (ed.) Springer, Online: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41882-3>

elaborated further,⁹ here only one additional aspect concerning the “heterogeneous spillover effects”¹⁰ of schools’ social milieu is outlined. The “education decisions” are impacted by the “long-lived relationship” set at school¹¹ and thus the school’s demographics and environment matter for the educational paths chosen by the learners.

Desegregation improves the quality of the entire education system and has various positive effects. The EC, referring to Thrupp et al. 2002¹² states that “[s]chool composition also impacts school quality. Research has highlighted the existence of a better learning climate, greater support from families and fewer disciplinary problems in more integrated schools.”¹³ The same EC’s report (referring to Dronkers et al., 2011¹⁴ as well as to Mickleson, 2018¹⁵ and González Motos, 2016¹⁶) outlined positive effects of school desegregation, benefiting also the students from the receiving schools. On one hand “[g]ood students can help their weaker peers (both through the provision of help and their acting as examples), students with greater difficulties enjoy a better curriculum (since teachers prepare it for the highest performing students) and, finally, better students deepen their learning thanks to their support of low-performing students.”¹⁷ On the other hand, “contact with classmates of other origins make students more familiar with new behaviours, expectations and motivations, which are clearly related to family background. These benefits cannot occur in a context of school segregation.”¹⁸

Educational segregation infringes the right to education as stipulated by the UNCRC and is a direct violation of various other legal provisions. The necessity to address any case of educational segregation is also a matter of a legal obligation in many countries, including in the Slovak Republic. The country, as one of the state parties of the United Nations Conventions on the Right of the Child (UNCRC), has not just recognized “the right of the child to education” but has done so “on the basis of equal opportunity” (art. 28/1). Furthermore, Slovakia agreed that “the education of the child shall be directed to: [t]he development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential” (art. 29/1a). The UNCRC articles on the right to education must be interpreted also in relation to the UNCRC’s guiding principles. Two of them are particularly relevant: the principle of *non-discrimination* (art. 2) and the principle of *the best interests of the child* (art. 3/1).¹⁹ There are numerous other legal provisions that stipulate educational segregation to be addressed by the state, to which Slovakia is a state party or are of relevance to the country. The following subsection, the one on the human-rights perspective on the necessity of preventing educational segregation, focuses on them.

Human-rights perspective

Educational segregation has been recognized as a major human-rights violation and the fight against it might be considered the most important human-rights-based intervention in the domain of education since the establishment of the contemporary international-law framework after World War II. The first massive education-desegregation efforts that have caught the world’s attention took place in the United States (US) southern states and had a human-rights justification as its basis. These efforts led to a legal battle and a historic

⁹ See below the Section *What We Have Learned from Previous Desegregation Interventions*

and patricianly the subsection *Extracts form Lessons from the Most Recent Pertinent European Interventions*

¹⁰ Patacchini, E., et al. (2017) Heterogeneous peer effects in education. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 134 190–227

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Thrupp, M., Lauder, H., & Robinson, T. (2002). School composition and peer effects. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 37(5), 483–504

¹³ EC (2022) Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training Final report of the Commission expert group. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union. Online: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896>

¹⁴ Dronkers, J., van der Velden, R. K. W., & Dunne, A. (2011). The effects of educational systems, schoolcomposition, track-level, parental background and immigrants’ origin on the achievement of 15-years old native and immigrant students. A reanalysis of PISA 2006. METEOR, Maastricht University School of Business and Economics. METEOR Research Memorandum No. 033. Online: <https://doi.org/10.26481/umamet.2011033>

¹⁵ Mickelson, R. (2018) Is There Systematic Meaningful Evidence of School Poverty Thresholds? The National Coalition on School Diversity, Research Brief 14.

¹⁶ González Motos, S. (2016). Friendship networks of the foreign students in schools of Barcelona: impact of class grouping on intercultural relationships. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 55, 66–78. Online: [Friendship networks of the foreign students in schools of Barcelona: impact of class grouping on intercultural relationships - ScienceDirect](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2016.05.001)

¹⁷ EC (2022) Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training Final report of the Commission expert group. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union. Online: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ UN (1989) Conventions on the Right of the Child (UNCRC) Online: [Convention on the Rights of the Child text | UNICEF](https://www.unicef.org/convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child)

decision by the US Supreme Court²⁰ which in turn provided a judicial ground for desegregation in the US. But a human-rights foundation for providing integrated education and intervening with education-desegregation measures could be found even before the 1954's US Supreme Court's decision, already in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) one of ground-setting United Nations (UN) documents. Although the Declaration comes short of specifically addressing educational segregation, its article 26 recognizes that "[e]veryone has the right to education" (art. 26/1) and that "[e]ducation shall be directed to the full development of the human personality" (art26/2),²¹ which, as already outlined in the section on the educational perspectives of desegregation, requires integrated education. UDHR's lack of specificity is completely compensated by the 1960 UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education, which already in its first article provides a detailed definition of "discrimination" in education.²² This convention, to which Slovakia is also a state party, together with the reviewed above UNCRC form a strong international-law human-rights foundation for measures aiming for the eradication of educational segregation, even no other national or international regulations are taken into account. Interpreting and operationalizing the right to education and especially the aspects related to educational desegregation and non-discrimination requires a broader context. As the *European Guidelines to Tackle School Segregation, developed within the framework of ECASS project*, points out, the right to education relates to other social, economic and cultural rights. To this end a broad interpretation of the right to education implies also right to integrated education.²³ There are also specific EU and European legal provisions and policy documents that consider school education freed of segregation as a key component of right-based approach to education. They are briefly overviewed below, in the section on the European perspectives on educational desegregation.

Social cohesion, welfare, economic and labour-market perspective

Next to the educational gains, social cohesion is another major benefit of desegregated education. The educational benefits have already been addressed above (the subsection *Educational perspective* in this section). But the benefits extend way beyond the domain of education. The European Commission's expert group on quality investment in education and training,²⁴ referring to previous research (Stark et al. 2015; González Motos, 2016), emphasizes that "inter-ethnic networks in the educational context tend to have positive effects on processes of inclusion of socially disadvantaged students, increasing the social cohesion of communities."²⁵ Another recent study recognizes the "importance of schooling for citizenship and social integration" as well as the "the role that schools play in creating cohesive societies."²⁶ In other words, "school segregation is particularly harmful for the cohesion of societies."²⁷

Educational segregation has its cost, literary, in financial terms and respectively educational desegregation is a sound investment also from economic perspective. Desegregated education stimulates disadvantaged students due to their higher sensitivity to the school demographics²⁸ as well as helps to raise expectations and academic performance.²⁹ Academic performance, not nominal education, in turn is associated with increased labour market participation, better competitiveness of the national economies and ultimately

²⁰ The case of *Brown v. Board of Education*. See also below the section What We Have Learned from Previous Desegregation Interventions, particularly the subsection *Bussing as an education-desegregation and education policy-implementation measure*.

²¹ UN (1948) Universal Declaration of Human Rights Online: [Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations](#)

²² UNESCO's 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education Online: [Convention against Discrimination in Education - Legal Affairs \(unesco.org\)](#)

²³ ECASS (2022) European Guidelines to Tackle School Segregation Online: [european-guidelines.pdf \(ecass.eu\)](#)

²⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expert-groups/consult?lang=en&do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=3759>

²⁵ (2022) Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training Final report of the Commission expert group. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union. Online: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896>

²⁶ Molina, A. (2021). Education, Segregation and Social Cohesion. In: School Segregation and Social Cohesion in Santiago. International Study of City Youth Education, vol 3. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-70534-3_2

²⁷ ECASS (2022) European Guidelines to Tackle School Segregation Online: [european-guidelines.pdf \(ecass.eu\)](#)

²⁸ EC (2022) Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training Final report of the Commission expert group. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union. Online: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896>

²⁹ Ibid.

personal and national welfare. “[K]nowledge rather than just time in school is what counts for economic growth.”³⁰ The Commission expert group on quality investment in education and training names the income losses related to educational school segregation “significant” and once again relates school segregation, overall academic outcomes and economic performance.³¹ But there are also further economic gains resulting from better qualification and respectively labour-market participation or savings of expenditure related to social security (e.g. unemployment), public health and public security expenses. Billings, Deming, and Rockoff reviewed the studies on the effects of the desegregation in the USA and confirmed the link between school desegregation and direct and indirect economic benefits: “Scholars have connected the widespread implementation of school desegregation plans in the late 1960s and 1970s with increased educational attainment for black students (Guryan 2004, Reber 2010), higher income (Ashenfelter, Collins and Yoon 2006, Johnson 2011), improvements in adult health (Johnson 2011) and decreased rates of homicide victimization and arrests (Weiner, Lutz and Ludwig 2009).”³² In brief, desegregating school education pays off.

The European perspective

The European Union (EU) has taken a clear stand against school segregation and has been consistent in this approach both at policy and regulatory level as well as at policy-implementation level. A key EU legal instrument, the Council Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, known as the Racial Equality Directive (RED)³³ covers different types of discrimination, ranging from direct and indirect discrimination to harassment, and covers the area of education. With this Directive serving as a legal ground, “[i]nfringements cases [were] launched by the European Commission ... (2014 CZ, 2015 SK, 2016 HU) [and] are currently [2022] ongoing.”³⁴ The European Commission has recently referred Slovakia to the Court of Justice of the EU³⁵ on account of the segregation of Roma children.³⁶ Further, to safeguard that the “EU Funds should not support actions that contribute to any form of segregation or exclusion”³⁷ specific EU regulations³⁸ have been enforced.

The need of educational desegregation is highlighted in various EU policy initiatives. A recent report pointed out “[t]ackling school segregation is a main policy priority in the EU”³⁹ and outlined three EU policy initiatives:

“The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child highlights educational segregation as one the main challenges and promotes access to inclusive, non-segregated, quality education, through a non-discriminatory

³⁰ Hanushek, E., & Wößmann, L., (2010), Education and Economic Growth. In: Penelope Peterson, Eva Baker, Barry McGaw, (Editors), International Encyclopedia of Education. volume 2, pp. 245-252. Oxford: Elsevier

³¹ (2022) Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training Final report of the Commission expert group. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union. Online: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896>

³² Billings, S., et al. (2014), ‘School Segregation, Educational Attainment, and Crime. Evidence from the End of Busing in Charlotte-Mecklenburg’, Quarterly Journal of Economics, 129 (1): 433-475 Online: [w18487.pdf \(nber.org\)](http://www.nber.org/papers/w18487)

³³ EU (2000) COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin. Online: eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32000L0043

³⁴ (2022) Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training Final report of the Commission expert group. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union. Online: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896>

³⁵ European Commission v Slovak Republic Action brought on 22 December 2023 (Case C-799/23). Online: [CURIA - List of results \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/curia/list_results). C-799/23

³⁶ EC (2023) The European Commission decides to refer SLOVAKIA to the Court of Justice of the European Union for not sufficiently addressing discrimination against Roma children at school. Online: [The legal aspects of segregation in Slovakia are addressed in more detail in Chapter III of the current report.](https://ec.europa.eu/education/press/2023/06/23-06-23-01)

³⁷ (2022) Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training Final report of the Commission expert group. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union. Online: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896>

³⁸ Common Provisions Regulation. The Common Provisions Regulation are “A common provisions regulation is established to govern 8 EU funds whose delivery is shared with Member States and regions. Together, they represent a third of the EU budget” Source: EC (2021) Common Provisions Regulation. The single rulebook of EU funds jointly delivered with member states and regions. Online: [Common Provisions Regulation - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eu-funds/common-provisions-regulation/)

³⁹ EC (2022) Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training Final report of the Commission expert group. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union. Online: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896>

treatment regardless of racial and ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, nationality, residence status, sex, and sexual orientation. The European Child Guarantee underlines that mainstream services need to be inclusive to ensure that children in need benefit fully and avoid stigma and segregation. In particular, segregation and discrimination in accessing mainstream education for Roma children, children with disabilities, children with a migrant background is an important challenge. The EU Roma strategic framework⁴⁰ sets a headline target on reducing school segregation, in countries with sizeable Roma population.”⁴¹

Not only at EU level but also at a broader, European level, school segregation is considered a major malfunction to the education system, especially in the context of basic human rights. Whereas the EU limits its jurisdiction to 27 member states, the Council of Europe (CoE) almost completely covers the European continent. In a position paper, deliberately devoted to school segregation, the CoE emphasized that “[s]chool segregation is at variance with international and European human rights standards, which enshrine a positive obligation for states to secure the right of every child to quality education without discrimination.”⁴² All this being noted, it is also fair to recognize that the educational segregation continues to be a challenging issue in Europe. Even in the EU, combating school segregation encounters various obstacles, including “reluctant desegregation policies.”⁴³ Against this background, the need to make the efforts against educational segregation more effective is clear. The accumulated so far experience, the lessons learned, especially those learned the hard way, should provide useful guidance to achieve the ultimate goal of eradicating educational segregation.

What We Have Learned from Previous Desegregation Interventions

This and the following part⁴⁴ of the present chapter review, create a reference framework to, and summarize lessons from pertinent experiences that should inform the design and approach of an education-desegregation

⁴⁰ The following note, received as feedback by the EC, EAC, is added to the text for comprehensiveness: “EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation was adopted for the period 2020-2030 and was accompanied by a proposal for Council recommendation. This initiative set out a comprehensive three-pillar approach: equality with all other members of society, social and economic inclusion, and participation in political, social, economic and cultural life. The main aim in the field of education is to ‘increase effective equal access to quality inclusive mainstream education’, operationalised by three targets: (1) cutting the gap in participation in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) by at least half; (2) reducing the gap in upper secondary completion by at least one third and ensuring that by 2030 the majority of Roma youth complete at least upper secondary education; and (3) working towards eliminating segregation by cutting at least in half the proportion of Roma children attending segregated primary schools. The 2021 FRA Roma Survey indicated that just over two out of five Roma children (44%) attend early childhood education; nearly three out of four young Roma aged 18–24 (71 %) leave the educational system early, and more than half of Roma children aged 6–15 (52 %) are in segregated schools where all or most schoolmates are Roma.

In their efforts to achieve the targets of the EU Roma Strategic Framework, guidance and assistance is provided to Member States, and they are expected to make full use of other EU policies, frameworks, and EU funding programmes (including the Recovery and Resilience Facility and EU Cohesion Policy funds, such as ESF+, ERDF) to work towards these targets.

Through the Council recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation (adopted in March 2021), Member States politically committed to work more directly on tackling and solving the issue of segregation in education and the spatial segregation of Roma, and to prevent and combat antigypsyism and systemic discrimination against Roma people. In addition, the recommendation established that EU Member States will submit their national Roma strategic plans (2021), and report on their implementation every two years from 2023 onwards. In 2022, the European Commission adopted its [Assessment report of the Member States’ national Roma strategic frameworks \(full package\) - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#).”

⁴¹ EC (2022) Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training Final report of the Commission expert group. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union. Online: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896>.

⁴² CoE (2017) Fighting school segregation in Europe through inclusive education” [ES194497 PREMS 105017 GBR 1700 Combating school 160x240 WEB.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴³ EC (2022) Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training Final report of the Commission expert group. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union. Online: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896>

⁴⁴ Lessons Learned: Key Points to be Kept in Mind when Designing and Implementing an Education Desegregation Intervention in Slovakia and Other Future Interventions

intervention in Slovakia. Of course, such a review can only sketch an intellectual framework⁴⁵ for a specific education-desegregation intervention. Its contextualization and turning it into a feasible implementation design shall require a good understanding of the factors and actors that shape the local educational and social environment to be provided by examining the relevant locations.

Extracts form Lessons from the Most Recent Pertinent European Interventions

To provide as specific as possible guidance, prior to contextualizing it to the selected intervention locations, this section examines and focuses on extracting key components from the most recent European school desegregation experiences, as provided by the Erasmus + funded project European Cities Against School Segregation (ECASS).⁴⁶ A summary is provided of some latest relevant European key points of attention for a policy maker and a practitioner who is about to engage into a specific education-desegregation intervention. Hopefully, the upcoming program in Slovakia will be another inspiring steppingstone of an ongoing process of bettering education-desegregation approaches and will contribute to limiting and ultimately eradicating the educational segregation.

The accumulated experience shows that it is unrealistic to expect that educational desegregation could be achieved quickly and by one-off interventions. The lack of long-term approach, which must be also comprehensive and cohesive, has been identified as a major shortcoming in previous education-desegregation efforts. To tackle a deeply rooted social fault, which manifest itself as a major malfunction of the education system, a persistent and systematic approach is needed. Against the background of this realized necessity, *“attempts to desegregate have been too often carried out via short term projects which frequently are based on external funding, and which terminates once the source of funding disappears.”*⁴⁷

Time, already being recognized as a crucial factor,⁴⁸ should be considered broadly. The need of continuous coherent efforts addressing education desegregation by default means that education desegregation programmes should not be perceived as short-term efforts, realized the frameworks of isolated, one-off projects. But the concept of ‘time needed’ must be interpreted also as ‘technological time needed’, a period that is necessary for the interventions to start manifesting their impacts.

To be successful, an education-desegregation programme should encompass various components, which, by default, requires planning it as a complex intervention. A review of the latest education desegregation interventions in Europe outlines at least three, quite diverse, components:

- a) Information component (“awareness-raising campaigns”)
- b) Purposeful set of specifically targeted support measures, which remedy the status quo but also prevent worsening the status quo of any other stakeholder affected by the intervention (“measures to overcome specific vested interests of different educational actors”)
- c) Proper, honest and chance-enriching attitudes to the supported learners (“actions to ensure high expectations of all children and high-quality education for all of them”).⁴⁹

Although listed as a last one, the fair and safeguarding-the-education-developmental-chances-of-the-learners attitude is the *conditio sine qua non*, which deserves special attention. Its significance is such that it refers not only to situations of educational segregation but to all education-inequality situations.

⁴⁵ “[C]ontexts’ characteristics modulate policies effects, so a policy may produce very different outcomes when applied to different contexts. Against this background, policy makers are invited ... tak[e] into consideration the specific context in which they operate” Source: ECASS (2022) Training materials Module 5 - What can be done? Online: <https://www.ecass.eu/training-materials/module5/>

⁴⁶ To this end the main source of resources referred to in this part of the text is the guidance framework provided by ECASS. Online: <https://www.ecass.eu/>

⁴⁷ ECASS (2022) Training materials Module 5 - What can be done? Online: <https://www.ecass.eu/training-materials/module5/>

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ All the quotes in the list here are form: ECASS (2022) Training materials Module 5 - What can be done? Online: <https://www.ecass.eu/training-materials/module5/>

“A challenging education is the only instrument for poor people to progress.”⁵⁰ The quote is from a publication by the architect of the Portuguese education policy which brought the country to the hay-days of its learning-outcome performance. In a later publication Prof. Crato and his coauthor elaborated further, to address the risk of condescending attitudes and approaches in education, especially towards learners placed in to deprivileged situations, such as educational segregation:

*“An obvious risk here is to adopt an attitude of conformity and to engage in lowering standards, simplifying requirements, avoiding tests, etc. This will be hugely unfair and damaging to all students. Conformity deprives not only the struggling students but also all their peers from a chance to achieve their learning potential. And it is double unfair towards the students experiencing learning difficulties, since by lowering the standards, the system, although allowing them to pass de jure, fails them de facto, by withholding the assistance they actually need.”*⁵¹

Once the fundamental principle is clear, how should it be operationalised? A recent study report by The World Bank (WB) provides a clear answer: “[a]ssessment plays a fundamental role in attaining equity and access to quality education.”⁵² The WB report, which is focused on Slovakia and it is published in Slovak, provides quite clear and specific guidance on how “actions to ensure high expectations of all children and high-quality education for all of them”⁵³ might be conducive and how they should be designed.

ECASS defined information as “a key aspect of policies to tackle school segregation” and outlined several features that must be considered when designing and implementing an education desegregation intervention.⁵⁴ The specific information components of which an intervention must be aware are:

- the “choices and strategies” of the involved learners and their parents/families; this refers not only to the objectives of the choices made but also to the various process aspects that might be of significance and encompasses issues such as *criteria frameworks, trust and agency*;
- information sources; this point is heavily related to one mentioned above, especially to the aspect of *trust*, since information sources, particularly “those based on “word of mouth” are considered the most useful and trustable”; another factor of significant importance that relates to information sources is the “quality [of the offline] social networks”;
- contextualization based on geographic, logistical and other specific factors;
- proper information provision targeting.⁵⁵

No education-desegregation intervention would be successful, actually no attempt to introduce a desegregation programme would make sense, if it does not encompasses specifically targeted, coherent and robust set of support measures. This clear message, purposefully emphasized more than once in the present report, could be derived also from the most recent relevant ECASS materials. ECASS employs a specific terminology, that is present also in the literature, and refers to the imperatively needed support infrastructure as *compensatory policies or compensatory measures*.⁵⁶ The authors of this report prefer a more descriptive approach and wording such as ‘*specifically targeted, coherent and robust set of support measures*’ or ‘*set of specific support*

⁵⁰ Crato, N., (2020) Curriculum and Educational Reforms in Portugal: An Analysis on Why and How Students’ Knowledge and Skills Improved in *Audacious Education Purposes How Governments Transform the Goals of Education Systems*. Reimers, F.M., (ed.) Springer, Online: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41882-3>

⁵¹ Iossifov, I. & Crato N., 2023 The Curious Case of A Successful Education Reform. Sofia: Mediapool. Online: [The Curious Case of A Successful Education Reform](https://www.mediapool.com/en/the-curious-case-of-a-successful-education-reform) Published in Bulgarian, original reference: Йосифов Й., Крато, Н., (2023) Необикновеният случай на една успешна образователна реформа. София: Медиапул.

⁵² WB (2022) Curriculum Reform from Policy Design at the National Level to Implementation at the School Level: Lessons Learned. Online, in Slovak: [Curriculum reform from policy design to school implementation: lessons learned](https://www.ecass.eu/training-materials/module5/)

⁵³ To revisit the quote referring to departing point that *proper, honest and chance-enriching attitudes to the affected learners* is a compulsory component of a *successful, an education-desegregation program*. To remind, the source of the quote is: of ECASS (2022) Training materials Module 5 - What can be done? Online: <https://www.ecass.eu/training-materials/module5/>

⁵⁴ ECASS (2022) Training materials Module 5 - What can be done? Online: <https://www.ecass.eu/training-materials/module5/>

⁵⁵ All the quotes and references in the list here are from: ECASS (2022) Training materials Module 5 - What can be done? Online: <https://www.ecass.eu/training-materials/module5/>

⁵⁶ e.g. see Ferraz et al. (2019) ‘Has the Portuguese Compensatory Education Program Been Successful in Reducing Disadvantaged Schools’ Performance Gaps? A 15-Year Quantitative Analysis of National Exams Online: <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci9040270>

*measures*⁷, since this phrasing not only provides the needed specifics, that are deemed particularly relevant to the envisaged intervention in Slovakia, but it is also more inclusive and encompasses a notion for a much needed support to the receiving schools, the learners there, their parents and educators. Bearing this terminological clarification in mind, this paragraph further refers to some points outlined by ECASS, with certain inclusive additions when considered needed. Providing an overview of possible relevant *specific support measures*, ECASS follows the distinction between “school-based measures” and “individual-based compensatory measures” (see next page).

School-based measures include:

- monitoring segregation trends in schools, but this should be done in a way preventing schools' stigmatization;
- purposeful directing additional financial resources to the schools taking part in the desegregation intervention;
- purposeful allocation of trained professionals, or even better: purposeful continuous professional development (CPD) of the involved pedagogical professionals;
- purposeful "integration of specialized personnel in the schools' teams" such as educational mediators, as this has been done elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE),⁵⁷ or professionals such as "socio-educational and emotional counsellors in Barcelona schools, in the context of The Neighbourhood Plan strategy" as in an example, that is provided by ECASS;
- "open schools as resource for the neighbourhood."⁵⁸

Individual-based measures include:

- "additional training in the local mother tongue [and]
- support for other students' needs."⁵⁹

The volume of this report does not allow a more detailed review of the selected by ECASS experiences or of other similar education-desegregation practices, but an interactive list (in the Annexes) with the mentioned in the text box ECASS measures might offer some remedy for this limitation.

Textbox #1 ECASS's selection of possible specific support measures

ECASS's selection of possible specific support measures ('compensatory policies')

- Identification of vulnerable students
- Improving low-demanded schools' facilities
- Pedagogical transformation of low-demanded schools
- Free School Meals and free school fees
- Support for Extra-school activities
- A communitarian answer to school problems: "From the teaching team to the educational team"
- Educational opportunities improvement Plan
- Shock Plan against school segregation
- Free activity school in specific districts
- Recruiting and retaining skilled leaders and teachers in vulnerable areas
- Second language training for students with low knowledge of local language
- Indexes of segregation and attractiveness
- Pre/Post school programme
- Open schools
- Changing the school reputation

Source: [ECASS - Examples of compensatory policies and measures](#)

⁵⁷ WB (2021) Bulgaria Early Childhood Education and Care, General Education, and Inclusion. Situation Analysis and Policy Direction Recommendations. Online: <https://sf.mon.bg/?h=downloadFile&fileId=2764>

⁵⁸ All quotes and references in this paragraph, unless specified otherwise are from or based upon: ECASS (2022) Training materials Module 5 - What can be done? Online: <https://www.ecass.eu/training-materials/module5/>

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Busing as an education-desegregation and education policy-implementation measure

Busing as a self-standing intervention should not be considered a viable education-desegregation strategy. As already pointed out in the previous sections: a combination of measures is needed. The review suggests that even when busing is at the centre of an education-desegregation intervention, it should not be implemented on its own. If considered a core desegregation measure it better be accompanied at least by:

- a) comprehensive and individually adjusted education support measures available for each of the bussed learners,
- b) properly designed and specifically targeted information components,
- c) secured at least minimal support by the learners, parents and teachers at the receiving schools, minimizing, if not preventing, secondary segregation,
- d) additional, contextualized to the receiving school support measures, based on proper, regular, if not continuous, M&E.

Busing as a desegregation measure has already accumulated a certain track record and although seen as a major human-rights break-through its positive educational effects as a self-standing measure have not been established convincingly. Busing as a desegregation measure has been introduced in the United States (US) particularly in the southern states and has been related with the human-rights and desegregation movement in the second half of the XX century. It followed a 1954 landmark decision of the US Supreme Court (*Brown v. Board of Education*) which “ruled that separate schools for black and white children were ‘inherently unequal.’”⁶⁰ Busing has remained:

*“the main policy implemented in the US, due to historical apartheid and high levels of racial segregation of neighbourhoods and districts. School buses took children from racially isolated neighbourhoods to attend more diverse schools in more affluent districts.”*⁶¹

As any desegregation measure it had not been easily accepted and has become one of the discussion points and a quite ideologically overloaded one. It is easy to misinterpret an objective, critical approach towards the effectiveness and efficiency of school busing as a self-standing desegregation measure and to take it for a part of the much broader, socially antagonizing, ideological debate on the (de)segregation per se.

“Few questions in American public life are as controversial as the social consequences of school integration. Policy makers and researchers have debated the impact both on the individual students who are bused to school for the purposes of racial balance, and on residential patterns in school districts affected by busing.”

Unfortunately, the ideological debates have been having a spill-over effect on everything concerning school busing and “[e]ven the proximate effects of desegregation efforts have not been clear cut”, thus potentially exposing any attempt for an objective review of the school busing open to ideological interpretations.

It must be emphasized that this report reviews busing only in the context of its effectiveness and efficiency as a particular desegregation measure in order to support a targeted desegregation intervention and to assist maximizing its beneficial effects to all involved learners. Keeping this in mind, a concise review of the studies on the effects of busing as desegregation measure in the US reveals a number of aspects that better are being kept in mind when designing a desegregation intervention involving school busing, anywhere in the world. Starting from the principle that a primary and imperative objective of any intervention aiming at improving human welfare must be *primum non nocere* (first: do no harm, DNH), it is important to recognize that studies on the effect

⁶⁰ Guryan, Jonathan (2001), “Desegregation and Black Dropout Rates,” NBER Working Paper 8345, June Online: [1 \(nber.org\)](https://www.nber.org/papers/w8345)

⁶¹ EC 2022 Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training Final report of the Commission expert group. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union,. Online: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896>

of school busing in the US point to risks and potential negative implications. A relatively early publication examining the effects of school busing as desegregation measure, by James Coleman and colleagues,⁶² already recognized as one of the “an influential study”,⁶³ pointed out the effect of ‘white flight’ and the associated process of secondary segregation. The study found that the re-segregation added an urbanistic-geographic aspect to the departing segregated situation and concluded that the desegregation efforts led to an “emerging problem with regard to school desegregation [which] is the problem of segregation between central city and suburbs.”⁶⁴ The publication also pointed out that “[the] current means by which schools are being desegregated are intensifying, rather than reducing the problem.”⁶⁵ A potentially related but quite separate issue is the question whether the majority families’ concerns that have materialised themselves in a *white flight* had been justified. A study on the effects of a Boston area Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunities’ (Metco) busing programme “show[ed] no effect of Metco [bussed] students in the full sample of non-Metco students”⁶⁶ with respect to the test scores. Such a finding should, potentially, mitigate some possible concerns of receiving-school-children’s parents. However, the same study found not only good news. It was also ‘[c]onsistent with previous research, which shows racial composition effects to be strongest within racial groups [thus], we do find some evidence for a negative impact of fraction Metco on the Reading and Language scores of Black 3rd graders.”⁶⁷ This, latter, finding provides a valuable lesson learned that might be particularly beneficial for a potential upcoming desegregation intervention in Slovakia having school busing as its core measure. Namely, it points to that it is advisable that targeted support measure must be envisaged for the minority (Roma) children who have been already enrolled at the receiving schools at the inception of the school busing.

Other precious lessons accumulated in the US by previous school busing programmes indicate that the expectations of such interventions should not be unwisely high at least as far as reduction of school dropout rates are concerned but should not cause concerns either. Another study’s “results suggest that desegregation plans led to a *one to three percentage point decline in the dropout rates* of blacks, and that desegregation had little or no effect on the dropout rates of whites.”⁶⁸ The quoted above US studies addressing the effects of the busing desegregation programmes on the students in the receiving schools in terms of a) learning outcomes (test score)⁶⁹ and b) dropout rates⁷⁰ might be instrumental to address potential concerns expressed by parents of receiving schools. At the same time research on *heterogeneous peer effects in education* suggests that such effects are *strong and persistent* but that their appearance require time “peers tend to be influential in the long run only when their friendships last more than a year.”⁷¹ This might be an indication that the studies that did not find effect of the school on the students from the receiving schools did so because the busing programs did not lead to long and lasting friendships between the bussed students and the ones already enrolled in the receiving schools, which in turn might a warning on the potential school busing interventions to support social integration of minority students and – more broadly – to strengthen social cohesion.

Busing cannot be considered a dominant, not even a mainstream contemporary approach to fighting education segregation in Europe. Other, including European examples of employing busing as a school desegregation measure might be found but these are rare and far between and no convincing recommendation could be drawn on them. There is even a really odd example of busing as a *school-population adjustment measure*

⁶² Coleman, J., et al. (1975), “Trends in School Segregation: 1968-73,” Urban Institute Paper No. 722-03-01, Washington, DC: August Online: [ed117252.tif.pdf](https://www.urbaninstitute.org/publications/ed117252.tif.pdf)

⁶³ Angrist, J.D. & Lang, K. (2004). Does School Integration Generate Peer Effects? Evidence from Boston’s Metco Program. American Economic Review, 94 (5), 1613-1634

⁶⁴ Coleman, J., et al.. (1975), “Trends in School Segregation: 1968-73,” Urban Institute Paper No. 722-03-01, Washington, DC: August Online: [ed117252.tif.pdf](https://www.urbaninstitute.org/publications/ed117252.tif.pdf)

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Angrist, J.D. & Lang, K. (2004). Does School Integration Generate Peer Effects? Evidence from Boston’s Metco Program. American Economic Review, 94 (5), 1613-1634

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Guryan, Jonathan (2001), “Desegregation and Black Dropout Rates,” NBER Working Paper 8345, June Online: [1 \(nber.org\)](https://www.nber.org/papers/w8345)

⁶⁹ Angrist, J.D. & Lang, K. (2004). Does School Integration Generate Peer Effects? Evidence from Boston’s Metco Program. American Economic Review, 94 (5), 1613-1634

⁷⁰ Guryan, Jonathan (2001), “Desegregation and Black Dropout Rates,” NBER Working Paper 8345, June Online: [1 \(nber.org\)](https://www.nber.org/papers/w8345)

⁷¹ Patacchini, E., et al. (2017) Heterogeneous peer effects in education. Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization 134 190–227

suspected to be a form of hidden discrimination: there are reports on busing of ethnic minority children out of white schools in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s.⁷² As a counterweight, a recent, potentially promising, example of busing that supports education desegregation effort, or, at least, one receiving positive media coverage,⁷³ is the *Toulouse busing experiment*.

Busing as an education-policy implementation measure could be associated not only with desegregation and integration but also with other education-policy objectives. There is an illustrative Bulgarian example of busing as a policy-implementation measure but it relates to the country's *2006 reform of its school network*. The busing still takes place in a number of regions in Bulgaria. However, neither data relevant to any potential desegregation effect of this major ongoing busing intervention has been made publicly available, nor a valid conclusion contributing such an effect could be drawn on the basis of any other report or publication on this operation.

Slovakia's, own experiencing with busing as a desegregation and integration measure, points to the need of more comprehensive approach as well as to the necessity of carefully considering the cost of such intervention and its sustainability. There have already been attempts to employ transportation-support measures to desegregate in Slovakia. An intervention that took place in Žilina, in 2017 and was supported a local NGO, *Center for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture*, focused on closing one segregated school and on providing support to its students to attend other schools in the city. A core issue that the intervention faced was the allocation of responsibility to cover the costs and the respective local regulations on transportation expenses. After initially covering the transportation costs from private sources through a fundraising campaign, a change in city regulations made it possible to provide free transport for all children, including those from the closed segregated school to other schools in the city. The intervention in Žilina, however, was also more complex than just providing transportation support to children affected by segregated education: it included tutoring programme for the pupils, regular communication with Roma parents, support and trainings for teachers in receiving schools and coordination with the municipality of Žilina and other external organizations and institutions (such as the Centre for Pedagogical and Psychological Counselling). The Žilina experience clearly demonstrates that desegregation of education encompasses more than transportation.⁷⁴ This important lesson as well as valuable reflections on the how challenging the sustaining of the busing aspects of an education-integration intervention might be, are reiterated by the only current intervention involving organised busing of children in Slovakia.

Purposefully organised transportation of children to bring them to school could be a technical support measure, but not on its own, and only in the context of a larger and more complex intervention endorsing integration. UNICEF Slovakia, in collaboration with Mareena, a local NGO, is currently running a busing intervention that supports Ukrainian refugee children placed at the Humanitarian Centre (HC) Gabčíkovo to reach schools in the region. The objective of the intervention is to provide access to education to the school-aged Ukrainian children. Although it has been running a second year, the measure is considered an emergency response. Despite its temporary character and the fact that busing itself is quite costly, this transportation arrangement from the very beginning has been aligned with a number of other support measures:

- pedagogical assistants in schools (speaking Ukrainian or Russian);
- language courses;
- language and homework assistance that takes place at the location where the children live with their families (in the HC Gabčíkovo);
- special attention to the allocation arrangements for the Ukrainian children in the receiving schools. *Purposeful efforts have been made to place the Ukrainian children in grades according to their age. Where possible, children were allocated in small groups of 2 to 3 per a hosting class to stimulate their faster integration with their age-peer Slovak classmates while preventing a (self-)perception of isolation;*

⁷² The Guardian (2022) Uncovering Britain's secret history of bussing ethnic minority children Online: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/28/uncovering-britains-secret-history-of-bussing-ethnic-minority-children>

⁷³ BBC 2021 French school bus experiment brings hope to Toulouse estates. Online: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-59290896>

⁷⁴ Telephone interview with Miroslava Hapalova, UNICEF Slovakia.

- ongoing continuous communication with and engagement of the Ukrainian parents;
- daily low-threshold creative, physical and artistic leisure activities, and a children's club;
- coordination and collaboration with the Slovak Ministry of Education (MoE) and other stakeholders including local authorities.

The outlined complex of measures is a part of a broader initial integration strategy. The education support measures, of which busing forms an important part, should be considered in the context of wider assistance mechanism aiming at a faster and smoother integration of the Ukrainian children and their families into the Slovak society. Providing meaningful access to various essential public services such as education, public health, social protection etc. is considered an initial contribution to the integration process. Another example of a support measure stemming from the same rationale, as the facilitated access to education for the school aged children, is the in-situ provision of ECEC services for the younger Ukrainian children in the HC Gabčíkovo. It is also worth making an explicit note on the necessity of establishing a functional collaboration and cooperation mechanism with the institutional stakeholders. In the case of the Gabčíkovo intervention, these were the Office for Migration (Ministry of Interior), the MoE, the respective local authorities, NGOs and schools. For example, the Ministry of Education made, as a matter of exception, special adjustments and allowed to expand the size of the classes⁷⁵ with 10 % where and when this was feasible from the point of view of the (physical) learning environment and the HR availability.⁷⁶

The list of the prime challenges that the current school-busing intervention in Slovakia has been facing is topped by the costs, and related to it – the sustainability, the capacity of the education system, especially at the respective receiving locations, the attitudes at the receiving locations and the capability to serve all potential beneficiaries. The cost of the busing, especially, if the transportation is provided purposefully and only to the school-aged children, is a substantial budget post and inevitably brings up the question of sustainability. The expenses needed to secure specially arranged school busing raise also the question of their enormous *opportunity cost* and respectively – the justification of such an intervention in a medium and a long term. The lack of available capacity of the education system at the receiving location is a clear risk factor, which, fortunately, is easily to be mapped and could be tackled by careful medium to long-term planning. Potentially related to capacity of the receiving schools might have been the initial attitudes of part of the school principals and teachers, who were not warmly welcoming the envisaged changes in the demographics of their schools and classes. This challenge has been tackled with a purposeful communication and concrete support measures specifically directed at the reported and identified needs. Here a word of caution is needed: in the case of Gabčíkovo intervention no particular reluctance on behalf of the parents of the children from the receiving schools was recorded. However, this is not a guarantee that the same would be the case with parents of children from receiving schools engaged in a Roma desegregation intervention.⁷⁷ Finally, the capability to organize an intervention that covers all potential school-aged beneficiaries from the respective location is a key consideration to be kept in mind. In the case of the Gabčíkovo intervention about 100 children are being bussed. For the rest of school-aged children, their parents expressed a preference to continue attending the Ukrainian education provisions available online.⁷⁸ Apparently, no comparable option would be present in a case of desegregation busing intervention. Then a question such as ‘what would be the impact of the busing desegregation interventions on the children who continue to attend the sending schools while some of their peers are being bussed to receiving schools?’ becomes unavoidable.

This deliberate busing as an access-to -education measure has been considered since the onset a temporary intervention, will be discontinued, and UNICEF Slovakia is already working on an exit strategy. Since the beginning, the government is deliberating temporary accommodation for the Ukrainian refugees, and exploring re-allocation in other locations/towns with better access to different services including education. As the

⁷⁵ Here “expand the size of the classes” refers to the respective *regulations of number of children per class*.

⁷⁶ Group interview with, UNICEF Slovakia, 20-12-23.

⁷⁷ A recent survey provides indications that this might indeed be the case. See: TERAZ (2024) SURVEY: According to 60% of Slovaks, pupils from MRC should be educated separately. Online:

<https://www.teraz.sk/spravy/prieskum-ziaci-z-mrk-by-sa-podla-60/792811-clanok.html>

⁷⁸ Group interview with, UNICEF Slovakia, 20-12-23.

children and their families are being supported to settle in Slovakia, any transportation assistance to facilitate access to education shall be delivered through the public transport system. At the moment of writing, no external evaluation of the intervention has been done, nor is envisaged since the busing has been introduced as an emergency/temporary measure linked to temporary accommodation provided in the HC Gabčíkovo.⁷⁹

Although the context of an intervention taking place in a HC is different from the one of an intervention envisaged to tackle school segregation, at least some of the lessons already learned from the ongoing busing intervention in Gabčíkovo must be taken into consideration. For convenience and quick reference, the following list provides a summary of the important *points of attention* already outlined in the review of the Gabčíkovo busing intervention:

- an imperative need to design the supplement a school busing intervention with a comprehensive package of other support measures;
- an imperative need to carefully organize the allocation of the bussed learners into the receiving schools;
- the cost of busing as an intervention measure:
 - its questionable sustainability, especially from a mid-and long-term perspective,
 - the need to be considered using the existing public transport infrastructure as a preferred option;
- the inevitability of coordination and collaboration with other institutional stakeholders;
- the unavoidability of securing at least neutral, if not supportive, attitude of the teachers and school principals from the effected (receiving) schools;
- the necessity to actively engage the parents of the bussed children;
- the necessity of targeted support measures for the receiving schools;
- the necessity to prevent further social injustice to the learners 'left behind' in the sending schools;
- the added value of various education-support measures at the location where the bussed children live.

Previous school busing desegregation projects within EU raise an array of other questions, that offer abundant food for thought for any policy maker considering a similar intervention. Among the earlier school busing projects specifically addressing school segregation in Europe, and in the EU particularly, one managed to gain particular prominence and media recognition. The Bulgarian *Organization Drom*, based in Vidin, one of the country's provincial capital, started a pilot school busing project in 2000 with 100 Roma children, ran it for over an decade and, in its own words, "progressively increased the number of integrated Roma children to over 400 Roma children and became the most widely publicised education initiative, launched in Central and Eastern Europe."⁸⁰. The main organisation's documents available on its website (as per December 2023) that are specifically devoted to the project⁸¹ pay explicit tribute to the global media attention with references to The New York Times,⁸² International Herald Tribune,⁸³ Newsweek,⁸⁴ the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation,⁸⁵ as well as to expression of political support and influential political gestures such a speech by George Soros,⁸⁶ and a report by the EU Commission.⁸⁷ Against this background, the limited volume of basic descriptive statistics on the busing intervention in the documents published by *Organization Drom* itself⁸⁸ indicates a modest impact of the of the whole programme.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Organization Drom *Buletin in English* Online: https://drom-vidin.org/drom/sites/default/files/buletin_en.pdf

⁸¹ Organization Drom (2011) Видинската десегрегационна програма (2010-2011 г.) Online: [final.bg .version.pdf \(drom-vidin.org\)](https://drom-vidin.org/drom/sites/default/files/buletin_en.pdf); Organization Drom *Buletin in English* Online: https://drom-vidin.org/drom/sites/default/files/buletin_en.pdf

⁸² The New York Times (2001) Bulgaria Opens School Doors for Gypsy Children. Online: <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/06/12/world/bulgaria-opens-school-doors-for-gypsy-children.html>

⁸³ Article by John Tagliabue from September 2001, republished by International Herald Tribune, as reported in Organization Drom *Buletin in English* Online: https://drom-vidin.org/drom/sites/default/files/buletin_en.pdf

⁸⁴ A publication in Newsweek on Vidin Desegregation Program is reported in Organization Drom (2011) Видинската десегрегационна програма (2010-2011 г.) Online: [final.bg .version.pdf \(drom-vidin.org\)](https://drom-vidin.org/drom/sites/default/files/buletin_en.pdf);

⁸⁵ Report by Nancy Durham of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation CBC from September 2000, as reported in Organization Drom *Buletin in English* Online: https://drom-vidin.org/drom/sites/default/files/buletin_en.pdf

⁸⁶ A speech by George Soros given on February 2nd, 2005, "in the presence of eight prime-ministers from Central and Eastern Europe, who signed a memorandum for launching the Roma Decade Initiative", as reported by Organization Drom *Buletin in English* Online: https://drom-vidin.org/drom/sites/default/files/buletin_en.pdf

⁸⁷ EC (2005) THE SITUATION OF ROMA IN AN ENLARGED EUROPEAN UNION Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2005 Online: [The situation of Roma in an enlarged European Union - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/press/pr/20050505roma_en.htm)

⁸⁸ Organization Drom (2011) Видинската десегрегационна програма (2010-2011 г.) Online: [final.bg .version.pdf \(drom-vidin.org\)](https://drom-vidin.org/drom/sites/default/files/buletin_en.pdf); Organization Drom *Buletin in English* Online: https://drom-vidin.org/drom/sites/default/files/buletin_en.pdf

In a document reviewing a series of projects spanning over 10 years the organization reports “[o]ver 400 Roma children⁸⁹ taking part in the desegregation program.”⁹⁰ Moreover, the mentioned documents do not provide information on some key issues that would have been particularly useful as accumulated experience for comparable interventions, such as: if all Roma children from the segregated schools were bused, were the segregated schools closed and if not - what was the effect of the busing on the students from the sending schools who remained in these segregated schools. The programme’s limitations and the missed opportunities to accumulate more valuable lessons should not overshadow the fact that it was a consistent desegregation effort supporting Roma children for over a decade. The accumulated experience encompasses some worthy examples of aligning a school busing intervention with other support measures, such as:

- provision of textbooks and other educational materials,⁹¹
- “[e]quitably distribut[ing] Roma children in classes to all integrated Vidin schools (less than 10 % of Roma in each class),
- [t]utor[ing] students who perform below grade level;
- Organiz[ing] extra-curricular activities for children (folklore club, sports club, crafts clubs, debate clubs, inter-school competitions);
- [i]mplement[ing] regular multi-cultural training courses and seminars for teachers and parents of pupils in ethnically mixed classes.”⁹²

Durable and meaningful education desegregation is not to be achieved with isolated projects, regardless of how coherent and sustainable they are, and must become an objective of a purposeful state education policy. Finally, one of the contributions of *Organization Drom* reflecting heavily on its desegregation efforts provides a particularly useful insight, of quite different nature. A document published by the organization and revealingly titled: “Why Did the Process of Desegregation of Roma Education in Bulgaria Failed to Become a National Policy?” points out to the need to address the phenomenon of education desegregation on the basis of a state policy, rather than on a project basis.⁹³

Lessons Learned: Key Points to be Kept in Mind when Designing and Implementing an Education Desegregation Intervention in Slovakia and Other Future Interventions

A successful desegregation of the school education requires more than adopting adequate strategic policy documents and proposing well-intended policy-implementation measures and requires consistent and coherent implementation conducted with integrity by capable education administration for as long as it takes. Reflecting on the question posed by the published by *Organization Drom* overviewing document (see the previous paragraph/section), this and the following paragraphs provide a concise review of the accumulated in Bulgaria policy and policy-implementation experience relevant to educational desegregation. There are valuable lessons to be drawn and, unfortunately, they have been leaned hard way. Keeping this clarifying remark in mind, it is important to mention that the *educational desegregation* has been properly addressed in the recent and current Bulgarian strategic documents. The current strategic approach in the Bulgarian education consolidated the array of previously existing strategies and as a result a *Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training, and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 - 2030)* was adopted in 2021.⁹⁴ The *Strategic Framework* addresses unequivocally educational desegregation and sets “[e]ncouraging school desegregation and forming a supportive public environment, inter-school activities, creating partnership with local communities and civil sector, additional

⁸⁹ This number does not correspond to an earlier reporting, namely: “In the 2000- 2003 period, the programme has successfully integrated over 600 students.” Source: EC (2005) THE SITUATION OF ROMA IN AN ENLARGED EUROPEAN UNION Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2005 Online: [The situation of Roma in an enlarged European Union - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1)

⁹⁰ Organization Drom *Buletin in English* Online: https://drom-vidin.org/drom/sites/default/files/buletin_en.pdf

⁹¹ Organization Drom (2011) Видинската десегрегационна програма (2010-2011 г.) Online: [final.bg_version.pdf \(drom-vidin.org\)](https://drom-vidin.org/drom/sites/default/files/final.bg_version.pdf)

⁹² Organization Drom *Buletin in English* Online: https://drom-vidin.org/drom/sites/default/files/buletin_en.pdf

⁹³ Organization Drom (2021) Why Did the Process of Desegregation of Roma Education in Bulgaria Failed to Become a National Policy? Online: <https://drom-vidin.org/drom/sites/default/files/BG.pdf>
Published in Bulgarian, original title: ЗАЩО НЕ УСПЯ ДА СТАНЕ НАЦИОНАЛНА ПОЛИТИКА ПРОЦЕСЪТ НА ДЕСЕГРЕГАЦИЯ НА РОМСКОТО ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ В БЪЛГАРИЯ?

⁹⁴ MoEC (2021) Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training, and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 - 2030), Online: https://web.mon.bg/upload/25571/Strategicheska-ramka_ObrObuUchene_110321.pdf
Published in Bulgarian, original reference: МОН (2021) Стратегическа рамка за развитие на образованието, обучението и ученето в Република България (2021 – 2030)

work with students and parents, encouragement parents' participation in the educational process in a multicultural environment” as an explicit measure under the goal “[e]ducational integration of children and students from vulnerable groups, including Roma, those seeking or granted international protection and migrants”.⁹⁵ Another pertinent strategic document which explicitly addresses educational desegregation is the adopted by the Government *National Strategy of Republic of Bulgaria for equality, inclusion and participation of the Roma* (2021 – 2030). It pays specific attention to the need of preventing secondary segregation and in recognises that “residential desegregation increases the chances of school desegregation”⁹⁶ thus promisingly putting the problem of educational desegregation in its broader socio-economic context. The country went beyond the strategic policy documents and regularly adopts a number of policy implementation measures that should, potentially, conduce the process of educational desegregation.

Particular attention deserves one of the Ministry of Education and Science’s (MoES) *National Programmes for Development of Education* (NPDEs). For clarity, the NPDEs are one of the main policy-implementation instruments at the disposal of the education administration to run the education policy of the country. The NPDE that focuses on educational desegregation was initiated in 2019 under the name *NP Supporting Municipalities to Implement Activities for Educational Desegregation*⁹⁷ and as per 2023 it is still running as *NP Supporting Municipalities for Educational Desegregation*.⁹⁸ Against this positive background, it has been the implementation capacity of the administration that proved to be a bottleneck – and which, in retrospective, turned out to be one of these valuable lessons that, regrettably, Bulgaria had to learn the hard way. The scope of the Bulgarian NP on desegregation has remained quite restricted throughout the period of its existence and, unfortunately, its dynamics projects lack of administrative capacity to foster the process of educational desegregation. The current NP, the 2023’s one, with its BGN 500 000,⁹⁹ (approximately € 250 000) is only half of the size of the first one, the NP of 2019, which had a budget of BGN 1 million.¹⁰⁰ Already at the time of the introduction of the NP on desegregation it was recognized that the needs of educational desegregation required much stronger commitment of public resources but also, that even the limited resources allocated at that time were beyond the administration’s capacity to advance the educational desegregation in the country: out of the envisaged BGN 1 million only BGN 180 000,¹⁰¹ less than one fifth, were allocated to approved projects. Examining the initial scope of programme beyond its financial resource reviews that its geographical coverage was equally meagre. As a comprehensive report of The World Bank on the state of the Bulgarian education stated: “[d]espite the indisputable need for educational integration activities and desegregation in dozens of municipalities in 2019, only six municipalities applied under the National Program.”¹⁰² *Geographically*, one should keep in mind that there are 265 municipalities in Bulgaria; to put it into perspective, *in*

⁹⁵ Goal 5.6. in the Strategic Framework. The original in Bulgarian reads: Цел 5.6. Образователна интеграция на деца и ученици от уязвими групи, включително роми, на търсещи или получили международна закрила и мигранти;

⁹⁶ Council of Ministers of (2022) Republic of Bulgaria National Strategy of Republic of Bulgaria for equality, inclusion and participation of the Roma (2021 – 2030)

Online: https://web.mon.bg/upload/33751/Roma-strategy_2021-2030_11112022.pdf

Published in Bulgarian, original reference: Национална стратегия на Република България за равенство, приобщаване и участие на ромите (2021 - 2030)

⁹⁷ In Bulgarian: НП Подпомагане на общини за реализиране на дейности за образователна десегрегация

⁹⁸ НП Подпомагане на общините за образователна десегрегация, in Bulgarian.

⁹⁹ MoES (BG) (2023) *NP Supporting Municipalities for Educational Desegregation* (2023) Sofia: MoES. Online: <https://web.mon.bg/upload/35984/11NP-Podpomaganе-obshtini-obr-desegregacia-02062023.pdf>

Published in Bulgarian, original reference: МОН (2023) Национална програма „Подпомагане на общините за образователна десегрегация“ София: МОН

¹⁰⁰ MoES (BG) *NP Supporting Municipalities to Implement Activities for Educational Desegregation* (2019) Sofia: MoES <https://web.mon.bg/upload/19229/19RH172pr17-obshtini.pdf> Published in Bulgarian, original reference: МОН (2019) НАЦИОНАЛНА ПРОГРАМА ПОДПОМАГАНЕ НА ОБЩИНИ ЗА РЕАЛИЗИРАНЕ НА ДЕЙНОСТИ ЗА ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛНА ДЕСЕГРАГАЦИЯ. София: МОН

¹⁰¹ Minister of Education and Science, Republic of Bulgaria (2019) Order RD 09 – 2154/28.08.2019 Approved project proposals. Online: https://web.mon.bg/upload/20486/zap2154_NP_obshtini_280819.pdf

Published in Bulgarian, original document’s name: Заповед № РД09-2154/28.08.2019 г. с одобрение за финансиране проектни предложения.

¹⁰² WB (2021) Bulgaria Early Childhood Education and Care, General Education, and Inclusion. Situation Analysis and Policy Direction Recommendations. Online: <https://sf.mon.bg/?h=downloadFile&fileid=2764>

terms of developmental dynamics and progress, one might note that there were only eight municipalities that received funding under the latest (2023) NP on desegregation.¹⁰³

On a par with the need to boost the capacity of the administration, another important and valuable lesson teaches that tackling educational segregation requires a patient and realistic approach, correct evaluation and honest communication, and most of all – integrity. The described above ongoingly challenging situation with the educational desegregation in Bulgaria presents food for thought in terms of what is needed to prepare the respective local and education administrations for the task at hand. One needs to internalize the lesson that overcoming educational segregation demands

- honest communication including
 - proportionality between the archived results and their public presentation,
- honesty with everyone involved in any of the activities and
- realistic expectations and approaches and in broader terms – integrity, cannot be overstated.

Educational desegregation has become an important need in Slovakia, that must be conducted in an effective and sensible way. The freshly published PISA 2022 established that: “[t]he performance gap related to students’ socio-economic status is widest in Romania and the Slovak Republic.”¹⁰⁴ Educational segregation is a major contributor to this state, as already elaborated above, in the section on *the impact of segregation on the educational systems*. It is well established that *higher levels of school segregation reduce the educational prospects of the underprivileged learners*.¹⁰⁵ To break this vicious spiral of educational segregation – educational underperformance – reduced developmental chances – reinforced segregation need to be tackled. But just introducing any education-desegregation busing intervention would not suffice. Any education-integration programme that includes a transportation component needs to be designed and implemented in an effective and sensible way, based also on the accumulated so far experience with busing as a desegregation and integration measures in the country. To this end, the following recommendations have been shaped, based on interviews with Slovak experts:

- Any transport-related school desegregation effort should be linked to the rationalisation of the school network in Slovakia and which has been suggested in several strategic documents¹⁰⁶ (including some of the Programmatic Declarations of the Government) in the area of education in the last 10-15 years. Unfortunately, none of these intentions has yet been realised so far (mainly because of the political price involved and because of the high degree of decentralisation of the education system).
- A busing programme serving desegregation, also in connection with the rationalisation of the school network (see above), must assess sensitively the age of the bussed children - for pre-schoolers and younger learners (pupils up to 10 years), qualified supervision is also required. This in turn inevitably increases the cost of the programme and complicates it. An example for a complication is the need to guarantee regular contact with parents of in pre-primary and primary education learners, which in turn makes the proximity of the school to the place of residence an important consideration.
- Instead of introducing separate school buses, strengthening the existing transport infrastructure (e.g., strengthening the city and intercity buses, creation of bus stops in the excluded locations, adjustment of the

¹⁰³ Minister of Education and Science, Republic of Bulgaria (2023) Order RD 09 – 1929/21.08.2023 For funding of the *Municipalities* approved to take part in the NP *Supporting Municipalities for Educational Desegregation* (2023) Online: https://web.mon.bg/upload/37847/11NP_zap1929_Desegregacia_24082023.pdf

Published in Bulgarian, original document’s name: Заповед № РД09-1929 от 21.08.2023 г. за финансиране на одобрените общини по НП „Подпомагане на общините за образователна десегрегация“

¹⁰⁴ OECD (2023), PISA 2022 Results (Volume I): The State of Learning and Equity in Education, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/53f23881-en>

¹⁰⁵ EC 2022 Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training Final report of the Commission expert group. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union,. Online: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896>

¹⁰⁶ E.g., Institute for Education Policy, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Slovak Republic, (2016), Options for the rationalization of the primary school network. Online: [10293.pdf \(minedu.sk\)](https://www.minedu.sk/files/10293.pdf) ; Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic(2017), National programme for the development of education and training: Learning Slovakia Online: [7532_uciace-sa-slovensko2017.pdf \(minedu.sk\)](https://www.minedu.sk/files/7532_uciace-sa-slovensko2017.pdf); Government of the Slovak Republic(2021) Programmatic Declaration of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the period of years 2021 – 2024, Online: [pvsr_2020-2024.pdf \(gov.sk\)](https://www.gov.sk/files/2020-2024.pdf)

timetables of the busses) combined with providing free-of-charge transport to school for pupils can be more effective. The free-of-charge transportation for school-age children is currently not universal - transport within a municipality/city is not automatically free, it depends on the regulation of the specific city; if free transportation is provided by the municipality, some groups of children may be excluded¹⁰⁷. Since the operation of bus services is a responsibility of different levels of local government (cities, self-governing regions), it is recommendable that the national education administration (i.e., the Ministry of Education) negotiates with the respective local governments, while at the same time considers the possibility of co-financing of this measure (for example from national or EU financial sources).¹⁰⁸

Education segregation is a social fault hindering enormously the proper function of the affected education system but neither its root causes are entirely educational, nor its implications are limited to the education system. Various education segregation aspects, broadening its impact on domains such as human rights, welfare, social and national security, economic development and labour-market perspectives etc. have already been addressed above. But regardless of its origin, or its broader social impact, it is the education system that frontally faces the education-segregation phenomenon, and it is responsibility of the education system to safeguard the best educational interest of every child, regardless of their SES, origin, ethnicity or place of living.

A properly designed education-desegregation intervention must be, first and foremost, considered part of the respective national education policy, serve the best educational interest of all the learners affected by it and be accordingly designed. Any education-desegregation measures, by default, should contribute to social justice and cohesion and could deliver much broader socially desirable outcomes. They are meant to address a specific, though major, malfunctioning of the education system and regardless of how an intervention is justified – it is a corrective measure of an ongoing process that must remain educational in its essence. Bearing this in mind, any intervention in the functioning of an education system must be completely aligned with the mission and the objectives of the respective education system.

Any education-desegregation intervention must account for the realization that “[t]he interaction between high and low achievers favours the process of learning of disadvantaged students, which benefits from an adequate learning climate and higher expectations.”¹⁰⁹ Naturally, in a longer run, the benefits from an education-desegregation intervention should also spill over to higher achievers, be it directly or indirectly. The potential for significant indirect beneficial spill-over effect is well-established in terms of increasing social cohesion and economic wellbeing (see also above the respective sections on the social and economic aspects of education (de-)segregation). But such a long-term view is not always adopted by the families of the better performing learners and malfunctioning education-desegregation interventions might be seen as serious risk for their children by the parents of better performing students.

Such parental concerns should not be dismissed as light, unsubstantiated, prejudicial or worse, but should be taken seriously. Grounded or not, if these concerns are not addressed, the parents of children in a receiving school might become a major obstructive factor to any otherwise well-designed desegregation intervention. To this end, at least four types of supporting measures are needed:

- a) Proper data collection and analysis ensuring a correct understanding of the parental attitudes (preliminary to the intervention), *especially in the receiving schools*; to this end, and to prevent distortion due to socially desirable answers, data on the parental attitudes needs to be collected not only directly from the parents but also from other sources (e.g. the teachers and school principals of the respective schools).
- b) Measures addressing the specific concerns expressed by the parents, especially the parents of learners in the receiving schools.

¹⁰⁷ This was also the case in the city of Žilina, which initially excluded from free public transport children whose parents owed the city waste collection fees. Following the pressure from NGOs and local activists, this regulation was modified.

¹⁰⁸ These recommendations are based on an interview (Dec. 2023) and the following (including written) communication with Miroslava Hapalova, UNICEF Slovakia. Part of the written contribution have been directly incorporated. The team preparing the report expresses special gratitude to Mrs. Hapalova.

¹⁰⁹ EC 2022 Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training Final report of the Commission expert group. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union,. Online: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896>

- c) Abstinance from chancing the learners' demographics beyond thresholds considered unacceptable by the parents.
- d) A continuous monitoring of the parental attitudes in a short- to mid-term period to ensure ability and readiness for immediate response in case the attitude towards the desegregation measure is worsening (an adaptation of the regular Estonian *satisfaction of education surveys* might serve as a guiding departing point to design such a support measure).

No education-desegregation intervention involving redistribution of students should rely on success without securing the understanding, if not active support, by the parents of the learners from the receiving schools. An education-desegregation intervention should account that the realization that “[p]eers’ backgrounds are likely to influence their classmates’ individual choices and outcomes”¹¹⁰ is not limited to the literature anymore and it is all too well internalized by parents, especially of middle-class parents from regions with mixed ethnical/socioeconomic background. The experience accumulated in Barcelona is convincingly supported by other studies, including such that took place in CEE.¹¹¹

A main takeaway from the accumulated so far experience is the sustainable resistance of the middle-class families towards desegregation strategies¹¹² and the tendency to direct their children to schools dominated by children of comparable SES.¹¹³ An important detail, having a specific bearing on the relevance of this lesson learned for the foreseen intervention in Slovakia is that this accumulating evidence is quite recent and European.

Specific education-desegregation measure should not be forced upon a functioning educational community. It must be kept in mind that ideologically-driven measures might be counter-effective, and, if perceived as externally imposed, might provoke sustainable resentment – a risk that should be avoided at all costs.

There is no continent-wide coherence in Europe in employing education-desegregation interventions and no particular measure has been established as a leading or dominant. The experience accumulated so far on educational desegregation in Europe is eclectic rather than consistent, which might be considered surprising, given that almost every EU – and European – country has been confronted with this damaging social phenomenon. Possible explanations for the absence of a well-established, consistent, and present across the board education-desegregation measures might be sought in the institutional arrangements as well as in the variety of the contexts in which the EU (and European) education systems function. An example of such institutional arrangement, relevant for EU, is the principle of subsidiarity and, stemming from it, national discretion on all education matters. The contextual factors have been extensively addressed in the literature including in the most recent European lessons learned.¹¹⁴

No single education-desegregation measure should be expected to address sufficiently, moreover: sufficiently successfully, the phenomenon of education segregation. The current review indicates that no universally applicable measure is available, and no single panacea should be sought. Rather, a combination of measures, preferably applied in an agile and contextually adaptable way might be a much more efficient remedy to initially contain and consequently reduce and eradicate segregation in the school education.

Busing might be a promising core desegregation intervention, but it should not be applied on its own, rather a more comprehensive desegregation program should be centred around it. Busing per se, regardless

¹¹⁰ EC 2022 Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training Final report of the Commission expert group. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union,. Online: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896>

¹¹¹ Iossifov, I., Mihaylov, N. et al (2019) Initial Mapping of the School Climate and the Interaction between Schools and Parents. Research commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Science. Published in Bulgarian, reference in the language of publication: Йосифов, Йордан, Николай Михайлов и др. (2019) Първоначално картографиране на социалната среда в училище и на взаимоотношенията между училище и родители. София: Доклад в резултат на изследователско задание на Министерството на образованието и науката. Online: [Initial Mapping of the School Climate and the Interaction between Schools and Parents. Research commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Science](#)

¹¹² e.g. the experience accumulated in Barcelona with the magnet schools project, source: [Module 5 - What can be done? - ECASS](#)

¹¹³ See above the section on “avoidance strategy” (source: [Module 5 - What can be done? - ECASS](#))

¹¹⁴ [ECASS Project](#); see also the specific reference above, e.g. in section ... and in section ...

of how rigorously it is applied as a desegregation measure, or how well an isolated busing intervention is designed, could hardly lead to the desired outputs if no other education-desegregation support measures are applied. A combination of measure encompassing busing would put it at the core of the desegregation intervention programme. Busing, given that it is a heavily (cost-)intensive measure, might be considered a key component and other measures should be designed around it. But relying on the conviction that busing per se would solve an education segregation problem might prove to be naïve.

Chapter III: The School Segregation Status Quo in Slovakia and the Need of Change

Introductory remarks

This chapter looks into the multifaceted challenges faced by Roma children in Slovakia's education system, which remains marred by systemic segregation despite ongoing integration initiatives and legislative reforms. It provides a detailed analysis of Roma children's various forms of segregation and reviews recent court decisions and observations from human rights organisations. Additionally, the chapter delves into the recent policy and legislative reform related to segregation and the structure of the educational system, with a particular focus on how decentralisation influences the development of school catchment areas, which have ambiguous effects. While they can serve to promote desegregation, in some cases, they are to maintain or even enhance segregation, depending on their implementation. The analysis extends to how these areas are defined and their importance in any desegregation effort. Ultimately, this chapter explores the key elements and considerations that should inform any desegregation strategy to address these issues effectively.

The manifestations of segregation in the Slovak general education system

In April 2023, The European Commission decided to refer Slovakia to the Court of Justice of the European Union for failing to effectively tackle the issue of segregation of Roma children in education.¹¹⁵ The European Commission stated that "Slovakia has undertaken a series of legislative reforms and adopted several strategies and action plans to foster Roma inclusion in education. However, after carefully assessing those measures and monitoring the situation on the ground, the Commission concluded that the reforms undertaken so far are insufficient."¹¹⁶ The Commission's statement references a survey¹¹⁷ conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, which singled out Slovakia as one of the two EU countries with the highest levels of educational segregation. Specifically, around 65% of Roma children from marginalised communities in Slovakia, aged 6 to 15, attend schools predominantly comprised of Roma pupils—a five percentage point increase since 2016, according to data from EU-MIDIS II and EU SILC_MRK 2020. Similarly, the FRA reports that Bulgaria experiences comparable levels of educational segregation.¹¹⁸

Despite various legislative and policy initiatives aimed at fostering integration, Roma children in Slovakia continue facing educational barriers. These children are often placed in special schools and classes for students with mild mental disabilities. Many Roma children who are educated in mainstream schools are taught in separate classes or schools.¹¹⁹

According to the EU-SILC MRC 2020 data, nearly half (47%) of children from marginalised Roma communities in Slovakia, aged 6 to 15 years, who are in mainstream education, attend classes comprised entirely of Roma students. An additional 23% are in classes where Roma students constitute the majority. In contrast, for Roma children from integrated households¹²⁰, only 24% attend classes exclusively made up of Roma students—half the rate of those from marginalised communities. However, an identical proportion, at 23%, of Roma children from

¹¹⁵ European Commission. "The European Commission Decides to Refer SLOVAKIA to the Court of Justice of the European Union for Not Sufficiently Addressing Discrimination Against Roma Children at School." Press release. Accessed [17/03/2024]. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_2249.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, "ROMA IN 10 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES — MAIN RESULTS," 2023, p. 40, accessed [17/03/2024], <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2022/roma-survey-findings>.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ European Commission. "The European Commission Decides to Refer SLOVAKIA to the Court of Justice of the European Union for Not Sufficiently Addressing Discrimination Against Roma Children at School." Press release. Accessed [17/03/2024]. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_2249.

¹²⁰ In the context of the EU-SILC MRC 2020 data, 'integrated households' specifically denotes Roma families who live integrated with the majority of the population, not in segregated settlements, unlike those from 'marginalized Roma communities'.

integrated households are also enrolled in classes where the majority of students are Roma, mirroring the rate observed in marginalised communities.¹²¹

In December 2011, a Slovak domestic court tackled the issue of segregated classes for Roma children for the first time. The Prešov District Court's landmark ruling on December 5, 2011, found that the Šarišské Michalany primary school had unjustifiably discriminated against Romani children by placing them in separate classrooms.¹²² The proceedings against the school were initiated by the Slovak NGO - Center for Civil and Human Rights in June 2010.

The Prešov District Court dismissed the school's defence that segregating Romani children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds was necessary for maintaining educational quality. The school argued that separation allowed for a tailored teaching approach but failed to substantiate this measure's purported benefits or temporary nature. The court ordered the primary school to eliminate the Roma classes. Subsequently, on October 30, 2012, the Regional Court in Prešov upheld the lower court's decision.¹²³

In 2017, Amnesty International and European Roma Right Centre monitored the situation at the primary school in Šarišské Michalany¹²⁴ and concluded that segregation had worsened, with more than half of the classes being Roma-only in part due to "white flight" following the judgment. Initially, the school implemented positive measures to comply with the court's decision, but quoted challenges related to unclear guidance from educational authorities. Efforts included refurbishing the canteen to accommodate all children, organising activities for Roma and non-Roma children, and providing free bus transport. Moreover, a two-year EU-funded project supplied Roma teaching assistants, but this assistance ended when the funding did. The school's work with the NGO EduRoma demonstrated the limitations of relying on external support without adequate direction and resources from the state. In their joint report, the NGOs concluded, "the experience of Šarišské Michalany shows that underfunded and unsystematic initiatives cannot replace the informed guidance and adequate support from local, regional, or national authorities."¹²⁵

The continuous practice of creating Roma-only classes within mainstream schools was highlighted in a complaint filed with the Public Defender of Rights in 2022.¹²⁶ The complaint detailed the existence of Roma-only classes at a mainstream primary school. Upon reviewing the case, the Public Defender of Rights identified this as violating the fundamental right to education as guaranteed by national and international law. In response, the Public Defender of Rights has requested that the school implement necessary measures to dismantle this segregation. Specifically, the school was urged to redistribute Roma students and establish integrated classes that ensure balanced representation between students from the Roma minority and those from the majority population, thereby promoting an inclusive educational environment.¹²⁷

The trend of establishing Roma-only classes often stems from school authorities' fear of the phenomenon known as "white flight". This phenomenon refers to the exodus of children from the majority population from certain schools, driven by an increase in the enrolment of students from marginalised Roma

¹²¹ Filip Markovič and Ľudmila Plachá, "Income and Living Conditions in Marginalized Roma Communities: Selected Indicators from the EU SILC_MRC 2020 Survey (Príjmy a životné podmienky v marginalizovaných rómskych komunitách: Vybrané ukazovatele zo zisťovania EU SILC_MRK 2020)," Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities, 2020, p. 37, accessed [17/03/2024], https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/eu-silc_mrk/?csrt=1322965984985426149.

¹²² Amnesty International, "Slovak court rules against segregation in education," January 9, 2012, accessed [date], <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2012/01/slovak-court-rules-against-segregation-education/>.

¹²³ Regional Court of Prešov, case number: 20Co/126/2012, judicial file identification number: 8110216181, decision issued date: October 30, 2012, accessed [17/03/2024], <https://www.ochrance.cz/uploads-import/DISKRIMINACE/aktuality/Rozsudek-KS-Presov.pdf>.

¹²⁴ Amnesty International and the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), "A LESSON IN DISCRIMINATION: SEGREGATION OF ROMANI CHILDREN IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN SLOVAKIA," 2017, p. 23, accessed [17/03/2024], <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur72/5640/2017/en/>

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Public Defender of Rights, Annual Report 2022, March 2023, page 80, Accessed available at [17/03/2024]: https://vop.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Sprava_2022_final2.pdf

¹²⁷ Ibid.

communities. The Ministry of Education's Methodological guide desegregation in education and training¹²⁸ describes attitudinal and value settings specific to parents from the majority towards the education of their children with pupils from marginalised Roma communities. The guide outlines fears of reduced educational quality for their own children due to the presence of Roma children, stemming from concerns that teachers may not have enough time to attend to children from the majority because they need to focus on children who do not speak the language of instruction well and are falling behind. Additionally, there are fears related to hygiene, diseases, infections, parasites, etc., associated with generational poverty.¹²⁹

Given the deep-rooted issue of 'white flight,' which stems from the widespread resistance among parents from the majority population, it is crucial for any busing strategy to tackle these challenges directly. Therefore, any desegregation strategy should include a comprehensive approach with tailored measures to address these concerns to prevent further instances of secondary segregation. Moreover, the experience of Šarišské Michaľany illustrates that desegregation initiatives cannot depend on external short-term funding but need comprehensive guidance and sustained assistance from the state authorities.

Apart from segregation in separate classes, Roma children are also educated separately in mainstream schools. Schools that are attended exclusively by Roma students were created for several reasons. Some schools have become ethnically segregated as a result of white flight, intensified by demographic trends, where children from the majority population were gradually transferred to other schools in neighbouring localities. Moreover, creating a school exclusively attended by Roma children can occur through the establishment of school districts so that neighbourhoods predominantly inhabited by Roma residents fall within the catchment area of one school. This scenario was documented in Amnesty International's report, "Still Segregated and Unequal."¹³⁰ In January 2009, the municipality of Prešov, Slovakia's third-largest city, set the catchment areas for its seven state primary schools in a manner that assigned streets primarily or exclusively inhabited by Roma to the catchment area of the Matica Slovenskej Street primary school, predominantly attended by Roma students. This was particularly evident in the Roma neighbourhoods of Stará Tehelňa and TarasaŠevčenka, where the arrangement ignored the proximity of other schools, thereby restricting Romani pupils' access to closer educational institutions. Despite local officials asserting that catchment areas do not prevent Romani parents from choosing other schools under the policy of school choice freedom, this effectively led to segregation, channelling Romani students predominantly to the school on Matica Slovenskej Street.¹³¹

Lastly, there are schools that have been ethnically segregated since their inception, often established near marginalized Roma communities as "container schools." In this case, residential segregation mirrors educational segregation. Of the total estimated number of approximately 450,000 ethnic Roma living in Slovakia, about 290,000 live in marginalised communities in Slovakia.¹³² According to the Atlas of Roma Communities, in 2019, there were 1052 Roma settlements in 825 municipalities in Slovakia. This situation, where educational segregation mirrors residential segregation, highlights the need for systemic changes in the creation of school districts to promote integration. Supreme Court rulings in 2023 underscored the state's responsibility to address and prevent such segregation, setting a precedent for future legal and educational reforms.

Impact of Recent Legal Decisions

In December 2022, the Slovak Supreme Court for the first time decided on an ethnically homogeneous school that was established near a local disadvantaged Roma community - the so-called "container school" (Stará Ľubovňa - Podsadek school). According to the decision of the Supreme Court, state institutions are also responsible for segregation that arose spontaneously, for example, due to demographic development or the setting of school

¹²⁸ Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic. *Methodological guide desegregation in education and training*. 2024, p.35 Accessed [17/03/2024]. <https://www.minedu.sk/desegregacia/>

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.32

¹³⁰ Amnesty International, "Still Segregated and Unequal", page 9, 2010, accessed [17/03/2024], <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur72/004/2010/en/>

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic. *Methodological guide desegregation in education and training*. 2024, p.25, accessed [17/03/2024], <https://www.minedu.sk/desegregacia/>

districts. The Supreme Court, in the dispute, further ruled that the state, in cooperation with the municipality, must adopt effective measures - whether through legislative initiative, creation of incentive conditions, as well as the formation of school districts.¹³³

In another judgement in July 2023, the Supreme Court ruled that the education of Roma children in an ethnically homogeneous container school built near a disadvantaged Roma community in the village of Muránska Dlhá Lúka constituted discrimination based on ethnic origin and confirmed the state's responsibility for insufficient preventive measures against discrimination. **In its judgement, the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic emphasised that there was no intention to deliberately discriminate against Roma children, but the construction of the container school near the Roma community led to segregation. It ruled that the state must take effective measures to eliminate this segregation and prevent it in the future.**¹³⁴

Segregation in special education

The disproportionate representation of Roma students in special education exacerbates the cycle of poverty and exclusion of these children. In Slovakia, a high proportion of students, 5.48% or 26,439 out of 482,426, attend special schools or classes.¹³⁵ The proportion of students in special education in Slovakia is nearly four times higher than the EU average.¹³⁶ Despite a significant decrease in the total number of primary school students in recent years, the number of special education students has remained at around 25,000. According to the Ministry of Education, Research, Development, and Youth of the Slovak Republic, legislative changes have started to reverse this trend since 2018. However, while progress has been made, there is still a long way to go to ensure that Roma children in Slovakia have equal access to education and are not subject to discrimination, including segregation.¹³⁷

According to the January 2019 report from the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, children from marginalised Roma communities are overrepresented in special education and comprise 63% of pupils in special classes and 42% of pupils in special schools. Furthermore, 16.1% of students from marginalised Roma communities are educated in special education with a diagnosis of mild mental disability, which is five times higher than the overall population (3.2%).¹³⁸ According to the EU SILC_MRK 2020 data, up to 63% of children from Marginalised Roma Communities aged 6 to 15 years in special education are educated in classes with only Roma classmates, while schools with exclusively Roma students are attended by 32% of pupils from Marginalized Roma Communities in special education.¹³⁹

The overrepresentation of marginalized Roma children in special education, as documented in reports, is highlighted with the case of Adrián Salay, whose complaint represents Slovakia's first instance of this nature at the European Court of Human Rights addressing the issue of discriminatory enrolment of Roma pupils in special

¹³³ Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic, Decision No. 5Cdo/102/2020, 15 December 2022, available at: <https://poradna-prava.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/rozsudok-NS-SR-zo-dna-15122022.pdf>; Center for Civil and Human Rights, "Dosiahli sme prelomový rozsudok Najvyššieho súdu SR v prípade segregácie rómskych detí na čisto rómskej škole v Starej Ľubovni," 13 February 2023, available at: <https://poradna-prava.sk/aktuality/prelomovy-rozsudok-najvyssieho-sudu-sr-vzdelavanie-romskych-deti-na-cisto-romskej-skole-v-starej-lubovni-predstavuje-segregaciu/> [accessed 17/03/2024].

¹³⁴ Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic, Decision No. 5Cdo/220/2022, 12 July 2023, available at: <https://poradna-prava.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Rozsudok-NS-SR.pdf>; see also Center for Civil and Human Rights, "Najvyšší súd SR: Rómske deti v kontajnerovej základnej škole v obci Muránska Dlhá Lúka sú vzdelávané segregovane. Zodpovednosť nesie štát," 19 September 2023, available at: <https://poradna-prava.sk/aktuality/najvyssi-sud-sr-romske-deti-na-kontajnerovej-zakladnej-skole-v-obci-muranska-dlha-luka-su-vzdelavane-segregovane/> [accessed (date of access)].

¹³⁵ Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic. *Methodological guide desegregation in education and training*. 2024, p.35 Accessed [17/03/2024]. <https://www.minedu.sk/desegregacia/>

¹³⁶ Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic. "Expenditure Review on Groups at Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion," January 2019, p. 7 and 21. Accessed [Date]. <https://www.mfsr.sk/sk/media/tlacove-spravy/uhp-revizia-vydavkov-skupiny-ohrozene-chudobou.html>.

¹³⁷ Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic. *Methodological guide desegregation in education and training*. 2024, p.35 Accessed [17/03/2024]. <https://www.minedu.sk/desegregacia/>

¹³⁸ Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic. "Expenditure Review on Groups at Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion," January 2019, p. 7 and 21. Accessed [17/03/2024]. <https://www.mfsr.sk/sk/media/tlacove-spravy/uhp-revizia-vydavkov-skupiny-ohrozene-chudobou.html>.

¹³⁹ Filip Markovič and Ľudmila Plachá, "Income and Living Conditions in Marginalized Roma Communities: Selected Indicators from the EU SILC_MRC 2020 Survey (Príjmy a životné podmienky v marginalizovaných rómskych komunitách: Vybrané ukazovatele zo zisťovania EU SILC_MRK 2020)," Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities, 2020, p. 35, accessed [17/03/2024], https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/eu-silc_mrkr/?csrt=1322965984985426149

education. In 2022, Adrián Salay, a Roma individual, lodged a complaint against Slovakia to the European Court of Human Rights (Adrián SALAY against Slovakia) for discriminatory enrolment and education in special class. Initially placed in a preparatory class instead of the standard first grade, he was later moved to a special class designated for children with disabilities, being diagnosed with mild mental disability. The complaint highlights the persistent issue of Roma pupil overrepresentation in special education, emphasizing culturally and linguistically biased assessments and diagnoses that led to the applicant being educated in a special class for children with mild mental disability. Additionally, it points to the lack of informed parental consent in these processes. Salay claims that his right to education was violated and that he faced discrimination based on his ethnic background.¹⁴⁰

Breaking the Cycle: Overcoming Educational Segregation and its Socioeconomic Impact on Roma Children

Education received in separate classes and schools or in special education, significantly impairs educational outcomes and prospects of Roma children. Addressing this critical issue requires a concerted effort to dismantle the barriers to equitable education. Implementing desegregation strategies can serve as a vital step toward ensuring that Roma children have access to quality education alongside their non-Roma peers, fostering a more inclusive and cohesive society. Education attainment is a strong predictor for the risk of poverty and social exclusion. In Slovakia, children from a low-education background face a significantly higher risk of poverty or social exclusion than the EU average (80.7% vs 61.9% in the EU-27 in 2022).¹⁴¹ Moreover, the impact of the socio-economic background of children from marginalized communities in Slovakia significantly impacts their education attainment. According to the EU SILC MRK 2018 data, more than three-quarters (78.4%) of people from marginalised Roma communities attended or have only completed primary school (mainstream or special)¹⁴² and did not continue their education further.¹⁴³

Children educated in special classes and schools for those with mental disabilities, upon completing the final year of special primary school, are deemed to have only received primary education (ISCED 1). Meanwhile, those in regular mainstream schools attain lower secondary education (ISCED 2) after finishing. Lower secondary education is a prerequisite for admission into secondary education programmes that lead to a matriculation exam, such as gymnasiums or vocational schools. However, students with only primary education (ISCED 1) have the option to proceed to practical or vocational training schools, where matriculation exams are not offered. Even with the amendment to Act No. 245/2008 Coll., the School Act, effective from 1 January 2022, which aimed to revise prerequisites and opportunities for pupils (including those from special classes and schools, to obtain lower secondary education via commission exams or external testing), the pathway for these students to further their education after special school remains notably constrained. This is largely due to the significantly pared-down curriculum in special schools.

Segregation in education undermines the future professional and income prospects of children and youngsters subjected to it.¹⁴⁴ According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, there is a 70% probability that children from marginalised Roma communities will, like their parents, become unemployed or work

¹⁴⁰ European Court of Human Rights, "Case of Adrián Salay v. Slovakia," application no. 29359/22, [17/03/2024], <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:%22001-228211%22}>.

¹⁴¹ European Commission. "Education and Training Monitor 2023." Accessed [17/03/2024]. <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2023/en/country-reports/slovakia.html#references>.

¹⁴² The standard EU SILC survey does not distinguish the education category of special primary schools (Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities. *Incomes and Living Conditions in Marginalized Roma Communities: Selected Indicators from the EU SILC MRK 2018*, p. 39).

¹⁴³ Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities. *Incomes and Living Conditions in Marginalized Roma Communities: Selected Indicators from the EU SILC MRK 2018*, p. 39. Accessed [17/03/2024]. https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/eu-silc_mrk/?csrt=1322965984985426149

¹⁴⁴ Council of Europe, "Fighting School Segregation in Europe Through Inclusive Education: A Position Paper," page 13, accessed [17/03/2024], <https://rm.coe.int/fighting-school-segregation-in-europe-through-inclusive-education-a-posi/168073fb65>.

for less than the minimum wage in irregular employment.¹⁴⁵ Among EU countries, Slovakia has the highest unemployment rate for people with low education – up to 29%.¹⁴⁶

To effectively address the socioeconomic impacts on educational outcomes for Roma children from marginalised communities, desegregation strategies need to be complemented by support measures specifically designed for the needs of children from socially disadvantaged environments. These measures are vital for closing the educational gap these children face. Furthermore, implementing such support measures can also alleviate the concerns of parents from the majority population about the possible decline in educational quality due to the integration of Roma children. Their fears often stem from the belief that teachers may be too preoccupied with assisting children falling behind.¹⁴⁷ By providing balanced support, schools can ensure all children receive the required attention, mitigating parental concerns and enhancing the educational environment for everyone.

Legislative and Policy Frameworks in Action

The decentralized Slovak education system, authority is distributed between the Ministry of Education and local authorities, enabling a localized approach to educational management. Despite the decentralisation, the Ministry of Education retains critical responsibilities, including overseeing equality and implementing nationwide anti-segregation measures. This structure ensures that, while local authorities have the autonomy to adapt educational strategies to meet community needs, they must still adhere to overarching policies and guidelines to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students. Local municipalities, guided by national laws, are responsible for setting and adjusting school catchment areas, crucial for implementing desegregation strategies such as busing initiatives to prevent segregated schooling environments. The Act on Education (No. 245/2008) outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, including setting educational principles, goals, conditions, scope, content, forms, and organization of education in schools.

The recent active steps of the Ministry of Education to tackle elimination of segregation of Roma children in education are closely connected with the Recovery and Resilience Plan.¹⁴⁸ The Government of the Slovak Republic approved the Recovery and Resilience Plan with Resolution No. 221 of 28 April 2021. Component 6 of the Recovery and Resilience Plan is devoted to the availability, development and quality of inclusive education. This component aims to improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of Slovakia's mainstream preschool and school education. Within Component 6, Reform 5, which is dedicated to the desegregation of schools, is included. The main goal of this reform is introducing a legal definition of segregation, which should be applied in every school in Slovakia. School desegregation should be implemented by developing methodological guidelines for various education stakeholders (e.g., founders, schools and educational institutions, principals, teachers, etc.) to prevent and eliminate segregated education. The adopted methodology should be applied in all schools.

In 2022, the Ministry of Education adopted its first methodical material on desegregation *Together in one Desk*.¹⁴⁹ The material is addressed to founders and school directors, and its development is in line with the objectives of the Reform 5 of Component 6 of the Recovery and Resilience plan. The methodological material promotes, among others, busing as one of the possible forms for school authorities to eliminate segregation. In 2023, the School Act's amendment introduced the definition of school segregation into legislation.¹⁵⁰ The School Act defines segregation in paragraph 2(ah). The definition specifies that “*segregation in education and training refers to any action or failure to act that contradicts the principle of equal treatment according to specific regulations and results in or could result in, spatial, organizational, physical, or social exclusion or separation of a group of children,*

¹⁴⁵ Michaela Bednarik, Slavomir Hidas, Gabriel Machlica, 'Enhancing the Social Integration of Roma', Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019, p. 8.

¹⁴⁶ Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, *Review of Expenditures on Groups at Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion*, March 2020, p. 9. Available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/15944.pdf>.

¹⁴⁷ Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic. Methodological guide desegregation in education and training. 2024, p.35 Accessed [17/03/2024]. <https://www.minedu.sk/desegregacia/>

¹⁴⁸ <https://www.planobnovy.sk>

¹⁴⁹ Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the SR. *Together at one desk. School desegregation guidance material for founders and headmasters*, 2022, Accessed [17/03/2024] <https://bit.ly/440Lv44>

¹⁵⁰ § 3 letter f) of Act No. 245/2008 Coll. (School Act)

students, listeners, or participants in education and training without a reason that stems from this law". The "specific regulations" refer to Anti-Discrimination Act. The amendment to the School Act also establishes the right to support measures for pupils. One of the aims of the reform was to effectively address the socioeconomic impacts on educational outcomes for children from marginalised communities and from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. These support measures represent a set of various interventions, including adjustment of educational goals, methods, and forms. This involves creating individual educational plans for tutoring certain subjects, temporarily forming specialised classes for smaller groups of lagging students, reducing class sizes, and employing teaching assistants and personal assistants if necessary.

Furthermore, support measures include revision of the content of education and evaluation of children's results: This is based on a minimum learning performance necessary for advancement to the next grade or educational cycle, more practical orientation of the curriculum, experiential learning methods, and alternative forms of education like animation. Providing tutoring or targeted learning to achieve the highest individual cognitive potential of a child or student is also one of the support measures. For instance, tutoring students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in selected subjects, or support in subjects and skills where they show increased abilities or talents, including through the involvement of NGOs focused on these issues. Ensuring the provision of the school's language of instruction courses or other support in mastering the language of instruction: this support can be provided after teaching hours or during class. It also includes providing programmes for teachers and professional staff in areas with a significant Roma population to learn the basics of the Roma language.

Additionally, the support measures focus on improving the conditions of education and upbringing for students with special educational needs by ensuring meals and hygiene (if it cannot be guaranteed at home), addressing problems of socially disadvantaged students that might cause them to drop out early, and creating a friendly and stimulating environment. This includes implementing programmes for working with parents, including home visits if necessary, in cooperation with social protection and social curatorship employees, and offering specialised career counselling to motivate students (and their parents) to continue their education at the secondary school level, according to their abilities and identified talents.¹⁵¹

In 2024, The Ministry of Education adopted another methodical material - *Methodological guide desegregation in education and training*.¹⁵² In the document, the Ministry explains that in some cases, soft measures such as facilitation, mediation, support measures, and material-technical provision within the average expenditures are not sufficient to fight segregation, primarily if the desegregation plan is not implemented within one school or schools under the jurisdiction of one founder. In these cases, other investment interventions are required (for example, construction of new buildings and facilities, provision of bus transportation) in close cooperation with multiple actors – schools, founders, and public administration bodies in redefining the plans for economic and social development of the locality or broader region.¹⁵³

Successful desegregation requires collaboration between the relevant authorities at the national level and local authorities. While the authorities at the national level provide the framework and resources, the actual execution of these strategies, such as establishing and modifying school catchment areas, falls to the municipalities, highlighting their critical role in the practical application of national desegregation policies. Municipalities are responsible for administration of primary schools, preschools, and school facilities, while self-governing regions administer higher secondary schools and special schools. In the context of transferred state administration powers, a municipality establishes and abolishes primary schools through a generally binding regulation.¹⁵⁴ Municipalities are also empowered to define school catchment areas that are crucial in the context of the implementation of any busing strategy or desegregation plan. A municipality that operates multiple primary

¹⁵¹ Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic. *Methodological guide desegregation in education and training*. 2024, p.21 Accessed [17/03/2024]. <https://www.minedu.sk/desegregacia/>

¹⁵² Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic. *Methodological guide desegregation in education and training*. 2024, page 5, Accessed [17/03/2024]. <https://www.minedu.sk/desegregacia/>

¹⁵³ Ibid., page. 28.

¹⁵⁴ Act no. 596/2003 coll., §6(1), on state administration in the school system and school self-government and on amending and supplementing certain other act

schools designates school catchment areas for each through generally binding regulation. In determining these districts, the municipality primarily considers:

- a) The capacity of school buildings owned or leased by the municipality used for education and other suitable buildings for educational purposes.
- b) The area's transport accessibility and services for which the municipality should designate a school district.
- c) Reasonable commuting distance for students that does not hinder their mandatory school attendance.
- d) The residents' interest in education in the state language and languages of national minorities.¹⁵⁵

In Slovakia's decentralised education system, implementing desegregation initiatives is easier applicable for larger municipalities with several schools. They have the flexibility to create school catchment areas for schools under their own administration to facilitate the integration of socially disadvantaged children. Conversely, smaller municipalities face more significant challenges, particularly municipalities with a high percentage of marginalised community members and fewer educational facilities. These areas require cooperation with neighbouring municipalities to establish joint school catchment areas. However, resistance may arise in receiving municipalities due to concerns about 'white flight,' complicating efforts to create inclusive educational environments. According to Act no. 596/2003, if a municipality does not establish a primary school, it may coordinate with neighbouring municipalities to create a joint school catchment area for a primary school. Coordinating municipalities should consider specific factors as outlined above. The Regional Education Office (regionálny úrad školskej správy) decides on the joint school catchment area if mandatory school attendance is at risk due to lack of agreement or improper consideration of these factors. If established by agreement, this joint district ends after the notice period, lasting until the end of the following school year.¹⁵⁶

The difficulties of small municipalities with creating joint school catchment areas can be portrayed in a situation that arose in the municipality of Terňa in 2014. As the school's founder, the municipality terminated the agreement on a joint school catchment area for children attending grades 1-4 with the neighbouring municipality of Malý Slivník. It did so to reduce the number of children at the local school in light of its limited capacity. The school was in real danger of having to start educating some of the children on the afternoon shift. The children from Malý Slivník who attend the school in Terňa are of Roma origin and face social disadvantage. Malý Slivník municipality, lacking its primary school, unsuccessfully sought to form a joint school catchment area with neighbouring municipalities. Consequently, it appealed to Regional Education Office in Prešov to establish a school catchment area ensuring uninterrupted education for its children. Despite efforts, the Prešov Regional Education Office, in decisions made in 2014 and 2016, reassigned Terňa's school as the designated institution for Malý Slivník's pupils.

A non-governmental organisation, the Center for Civil and Human Rights, filed an anti-discrimination public lawsuit against the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic and the Prešov Regional Education Office in January 2016. In the lawsuit, the NGO argued that the defendant state authorities failed to provide the school with the necessary support. Moreover, the NGO argued that their decisions on the designation of school districts and their inaction put the school in a situation where, due to a lack of capacity, it had to start educating some of the children in the Roma-only classes on the second-afternoon shift. In November 2023, the District Court in Prešov ruled that the state authorities need to designate school districts in such a way as to promote diversity of children across primary schools.¹⁵⁷

During the court proceedings, the Public Defender of Rights provided the court with an opinion that supported the argumentation of the Center for Civil and Human Rights.¹⁵⁸ Since the existing legislation governing the creation of

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Act no. 596/2003 coll., §8(2), on state administration in the school system and school self-government and on amending and supplementing certain other act

¹⁵⁷ Court rules that state institutions are responsible for the segregation of Roma children at a primary school in a village Terňa, November 2023, <https://poradna-prava.sk/en/news/court-rules-that-state-institutions-are-responsible-for-the-segregation-of-roma-children-at-a-primary-school-in-a-village-terna>

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

school districts does not mandate considerations that prevent educational segregation—such as the impact on ethnic composition—the Public Defender of Rights has recommended legislative revisions to prevent the formation of segregated school districts.¹⁵⁹ This suggestion aligns with the recommendations in the evaluation report for Slovakia's Roma Integration Strategy up to 2020¹⁶⁰, which calls for legal modifications to prevent the establishment of schools in excluded communities and to revise the delineation of school catchment areas to prevent the formation of segregated districts predominantly inhabited by Roma students. Moreover, the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights suggests amending Law No. 596/2003 concerning state administration in the education and school self-administration to explicitly require municipalities to consider the ethnic distribution of their populations when determining school districts to facilitate more integrated schooling environments.¹⁶¹

The desegregation effort in Žilina, a city with about 80,000 residents and a Roma population of less than 1%, showcases the use of school district realignments for educational desegregation. In 2017, the municipality announced plans to close a primary school on Hollého Street, attended by children from Roma and socio-economically disadvantaged families, and redistribute the students to other schools within its jurisdiction. The reason for closing the primary school was its operational inefficiency, which the city deemed economically unsustainable.¹⁶² The initial plan of Žilina City proposed relocating up to 31 students from a closing school to one receiving school due to economic reasons. However, this plan faced resistance from the parents of the intended receiving school, who demanded alternative solutions. At a community meeting, several parents expressed concerns that one school should accommodate a large number of children, many of whom were labelled as “problematic”. The core of the parents' argument was not framed as an issue between the majority white population and the Roma but rather the unpreparedness of the school to handle an influx of children with various challenges. They feared that introducing many problematic children to the school would not only exacerbate issues for new arrivals but also for existing students. As a result, these parents started petitioning against the redistribution, addressed to the Mayor of Žilina. Despite initial plans to transfer all students to a single school, public pressure resulted in a revised strategy to distribute them among multiple schools.¹⁶³ The city of Žilina established school districts through General Binding Regulation No. 5/2019, which resulted in the redistribution of Roma and socio-economically disadvantaged children from the urban ghetto on Bratislavskej Street to various schools throughout the city.¹⁶⁴

The Žilina case emphasises that the effectiveness of strategic desegregation depends on comprehensive support, stressing the need for coordinated efforts from state and municipal authorities to ensure accessible education for all children.¹⁶⁵ The redistribution brought various challenges, such as travel expenses, particularly impacting Roma children ineligible for free transportation due to unpaid communal fees. Moreover, the Žilina case highlighted the importance of focused integration strategies, improving communication with families, addressing poor attendance, and teacher training.

¹⁵⁹ Public Defender of Rights, We need to amend the school law to bring about effective inclusion, February 2021, <https://vop.gov.sk/potrebuje-upravit-skolsky-zakon-tak-aby-priniesol-efektivnu-inkluziu/>

¹⁶⁰ Vladimír Rafael, Jaroslav Skupník, Andrej Belák, Tomáš Kobes, Juraj Buzalka, Lucia Mokrá, Alexander Mušínska, External evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Integration of Roma up to 2020, December 2021, page 24, available:

¹⁶¹ Report on the Observance of Human Rights Including the Principle of Equal Treatment in the Slovak Republic for the Year 2022, Slovak national centre for Human Rights, 2023, page 51, available: <https://www.snslp.sk/wp-content/uploads/HR-Report-2022.pdf>

¹⁶² Center for Research on Ethnicity and Culture, Roma Advocacy and Research Center, Association for Culture, Education, and Communication, Roma Media – ROMED, Community Center for Minorities, People in Need, Roma Platform, "Pilot Project of Roma Civil Monitoring: Monitoring Report of Civil Society on the Implementation of the National Strategy for Roma Integration in Slovakia Focusing on Structural and Horizontal Preconditions for Its Successful Implementation," February 2018., page 54.

¹⁶³ Parents Protest Against the Redistribution of Children from the Closed School, Begin to Draft Petition (Rodičia protestujú proti prerozdeleniu detí zo zrušenej školy, začali spisovať petíciu)," Mesto Žilina, accessed [17/03/2024], <https://www.zilina.sk/clanky/6291/rodičia-protestuju-proti-prerozdeleniu-deti-zo-zrusenej-skoly-zacali-spisovat-peticiu>.

¹⁶⁴ General Binding Regulation No. 5/2019 on School Districts," Mesto Žilina

¹⁶⁵ Center for Research on Ethnicity and Culture, Roma Advocacy and Research Center, Association for Culture, Education, and Communication, Roma Media – ROMED, Community Center for Minorities, People in Need, Roma Platform, "Pilot Project of Roma Civil Monitoring: Monitoring Report of Civil Society on the Implementation of the National Strategy for Roma Integration in Slovakia Focusing on Structural and Horizontal Preconditions for Its Successful Implementation," February 2018., page 54.

Concluding remarks

Based on the examination provided in this chapter, it is evident that the path towards the effective desegregation of Slovakia's educational system, necessitates meticulous planning and a collaborative approach that encompasses all stakeholders. The challenge of implementing effective desegregation strategies might be compounded particularly in smaller municipalities with significant populations of marginalized Roma and limited educational facilities/ The lack of available schools necessitates the establishment of joint school catchment areas with neighbouring municipalities. However, resistance from these neighbouring areas, often devoid of marginalised communities, might represent a critical barrier to desegregation as detailed in the experiences of municipalities like Terňa and Malý Slivník. Since the current legislation governing the establishment of school districts does not include measures to prevent educational segregation, in certain cases, providing incentives to receiving municipalities could also be an effective strategy.

To support the educational journey of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, it is imperative to ensure that comprehensive supporting measures are in place. These measures should not only facilitate their physical inclusion into mainstream schools but also support their educational and social inclusion. This includes providing targeted academic support, after school activities, teacher cultural competency training, and fostering an inclusive school environment that respects and values diversity. The adoption of these supportive strategies can also mitigate worries from the majority population's parents about potential decreases in educational standards following the integration of Roma children. These supportive measures should not rely on external short-term funding but must be sustained by state authorities on a long-term basis.

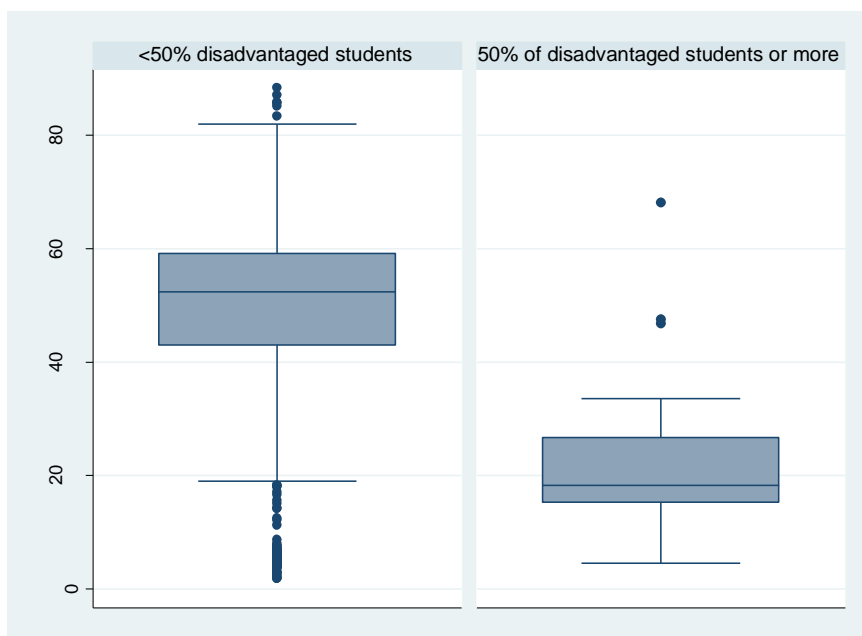
In developing programmes for busing, it is crucial to incorporate strategies that address these multifaceted challenges. The programme should allocate funds not only for the transportation itself but also for associated support services that ensure the success of desegregation efforts. It requires strong cooperation of all relevant stakeholders - from national authorities and local governments to schools, communities, and NGOs. By embracing a holistic approach that addresses both the logistical aspects of busing and the broader educational needs of children, Slovakia can move closer to dismantling the barriers to equitable education and ensuring that all children, regardless of their background, have access to the opportunities they deserve.

CHAPTER IV: A Quantitative Review to Inform a School-Desegregation Intervention

Segregation, educational performance and school failure

Just as everywhere else, the segregated school-education in Slovakia is strongly associated with worse learning outcomes. Standardised national tests take place in Slovakia in grade V and grade IX. These grades mark important milestones in primary education, soon after the end of primary education, and can therefore be very useful for the analysis of performance-based segregation, which often goes hand in hand with social and ethnic segregation, all of which are manifestations of the same process of selection and tracking. Exams after grades V and IX capture the attainment of learning objectives over longer periods of time. An on-going educational reform envisages a different type of criterion-referenced testing in the 3rd, 6th and 9th grades.¹⁶⁶

Figure 1. Score in mathematics grade 9 2023



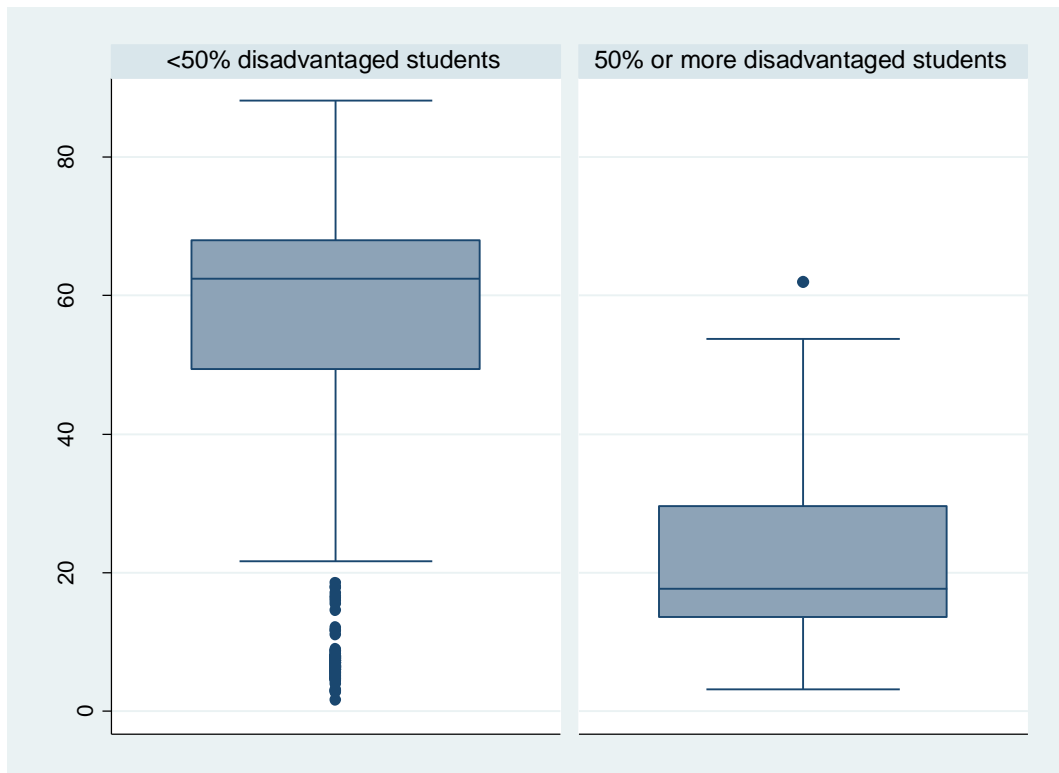
Schools with 50% or more of disadvantaged students have strictly lower scores in national tests on mathematics: the 75th percentile for those schools is below 30 points while the 25th percentile of the rest of the primary schools is above 40 points.

This should not be interpreted in the sense that the other schools will be ready to lift the scores of Roma students if they are moved there or that these are “better” schools. It is just indicative of the correlation between ethnic and sociocognitive segregation. As noted in an analysis by the Council of Europe “lower quality education in a school can be both the cause and consequence of school segregation” not least because “schools attended by socially disadvantaged students tend to have lower expectations of these children in terms of educational attainment”¹⁶⁷.

¹⁶⁶ [P176583 Digital Transformation and National Curriculum Reform of Primary and Lower Secondary Schools in Slovakia \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org/)

¹⁶⁷ Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (2017) “Fighting School Segregation in Europe through Inclusive Education.”, p12.

Figure 2. Score in mathematics grade 5 2022¹⁶⁸

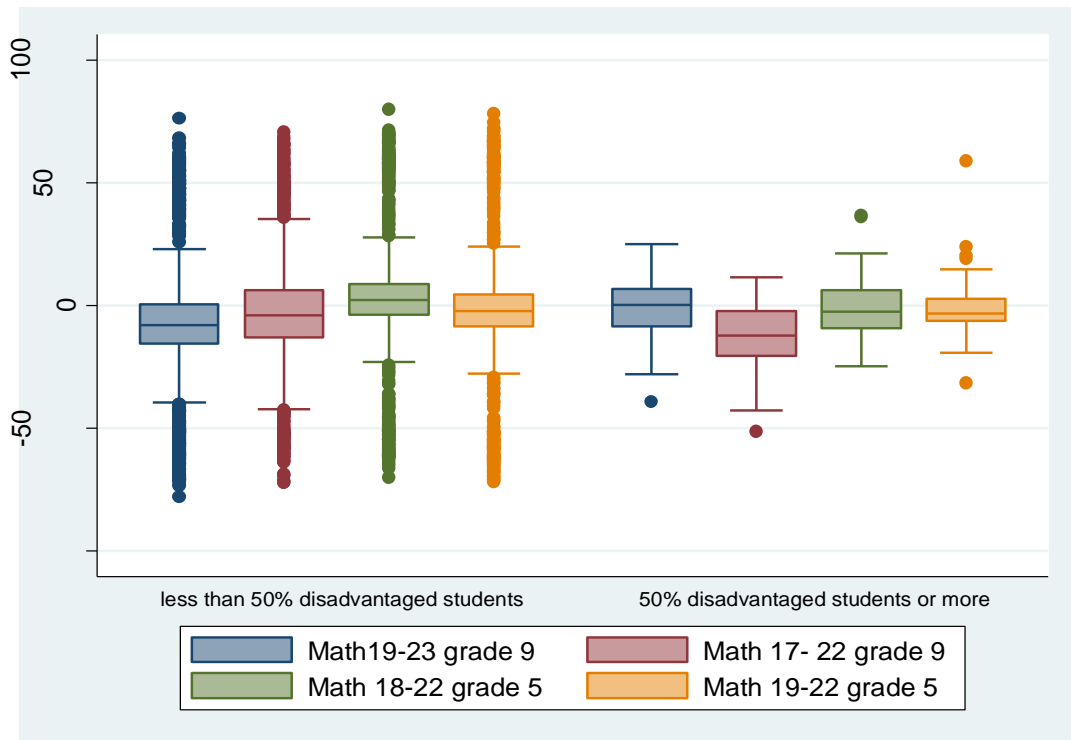


The gap in mathematics score in grade 5 between schools with a large proportion of Roma students and the rest is similar. The two distributions of scores barely overlap.

Based on the available data, it could not be convincingly concluded that the pandemic or the recovery form significantly altered the gap between the segregated and other schools. It appears that in grade 5 schools with a large proportion of disadvantaged students have not experienced any dramatic shifts in their relative position among other schools in terms of performance. In grade 9, however, they seem to have performed worse in 2022 - during the time of the pandemic - but then in 2023 have made significant progress (or other schools have made significant regress, which would give a similar change in percentile ranks).

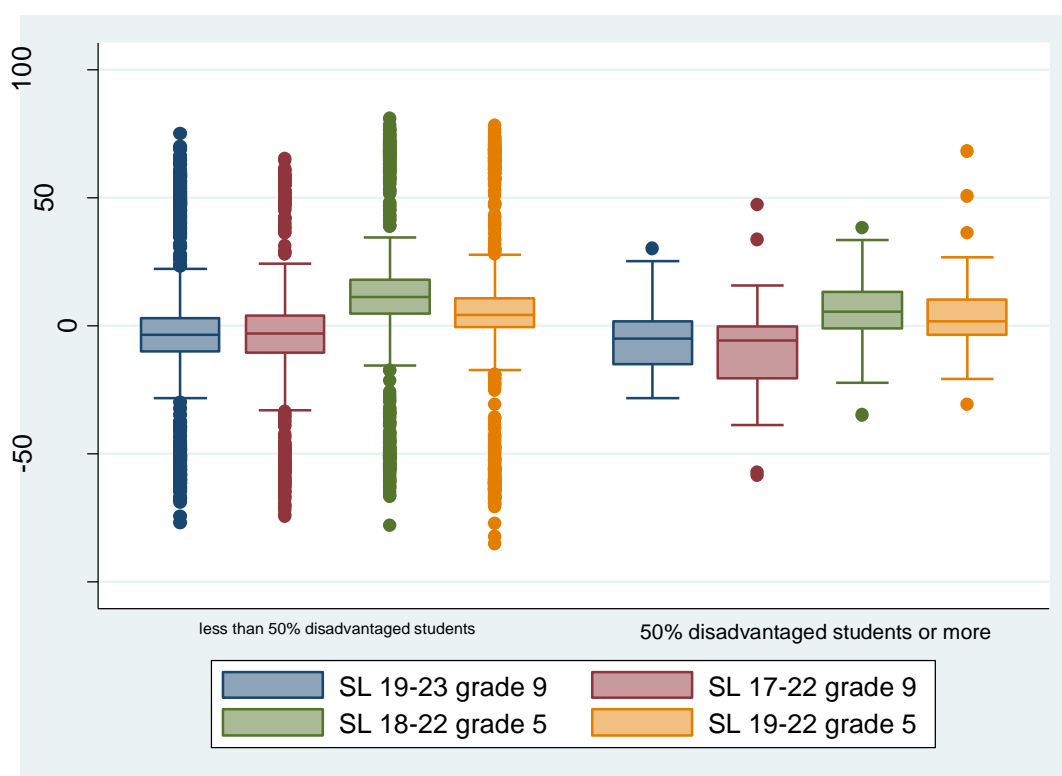
¹⁶⁸ After the end of the pandemic, in the school year 2023/2024 only testing in grade 9 was carried out, testing 5 was not carried out. We therefore used the most recent available data for grade 5, which are from 2022.

Figure 3. Change in test scores in mathematics in grade 5 and grade 9



Significant gaps in the performance of schools seem to persist based on the socio-economic status of the students. There are many reasons why learning in an environment with deficiency of better performing students may not be good. Such a social environment does not provide enough challenges, lowers expectations and normalizes poor academic results. It can be strongly demotivating for the teachers, too.

Figure 4. Change in test scores in Slovak language in grade 5 and grade 9



Learning and social environments

Some of the most important parties and coalitions who are strongly represented at local level following the municipal elections from 2022 have not positioned themselves as strong supporters of Roma inclusion policies. There are generally few sources that allow to assess systemically and in a comparable way the social environment in the Slovak communities and in the potential receiving schools from the point of view of their potential readiness to accept Roma students. One of the indicators is the prevalence of voters in each municipality who supported political parties that are able to appreciate the added value of better integrated Roma communities or vice versa. Strong vote for political parties and coalitions who have expressed publicly or included in their programmes anti-Roma statements or sentiments is to some extent indicative for the attitudes of the adult population, including parents of primary-school students towards the Roma. Based on the vote on the municipal elections from 2022 we constructed an index of a pro-Roma sentiment or attitude at municipal level, which can serve as a proxy for public sentiment towards the Roma in the absence of better sociological data.

A thematic survey was conducted in eight municipalities of the Slovak Republic with Roma communities, in which local actors with an influence on the local marginalised Roma community were approached, presents the results of a thematic investigation aimed at recording and comparing various forms of stereotypical judgments about Roma in local politics¹⁶⁹. The analysis uses the term “rejecting locality” to describe those localities which have not come to terms with the presence of Roma communities and perceive them as a burden. On the opposite side, are “proactive localities”, which act towards the improvement of the situation of marginalised Roma communities. From the point of view of the territorial self-government “neutral localities” the ones where pragmatic attitudes towards MRK prevail among local actors.¹⁷⁰ Probably, a similar categorisation can be made for schools, but with special

¹⁶⁹ TRIXIMA Bratislava, spol. s r. o. (2022) *TEMATICKÉ ZISŤOVANIE Stereotypy a postoje voči Rómom v lokálnej politike*. Bratislava: Úrad splnomocnenca vlády SR pre rómske komunity.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

emphasis on the fact that many potential receiving schools have practically no Roma students or very few of them, which means that any attitudes will likely be based on stereotypes rather than personal experiences. This would make first impressions and experiences at the onset of a busing programme very important, if not decisive.

Findings of the quantitative part of the study

Selection criteria for sending schools

Proximity and logistical accessibility are not sufficient conditions for implementing any programme for moving students from one school to another but – within certain limits – proximity and more generally – logistical accessibility are necessary conditions. Moving students, particularly students in primary school and those of lower grades long distances may create many disadvantages, i.e., other circumstances equal it requires a lot of additional time, contributes to fatigue, leaves less opportunities for learning and recreation. In addition, parental contacts with a school located at a large distance may be significantly reduced. Contacts of parents from marginalised Roma communities with schools are quite rare, even when schools are located closer to home¹⁷¹.

Geographical distance is the best overarching indicator for proximity.¹⁷² But in the context of a school busing programme, the definition of proximity can be refined in different ways depending on the age of the students, the estimated time for travelling and other factors. Some of those factors are contextual – taking them fully into account will require in most cases local feasibility studies. Such feasibility studies can be performed by municipalities in cooperation with potential sending and receiving schools and local NGOs with the possible involvement of other stakeholders. In our analysis, we have mainly considered potential receiving schools that are located with 10 km of a sending school. In most situations and bearing in mind the relatively dense school network in Slovakia, a suitable school would be available at that distance. However, when we take into account the estimated capacity of logistically accessible schools to enrol more students, we see that there are quite a few cases when this logistical operation may require longer travels.

Selection of locations for the pilot field work

Our selection has defined two lists of potential sending schools – a short and a long one. The short list consists of 45 potential sending schools. In total, 6 selection criteria were applied for compiling a list of possible locations¹⁷³ from which pilot clusters of schools and the corresponding municipalities were selected for the implementation of the qualitative fieldwork.

- 1) Selection criteria 1: At least 50% disadvantaged students (ME), at least 30 students in the school (ME), there is Roma settlement located outside the town/village boundary, barrier of any type separating the Roma settlement from the rest (Atlas of Roma Communities, ARC)
- 2) Selection criteria 2: At least 70% disadvantaged students, at least 30 students in the school (ME), there is Roma settlement located outside the town/village boundary (ARC), barrier of any type separating the Roma settlement from the rest (ARC)
- 3) Selection criteria 3: At least 50% disadvantaged students (ME), municipality included in the (ARC) and barrier present.
- 4) Selection 4: At least 70% disadvantaged students (ME dataset) and located in a municipality included in the Atlas of Roma Communities (ARC)
- 5) Selection criteria 5: Schools suggested by the Office of the Plenipotentiary (marked as PO)

¹⁷¹ Rafael, V. (2022) *Príčiny prepádávania rómskych žiakov alebo keď opakovanie nie je matkou múdrosti*. Bratislava: eduRoma – Roma Education Project.

¹⁷² In our analysis, we have used geodesic distance. It was difficult to find to a detailed layer containing smaller inter- and intra-village roads and streets in order to estimate actual distance along the road network. Such a task can be performed on aggregate level by a specialized unit managing GIS data or at local level – as part of small feasibility studies.

¹⁷³ Criteria for building the list are based on three sources: 1) The Atlas of Roma Communities (ARC); 2) A publicly available dataset of the Ministry of Education (ME) + some additional variables provided following a special request; 3) A list 12 potential sending schools provided by the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities (PO).

- 6) Selection 6 At least 50% disadvantaged students (ME) and located in a municipality included in the Atlas of Roma Communities (ARC)

Based on the criteria listed above, we created a short list of 45 schools with high concentration of Roma students: these are the 45 schools which meet at least 2 of the initial criteria for selection, including being part of the list of 12 schools presented by the Office of the Plenipotentiary.

A long list of 143 sending schools was built using at least one of the criteria from the initial selection list.

This list practically overlaps with the list of schools with 50% of disadvantaged students or more. There are 5 schools on the initial list, which we excluded from the list. In addition, there are only 5 schools which have 50% or more disadvantaged students but are not on this list. For the validation of the long list, other methods were applied, including the use of various distances and other definitions of school catchment areas such as Voronoi polygons¹⁷⁴. The combination of methods showed that taking the schools with 50% or more of disadvantaged students is a reasonable and simple procedure for which data are more easily available. The 98 additional municipalities in the long list that come on top of those from the short list (45) are primarily smaller municipalities with a higher share of the Roma population (see figures 5 and 6). Typically there will be fewer students that can be potentially bussed from each of those additional 98 municipalities.

The list of receiving schools was built based primarily on logistical accessibility but other factors were also accounted for. The additional criteria that were considered included:

- a) the share of socially disadvantaged students;
- b) the size of the school as measured by the number of students;
- c) a proxy for enrolment capacity based on the students per room ratio, i.e., whether there is sufficient space allowing the enrolment of more students;
- d) a proxy for enrolment capacity based on the student-per-teacher ratio, i.e., whether there is a sufficient number of teachers allowing enrolment of more students.
- e) These additional criteria are applied as filters, which reduce the number of suitable receiving schools.

The combinations of a sending school and accessible receiving schools create overlapping clusters: these are relatively small networks of primary schools, which can interact with each other from the point of view of enrolment, i.e., they have potentially overlapping catchment areas. Our sample of clusters represents a portion of all school clusters around schools with high concentration of vulnerable students including Roma students (segregated schools). Here, in this part of the report, the term ‘segregated’ is used in a purely technical sense without prejudice to any legal, political or colloquial definitions or connotations of the term that may exist. The total number of such clusters, which sometimes overlap with each other, is around 150. The Slovak network of primary schools is rather dense and typically a primary school has a lot of immediate neighbours within 10 km geodesic distance. However, there are some exceptions, i.e., segregated schools that do not have a suitable potential receiving school within this perimeter. Such cases can be seen in particular in the south-eastern part of Slovakia.

Presentation of data from the Atlas of Roma Communities (ARC) and data on children from socially disadvantaged environments

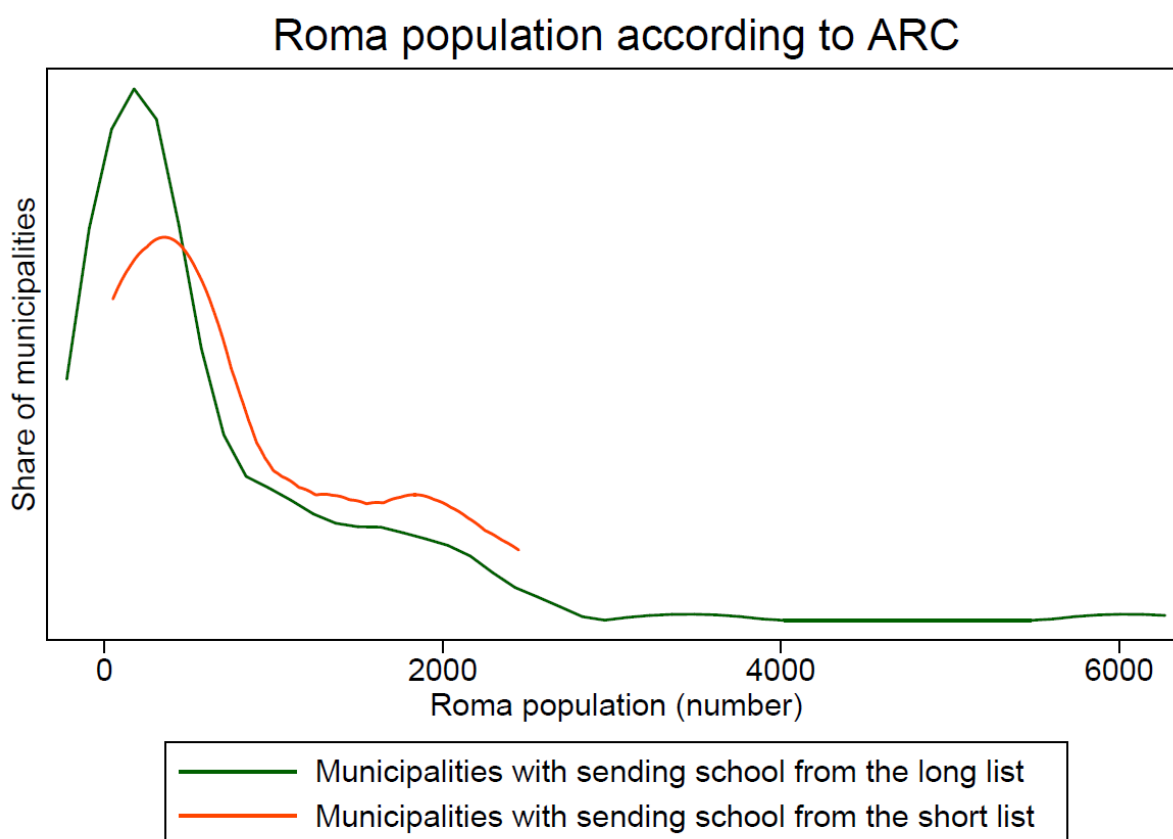
ARC¹⁷⁵ proves to provide a suitable guidance-framework for further selection of sending schools to be included in the proposed desegregation intervention, as well as in any possibly upcoming school-desegregation effort in Slovakia, involving adjustment of the school/class demographics.

¹⁷⁴ Also known as Voronoi cells or Thiessen polygons. Voronoi polygons are cells around points from a given set, i.e. in our case points are geolocated schools. Any point within a Voronoi polygon is closer to the point around which it is built than to any other point from the original set. Voronoi polygons for this study were constructed using QGIS. See for example “28.1.22. Vector Geometry — QGIS Documentation Documentation.” Retrieved April 8, 2024 (https://docs.qgis.org/3.34/en/docs/user_manual/processing_algs/ggis/vectorgeometry.html#voronoi-polygons).

¹⁷⁵ *Atlas rómskych komunit 2019 | Úrad splnomocnenca vlády SR pre rómske komunity* (no date). Available at: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/atlas-romskych-komunit/atlas-romskych-komunit-2019/?csrt=17137722713011525958> (Accessed: 10 March 2024).

Municipalities included in the Atlas of Roma Communities are almost a third of all Slovak municipalities, but they include all but 5 (3%) out of 148 primary schools with 50% or more of disadvantaged students.

Figure 5. Distribution of the Roma population in the municipalities from the ARC with a sending school from the short list of sending schools (45) as compared to the distribution of the Roma population in the municipalities with a sending school from the long list



In 2021, 75% of the municipalities with potential sending schools had less than 520 out-commuting primary school students. In the same year, 90% of the municipalities with sending schools had less than 1450 out-commuting primary school students. The shares of out-commuting boys and girls are roughly equal.

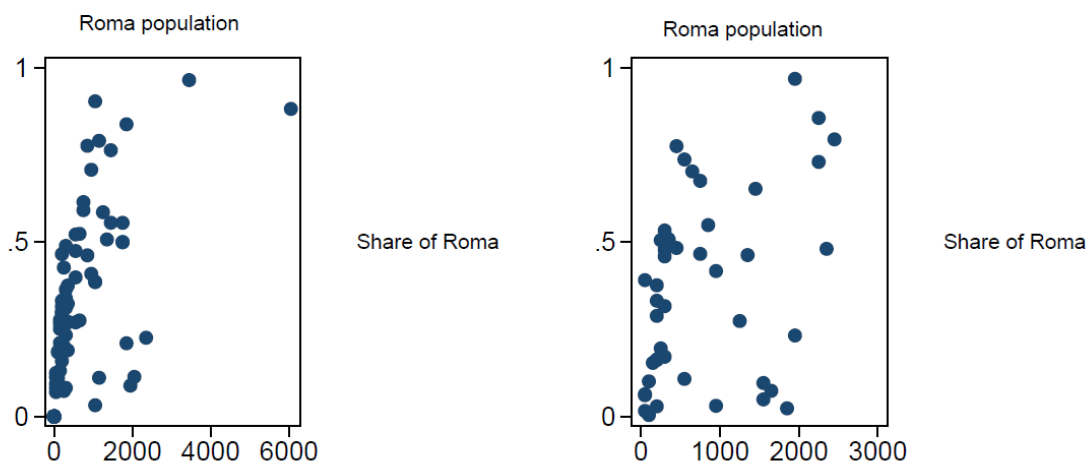
Municipalities included in the ARC have a varying number of Roma, ranging from less than 50 up to almost 3000 inhabitants. The municipalities which have probable sending school from the short list are generally larger – the mode of the distribution is still below 500 but a larger share of those municipalities have a population of more than 1000 and a lot have even more than 2000 Roma inhabitants.

A similar pattern can be seen in the municipalities hosting a sending school from the long list (143 schools).

Figure 6. Number and share of the Roma population in the municipalities from the ARC with a sending school from the short list of sending schools (45) as compared to the additional municipalities with sending school from the long list (98).

Additional municipalities in the large selection (98)

Municipalities in the small selection (45)



Distribution of schools according to the percentage of disadvantaged students in municipalities from the ARC and outside the ARC¹⁷⁶.

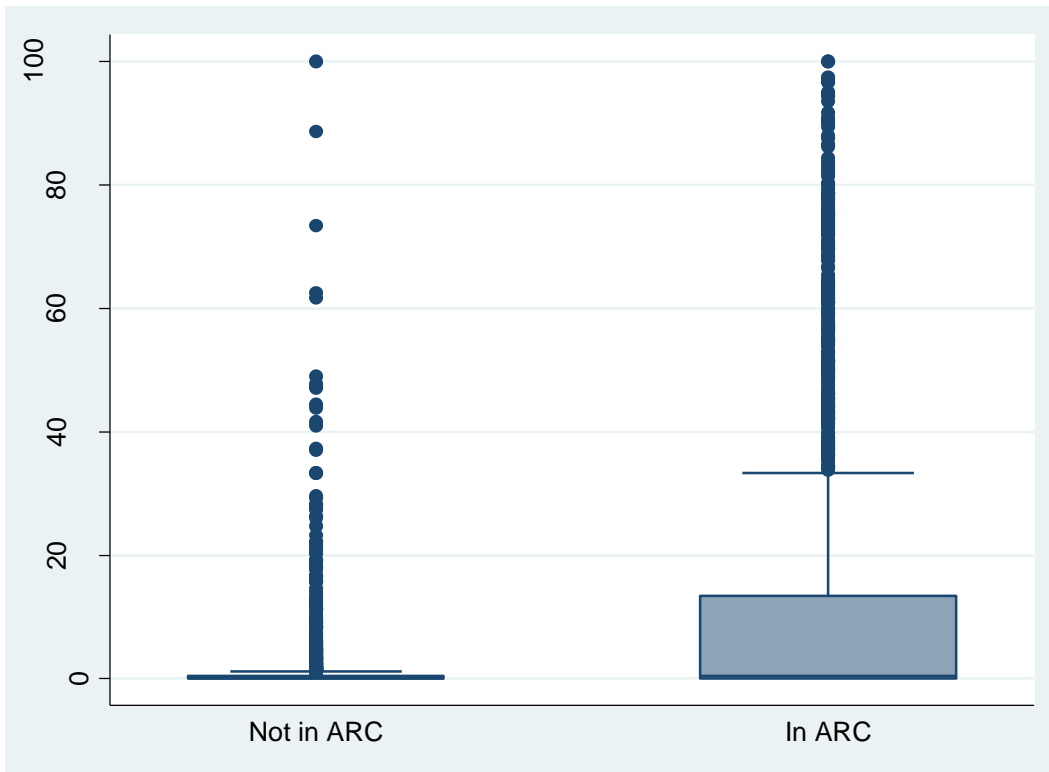
If we assume that students in primary school represent maximum a 5th of the overall age pyramid, we come to an estimated distribution of primary school students starting at several 10s up to 500-600 students within the municipality with a mode of about 100 children in primary-school age: some of those students could be enrolled in ethnically mixed (non-segregated) schools while some could have dropped out of school.

Schools with more than 50% of socially vulnerable students tend to be located in municipalities included in the ARC the exceptions being extremely rare (we identified just 5 schools, which represent an exception). Similarly, we found only 17 schools out of 253 with more than 30% disadvantaged students who are not located in municipalities from the ARC. The fact that a school is located in a municipality with a vulnerable Roma community and more than half of its students are vulnerable does not per se guarantee that a lot of those students are Roma, but there are strong reasons to believe that this is actually the case for almost all of those schools: one of the reasons to assume that those students might be Roma is precisely the fact that we observe very few schools with a such a high number of disadvantaged students in other communities. The total number of primary schools that are located in a municipality from the ARC and have more than 50% of disadvantaged students is 148 - 45 of those have been preliminary selected based on a variety of criteria and used to identify the locations for the qualitative survey. It is confirmed that these 45 schools have a lot of Roma students enrolled and therefore meet the criteria for potential sending schools.

All 45 schools included in the short list were selected based on multiple criteria and can be considered very suitable for inclusion in any programme for desegregation. The long list of schools is roughly 3 times bigger (143 schools) and, in addition to the short list, includes also all schools with more than 50% of disadvantaged students that are located in a municipality from the ARC. The long list can be expanded further by adding all schools with more than 30% of disadvantaged students located in municipalities from the ARC: bringing the total number to 236 schools.

Figure 7. Percentage of disadvantaged students in schools located in municipalities included in the ARC and outside the municipalities included in the ARC.

¹⁷⁶ Municipalities in the ARC are given over an interval of 100, which is an estimate of sufficient precision for most purposes. We have taken the middle of the interval as an estimated number.



It can be seen that outside the ARC the schools that have any socially disadvantaged students are outliers, i.e., such schools are extremely rare outside of the ARC. At least half of the schools in the ARC have no or have very few socially disadvantaged students: 75% of the schools in ARC have less than 15% of disadvantaged students.

Typology of the clusters of sending and receiving schools

Based on the analysis of clusters of sending and receiving schools we identified five typical situations, which may require a different approach in structuring the busing programme and in deciding whether busing is a suitable logistical approach in each specific case¹⁷⁷. The type of challenges that each cluster presents can indicate the types of support measures that may be needed taking into account the context.

Type 1. *Small school mostly in rural or peri-urban area surrounded by much larger schools.* Students can potentially be moved to just 1-2 receiving schools. Many but not all sending schools are in this type of situation. Since this situation is the least problematic from a logistical point of view, if there are any obstacles preventing a successful desegregation intervention, that involves changing school/class demographics, it is very likely that these obstacles are of different (non-logistical) nature.

Type 2. *Small or mid-sized sending school with many receiving schools of similar size around.* It is possible that the receiving schools will not have the capacity to accommodate the students from the sending school and this will be logistically challenging. Students will have to be transported to many different schools often in different directions.

Type 3. *Small or mid-sized school with just a few receiving schools of similar size.* There is no guarantee that the nearby schools can accommodate the students from the sending schools. This is a situation in which redistributing students between the available schools could be considered, instead of just busing students from one school to other schools.

Type 4. *Large sending school with many smaller schools around.* It is unlikely that the schools located at acceptable distance will be able to accommodate all or even a significant part of the students from the sending school. Students will have to be transported to many different schools often in different directions. Pressure on

¹⁷⁷ Full list of types and illustrations including all schools from the short list (45) is provided in *Annex 2*.

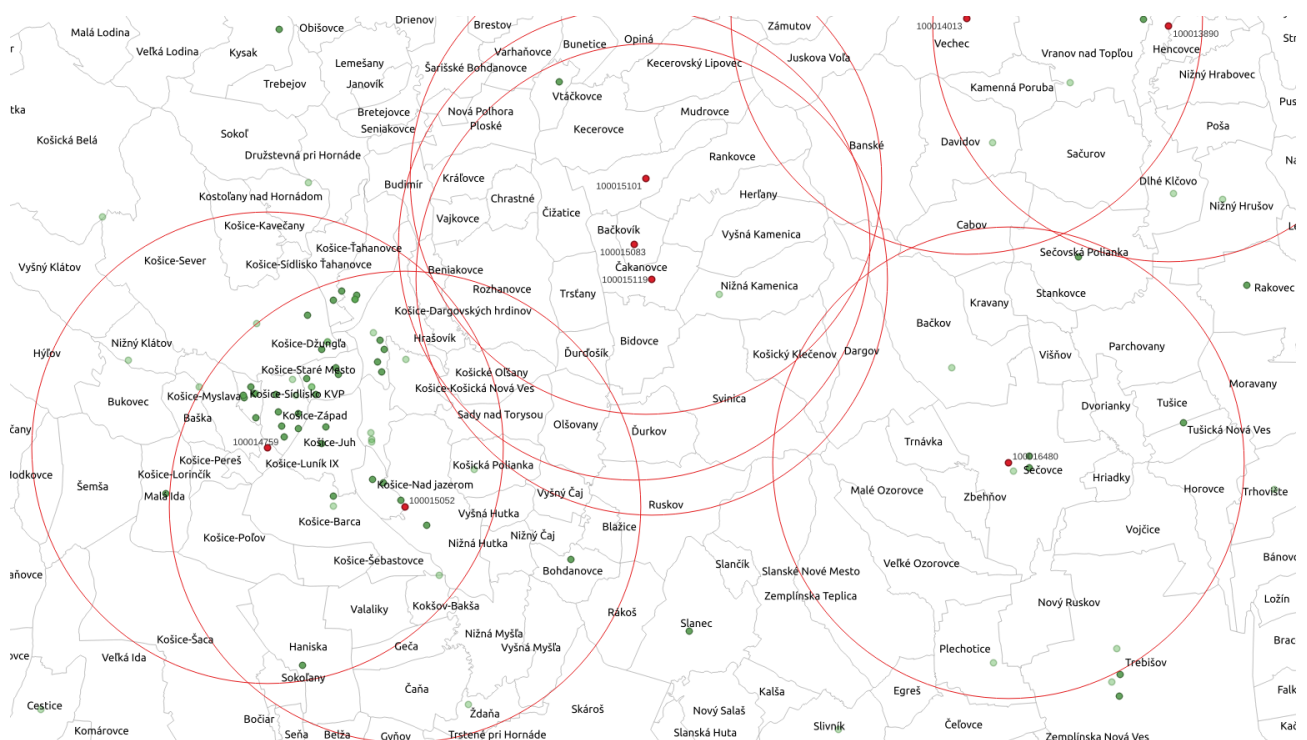
receiving schools could be high. Decisions may have to be taken about the reorganisation of the sending school.

Type 5. *Very large segregated urban school with other large urban schools around.* Students will have to be transported to more than one school. Decisions concerning how to distribute students between schools can be difficult and must be carefully weighted, especially if nearby urban school offer different curricula, have different owners and premises of different quality.

Logistical limitations and their possible link to other types of limitations

Overlapping 10 km radii around sending schools (red) are shown. Small receiving schools are in light green, large receiving schools (>100 students) are in dark green. The maps show a typical pattern of overlapping subnetworks of schools (clusters) in the vicinity of a large city including the peri-urban and the more distant rural areas.

Figure 8. Map of the region of Kosice and nearby municipalities



This area offers a lot of opportunities but also poses a lot of challenges, presenting difficult decisions to be taken. In some cases, busing and other desegregation measures would better be discussed with a whole group of neighbouring municipalities as this could open more options both in terms of logistics and in terms of the provision of support measures.

In some locations there are few receiving schools.

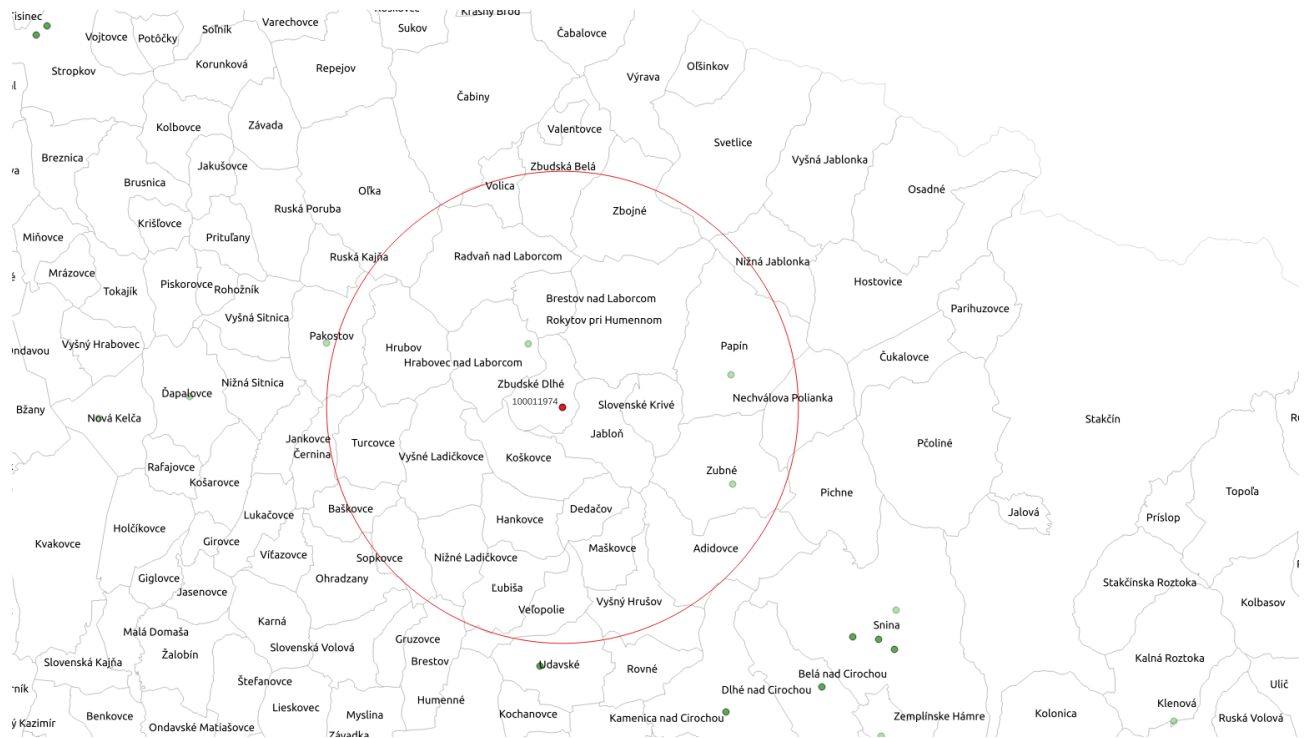
Figure 9. Map of the region of Kosice, Bačkovík , Tuhrina and other nearby municipalities with potential sending schools



The schools in some municipalities like Vehec and Hencovce have more receiving schools in their vicinity, but many of them are small. In some cases, it may be practicable to have a whole cluster of neighbouring municipalities coordinate their desegregation policies. For example, a municipality may not choose the closest school for busing students because this school is the only available option for a potential sending school in another municipality. It may instead choose a more distant school to avoid overburden of a single receiving school with too many new enrolments.

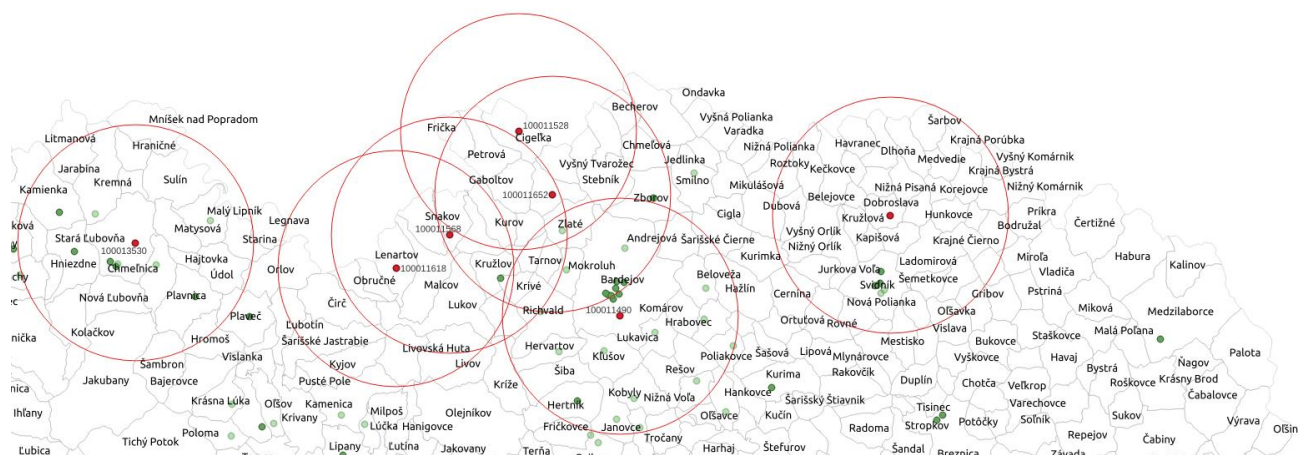
In Bačkovík and Čekanovce is the case with three sending schools located next to each other. There are a few suitable schools in neighbouring municipalities and some students may have to be moved to Košice.

Figure 10. Map of the region of Zbudské Dlhé and nearby municipalities



In some places, there are separately situated sending schools without many options in a radius of 10 km. The three potential receiving schools within a 10 km reach from the school in Zbudské Dlhé are all small, bigger schools are located at a distance of 15-20 km.

Figure 11. Map of overlapping and disjoint clusters of potential sending and receiving schools in the north of Slovakia



In the municipalities on map, there is a whole cluster of sending schools which also share an agglomeration of receiving schools. Next are two potential sending schools located at a distance of more than 20 km from the rest, which do not share any receiving schools with another sending school: the schools in Dobroslava and Stará Ľubovňa.

Figure 12. Overlapping clusters and a chain of clusters of sending and receiving schools in the northern and central parts of Slovakia.



In this part of central Slovakia, there is a chain of sending schools. The cluster of sending schools in Rakúsy, Veľká Lomnica, Stará Lesná and Mlynčeky share some receiving schools, but Stará Lesná and Veľká Lomnica have also option to bus their students south and west. A potential sending school in Telgárt on the other hand does not have any good options within 10 km, there are few suitable receiving schools even within 20 km. In such cases, the implementation of desegregation even from a purely logistical point of view may require more complex forms of coordination across municipalities.

Many potential sending schools are located close to each other with a quite limited set of potential receiving schools at least for some of the sending schools.

Figure 13. Map of a chain of municipalities with sending schools with few options of receiving schools



It is not immediately clear how and whether a busing programme can help in a situation where larger areas appear quite segregated at least in socio-economic terms but some of them in ethnic terms. This practically means that schools where students of low socio-economic background are enrolled, tend to be located close to other similar schools.

Figure 14. Map of a chain of municipalities with sending schools some of which have a lot of options of receiving schools while other almost none.

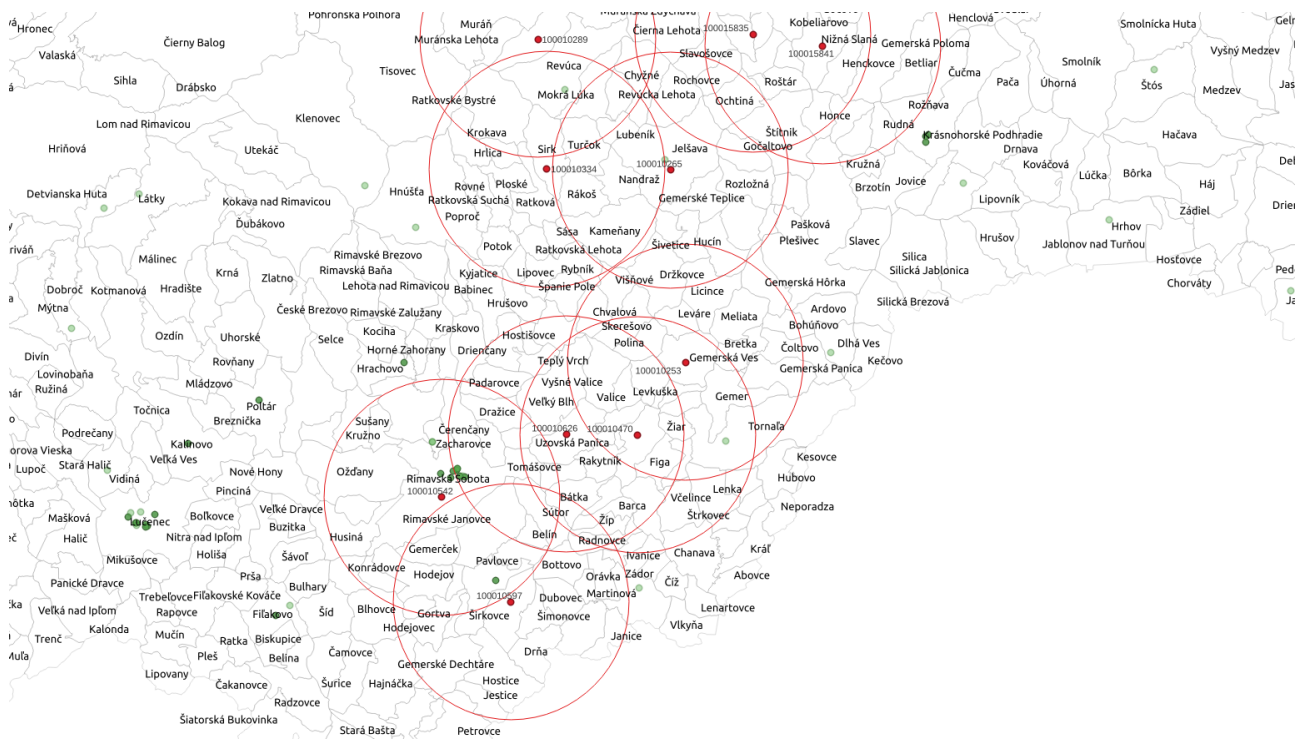


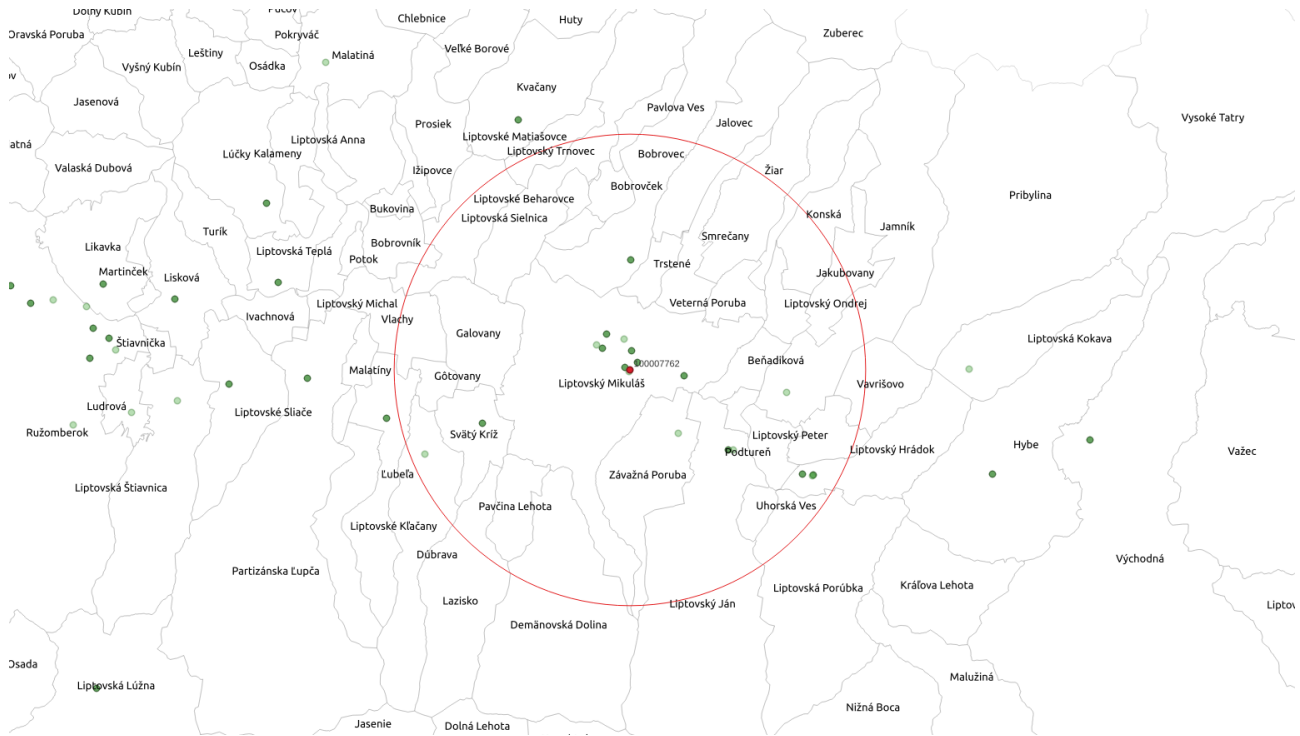
Figure 15. Map of municipalities with sending schools where travelling at distances (much) longer than 10 km may have to be considered in order to reach large clusters of suitable receiving schools



In this cluster, the potential sending schools tend to be located close to other vulnerable schools. We see whole chain of such schools – Čakanovce, Bačkovík, Boliarov, Kecerovce, Vtáčkovce, Varhaňovce, Mirkovce, Tuhrina, Žehňa, Lesiček, Abranovce.

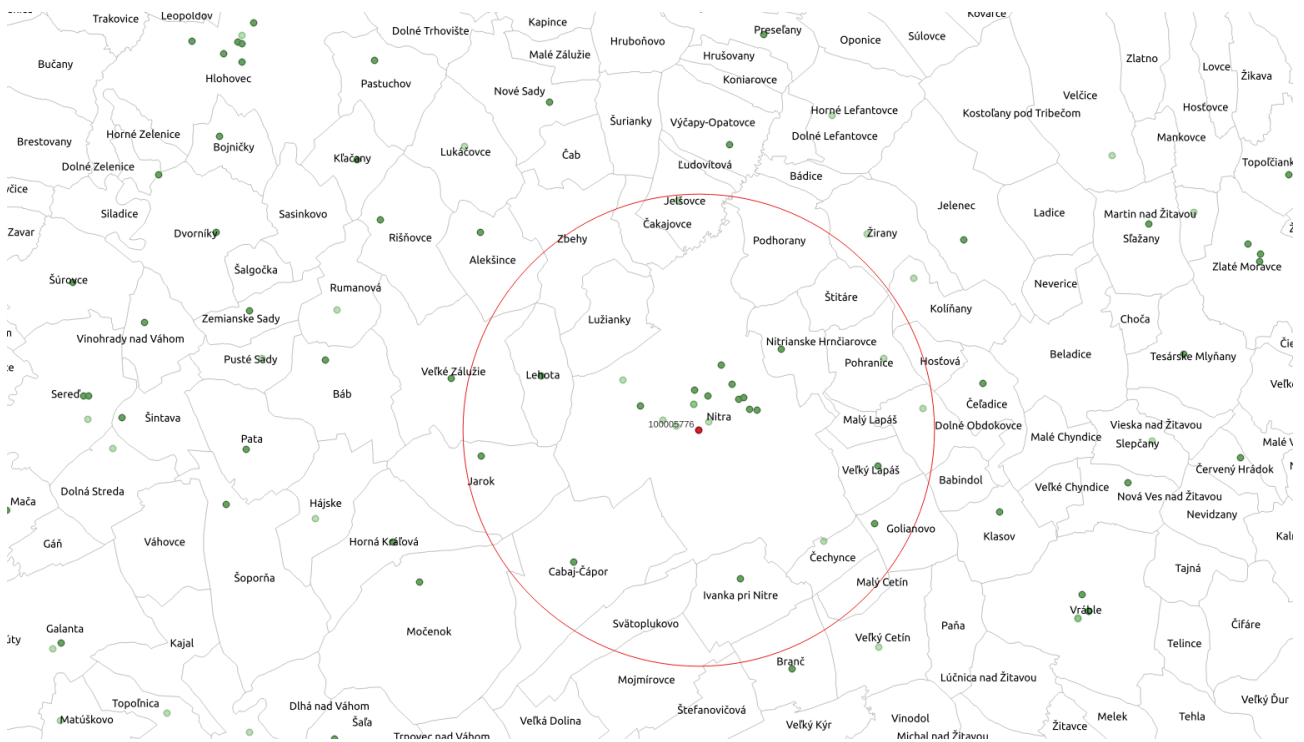
Some of the students from those municipalities will have to be bused north in the direction of Prešov, where there are very few options to find suitable receiving schools, while others will have to be moved south and south-west towards Košice, where also there are lots of potential receiving schools to choose from, but also two large sending schools, which also may have to be moved to other schools, if segregation is to be decreased. In such regions, if the road infrastructure is good and travelling can happen faster it could make sense to consider travelling distances that are a bit longer if other conditions are favourable. In other locations the case is just the opposite - sending schools are favourably located among many suitable receiving schools.

Figure 16. Map of a municipality with a potential sending school and a lot of suitable receiving schools within the municipality (example 1)



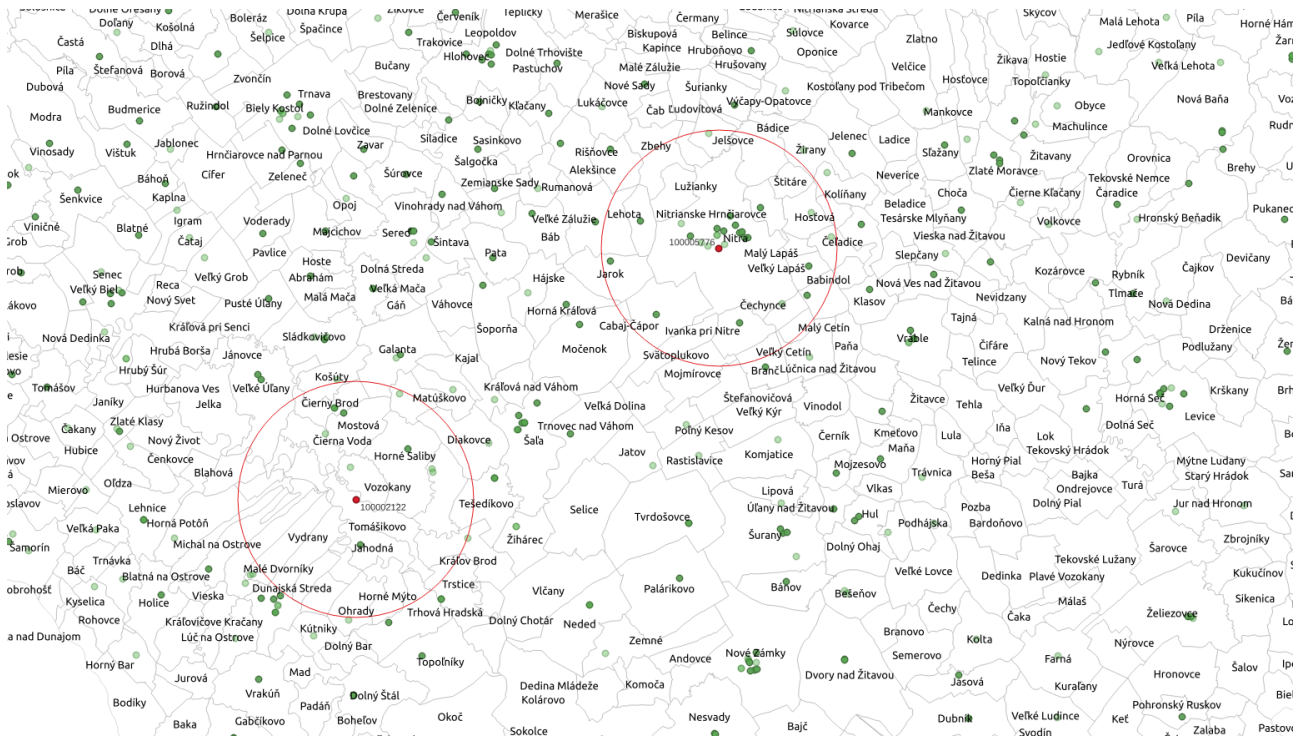
The task in cases of abundance of suitable receiving schools appears logistically easy, but quite probably the very fact that a school with high concentration of socially disadvantaged students continues to exist in such a situation is a signal that other adverse factors could be at play.

Figure 17. Map of a municipality with a potential sending school and a lot of suitable receiving schools within the municipality (example 2)



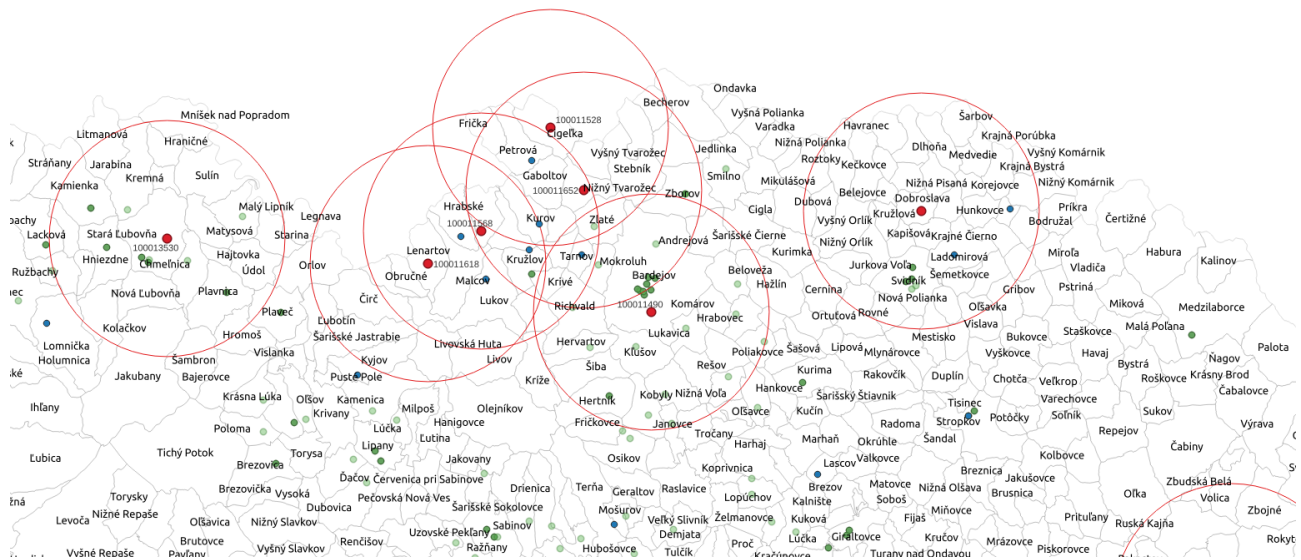
Determining those factors will typically require in-depth review of the full context with the application of qualitative methods of social research, similar to the instruments used in this study.

Figure 18. Map of a municipality with a potential sending school and a lot of suitable receiving schools scattered across neighbouring municipalities.



further West there are few schools with a high concentration of vulnerable students. One of such examples is a school in Nitra, which does not have any other neighbours with a lot of vulnerable students and has many options of potential receiving schools to choose from.

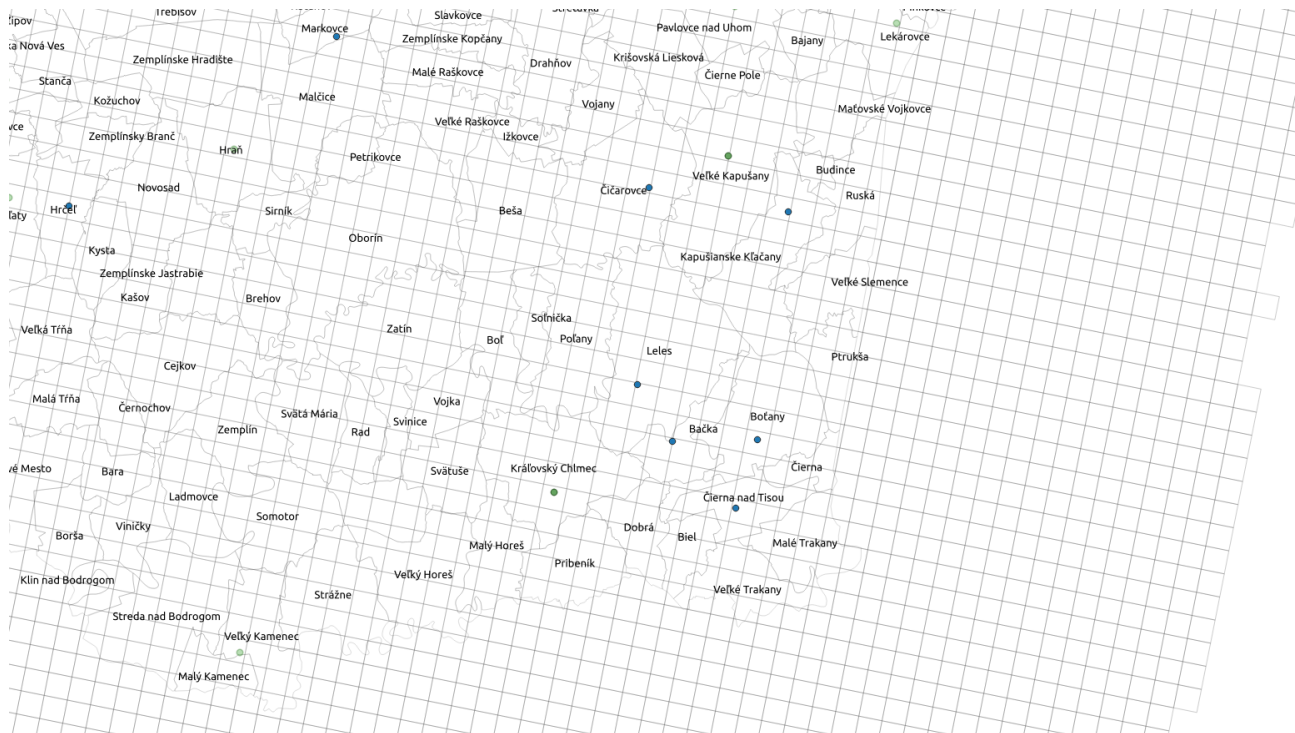
Figure 19. Map of overlapping clusters of municipalities with sending in receiving schools in the north of Slovakia illustrating potential competing priorities between busing students from schools with higher or with lesser concentration of socially vulnerable students.



Blue dots represent less vulnerable schools from the long list: those are however still schools from which students should rather be bused elsewhere. In some cases, the available receiving schools may not have places to enrol students from all of the nearby potential sending schools. In such cases, the dilemma would be whether the process should be left entirely to the initiative of municipalities or some more coordinated efforts would be put in place, i.e., making plans and setting priorities for larger territorial areas covering many municipalities.

In the South-East there is a cluster of schools with quite significant concentration of socially disadvantaged students and few existing options of schools to choose from. In such regions, it may still make sense to move students from more vulnerable to less vulnerable school or to prioritize.

Figure 20. Map of a region without any suitable receiving schools according to the adopted definition.



In Čierna nad Tisou, Boľany, Bačka and Leles and then further in Čekanovce and Kapušianske Kľačany there are schools with many socially disadvantaged students with no suitable receiving schools within reach: the closest suitable schools are too many kilometres away.

Capacity limitations

Capacity to enrol additional students

One of the necessary conditions for becoming a receiving school is to have spare capacity for enrolling new students. No reliable direct indicators are available to assess on a systemic basis spare enrolment capacity of schools. Some data were collected in relation to the enrolment of migrant students from Ukraine, but information is not exhaustive, it covers just a small portion of schools.

Next to the two possible and not mutually exclusive approaches to assess the maximum enrolment capacity of a school, there is a valuable lesson learnt that must be -imperatively- taken into consideration.

The possible approaches are a) a regulatory one and b) an empirical one. The former could be concisely presented as a compliance with the limitations set by the regulatory framework on the number of students. Typically, those are limitations on the size of classes, which can vary per grade level. The empirical approach is based on the observed distribution of the number of students per class within the system. The two approaches can be perfectly compatible if rules are strictly observed or if the system does not face any overload and the actual population of students is below the normative thresholds. In the case of Slovakia, there are exceptions to the general regulations concerning the number of students; whether those exceptions are regulated by by-laws or administrative discretion is not as relevant as the fact that they are possible. This analysis takes on an empirical approach, assuming that it provides a better and more reliable assessment of what is actually possible within the education system: if unrealistic capacity limitations are set, the system is more likely to ignore or modify them instead of incurring high social costs, e.g., increasing school dropout.

But whereas the reviewed approaches are not mutually exclusive, taking into account a key lesson learned on the acceptability of changing class demographics is imperative. Experiences accumulated both in Slovakia and abroad clearly indicate that a tolerable change of the class demographics varies between 5 and 10%. In other words, to an existing class of 20 students not more than a few new students from a background might be safely added, which

is likely to provoke social distancing and trigger “white flight”. This rule works irrespective of the nominally available (normatively or empirically assessed) upper limit of the capacity to enrol students, but overcrowding can make the situation worse due to the additional pressure on teachers. This rather simple, but potentially crucial guidance, is reviewed in detail in Chapter II¹⁷⁸ and in Chapter III.¹⁷⁹ The specific level of tolerance needs to be established purposefully and specifically per location/school/class, each time before a desegregation intervention changing school/class demographics takes place. To this end, one of the annexes of this report offers templates for instruments¹⁸⁰ that might be employed by the desegregation intervention bodies before fine-tuning the specific parameters of the intervention.

The assessment of spare capacity done, the way described here, is meant only to give a general overview and preliminary information about each location. Such information can be used for purpose of making overall assessment of the approximate costs of a programme, or building long and shorter lists of potential places where a specific measure could be relevant or feasible. In no way is it recommendable to take any decisions about the implementation of concrete measures in any specific location based on statistical data alone. Such decisions are better taken by a process of democratic consultation involving all stakeholders with a special attention to those that, due to vulnerability of any sort, might be excluded from the applicable procedures for citizen consultation.

Overall spare capacity represents the minimum of the spare capacity assessed by the number of teachers and the spare capacity based on the number of students. We don't have any information about procedures or practices within the Slovak primary schools that allow for compensating the deficit of space by employing more teachers or the deficit of teachers by providing more space.

For the purpose of the analysis, we developed a combined indicator which takes into account the number of teachers and the number of rooms in the school: both indicators are exhaustively available. Based on them, we constructed a student-teacher ratio and students-per-classroom indicator. While the student-to-teacher ratio is a well-established and widely used indicator for measuring capacity utilisation, overcrowding in schools among other important educational phenomena, the students-per-room indicator is not as widely employed and does not offer useful reference values and benchmarks. In the Slovak case, the distribution of this indicator looks reliable and interpretable, displaying no anomalies except for a handful of outliers (extreme values), which are comparable in number to outliers in the student-to teacher ratio.

The spare capacity is defined as the number of students that can be enrolled before the school reaches the highest percentile of the student-teacher ratio or the student-per-room value beyond which outliers (i.e., extreme values or abnormalities) start. In the case of both distributions, there are just a few outliers: in the case of students per room this happened to be the 99th percentile and in the case of the student-to-teacher ratio this was the 98th percentile. In practical terms, this means that in both cases we would allow a receiving school to be filled with students up to the current empirical upper limits for these indicators ignoring just extreme values. Using the statistical distribution to estimate spare capacity, the way we did, relies heavily on the assumption that the observed utilisation of capacity in schools - in terms of space and staff alike – is the way it is for a good reason, although we might not know exactly what the reason is.

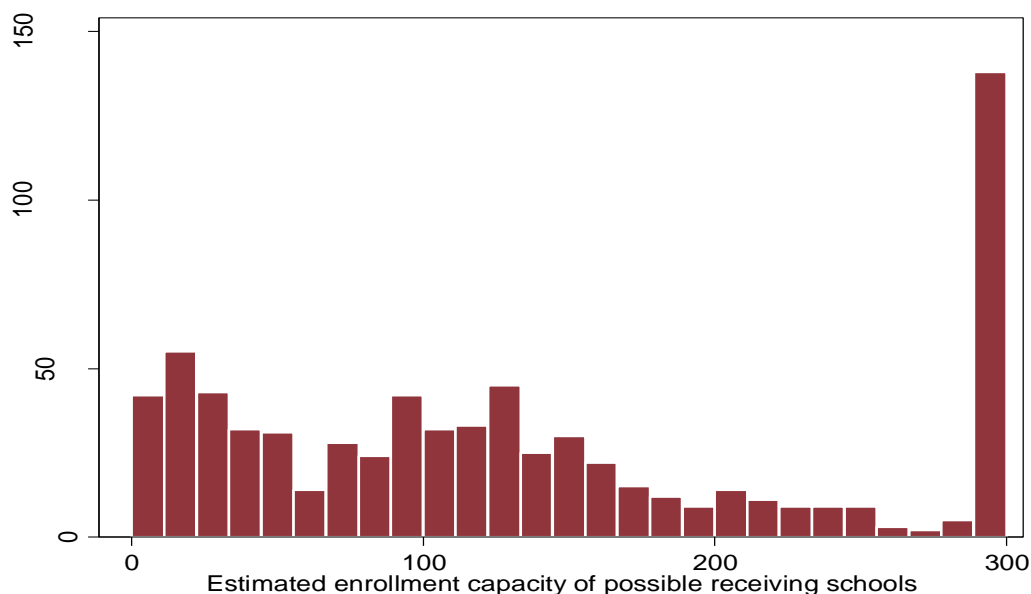
The 90th percentile of students per room is 23.04831 (23 students). The 90th percentile of the student-teacher ratio is 15.66524. Both empirical distributions look reliable containing a few outliers, which were excluded from the analysis. A spare capacity of 300 students is the point at which outliers start, we therefore assumed that no school – no matter how big – will be able to enrol more than 300 additional students on top of the usual yearly intake: the actual practical upper bound is quite probably much less.

¹⁷⁸ See subsection *Educational Perspectives* in section *Educational Desegregation as a Must*.

¹⁷⁹ See sections *Bussing as an education-desegregation and education policy-implementation measure* and *Lessons Learned: Key Points to be Kept in Mind when Designing and Implementing an Education Desegregation Intervention in Slovakia and Other Future Interventions*.

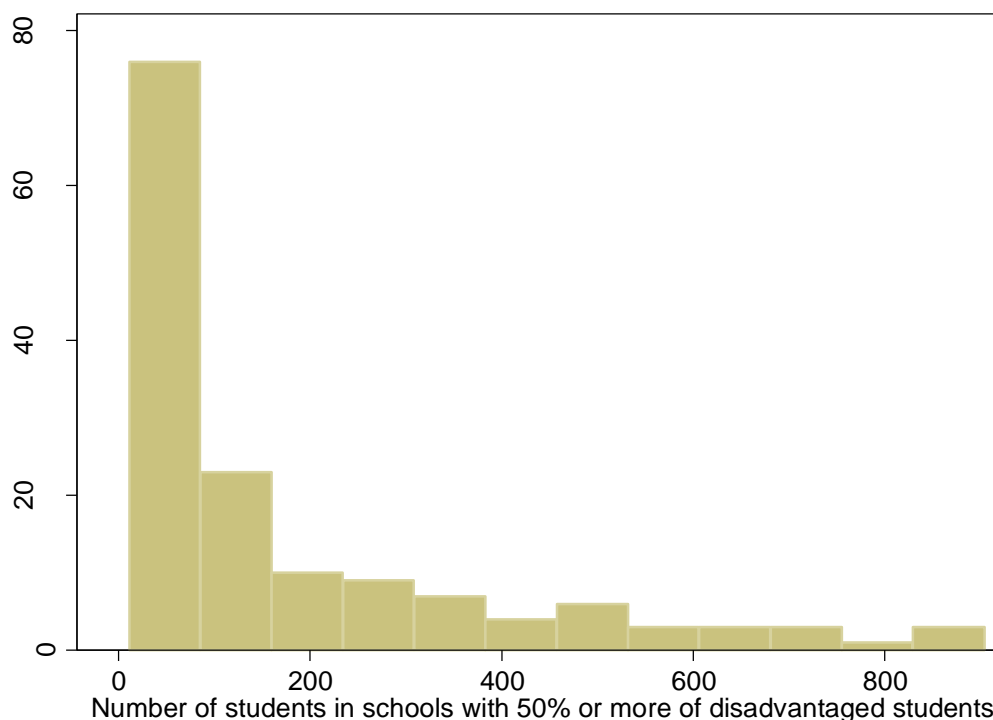
¹⁸⁰ Scenario templates for focus-group discussion (FGD) and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key-stakeholders. The FGD are suitable for consultations with the parents of the students in the receiving classes, whereas the interviews should be used as an instrument to take into account the positions and the concerns of the teachers and the school management.

Figure 21. Enrolment capacity of potential receiving schools



The distribution of estimated enrolment capacity among receiving schools is approximately flat in the range of up to 140 potentially possible new enrolments. We have limited the upper bound at 300 students, i.e., all schools that, according to the estimate, can enrol more than 300 students have been assigned a spare capacity of 300. It is very likely that the actual practically feasible and sensible upper limit for moving new students to a school is much lower than 300 no matter how big the school is. There can be no general rules for this decision as many factors beyond sheer logistical capacity and appropriate number of staff must be taken into account. These factors can be rather contextual or even strictly case-specific (idiosyncratic).

Figure 22. Distribution of the number of students in schools with 50% or more of disadvantaged students



Almost all schools but 6 with a majority of disadvantaged students have less than 400 students: more than 75% of schools with a majority of disadvantaged students have less than 200 students. The overall statistical distribution of students who could participate in busing maps well onto the distribution of spare enrolment capacity. The ratio between potential sending and potential receiving schools is approximately 1:7 in the overall sample. The ratio drops to 1:3.5 (105:365) after excluding the small potential receiving schools with up to 100 students. The overall match, however, in no way guarantees that there would be a good match geographically. A situation where a large number of big sending schools are located close to small receiving schools is perfectly possible, while the big potential receiving schools are located elsewhere.

Out of 48 schools with 2 shifts, 34 are schools with predominantly disadvantaged students, i.e., 30% of all schools with predominantly disadvantaged students operate in 2 shifts. This is a clear sign of excessive capacity overload particularly affecting schools with disadvantaged students, which should be avoided. The Recovery and Resilience Plan includes subsidies to eliminate double-shift schools¹⁸¹: such effort could support and complement desegregation and busing in particular. Some analyses show that 2-shifts schools reinforce segregation as wealthier families are able and likely to avoid such schools¹⁸².

181 Výzva na odstránenie dvojzmennej prevádzky základných škôl | Ministerstvo školstva, výskumu, vývoja a mládeže Slovenskej republiky [WWW Document], n. d. URL <https://www.minedu.sk/vyzva-na-odstranenie-dvojzmennej-prevadzky-zakladnych-skol/> (accessed 4.9.24).

182 Baláž, L., Lalík, S., 2022. Analýza existencie a fungovania dvojzmenných prevádzok a kapacít ZŠ v školskom roku 202. Úrad splnomocnenca vlády Slovenskej republiky pre rómske komunity.

Chapter V: Recommendations

- 1. Acknowledging the educational aspect of school segregation.** The problem of school-education segregation in Slovakia has been well recognised, both nationally and internationally. It has caught the attention of the executive body of the EU¹⁸³ and country has made specific commitments to tackle the problem. School segregation is a multifaced challenge and a more detailed overview on some of its aspects, (such as the human-rights', the European, the social cohesion, the welfare, the economic and labour-market's ones) has already been presented above.¹⁸⁴ Yet, the most fundamental aspect of the existing in Slovakia school segregation is the educational one. The continuous existence and the scope of school segregation in Slovakia constitutes a direct defiance of:
 - the very essence of the education as a public domain that serves the wellbeing and the developmental prospects of the nation;
 - its core function as a contributor to social cohesion and
 - the notion of education as public good, equally and equitably accessible and contributing to the developmental chances of all learners in Slovakia.
- 2. Continue investing efforts in designing action to effective school desegregation.** Reaffirming previous findings, the latest PISA report, published as recently as December 2023, identified Slovakia, alongside Romania, as the weakest performing education system among the developed countries in terms of a “performance gap related to students’ socio-economic status.”¹⁸⁵ On one hand a disadvantageous *students’ socio-economic* status has been routinely and convincingly associated with ethnic-, linguistic- and cultural-minority backgrounds. On the other, “[f]or nations, the lower long-term growth related to such [learning-performance] losses might yield an average of 1.5 percent lower annual GDP for the remainder of the century.”¹⁸⁶ Therefore every day of delay in desegregating the school education in Slovakia is a day of extended social-wellbeing and e-conomic losses for the entire country. The process of school desegregation in Slovakia has implications that reach beyond the immediate student community, impacting broader societal outcomes. Adequate actions leading to effective school desegregation are needed immediately.
- 3. Designing any school-education desegregation intervention needs to be informed by a proper analysis and has to primarily serve educational objectives.** A relevant mapping of the school-segregation situations and realistic planning of possible responses as well as a clear analysis of the probable challenges to a potential desegregation intervention need to be conducted prior to the inception of the intervention. Any school-education desegregation intervention is by default *an invasive activity that affects ongoing school-education process and must lead to improved, not worsened education outcomes* for the involved learners, *including the learners from the receiving schools*. The educational objectives must be prioritised to any other objectives a school-desegregation intervention might have.
- 4. The design of a school-desegregation intervention has be defined by its objectives and a well thought desegregation approach.** A school-education desegregation intervention where the design is pre-supposed by external factors not having a solid argumentation and not convincingly serving clear educational objectives must be reconsidered.

¹⁸³ EC (2023) The European Commission decides to refer SLOVAKIA to the Court of Justice of the European Union for not sufficiently addressing discrimination against Roma children at school. Online: [EC vs SK on School segregation of Roma children](#). See also Chapter II, Section *Educational Desegregation as a Must*, Subsection *The European perspective*

¹⁸⁴ See Chapter II, Section *Educational Desegregation as a Must*

¹⁸⁵ OECD (2023), PISA 2022 Results (Volume I): The State of Learning and Equity in Education, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/53f23881-en>. See also Chapter III, Section *Lessons Learned: Key Points to be Kept in Mind when Designing and Implementing an Education Desegregation Intervention in Slovakia and Other Future Interventions*

¹⁸⁶ Hanushek, E. A., Woessmann, L. (2020) The economic impacts of learning losses. OECD, Paris. Online: [21908d74-en.pdf \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#)

5. **Sustainability of action:** change of school demographics needs to be accepted by the participants in the ongoing education process, and *hard measures*, such as school busing, need to be accompanied by soft measures.
- a. **Interventions solely relying on infrastructural investments that suggest changes on school demographics might not deliver a sustainable educational desegregation.** Even if an initial change in the school demographics is successfully introduced, it is, most likely, short-lived. Sustaining it requires securing support of the teachers, students and their parents, especially the ones from the receiving schools.
 - b. **Immediate risks and potential long-term perils might occur when imposing unconsented/unaccepted changes impacting on the school/class demographics.** When such changes are decided without preliminary consultations, they might unleash a process of secondary segregation, expressed in phenomena such as ‘white flight’. In a way, in a longer term, unconsented, sudden and perceived as *forced* school-demographics changes may even worsen the overall school demographics, by extending geographically the area affected by school segregation.
 - c. **When introducing a school/class-demographics changing measure, such as school-busing, it is important to secure the support of all affected participants in the educational process, especially at the receiving school, at latest by the beginning of the intervention.** In order to stand any chance for a success, a school-desegregation intervention needs to encompass a combination of *hard* measures (ones that change school/class demographics) and *soft* measures (ones that respond to the existing at the beginning of the intervention attitudes and needs of the participants in the educational process).¹⁸⁷ Any measures leading to externally induced change in the school/class demographics must be supported by soft measures at both the sending and the receiving schools. It is imperative that the soft measures, responding to the changing demographics at the receiving school, address any potential grievances of the teachers and the parents at these schools. Field survey showed that some mayors are deeply aware of the risk of white flight and very cautious about planning any student transfers. Slovak parents are likely to be one of the groups of stakeholders that would be most difficult to convince and engage positively. In particular, Slovak parents were the most difficult to reach during our field survey, probably because many Slovak parents feel uneasy about addressing the topic of desegregation. In the process of consultations, it will be very important to address any concerns related to the school climate and classroom dynamics which may not be necessarily related – although they could be as well – to stereotypes, but to justifiable concerns about the ability of teachers and school directors to manage the most challenging aspects of integrating students from MRCs in classrooms.
 - d. **There is a limit of the scope of the school-demographics changes that might be acceptable to the participants in the education process.** The ability of a given class/school to absorb externally imposed demographic changes needs to be established individually and in advance. In any case, it is advisable that whenever possible Roma students should be bused to different schools, instead of just one in order to reduce the risk of overwhelming the receiving schools and generating white flight. Field research has shown that local stakeholders, particularly mayors and school directors have strong preference for transferring small number of new Roma students to any specific class: some have referred to one student per class which is perhaps too restrictive but experiences from other countries, where Roma experience segregation, indicate that to improve chances for adaptation and reduce the risk of white flight just a few (2-4) new Roma students should be enrolled per class. It should be noted that carrying out comprehensive desegregation in some parts of Slovakia would necessitate the transfer of more Roma students per school than mayors or school directors would consider manageable or guidelines, such as the one quoted above, would typically recommend.
 - e. **The sending-school participants in the educational process, who take part in a desegregation intervention, also need to be properly prepared for the change and to be duly supported during**

¹⁸⁷ The scope of the participants in the educational process must be broadly defined, to include at least: teachers, students and their parents.

the intervention. For each of the places affected by the desegregation intervention it would be of great help if a small local feasibility study could be conducted prior to the starting of any (school/class-demographics changing, especially - busing) intervention. The feasibility study should include as a minimum discussion group with parents from the sending and from the receiving schools. Teachers from sending schools may be a good asset in the process of desegregation due to their experience with students from vulnerable communities: some of them may have concerns about their jobs and therefore resist ideas for desegregation. Field survey showed that teachers in some potential receiving schools have expressed deep concerns about them being unprepared to teach students from MRCs. Experiences with other Roma students, typically from more well-off families, who have been enrolled by their own parents in schools with predominant number of Slovak students, are not considered a representative example for the type of challenges that may arise during massive transfer of Roma students from MRCs.

- f. **Beyond the acceptable potential change of the school demographics, the need of specific and targeted support measures to students and teachers from both sending and receiving schools must be established in advance.** Also, here adaptable qualitative research approaches (e.g., FGD, semi-structured interviews) should be employed every time a school-demographics-changing intervention is envisaged. Ideally, a systemic local feasibility study should be done as part of the process of planning local interventions aiming at desegregation, including busing.

6. Consider alternatives to introducing a school-busing intervention as an education-integration measure: its opportunity costs, sustainability as well as set of other strength and weaknesses of a busing programme should be examined within the specific local context.

- a. **Use the existing public transportation system.** Not only an ongoing education-integration interventions in Slovakia convincingly supports this recommendation,¹⁸⁸ but also there is already a significant number of out-going students using public transport throughout many Slovak municipalities. It makes sense to take stock of the local situation concerning transport and patterns of commutation. A programme covering travel costs for students could be more efficient and practicable, at least, in a number of locations.
- b. **The choice of logistics should be done to support successful adaptation of students in the receiving schools.** In quite a few municipalities moving the students out of a sending school may require travelling to *many other schools in different directions*. This would mean that the logistical task may require a simultaneous use of more than one vehicle or means of transport. In small communities there could be a variety of other practicable solutions such as public transport. In any case, in view of ubiquitous poverty among children in marginalised Roma communities, support for covering travel costs should be extended in any form that fits sustainably into existing legislation of social allowances or other instruments.
- c. **When employing dedicated school busing as a desegregation measure, add (education) value to the experience.** Whenever dedicated school or municipal buses are used, busing could be combined with some activities for the students which make travelling more useful, more fun or a good learning experience. Such a programme may require the use of well-trained staff but not necessarily a pedagogical staff. There are quite a few resources in different languages describing games that can be played on a school bus.¹⁸⁹ Assistants without pedagogical qualification can organize such games. Travels to and from schools can also be used for building stronger ties with teachers or for supporting the socio-emotional development of students.¹⁹⁰ Slovak pedagogues can easily develop their own approaches to making the most of transfers by school bus should they take on the task.

¹⁸⁸ See also *Chapter II, Section Bussing as an education-desegregation and education policy-implementation measure*.

¹⁸⁹ *Avoid Boredom on a Charter Bus for a School Field Trip with Fun Games* (2020). Available at: <https://atlanticcoastcharters.com/avoid-boredom-on-a-charter-bus-for-a-school-field-trip-with-fun-games/> (Accessed: 9 April 2024).

¹⁹⁰ 10 Key Benefits of School Field Trips Using Charter Buses | Infinity Transportation [WWW Document], URL <https://www.infinitytransportation.net/blog/benefits-of-hiring-a-charter-bus-for-a-school-field-trip> (accessed 4.9.24).

- d. **Although school busing is a possible desegregation measure, it should be considered as a means of last resort.** Although this was not an objective originally included in the present feasibility study, the results of quantitative part might provide support to the local stakeholders to take an informed decision on the feasible transportation approaches per location. *In more general terms*, with respect to choosing between school busing and other transportation options, the following table summarises possible arguments in favour of or against (*pros* and *cons*) school busing.

Table 1. School busing vs. other transportation approaches of students/pupils from segregated schools.

Criteria	Pros (including circumstances that favour the use of school buses at least temporarily) and possible measures mitigating risks and deficiencies of school busing	Cons (including circumstances that indicate that other available options should be given preference)
Efficiency		Other options like public transport can be more efficient. School busing is not very efficient as the fleet is not used most of the time.
Sustainability	A permanent government programme taking into account depreciation and the need to replace the fleet can resolve the issue of sustainability.	Solutions provided on a market basis or public transportation servicing many segments of the population are generally more sustainable. Low sustainability of school busses is related to low efficiency.
Costs		In the case of using public transport maintenance costs and related risks are transferred to other operators, i.e., not part of the programme. A school busing programme internalises those high maintenance costs and risks. Logistics related to maintenance of a fleet of school buses can be complicated in rural areas increasing the risk for potential disruptions in service (students getting late to school or missing classes).
Comfort	Generally, travel with a dedicated bus can be much more comfortable if it is well maintained and adapted to the age and needs of student. A field survey carried out by the research team, showed that public transport used by students is sometimes overcrowded. Some parents have	A well-operated line of public transport can offer comparable level of comfort, but this depends on the local circumstances.

	expressed preference for school busses for a more comfortable ride.	
Convenience	Field survey showed that, in some cases, departure times for public transport can be inconvenient, especially for students who stay after regular classes for other activities. Bus stops can be situated far away from Roma communities located outside of the official boundaries of settlements: It takes a long walk to reach the public transport.	Public transport may be available at various intervals, which makes it more convenient in terms of flexible timing, but this also depends on local circumstances. Boarding place can be made convenient for a maximum number of students, but there is no flexibility with timing
Multilocational transfers	Addressing the problems related to multilocational transfers with school busses is related to considerations of ownership over the vehicles, i.e., which of multiple schools receiving students from a common locality or pool of localities will own and maintain the busses. Carefully calibrating the size and capacity of vehicles can also mitigate challenges related to multilocational transfers.	Depending on the available itineraries, public transport can be combined with the provision of school busing only to / from localities to schools where better options are not available. Our analysis shows that, in many cases, to avoid excessive pressure on specific schools and reduce the risk of white flight, students from a sending schools will have to be moved to more than one receiving schools, not necessarily located close to each other. <i>Transferring students from a single locality to many geographically dispersed schools as well as from several localities to a single school can make the use of school buses less efficient and more problematic from a logistical point of view.</i>
Travel time	Travel time with a school bus can be shorter.	Travel time with public transport depends on local circumstances – itinerary, number of stops, passenger flow etc. It could sometimes outperform school buses.
Adaptability to needs	Time spent on a school bus can be filled with useful activities, making travel more fun or a learning experience, particularly if students are accompanied by a teacher or teaching assistant. Public transport does not offer this opportunity.	
Safety	Generally, travel with a school bus should be safer, but this depends on maintenance and equipment. Stricter safety regulations may apply to	Safety can vary significantly depending on the operator and the location.

	school buses in comparison to the fleet used in public transport.	
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7. **Closely monitor an ongoing school-desegregation intervention that changes already established school demographics and follow up on any indication of (perceived as) needed or requested support.** A school desegregation intervention, especially one that changes school demographics or imposes other external impacts on an ongoing education process, is by default invasive. It changes various aspects of the (perception of) wellbeing and of the established routines of the effected children and their families. The implications of these changes need to be closely monitored for at least one school year and any concerns, real or perceived, must be swiftly and adequately addressed.
8. **Any regional collaboration necessary for the success of the school-desegregation efforts, especially in cases that involve school-demographics changes affecting more than one municipality, must be arranged in advance.** In a number of cases, education-desegregation efforts might require school-demographics changes that involve more than one municipality. The most obvious example is when the sending and the receiving schools are in different municipalities; sometimes crossing regional borders should not be excluded either. In all such cases, preliminary agreements must be reached between all involved local/regional authorities, including arrangements covering all possible financial implications.
9. **The establishment of catchment areas and especially of joint catchment areas between more than one municipality is a tool of paramount importance.** The analysis shows that catchment areas can be designed in a way that intensifies segregation. If redesigned in a thoughtful and considerate manner, catchment areas can promote desegregation. Making a redesign of any catchment areas a success may require governance mechanisms that might not be in place. In particular, there is a need for a strong mediator who could broker agreements between pairs of municipalities and even between clusters of municipalities. The Regional Education Office is a good candidate for intermediary but successful performance of this role may require some additional powers or functions. Rules concerning the establishment of catchment areas can be incorporated into legislation on the basis of guidelines and definitions from court rulings such as the one of the District Court in Prešov, which was triggered by a malfunctioning of a joint catchment area. Rulings of the Supreme Court on cases related to segregation could also provide guidance about framing the regulations and practice related to catchment areas. If the creation of school clusters is considered, where necessary, effective desegregation can be one of the criteria for the creation of local/regional school clusters.
10. **Secure an ongoing on-demand support to the local teams implementing the respective school-desegregation interventions by pertinent central and local stakeholders.** The local teams engaged into the school-desegregation efforts will need and should be able to rely on continuous, on-demand support by both local and central stakeholders. Most probably, the “Regional teacher support centers (RCPU), created as a direct part of the [ongoing] curriculum reform”,¹⁹¹ would be the most appropriate bodies to offer pertinent methodological guidance and ongoing pedagogical support to teachers and school management of the receiving schools. The school desegregation interventions need to be supported also administratively and financially, for as long as it takes, to ensure that the expected school-demographics changes have been sustained. Each of the interventions should be closely monitored and assisted by the respective central educational administration, responsible for the school desegregation at national level¹⁹² and, if this proves necessary, by the governmental administration¹⁹³ in charge of the implementation of Slovak Recovery and Resilience Plan.

¹⁹¹ WB (2022) Curriculum Reform from Policy Design at the National Level to Implementation at the School Level: Lessons Learned. Online, in Slovak: [Curriculum reform from policy design to school implementation: lessons learned](#)

¹⁹² Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic

¹⁹³ Recovery and Resilience Plan Section in the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic.

11. **Embed the local teams engaged into the school-desegregation interventions into formal and informal networks and facilitate their contact with colleagues and experts who operate in similar situations and are faced by comparable challenges.** Stay clear of organisations and figures who prioritize PR to real achievements. Be aware that not the amount of spent resources and the number of conducted activities but the delivered real desegregation results are the ‘successes’ and ‘good practices’ that deserved to be paid attention to.
12. **From the very beginning, recognize that the school-education segregation is not an easy problem to solve.** Allow for continuous effort, recognise that the process might include partial local failures and persistent obstacles and ensure that, every time this happens, a relevant lesson is drawn and consequently benefited from. Make sure that every successful case of educational desegregation is duly documented, the information about it is properly disseminated and that the contributions of the colleagues, who played a role, are duly recognised.
13. **Together with the designing of the intervention, begin with fostering the needed implementation capacity at the local educational authorities and stakeholders, who have to ensure the sustainability of the desegregation process.** As already elaborated in detail above,¹⁹⁴ the ability of the educational administration and professions to run effective desegregation interventions is both an often-encountered bottleneck and a critical factor defining the success chances of any school-desegregation effort. Even a perfectly designed school desegregation effort is entirely dependent on the ability, and the motivation, of the local implementation teams.
14. **Take advantage of the presented in this feasibility study typology of clusters of sending and receiving schools to advance the process of school desegregation as much as possible and as quickly as possible.** The typology of clusters of sending and receiving schools suggested in this report can be used to facilitate the desegregation efforts in Slovakia in at least two ways. First, it provides some guidance on how to inform any upcoming desegregation intervention by employing relevant quantitative geolocal analysis; this, in turn, should increase the chances for success of efforts to change the school demographics in pursuit of educational desegregation. Second, next to the limited number of specific cases, exemplifying each cluster type to be covered by a qualitative study, the annexes to this report present a number of potential other clusters that might be directly considered as convincing candidates for upcoming school-desegregation interventions.
15. **Relevant Slovak authorities may consider building a list of locations where desegregation could take place.** The present feasibility study used geolocal analyses to spot some possible education-desegregation interventions and produced a short and a long tentative list of such locations: those lists can be used as a starting point. Having a list of locations would be particularly useful in case the Slovak authorities considers extending their school-education-desegregation initiative beyond the limited number of the locations where the planned pilot should take place.
16. **The definition of a location where desegregation may take place should better consider local school networks which sometimes can cover clusters of neighbouring municipalities.** Such networks may not correspond to any predefined administrative units. Planning at municipal level is often not sufficient in the context of complex interventions such as busing, which are only a segment of policies for desegregation and reshaping of the school network. Wider-angle lenses are required to capture all relevant stakeholders and put in place efficient governance mechanisms. On the other hand, planning at regional level may be too generic and decontextualised and require a more granular approach.
17. The demonstrated approach to sketching *clusters of sending and receiving schools* could be combined with other types of locational profiling (per municipality/ within clusters of municipalities/ per region). Examples

¹⁹⁴ See also Chapter III, Section Lessons Learned: Key Points to be Kept in Mind when Designing and Implementing an Education Desegregation Intervention in Slovakia and Other Future Interventions

including exhaustive or at least more systemic data include: a) Data related to political attitudes and their predictive power for community attitudes towards desegregation interventions that change school demographics. Voting patterns for political actors who support the integration of the Roma at municipal level and vice versa are a useful source of information as they indicate societal attitudes; b) Content analysis of local media and public groups on social media discussing local topics including education and marginalised Roma communities can be another source of useful sociopolitical information; c) Commutation patterns, specifically out-commutation of primary-school students from municipalities with a high proportion of children from marginalised Roma communities as well as from and to neighbouring municipalities. This information is available from the census in 2021: it can be used in triangulation with other data to diagnose possible instances of “white flight” and possibly also of Roma students who attend non-segregated schools.

Chapter VI: Conclusions

The most important lessons to be drawn from this report have already been outlined in the previous chapter, the one focused on the recommendations. Yet, while the *Recommendations* are to be regarded as a set of policy options which, at least theoretically, could be employed separately and independently of each other, at the discretion of the desegregation-intervention implementing body, this chapter offers the takeaways from the feasibility study in a more coherent way, namely, as a chain of consequential policy approaches that are deemed necessary.

The *first conclusion* of the study is that Slovakia's school education system is in obvious need of desegregation. Moreover, the need is not just present, it is urgent. To this end, the initiative of the Slovak counterparts to engage into a desegregation intervention deserves to be fully and unconditionally supported. This being said, it is the result of a desegregating intervention that ultimately counts, not the intention, not the efforts, nor even the activities. Seen from this perspective, the best support that the present feasibility study can offer is to warn against ineffective desegregation intervention approaches and to assist the respective decision takers to make well-informed choices leading to optimal outcomes.

The specific objective of the feasibility study was to assess the potential of school busing as a desegregation intervention measure. The *second conclusion* of the study is that an effective desegregation programme must incorporate both:

- a) measures changing school demographics as well as
- b) preceding, ongoing and follow-up supporting measures to both the sending and the receiving schools and classes, with a heavy emphasis on the support to the receiving schools.

Therefore, it must be clearly stated that while a school-busing intervention, implemented on its own, might fulfil the function of a measure that changes school demographics, it is not a sufficient school-desegregation intervention. To prevent any possible doubt, **any measure changing school demographics, such as a school busing program, must be complemented by a twin-programme of support to the receiving and the sending schools.** The particulars of the support measure would vary per school, or even per class but, if the instruments presented in the annexes are employed, designing an adequate school-specific or class-specific action-plans should not constitute a problem.

The *third conclusion* is that **changing school demographics as a desegregation measure has its school-specific, or rather class-specific quantitative limitations.** An effective and sustainable desegregation will require a careful distribution of Roma students among the available schools with an eye on possible white flight. A rule of thumb empirically derived in similar contexts indicates that Roma students should not grossly exceed 10% of the student population to avoid triggering a process of (secondary) segregation, this time in the receiving school. With a standard class size of 20-30 students, this would mean enrolling just a few (2-3) new pupils in every receiving class. In view of existing examples of within-school segregation of Roma students, enrolment should be planned and monitored to avoid concentration of Roma in separate classes. Once again, this should be considered a general guideline, and the specific scope of the school-demographics change should be defined per school/class based on a preliminary context-specific assessment involving not only quantitative information but also revealing and addressing attitudes, stereotypes and socioeconomic barriers. This means that new enrolments should be matched by adequate support for the receiving school/class based on a preliminary assessment of needs.¹⁹⁵ Scenarios, when the school-demographic change takes place gradually, depending on the availability, the scope and the quality of the ongoing support measures should be considered too.

This brings the question of timing of the various components within the desegregation intervention in general and leads to the *fourth conclusion* of the study. As already mentioned, some of the support measures must precede the actual school-demographics change. Therefore, the preparation of the entire school-desegregation intervention

¹⁹⁵ Again: the annexes offer suitable instruments to this end.

programme requires proper planning and collaboration between different stakeholders, responsible for various components of the desegregation programme (e.g., transfer and enrolment of new students, the support measures, ongoing monitoring and adaptation, administrative, financial and logistical management and coordination etc.). Before delving into the need of *coordination and cooperation beyond timing*, a very important point about school busing itself needs to be made.

The *fifth conclusion* concerns directly the feasibility of school busing as a specific school-desegregation measure. It has already been stated clearly (see the *second concluding remark*) that a measure changing school demographics on its own (such as school busing) is not sufficient. Here, considering only the school-demographics-changing measures, separately, on their own right,¹⁹⁶ it needs to be admitted that school busing is not an optimal long-term measure. As the study has established, school busing is an expensive, logistically demanding measure with high *opportunity cost*.¹⁹⁷ School busing might be justified as a short-term, emergency response measure but it is not sustainable in longer term. This inference is based *also* on the lessons learned from the singular case of school busing currently practiced in Slovakia. In this case the school busing was introduced, indeed, as a response to an emergency situation. Meanwhile, an exit strategy, focusing on public transportation arrangements, has already been worked on. The examined evidence suggests that the pre-selection of busing as a chosen, exclusive desegregation measure, aiming to change school-demographics, needs to be reviewed again. There might be specific location clusters (see below, the next paragraph) where school busing might be currently the only feasible options. But even if such location clusters are identified, these would be exceptions and here, too, a shift to better, more efficient and more sustainable transportation options should be considered if eventually they become available. Against this background, the alternative of effective arrangements to utilise the existing public transportation system might be much more efficient policy option, even if specific supplementary investments in the public transportation or particular coordination arrangements are needed.

The *sixth conclusion* focuses on two contributions by the quantitative part of the present feasibility study, that have a significant potential to support any desegregation intervention in Slovakia, the proposed one served by the present feasibility study as well as any forthcoming in a near future one. First and foremost, the quantitative study proposes a *typology of clusters of sending and receiving schools*. The typology is developed, tapping on the available demographic, administrative and other relevant data. In essence, it outlines possible structuring approaches with respect to specific school-demographics-changing models. Functionally, it suggests possible patterns of interactions between sending and receiving school(s), categorized in 5 generally distinct types, according to specific configurations of potential sending and receiving schools in a busing programme. For example, options such as *small or mid-sized sending school with many receiving schools of similar size around or small school mostly in rural or peri-urban area surrounded by much larger schools* are reviewed. More details on the typology are available in the section: *CHAPTER IV* in *CHAPTER IV*. The significance of this contribution - for any desegregation intervention, also future ones - is that it provides very clear, easy to follow and logistically justified structure of desegregation intervention's school-demographics-changing component.¹⁹⁸ The other contribution of the quantitative part of the study with significant and very specific potential to contribute to a school desegregation intervention is contained in the illustration cases of the above-mentioned *Typology*. They are visualized in *Annex 2*. Each of these cases is a de facto ready-to-use, with respect to the changing-of-the-school-demographics component, desegregation-intervention proposition. Since they were developed by analysing the available and relevant at the moment of writing quantitative data, some updating would be undoubtedly needed over time, but in short-to-midterm period, the 45 cases presented in *Annex 2* are a bonus with a high potential

¹⁹⁶ Thus, as the hardware component of school desegregation intervention, separated of the soft support measures, which, as already stated, are quite different, but also needed.

¹⁹⁷ The *opportunity cost* disadvantage of the school bussing deserves a special attention. In a nutshell, the microeconomic concept of *opportunity cost* refers to the lost value of an alternative that has not been chosen. From this point of view, school bussing comes at quite high one-off cost, related to the investment in a fleet of busses as well as at continuous costs related to the maintenance and the operating of the busses. Affording such expenses, both substantial high initial one and a long-term regular one, might seem justified only if the allocation of the resources needed for the other components of the desegregation intervention (i.e., the required preceding, ongoing and follow-up support measures) are completely secured for the entire duration of the school bussing activities.

¹⁹⁸ Regardless of whether the latter is realized by deliberate school bussing, public transportation arrangements or other hard measures.

added value to the interested stakeholders of the school-desegregation process in Slovakia. Finally, the quantitative part of the study offers one more important potential addition: currently the *typology* has been done only on the basis of school/location (demographic) characteristics. Yet, as indicated above, *this study might be extended and complemented to include the transportation patterns and arrangements*. A very useful set of data is the information on out-commutation and in-commutation, which is available at municipal level from the census in 2021. Modes of commutation give some idea about the use of public transport, but also hint at other possible modes of transport for primary school students, i.e., travelling by car with their parents who combine other tasks requiring commutation with transport to school. Data on commutation can be triangulated with other data sources and generalised observations from other studies to provide an approximate or preliminary assessment of the scope of phenomena such as white flight.

The *seventh conclusion* stems naturally from several previous ones. Currently, the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic¹⁹⁹ is preparing a desegregation intervention programme also in response to commitments related to the Slovak National Recovery and Resilience Plan. In line with the *second concluding remark*,²⁰⁰ it seems inevitable that the proposed desegregation intervention, informed by the present feasibility study, must be coordinated with and supported by, at least in terms of complementing support measures to the sending and - most of all - to the receiving schools, by the interventions planned by the Slovak Ministry of Education. *Given the timeframes, as they are known at the moment of writing, such coordination efforts must be initiated without delay.*

The *eighth concluding remark* is a *word of caution* and it concerns the preparatory qualitative-research activities that should take place at each proposed school-desegregation-intervention location (thus, at the sending and the receiving schools but especially at the receiving schools). A proper preparation of a school-desegregation activity that envisages to change the school demographics needs to envisage such research activities. It is suggested that they take the form of focus group discussion (FGD) and semi-structured in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, conducted in advance, before the school-demographics-changing intervention at the particular location commences. The accumulated experience within this feasibility study demonstrates how easy it is to get this activity substantially delayed. The preparatory work must start as soon as a location is selected for an intervention and the twin- objectives of identifying:

- a) the proper support measures for the concrete location (applicable both in the case of sending and receiving school) and
- b) the specific-per-location tolerance towards school/class demographics change

must never be neglected. It might become very difficult to get the necessary results delivered when these objectives are not purposefully pursued. Another very important aspect of this *word of caution* is that being a location-specific qualitative research activity, these interviews and FGDs should not be used for generalisations. It should not be assumed that, for example, support measures identified as needed or strongly expected at one location might be properly applicable at another location, even though the two locations might share similar characteristics, or are geographically close, or both. Thus, no conclusions with relevance exceeding the specific locations should be made on the basis of the qualitative field-research activities realised within the feasibility study, especially given their quite limited scope and number. Yet, despite their illustrative character, the qualitative field-research activities clearly demonstrated that a school-demographics-changing desegregation activity must be accompanied by soft measures and that the potential for school demographics changes is everything but elastic.

The *ninth conclusion* is plain but undoubtedly needed expectation management remark. Ever since the 1954's landmark decision of the US Supreme Court, school desegregation been featuring prominently on the policy – and on the political – agendas. The significant devastating potential of the school segregation has been recognised, long enough, also on this side of the Atlantic. Yet, the fact that it persists to constitute a challenge for educators and policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic, indicates that the school segregation is not an easily solvable

¹⁹⁹ Referred elsewhere in the text also as Ministry of Education or MoE.

²⁰⁰ To remind: *any proposed hard-measure desegregation intervention purely focused on school-demographics changes must be complemented by soft measures providing timely, pertinent and continuous support to the sending and especially to the receiving schools.*

problem. Expecting quick fixes resulting from short-term interventions would be a mistake. Moreover, starting a school desegregation intervention without realising that it is a difficult and not necessarily successful endeavour might create unrealistic expectations that sooner rather than later could turn into quite negative social attitudes towards any desegregation effort. Although this warning sounds banal, it should not be taken lightly.

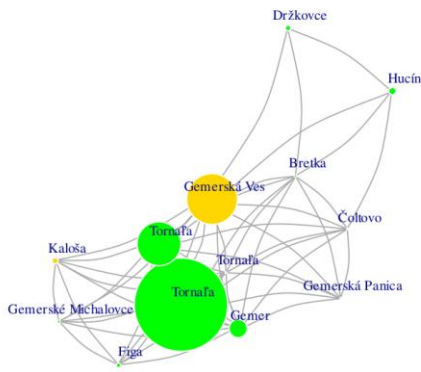
The *tenth and final conclusion* relates to the need of embedding the desegregation interventions in Slovakia in larger European school-desegregation efforts. The desegregation interventions envisaged in Slovakia are neither unique nor pioneering within the EU. Given the previous concluding remark (the *eighth* one), any ongoing additional feedback, know-how exchange, relevant external reflection or any other form of expert or moral support should be welcomed. To this end, the effort in Slovakia needs to be embedded in EU and broader European networks and education-desegregation focused communities. The sooner this process starts, the greater the chance that Slovakia might benefit from relevant inputs from a variety of similar and not so similar contexts in other EU countries.

Annexes

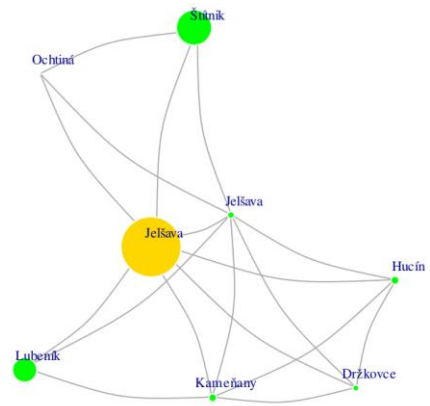
Annex 1: An interactive list with ECASS's selection of specific support measures that might be encompassed in an education-desegregation programme ('compensatory policies')

- Identification of vulnerable students
- Improving low-demanded schools' facilities
- Pedagogical transformations of low-demanded schools
- Free School Meals and free school fees
- Support for Extra-school activities
- A communitarian answer to school problems: "From the teaching team to the educational team"
- Educational opportunities improvement Plan
- Shock Plan against school segregation
- Free activity school in specific districts
- Recruiting and retaining skilled leaders and teachers in vulnerable areas
- Second language training for students with low knowledge of local language
- Indexes of segregation and attractiveness
- Pre/Post school program
- Open schools
- Changing the school reputation

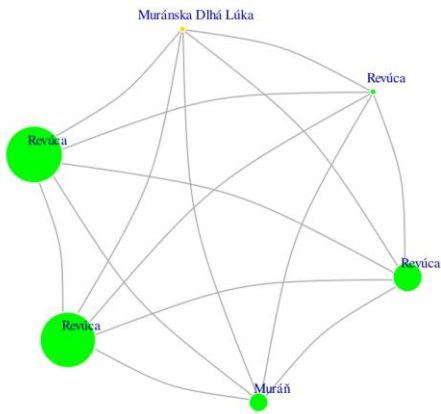
Source: [ECASS - Examples of compensatory policies and measures](#)



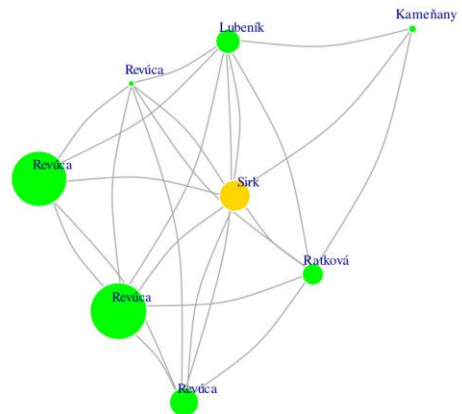
Case 7, Type 1



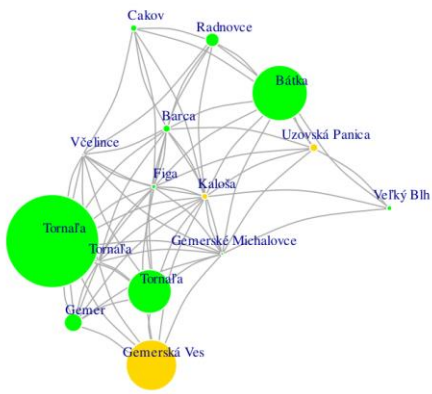
Case 8, Type 1



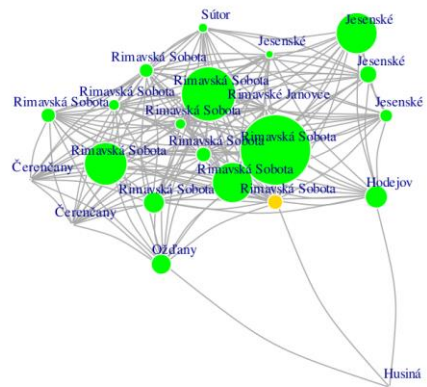
Case 9, Type 1



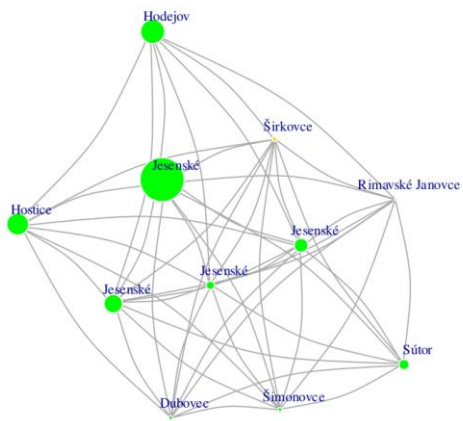
Case 10, Type 1



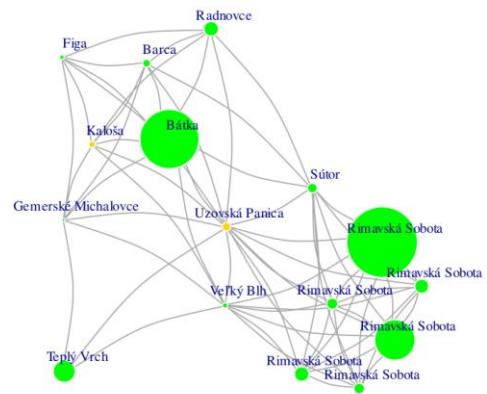
Case 11, Type 1



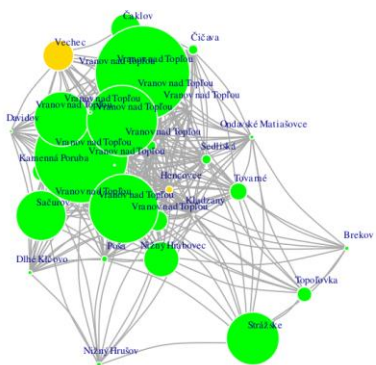
Case 12, Type 1



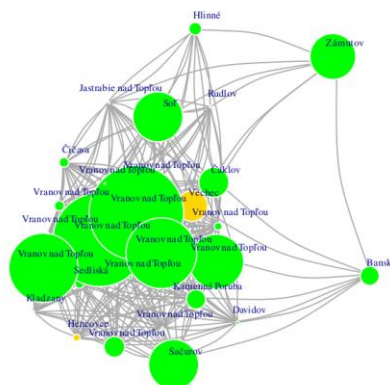
Case 13, Type 1



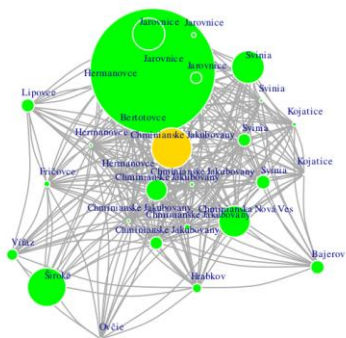
Case 14, Type 1, Type 2



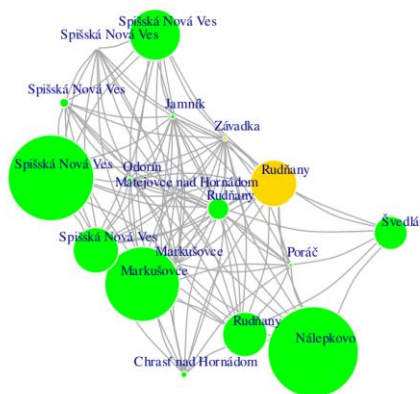
Case 31, Type 1



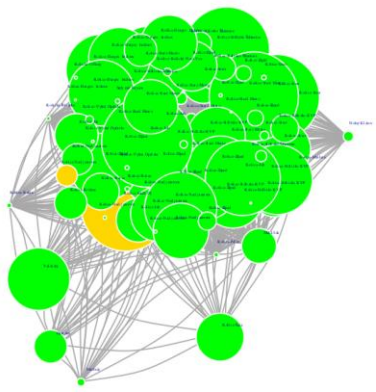
Case 32, Type 1



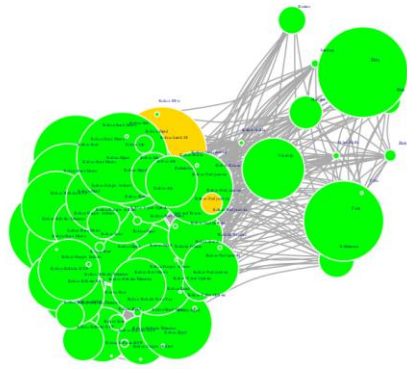
Case 33, Type 1 + Type 5



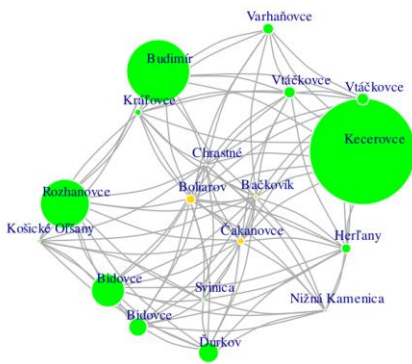
Case 34, Type 1 + Type 5



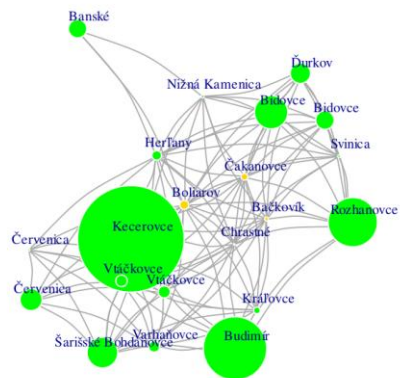
Case 35, Type 1



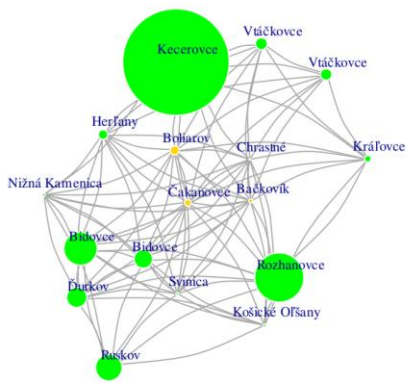
Case 36, Type 1



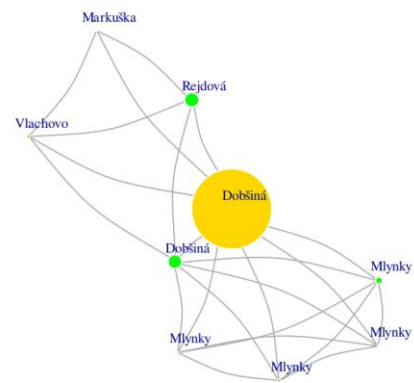
Case 37, Type 1



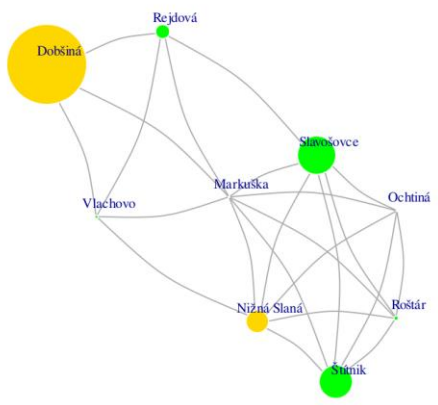
Case 38, Type 4



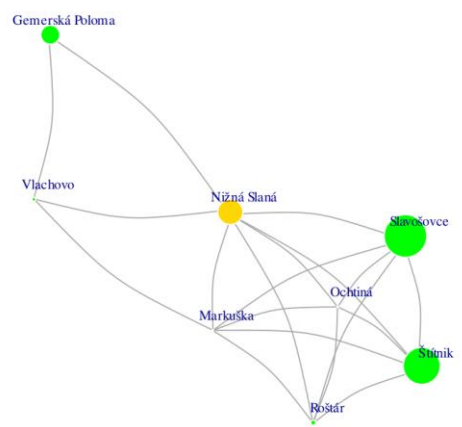
Case 39, Type 2 + Type 4



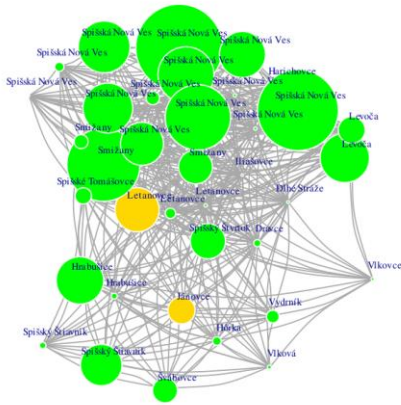
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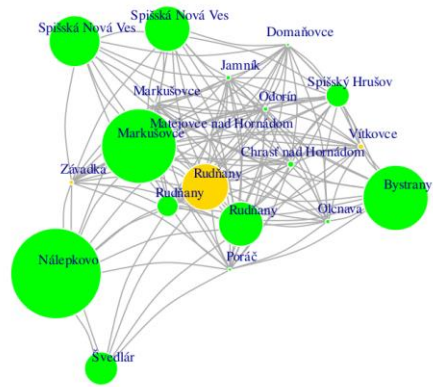
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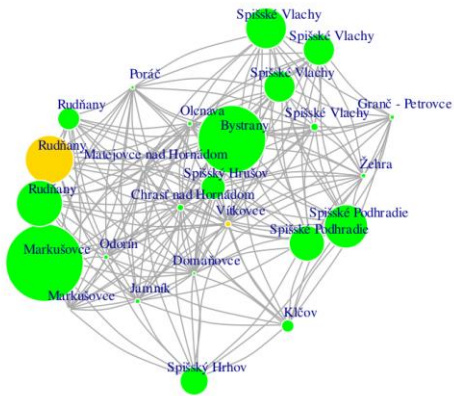
Case 42 Type 1 and Type 4 (or Type 1)



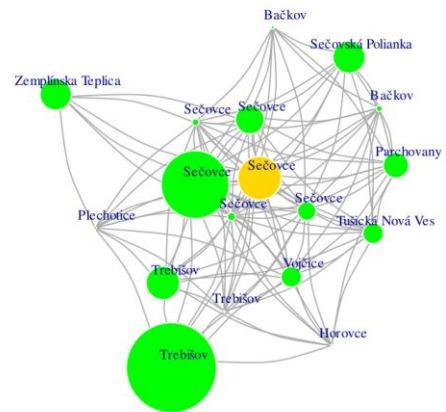
Case 43, Type 1 and Type 5 (or Type 1)



Case 44 Type 1 or Type 5



Case 45, Type 1 or Type 5



Annex 3. Case studies: reporting findings of qualitative research activities at 5 locations in Slovakia

Introduction

This annex presents the findings from qualitative research conducted to assess the practical needs, barriers and challenges in implementing a busing initiative. The objective of this field research was to map, through individual and group interviews, the situation in villages and towns where busing could be a solution to the lack of spatial capacities or to a concentration of Roma children from socially disadvantaged environment at schools.

The field work took place in five selected locations in Slovakia, with a focus on municipalities of varying sizes— from metropolises with over 100,000 inhabitants to rural villages with fewer than 2,000 residents. This approach allows the research to capture the nuanced challenges and opportunities in municipalities of varying scales and demographics, providing a more comprehensive view of the complexities involved in implementing educational desegregation efforts.

In each of the localities, the research methodology involved direct engagement with a diverse set of stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the varied needs, barriers, and challenges present. This included in-depth interviews with mayors and representatives from educational, social, and transportation departments within the municipalities. These interviews sought to uncover the administrative and logistical frameworks that could influence the implementation of a desegregation or busing initiative.

Furthermore, focus groups were conducted with Roma parents from potential sending schools, providing invaluable insights into the community's perspectives, concerns, and expectations regarding educational accessibility and integration. To augment the depth of our analysis, online questionnaires were distributed to directors and teachers of both potential sending and receiving schools, aiming to gather a broad spectrum of opinions and experiences within the educational environment.

This annex, intended as a supplemental resource to the primary study, aims to enrich the broader discussion by presenting grounded evidence and practical considerations from the Slovak context to formulate broader set of policy and policy-implementation recommendations that would contribute to the process of educational desegregation in Slovakia.

It's important to note the limitations inherent in this field of research. While providing valuable perspectives, the findings are illustrative of the specific municipalities studied and may only be universally applicable with careful consideration of local conditions and needs. The research highlights the necessity for customised approaches in addressing educational and social challenges, especially given the differential impacts and requirements identified across the spectrum of municipality sizes from large urban centres to small rural villages.

Methodology

The field research employed a qualitative research design to capture nuanced insights into perceptions, barriers and needs. This approach was chosen for its ability to provide a detailed understanding of the complex issues surrounding the education and integration of Roma children.

Data Collection Methods: Online Questionnaires: Distributed to one sending and one receiving school in each selected locality, targeting a total of 10 school directors and 26 teachers. The questionnaires were designed to collect data on educational practices, challenges, and the perceived impact of a potential busing project.

Semi-structured Interviews: Conducted with 17 representatives from five selected localities (seven municipalities in total), including mayors, vice-mayors, directors from the education, social service, and transport departments, and a social worker. The interviews aimed to gather diverse perspectives on local challenges, transportation needs, and integration strategies.

Focus Groups: Five focus group discussions were held with 40 Roma parents from potential sending municipalities to delve into community-specific issues, parental concerns, and suggestions for improving educational access and integration.

Site Visits and Observations: Conducted in selected municipalities to complement the data collected through questionnaires and interviews, providing contextual understanding and firsthand observations of local conditions.

Ethical Considerations: The study was conducted in accordance with ethical research standards, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw. Efforts were made to maintain cultural sensitivity and respect towards all participants, particularly when engaging with Roma communities.

Research Timeframe: The fieldwork for the study was conducted from February to March 2024, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the current educational and transportation realities faced by Roma children in the selected localities.

Summary of Findings

Transportation Needs and Solutions

- Field research highlighted the unique transportation challenges faced by smaller municipalities, especially those with segregated Roma settlements situated far from municipal centres. This underscores the necessity for busing initiatives to extend the focus not only on facilitating access to distant educational institutions but also consider the intra-municipal transportation needs to ensure safe, and accessible education opportunities.
- Smaller municipalities might benefit from owning a vehicle for a more personalised transport approach, though collaboration with neighbouring municipalities or higher-level administrative support might be necessary for very small villages due to resource constraints.
- Representatives of rural municipalities suggested that appointing a coordinator for each municipality could be beneficial due to capacity constraints. This coordinator would be tasked with overseeing project management and supervising the support staff.
- During the fieldwork, it emerged that larger municipalities with substantial Roma populations and existing bus networks identified financing travel costs as an efficient solution to support the transportation of socio-economically disadvantaged students. This approach aims to mitigate the challenges posed by inadequate public transportation options. Furthermore, the introduction of free transport for all school-age children was considered a potential strategy to address the concerns raised by non-Roma parents regarding exclusive free transport access for Roma children.
- Roma parents raised concerns regarding the implications of longer travel distances for their children, including the potential for increased safety risks and difficulties in participating in school-related activities, such as parent-teacher meetings.
- Lastly, the fieldwork revealed that financial constraints significantly impact several Roma families, making it difficult to afford bus tickets for school transportation. This situation sometimes forces children to endure long walks to school, exacerbating the challenges faced by families with multiple children and underscoring the necessity for targeted support in transportation initiatives.

Comprehensive Support During Transportation

- Roma parents and educational administrators emphasised the importance of having a trusted adult conversant in the Romani language, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive measures to ensure the safety and comfort of children during their commute and provide a sense of security.
- Roma parents expressed concern over potential emergencies in which they could not reach their children quickly due to a lack of personal transportation and poor public transport links to the municipality, which would also hinder their ability to attend parent-teacher meetings.
- Concerns have been raised by Roma parents about the quality and safety of buses provided by some municipal transport services.

Educational Integration and Classroom Dynamics

- Fieldwork findings highlight significant insights into educational integration and support for Roma children within the educational system:
- Support Mechanisms and Staff Training: There is a recognised need to prepare receiving schools with the necessary support mechanisms. Training staff in cultural competency and inclusive practices and providing access to psychologists and specialised teams are critical to fostering successful integration. These measures aim to ensure a balanced and inclusive learning environment that does not overwhelm existing structures.
- Challenges and Strategies for Integration: The fieldwork reveals challenges in integrating Roma children with students from the majority. Issues such as insufficient home preparation and restricted vocabulary directly impact Roma students' learning capacities.
- Capacity and Readiness of Schools: Responses from educational professionals indicate a significant lack of preparedness and resistance to desegregation initiatives. Many schools, particularly potential receiving schools, express concerns over the practical feasibility of integration, citing a need for more resources and potential impacts on academic standards, school reputation, and the fear of the "white flight".
- The fieldwork findings underscore reducing class sizes as a critical factor in creating conducive conditions for integrating Roma children into schools. This measure is supported by educators, who see it as essential to effective teaching and individualised support, and Roma parents, who believe it provides a safer and more positive learning environment for their children. Balancing Roma students' educational and social needs with the logistics of classroom management and resource allocation presents a challenge that requires thoughtful planning and dedicated resources.
- Roma Parents' Concerns and Satisfaction: Roma parents are generally satisfied with their children's education. This satisfaction stems from the proximity and familiarity of the educational setting, which is seen as accessible and culturally accommodating.
- Concerns about Safety and Integration: Alongside satisfaction, significant concerns were raised about the safety of young students travelling to distant schools and the challenges of integrating into mixed ethnic environments. Parents worry about the physical safety and emotional well-being of young students who must navigate longer distances and adapt to classrooms where they might be in the minority.
- Fear of Bullying and Discrimination: A critical concern for Roma parents is the fear of bullying and discrimination their children may face in mixed ethnic environments. This fear is particularly pronounced for parents contemplating the shift from a segregated educational setting to a more integrated one, highlighting apprehensions about potential hostile interactions and the psychological impact on their children.
- Dissatisfaction with Segregated Double Shift Operations: Some parents expressed dissatisfaction with the education provided in segregated classes, especially those operating in a double-shift system. This system often places Roma children in the afternoon shift, which is seen to offer a reduced curriculum and exacerbate educational disparities. Parents are concerned that such segregation not only limits their children's educational opportunities but also reinforces social isolation and inequality.
- Educators' Views on Integration Capacity: Educators, including teachers and school directors, have expressed opinions on the optimal number of Roma children per class to ensure successful integration without overwhelming the existing structures. A commonly mentioned figure suggests that integrating from one up to five Roma students in a class of 25 could be manageable without significantly altering class dynamics. This approach is seen as a way to ensure that Roma children receive the support they need while maintaining a balanced and inclusive learning environment that benefits all students.
- Roma Parents' Perspective on Integration: Roma parents emphasize the importance of the 'family approach' when considering the distribution of Roma children across schools and classes. This approach entails keeping family members or children from the same community together to provide mutual support and ease the transition into a mixed-ethnic environment. Parents believe that having at least 5-6 Roma children in a class would help mitigate concerns over safety, bullying, and integration challenges by providing a sense of security and familiarity in an otherwise new setting.
- Concerns about Bullying and Discrimination: Both educators and Roma parents highlight the need for careful consideration of integration strategies to prevent bullying and discrimination.

Addressing Essential Needs for Well-being and Attendance

- Fieldwork findings reveal significant challenges some children from marginalised communities face, emphasizing the critical need for basic necessities such as food, clothing, and hygiene to ensure their well-being and consistent attendance at school.
- Nutritional Support: The necessity of providing meals at school is highlighted as crucial, especially for families experiencing material deprivation. Teachers report that socio-economic disparities lead to challenges like bullying and affect students' self-esteem and comfort. The study finds that providing suitable attire during colder months and offering meals at school are vital in preventing absenteeism due to illness or inadequate clothing.
- Material Deprivation: Material deprivation is a significant barrier to consistent school attendance, with children frequently missing school due to a lack of adequate clothing and the instability caused by fluctuating family locations. The study notes instances of children from the most impoverished families collecting plastic bottles to earn money for food, suggesting that school-provided snacks and lunches could significantly motivate attendance.
- Hygiene and Health: Some Roma parents describe hygiene issues, with children suffering from lice and scabies, leading to frequent school absences. In one marginalised community, Roma parents associated the high costs with maintaining basic hygiene due to fees at community hygiene centres.
- Housing Quality and Access to Water: The municipality representatives also link improved school attendance and educational outcomes to better housing quality and access to water, indicating a broader context of living conditions affecting educational participation.

Challenges in Schools Predominantly Attended by Roma Children

- Educational Barriers: Educators in schools predominantly attended by Roma children reported encountering significant challenges, including language barriers, lack of home preparation, socio-economic hardships, and a general disengagement from education. These issues underscore the necessity for adopting smaller class sizes, individualised teaching approaches, and the integration of IT technologies, alongside the support of professionals well-versed in Roma culture and language.
- Impact of Homogeneous Class Composition: According to some educators, the homogeneous composition of Roma students within certain classes has led to a lower interest in education and poor school attendance. Educators emphasize the importance of a diverse student population to enrich the learning experience and foster higher engagement and attendance rates.
- Views on Desegregation: There's a mixture of support and concern regarding desegregation efforts. While some educators and some municipal representatives prioritise inclusive education for enhancing Roma children's communication skills and integration, worries about the logistical challenges and potential societal resistance, particularly anti-Roma sentiments, and "white flight" present significant hurdles.
- Parental Satisfaction and Concerns: Satisfaction levels among Roma parents vary, with those whose children attend mainstream primary schools in mixed classes expressing contentment. In contrast, dissatisfaction arises among parents whose children are in segregated, afternoon-shift classes, highlighting issues with segregation and reduced curriculum.
- Class Size and Curriculum Adaptations: Educators advocate for more manageable class sizes and curriculum tailored to address the unique needs of Roma students. They believe that smaller classes and individualized approaches can significantly improve educational outcomes for these students.
- Resistance from Receiving Schools: While the sending schools, located within a Roma community, have adapted to the unique challenges faced by its students, most of the receiving schools exhibited apprehension towards integration. This resistance stems from concerns over resource allocation, maintaining educational standards, class dynamics, and "white flight".

Active Engagement, Collaboration, and Financial Support

- Active Engagement and Collaboration Essential for Success: Fieldwork highlights the critical role of active engagement and collaboration among schools, local communities, and government bodies in the success of busing initiatives and desegregation efforts. The inclusive participation of minority and majority parents

in planning and feedback processes is fundamental, underscoring a community-centred approach to educational reform.

- Continuous feedback and a robust monitoring and evaluation framework are vital for assessing and adjusting these initiatives.
- **Challenges in Small Municipalities with Marginalised Roma Communities:** Some small municipalities with marginalised Roma communities lack sending schools, requiring Roma students to be bussed to schools in other municipalities. Challenges encompass the unsuccessful attempts to establish joint school catchment areas with neighbouring municipalities, highlighting the difficulties in ensuring equitable access to education in these situations. Resistance from potential receiving municipalities to desegregation efforts coupled with the prevalence of anti-Roma sentiment might pose significant barriers to the integration and acceptance of Roma children in local educational settings. The emphasis on portraying a positive image of the Roma within the broader community to counteract negative stereotypes highlights the importance of media representation and community perception in the success of these initiatives.

The following main aspects of busing and desegregation programmes are covered in the qualitative field survey:

Logistics: All aspects related to distance to school, transportation in terms of organisation (stops, departure times, itineraries), operators, ownership of vehicles, fares, fare inspection, safety etc.

Capacity: All issues related to the capacity of receiving schools in terms of space, teachers, teacher assistants, staff working with children with special educational needs and learning difficulties.

Relationships: Relationships between students, particularly between Roma and non-Roma students, between students and teachers, parents and teachers, and between parents, especially between Roma parents and parents of the majority population.

Attitudes: Any attitudes of any agents and stakeholders that affect busing programmes and broader desegregation measures, including stereotypes towards Roma, fears concerning desegregation on behalf of Roma and Slovak parents, preferences for closeness to school, sense of belonging and community. Parent engagement is a special subcategory that can be analysed also separately.

Social standing: All aspects related to poverty and social disparities, including the enrolment of students from extremely poor background into an environment with students of much higher social standing. Support participation of children from disadvantaged families in any activities and events that generate additional costs for parents, e.g. sports, travels etc.

Governance: Any decisions affecting busing programmes and broader desegregation measures taken by school authorities such as school headmasters, mayors and deputy mayors, regional and national authorities.

Teaching and learning: Any issues with teaching and learning that may arise from mixing students from MRCs with other students such as increased class sizes, demand for more teachers and teacher assistants, experience of pedagogical staff in working with students from MRCs, need for additional training of pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff, large skill differentials in class, maintaining discipline etc.

Support measures: This is a residual category containing all support measures that are not related to logistics, physical capacity to enrol students or changes in pedagogical practices (teaching and learning). Such support measures may include but are not limited to community work, social support and social services, subsidised or free food, clothing, learning materials including digital tools.

Table 1. Qualitative study coding

Aspects/challenges	Description	Response and risk mitigation
Logistics		
	Bad condition and poor maintenance of vehicles. Arriving late to school or missing school due to vehicle failure.	
	Overcrowded public transport.	Priority boarding for students used in some locations. Details of organization of priority boarding can vary a lot.
	Safety concerns, over crowdedness of public transport.	Transport in some locations organized in special buses (accompanied by parents and school employees)
	Children from the community are bused to a school which is about 8 km away – necessitating bus transport. The receiving school is established by a private founder (NGO). Bus used by adult members of the community as well, rarely if ever used by non-Roma; no fare inspection.	Schools (not only municipalities) could be made eligible beneficiaries for the purchase of a school bus.
	Problem with the frequency of departures, as children attend after school clubs	Public bus itineraries can be adapted (this may require some sort of public subsidy). Municipality could covers directly the costs of the transport company. School buses may have to travel several times.
	Parents drive their children by car, creating a dangerous space around school at rush hour.	
	The opportunity to participate in after-school activities is important.	Staying for after-school activities has logistical aspects – departure times of transport, location of bus stops.
Large metropolitan areas	Public transport of good quality and regular departures is available (large metropolitan areas).	
Capacity	Integrate a smaller number of Roma children into one school to avoid overburden, too large classes.	Some mayors suggest moving just 1 Roma student per class: in most places this is not feasible.
	Not enough teachers or insufficient number of teachers with specific skills.	Expanding the inclusion team, staff proficient in the Roma language, and reducing the number of students in classes. Employing additional teachers or teacher assistants
Relationships	Resistance from parents from the majority	Fewer students transported from sending to receiving schools.

		Sometimes it is impossible to desegregate without transferring more students than prescribed as there are simply not enough schools with significant capacity.
Parent engagement	Roma parents are less engaged with school. Roma parents from MRCs participate less in parent associations. Larger distances can lead to even fewer contacts between Roma parents and teachers or teacher assistants.	Consider organizing parent gatherings in the villages from which Roma students come in order to make sure that Roma parents are involved as well as to discuss any specific issues that Roma students may face.
	Teachers have fewer contacts with Roma parents from MRCs	
Cultural differences		
Different attitudes towards school		Put Roma and non-Roma children in contact with each other during extracurricular activities prior to starting busing student into regular classes (theoretic)
Governance		
Catchment areas	Territorial principle of school districts; no plans for busing.	Arguments for and against the territorial principle of school districts.
Closing schools	The municipality has the authority to establish and abolish primary schools through generally binding regulations	
Enrolling students	Enrolment of small numbers of Roma students in multiple schools	
Organised preparation adaptation	School directors and teachers in receiving schools may not be fully aware of all the challenges they will have to address	Training for school directors and deputy directors. Dissemination of available guidelines.
Teaching and learning		
	Both the management of potential receiving schools and the pedagogical staff may lack any experience in working with students from marginalised Roma communities.	
Large disparities in the preparedness for the corresponding grade level.		
Deficiencies, need for remedial programmes.	Insufficient vocabulary or poor command of Slovak language.	
Homework and learning at home.	Parents not able to provide support at home.	Some lessons learned from the times of the pandemic can be useful, i.e., distance learning, online support, offline support

		through community workers and mediators.
Large disparities in the pace of learning.		
Pressure on class dynamics and teaching.	Just a few students per class enrolled	
Lower grades of Roma students after transfer.	A more challenging learning environment and stricter assessment can lead to lower grades as well as real deterioration in learning due to other factors.	Reasons for lower grades need to be determined. Parents and students need to be informed and prepared to avoid shock.
Social standing		
Roma children are bussed while Slovak children are allowed to study close to where they live.		Provide arguments why this should be done. Roma children tend to live in much poorer families, which have less resources and capacity to support them at home. Roma children must be given the chance of exposure to a social and linguistic environment which is very important for their future prospects, both academically and on the labour market.
Fairness	Complaints from non-Roma parents about Roma children having access to free city transport	Provide free transport for all (less cost-effective but simple). Design convincing criteria or arguments why some groups of students can enjoy subsidised ride, i.e., fare-free ride can be provided to families dependent on social benefits.
Social distance, fears	Roma parents previously refused to transfer their children to a special school.	Reasons for any refusal to transfer students should be addressed. Listening to concerns with respect and consideration is important.
Roma parents are less engaged with school.	Roma parents from MRCs participate less in parent associations. Larger distances can lead to even less contacts between Roma parents and teachers or teacher assistants.	Consider organising parent gatherings in the villages from which Roma students come in order to make sure that Roma parents are involved as well as to discuss any specific issues that Roma students may face
	Teachers have fewer contacts with Roma parents from MRCs	
	In some locations bus travel for school children is de facto fare-free as no fare inspection is carried out. But some poor parents feel uncomfortable about letting children go without a ticket.	Informal arrangements can sometimes not work. Clear rules for fare-free ride are preferable.
Support measures		

	Food in materially deprived families is a problem.	Providing free or subsidized (affordable) lunch at school.
	Clothes can be a problem for some families especially in wintertime.	Social benefits in kind or another programme can address material deprivation
	Parents from more remote areas, where the living conditions are much worse (people live in shacks without access to electricity or warm water) may need other support as well.	Address issues of access to water and difficulties in maintaining hygiene, which affect negatively children's health but can also affect relationships at school.

Locality Profiles

Locality A: Metropolis (above 100 000 inhabitants)

This locality belongs to a metropolitan area where at least two types of school clusters are represented. There are clusters of type 1, i.e., smaller potential sending school with many bigger potential receiving schools at a reasonable distance. But the area also features some quite large urban schools with a concentration of Roma students. Busing students from such schools can be a challenge even when schools of comparable size and few students from MRCs are situated in close proximity. A well-designed desegregation programme will often require transferring a limited number of students (2-4) to any specific class, which means that busing hundreds of students will require tens of even hundreds of classes. In addition, students from smaller sending schools may also have to be placed in the same cluster of receiving schools.

This locality is a large metropolitan area with a number of Roma settlements some with a couple of hundred inhabitants, others with more than 1000 inhabitants. Access to public water supply and sewage is almost full with the exception of two settlements where a small percentage of in-habitants are not connected to public sewage. One of the settlements has no garbage collection. Medical services of all types are in close proximity. For many of the settlements it is uncertain whether access to kindergarten is guaranteed. Public transport is available as can be expected for a metropolitan area. However, it should be noted that availability of transport does not guarantee that it is affordable to all citizen and that it is convenient for students in terms of itineraries.

The competencies necessary for the implementation of the desegregation plan lie within the purview of the mayor and the municipal council, in accordance with Act No. 596/2003 on state administration in education and school self-government. Through the delegated exercise of state administration, the municipality has the authority to establish and abolish primary schools through generally binding regulations. The municipality is also empowered to define school catchment areas.

Summary of Interview with key municipal representatives:²⁰¹

The municipality representatives informed the interviewers that the city is the founder of 34 primary schools. The Director of the Education Department stated that the city operates public buses and trams to transport children from smaller city districts with no primary schools to other city districts to ensure compulsory school attendance. This public transport is, however, also used by the rest of the public, with children having priority boarding. These children are not from Roma marginalised communities.

The city also operates a special service to transport physically and mentally disadvantaged children to special primary schools (exclusively organized for this transport) without the obligation to pay the fare. The transport is organised in special buses (accompanied by parents and school employees). This bus service stops explicitly for special school students from around 6:45 to 8 in the morning, collecting all children from different city parts. The

²⁰¹ Interview with representatives of the municipality: director of the education department, the director of the social services department, the representatives of the management of the city transport company

driver stops according to the students' addresses and receives information if a student is not going to school that day.

Roma children residing in the largest marginalised community in the city are educated in two primary schools. One primary school is operated by the city and is located directly in the neighbourhood – without the need for any bus transport. It accommodates around 700 Roma children. The other primary school attended by Roma children from the community is located 8 km away – necessitating bus transport. This primary school is established by a private founder (NGO) and has long-term experience in educating children with special educational needs. About 190 Roma children attend this primary school.

According to the director of the Department of Social Service, Roma's parents ensure the children's escort to the bus, and no assistance is provided by social services workers. The journey to school takes approximately 20-25 minutes. Considering the low socio-economic status of the children, the city does not use a fare inspection system (tariff obligation); besides children, adults from the community also use this service for transport. According to the transport company representative, no non-Roma residents usually use this bus connection. In the past, on occasions when the city started controlling tickets on this route, the students would stop going to school, so the city representatives decided not to conduct a fare inspection system on this bus connection.

According to the transport company representative, this bus is one of the most used. The city would need to supplement it with a bigger vehicle. The bus is fully utilised (about 150 places) mainly from Monday to Wednesday, then slightly drops to 50%. The city currently cannot increase this service. According to the city transport company representative, if new buses are purchased, as is the case every year, then one used bus after modification will be used for this route.

The primary school located directly in the city district inhabited by marginalised Roma has become ethnically homogenous over time. The education department director claims that the school provides a good quality education for Roma children due to the reduced number of students per class. Moreover, the schools employ teacher assistants who work closely with the local Roma community. According to the education department director, the school can thus solve any emerging problems directly with the family. The city's experience tends more towards the local organisation of fulfilling compulsory school attendance based on the territorial principle of school districts. The city does not plan any desegregation in education supported by a busing initiative to transport Roma children to other primary schools in the city.

The head of the education department informed about Roma parents' refusal to transfer their children to a special school outside this location in the past, therefore, believes that Roma parents would not agree to register their children to other city schools. According to the representative, the best solution is for children to be educated as close to their residence as possible: "The best school is the one under the block."

In connection to busing Roma children from marginalised community to different primary schools in the city, the transport company representative stated that, in the past, the city encountered problems in another city district inhabited by a marginalised Roma community. After initiating transport controls focused on tariff obligations, it was found that most school-age children from marginalised Roma communities did not pay for transport. After an agreement with the mayor of this city district, the route between the community's residence and the school is paid for through an order from the municipality, which the transport company invoices.

According to the transport company representative, this model would be a suitable alternative for reducing the carrier's costs concerning school-age children's transportation from the city's largest marginalised community. The city would also like to introduce free transport for all school-age children in response to complaints from non-Roma parents about Roma children having access to free city transport.

Focus Group Discussions

Insights from conversations with Roma community members²⁰²

During the focus group discussions, Roma parents expressed their satisfaction with the education their children receive at the private school, saying “children can learn more”, the opportunity to participate in after-school activities, and the school’s approach to children. Roma parents stated that they consider the private primary school to be a Roma school, saying it feels like “coming home”. The parents know the teachers personally and trust them. Moreover, the school also employ Roma teachers and teaches Romani language. Parents also expressed satisfaction over the small number of children in classes - maximum of 16 students per class.

During the focus group discussion, Roma parents also talked about their previous struggles while trying to enrol their children to other city primary schools attended by non-Roma children, which is, according to them, very difficult. Moreover, they expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of the education provided at the primary schools located directly in the Roma community.

Children travel to the private school by bus operated as public transport by the city. Overall, parents do not consider commuting their children to a distant private school to be problematic or something they would be afraid of. Moreover, they stated that they support it as they want for their children the best education. However, all Roma parents expressed their negative views towards the quality of bus service the city provides for their children. The bus service is problematic in terms of overcrowding. Since this bus service has stops throughout the city and is considered “Roma” bus, it is used by Roma people from the entire city, while the connection frequency is very low. Sometimes, the bus driver refuses 20 – 30 children because the bus is full.

Parents also see a problem with the technical condition of the bus, which, according to them, is unsafe, has “holes”, falling parts, etc. The bus is not air-conditioned. According to parents, children are not transported safely. The bus broke down multiple times and did not arrive, so the children could not get to school. According to parents, the bus has also caught fire. An employee of the private school performs supervision, but does not have the authority to limit the entry of adults into the public transport operated by the city transport company. According to parents, a devoted school bus would be more suitable alternative. This bus service also brings children back to the city district where they live, but there is a problem with the frequency of departures, as children attend after school clubs, etc.

During the focus group discussion, Roma parents also spoke about the financial struggles of some families dependent on social benefits to pay for bus fares. Parents talked about how some students go without tickets. It is generally known that children travel without a ticket, but in some cases, parents do not let children go without a ticket, and if they do not have the finances for the ticket, the child does not go to school.

High school students in the community manage transportation themselves. Financial coverage of travel costs would help those who do not have a scholarship. High school students especially choose dual high schools because of the opportunity to earn money.

Interview with the statutory representative of a non-profit organisation operating the private elementary school²⁰³

In the context of field research, we also interviewed the statutory representative of the non-profit organisation operating the private school attended by Roma children. As one of the few in Slovakia, school also teaches Romani language. The representative stated during the interview that the school successfully managed to engage with Roma children, as the primary school has good school attendance. One of the reasons for this are the many after-school extracurricular activities provided for these children.

²⁰² Focus group discussion with Roma parents whose children are educated in the private school and use public transportation

²⁰³– The statutory representatives also works as a coordinator of healthy regions in the largest city district inhabited by a marginalized Roma community. More information about Healthy Regions can be found here: <https://www.zdraveregiony.eu/projekty/>

Besides problems with the city bus raised by Roma parents, the representative expressed concerns with sometimes low attendance caused by, for example, clothing, which is a problem in winter. Similarly, food in materially deprived families is a problem. The school tries to secure food through a food bank, but it is insufficient.

The representative sees differences in how Roma parents from different communities approach their children's education. She compared the approach of parents from the largest city district with the approach of Roma parents from more remote areas, where the living conditions are much worse – people live in poor accommodations without access to electricity or warm water. Parents try to secure basic needs like warmth and food in such cases. Therefore, for these parents, their children's school attendance is not a priority.

During the interview, the representative informed us that, in the past, private schools used grants to finance school buses. However, due to financial constraints, this initiative ended. According to the representative, a school bus would be a suitable alternative to the current difficulties with public transport. She also added that accompanying children, which could be provided by social services or people from the community, would also help. Employing members of the local community for this purpose can create new job opportunities.

Online Questionnaire Findings

The sending school, attended by Roma students, highlights several educational challenges, including insufficient home preparation and language barriers. Teachers rely on IT technology to enhance student engagement and advocate for additional staff to effectively manage students' diverse needs. There is a consensus on the positive role of desegregation initiatives; however, concerns about class size, logistical challenges, and the current educational structure's capacity to handle integration effectively remain significant.

Conversely, the receiving school, which currently has minimal experience with students from marginalised Roma communities, anticipates difficulties in their inclusion related to high student numbers and the integration of students requiring special education needs. Although the school is experienced in educating children with special educational needs, the school lacks preparedness for the inclusion of children from marginalised Roma communities. Concerns about social rejection and the need for professional development for teachers to handle a diverse classroom environment were also noted.

Responses from teachers and director of a potential sending school

Composition and Dynamics of School Environment: Teachers reported that classes are composed of students from marginalised Roma communities, which significantly influences teaching dynamics. According to the teacher, issues such as insufficient home preparation and restricted vocabulary are common, directly impacting students' learning capacities. The director attributed the demographic concentration (100 % of pupils are Roma children) to the school's location in an area primarily inhabited by the Roma population.

Impact of School Operation Mode on Education: The school does not operate a double-shift operation.

Preparation and Resources for Inclusive Education: A notable point of consensus among teachers was the beneficial role of IT technology in enhancing the educational experience for Roma students. Specific technologies utilised include interactive whiteboards and digital learning platforms, which have maintained student engagement and facilitated a more interactive learning environment. The director recognised the need for additional staff to address broader educational challenges.

Involvement and Perspectives on Desegregation Programs: Opinions varied among teachers regarding the effectiveness and support for desegregation initiatives intended to create a more inclusive educational environment. Some educators supported the initiative, believing it would encourage necessary contact of Roma children with the majority, enabling them to learn and use the Slovak language and integrate them into broader society. On the other hand, educators expressed reservations, pointing out the logistical challenges and the potential strain on educators within currently structured class sizes. If classes were smaller, such integration might

be more feasible and less overwhelming for teachers. The director showed hesitancy regarding the school's involvement in desegregation programmes due to the school's specific geographic and demographic context.

Challenges and Barriers in the Integration Process: Teachers anticipate several challenges in integrating Roma children with students from the majority. Some indicated issues, such as bullying and the problem of inadequate clothing, that affect students' self-esteem and comfort, highlighting the socio-economic disparities that extend beyond the classroom. Moreover, they stated significant differences in home environments between children from the Roma population and children from the majority populations, cooperation with parents, approach to education and different attitudes towards duties and laws. The director indicated a broader staff requirement to address educational challenges but lacks detail on specific needs for combating segregation or fostering inclusion.

Responses from teachers and director of a potential receiving school

Educational Experiences and Attitudes: The school director and teachers stated in the questionnaires that pupils from marginalised Roma communities do not attend their school. However, some mentioned that Roma children who do not come from marginalised communities do attend the school. Both the director and teachers unanimously stated that they have no experience in educating children from marginalised Roma communities.

Views on Segregation and Inclusion: Most teachers, including the director, reported that they had not encountered issues of segregation of Roma students, although some teachers mentioned having some knowledge of the issue. Teachers stated that in the case of inclusion of students from marginalised Roma communities, the problem might be a relatively high number of pupils in classes, considering already high number of integrated students (students with learning disorders, students with autism) who require special attention. Therefore, according to the teachers, it would be difficult to educate all children with special educational needs in one class. The teacher also expressed that the school has specialised sports classes where students professionally engage in hockey and basketball.

Preparedness and Support for Inclusion: The director stated that the school is currently not prepared for the integration of new students from marginalised Roma communities. The school currently has a support team that supports the education of students with disabilities but operates at its maximum capacity. Teachers also mentioned that they believe the school is currently not ready to accept children from marginalised communities. They would need support measures, including expanding the inclusion team, staff proficient in the Romani language, and reducing the number of students in classes. Some educators stated that the school can no longer accept new students for capacity reasons.

Impact on School Dynamics: According to the director and teachers, the arrival of children from marginalised communities would impact teaching and dynamics in the classes and the school. All agreed that the maximum number of newly admitted children should be at most one per class to avoid significant impacts on teaching. The principal mentioned that there would also be mutual social rejection from the legal representatives. Teachers also informed that retraining teachers and employing additional teaching assistants would be necessary.

Locality B: Large-sized city (100 000 - 50 000 inhabitants)

The cluster of schools in this locality belongs to type 1, i.e., it represents a potential sending school with much larger schools, some of which can receive students from the sending school. This situation is typical for sending schools in urban and peri-urban areas as well as in smaller municipalities (peri-urban or rural) located in proximity to large cities and metropolitan areas.

The municipality has 5 Roma settlements with almost 2000 Roma inhabitants, including several hundred who live outside of the official boundary of the settlement, which means that there must be several hundred Roma students in the municipality including students from very marginalised communities. Around 10% of the inhabitants of the settlement do not use public water supply but have their own wells; 30% of households are not connected to the

public sewage system, 5% are not connected to the electricity grid. All types of medical services are available in the settlement. Garbage collection covers all households.

Summary of Interview with key municipal representatives²⁰⁴

The deputy mayor, representatives of the education department, and representatives of the social services department were present at the interview. The city representatives informed that the municipality operates 14 primary schools. There are also private church primary schools in the city.

In the interview, the deputy mayor stated that the city has three major marginalised Roma communities, from which children primarily attend three primary schools in the city. Two of these communities have a primary school situated directly in the location where they live. Children from the third marginalised Roma community in the city have to commute to a school that is approximately 3 km away from their residence. The city has established a school bus for transportation to this school.

The city is now in the process of addressing Roma children's segregated education. Within the city's school network, Roma children from the last-mentioned school could be redistributed to three different schools that are located approximately the same distance from their current school. Therefore, it will be necessary to transport children to these schools.

According to the deputy mayor, the city will face resistance from the parents of the majority population. Therefore, based on the city's experience, they plan to integrate a smaller number of Roma children into one school. According to the deputy mayor, integrating Roma children into schools with children from the majority is very beneficial for marginalised children.

In the interview, the representatives stated that the city will take example from the city of Žilina²⁰⁵ while implementing any desegregation strategy within the municipality. There are two different scenarios possible to desegregate two "Roma" schools located in the city districts inhabited predominantly by Roma communities. The first scenario involves complete close down of segregated schools, and redistribution of pupils to other primary schools. The city representatives expressed the need sensible approach in connection with redistribution of pupils due to possible "white flight".

Busing could serve as a transportation solution for Ukrainian children, facilitating their education in schools of surrounding villages. The city's schools currently have a total capacity for Ukrainian students. Relocating them to nearby municipalities with available space addresses educational capacity issues while ensuring Ukrainian children have access to schooling.

City officials discussed the potential for providing free transportation to all school-age children, focusing on enhancing student commute' safety. The primary concern arises in the morning, as the influx of parents driving their children to school creates hazardous conditions. The city is considering implementing direct school bus services to mitigate these risks. Prioritizing safety, the city representatives acknowledge that while the cost of bus fares is manageable for most families, introducing school buses would significantly improve overall safety in the town. In the conversation, city representatives expressed that possible barriers to the implementation of busing could be the attitudes of parents from the majority and rejection from Roma parents. They fear that the attendance of Roma children might worsen, so the city still needs to work with parents on both sides. The deputy mayor highlighted concerns over potential resistance from primary school directors as a significant challenge to achieving desegregation, emphasizing the need for further engagement with schools.

²⁰⁴ Interview with the deputy mayor, the representative of the education department, and the representative of the social services department.

²⁰⁵ The desegregation effort in Žilina, a city with about 80,000 residents and a Roma population of less than 1%, showcases the use of school district realignments for educational desegregation. In 2017, the municipality announced plans to close an elementary school on Hollého Street, attended by children from Roma and socio-economically disadvantaged families, and redistribute the students to other schools within its jurisdiction. The reason for closing the elementary school was its operational inefficiency, which the city deemed economically unsustainable. For more information, please see Chapter III: The School Segregation Status Quo in Slovakia and the Need of Change, page 44.

The education department's representative underscored the crucial support schools require, including expanding staff capacities by adding teaching assistants, psychologists, and educators specialised in special educational needs. This support extends to material and financial resources and potentially reduces class sizes to manage overcrowding—a factor negatively affecting the school atmosphere. Intriguingly, city-commissioned research found that, despite overcrowding, students in "Roma schools" reported feeling safer than their counterparts in other schools.

City officials view any school closure as part of the desegregation strategy as a gradual process. They advocate for a state-level (Ministry of Education) framework to guide the desegregation efforts, enabling municipalities to effectively communicate and implement these measures, backed by comprehensive documentation and arguments. The deputy mayor specifically pointed out the importance of covering personal costs for supervising children on buses and ensuring the availability of free transport for school-age students as part of the desegregation efforts.

Furthermore, the representative from the education department suggested that the busing initiative could also facilitate the transport of children from marginalised communities to extracurricular activities, thereby increasing their participation. Given the logistical, economic, and organisational barriers to accessing these activities, providing transportation could significantly enhance their engagement. The representative views the provision of joint extracurricular clubs as a vital opportunity for fostering interactions between Roma children and their peers from the majority community.

Focus Group Discussions

Insights from conversations with Roma community members²⁰⁶

Approximately 80 children from the community travel to primary schools using a school bus service, for which they are not charged. Parents emphasize the urgent need for a busing initiative, pointing out the road's poor condition leading to the community. This situation forces the bus to stop farther away, making children walk longer distances to reach it. Parents prefer the school bus, comforted by the presence of a social service worker for supervision, and express satisfaction with the education their children receive.

However, concerns arise with desegregation efforts; parents worry about potential violence against their children in mixed schools and advocate for a system where older children can accompany younger ones for protection. Hence, the family principle should be applied when distributing children to other schools so that older children can protect the younger ones. Discrimination in public spaces and fear of bullying at schools that include non-Roma children are significant concerns. According to the parents, school attendance fluctuates with the receipt of social benefits and pensions or during inclement weather, highlighting variability across families. The need for school-provided meals for the most materially deprived families is underscored, pointing to gaps in support, despite assistance from community centres.

The city houses two principal Roma communities, including the Vlach Roma, known for their enduring family-caste system, which deeply influences community dynamics and individual behaviour. Understanding this system is essential when considering desegregation strategies to ensure they effectively address the unique challenges of Roma students.

This discussion underscores the complex concerns Roma parents have regarding safety, discrimination, and material needs in the face of desegregation and busing efforts. Successful initiatives must tackle transportation challenges, ensure safety and respect at schools, and offer substantial support, reflecting the multifaceted approach needed to address Roma communities' diverse needs and experiences.

Interview with social working from local community centre

²⁰⁶ Focus group discussion with Roma parents whose children commute to school by bus from their locality.

The social worker highlighted the importance of focusing on the needs of the most marginalised individuals, specifically by providing breakfast, lunch, and snacks to enhance school attendance. Previous efforts to improve attendance through snack provisions proved ineffective. The children, driven by immediate hunger, quickly consumed the provided snacks, resulting in a lack of food for the following day and subsequently leading to absenteeism from school.

Online Questionnaire Findings

Responses from teachers and director of a potential sending school

Composition and Dynamics of School Environment: The director and teachers stated that the school is primarily attended by Roma children or children from marginalised Roma communities. This shift started in 2006 when non-Roma children ceased to be enrolled. The absence of a mixed demographic has led to challenges such as a lower interest in education and poor school attendance among pupils.

Preparation and Resources for Inclusive Education: The school operates on a single-shift system. Teachers have utilised various strategies to engage students, such as relying on senior colleagues' advice, preparing interactive lessons and adopting individual approaches.

Involvement and Perspectives on Desegregation Programs: The director expressed support towards any desegregation effort based on past successful experiences with a mixed student population. However, a significant barrier was identified: the need to convince non-Roma parents to enrol their children at the school. Teachers have mixed views on desegregation; they acknowledge its potential benefits but also express concerns about the logistical and social challenges.

Effective Strategies from Teachers in Segregated Classes: Teachers highlighted strategies that helped them in their segregated classes, including gaining authority and advice from experienced colleagues, implementing alternative and engaging teaching methods, adapting educational content to the student's understanding and ensuring consistent repetition, and emphasizing individualised approaches to cater to each student's needs.

Challenges and Barriers in the Integration Process: A significant challenge highlighted is the anti-Roma sentiment that could affect desegregation efforts. Teachers also noted the need for a conducive learning environment fostering motivation and engagement among Roma students. They emphasized the lack of diversity in current classes as a hindrance to effective learning.

Views on Desegregation and Integration: There is a consensus among school staff that desegregation could lead to positive outcomes. Introducing non-Roma students into the classroom could provide Roma students with positive role models, thereby improving their motivation and educational performance. However, this is contingent upon overcoming societal biases and logistical issues.

Impact of Desegregation: Teachers expect that desegregation would positively alter the school dynamics by improving attendance and educational outcomes and providing better future opportunities for students. They foresee an environment where Roma students can benefit from being alongside non-Roma peers, which could help bridge the educational gap.

Overall Support for Desegregation: The overall sentiment from the school's director and teachers leans towards support for desegregation, underpinned by the belief that a diverse educational setting could enhance learning outcomes. However, there is acknowledgment of the considerable efforts required to make such initiatives successful, including changing societal attitudes, ensuring adequate resources, and fostering an inclusive school culture.

Responses from a director of a potential receiving school²⁰⁷

Educational Experiences and Attitudes: The director of the potential receiving school indicated that children from marginalised Roma communities do not attend their school and also mentioned no prior experience in educating children from these communities. This lack of experience could signify a significant gap in understanding and addressing the unique needs of Roma students. The absence of Roma children in the school and lack of experience could reflect broader societal issues and contribute to educational segregation.

Views on Segregation and Inclusion: The director did not acknowledge segregation in education as an issue and expresses no support for the inclusion of children from marginalised Roma communities. This stance can indicate a resistance to desegregation efforts, aligning with concerns expressed by representatives from the city regarding potential resistance from receiving schools. The director's reluctance to support inclusion initiatives could reflect broader systemic barriers and societal attitudes that need to be addressed to facilitate meaningful desegregation.

Preparedness and Support for Inclusion: The director clearly stated that the school is not prepared for the inclusion of new students from marginalised Roma communities, citing a lack of staff as a primary concern. This response suggests a need for significant structural changes and resources, including trained personnel, to support the successful integration of Roma students. The lack of readiness might also mirror a lack of willingness to engage with the complexities associated with the desegregation process.

Impact on School Dynamics: The director expressed that the arrival of children from marginalised communities would impact the school but did not elaborate on this. The suggestion that no more than one Roma child per class would be acceptable reflects a cautious or even resistant approach to integration, potentially fostering an environment where Roma children could feel isolated or singled out. This approach does not seem conducive to creating an inclusive and supportive educational setting.

The analysis of the director's responses from the potential receiving school points towards a significant lack of preparedness and resistance to desegregation initiatives. The lack of experience with Roma students, coupled with the director's attitudes towards integration, underlines the critical need for comprehensive support systems, training, and a shift in mind-set to create more inclusive educational environments. These findings align with the broader challenges of desegregation and the necessity for coordinated efforts at all levels to ensure equitable access to quality education for all children.

Locality C: Medium-sized city (50 000 – 19 000 inhabitants)

This locality has a cluster of schools belonging to type 1 or type 3, i.e. Potential sending schools are small compared to potential receiving schools and there is more than one receiving schools for each sending school. One of the potential receiving schools is significantly bigger, if it is not taken into account, the cluster would rather belong to type 3 – a sending school with a few potential receiving schools of comparable or a bit bigger size. Physical capacity and the available human resource of receiving schools to enrol bussed students should be thoroughly assessed for each potential receiving school. Pedagogical, attitudinal and other factors also need to be addressed.

The municipality has almost 2000 Roma inhabitants, all of them live within the settlement. Access to all basic services – water, sewage, electricity and garbage collection cover all households. According to the ARC, there is no shortage of places in kindergartens. Medical services, including a paediatrician's office, are located in the settlement. Public transport is also available. The municipality has a community centre.

²⁰⁷ Disclaimer: Teachers from this potential receiving school did not participate in the questionnaire, and despite several attempts, the school's broader faculty responses could not be analysed. This absence of engagement could be connected to the possible resistance towards desegregation initiatives, echoing concerns about reluctance from the receiving schools highlighted in interviews with city representatives. The director's brief responses further underscore this sense of resistance, highlighting a significant need for dialogue, education, and structural support to overcome barriers to successful integration.

Summary of Interview with key municipal representatives²⁰⁸

In the interview, the mayor stated that the city's general binding regulation establishes school catchment areas for city primary schools, allowing parents to choose schools for their children. The city encompasses a marginalised Roma community on its outskirts.

There is one school attended exclusively by Roma children from marginalised communities. Its allocated facility, which has first four grade classes, is situated in the marginalised Roma community. Parents have the right to choose whether they want their child to attend the main primary school in the city, or the allocated facility located in the community.

Historically, parents have tended to enrol their children in the community-located facility, reflecting a natural preference. Despite this, both Roma and non-Roma parents retain the freedom to choose any city school. However, there have been no instances of non-Roma parents choosing schools predominantly attended by Roma children. Conversely, Roma parents prefer the community-based facility, citing proximity as a key factor.

Upon reaching fifth grade, Roma children transition to the main school, navigating a busy secondary road. The school director highlighted challenges such as material deprivation affecting attendance, with children often missing school due to inadequate clothing and fluctuating family locations across Slovakia and abroad. The director noted that the provisioning of meals at school could potentially boost attendance.

The school director claims that attendance decreases with the social benefits and pensions that their parents receive. Sometimes, the absence is up to 70%. Fluctuation of children across Slovakia and abroad is also a problem. According to the school director, busing children to the main school would not increase attendance. According to the elementary school director, the motivation to attend school is based on social benefits, which are conditional on children's attendance at school. The director mentioned in the interview that, if meals were provided at school, the children would attend. In his opinion, if breakfasts were prepared at school, the participation of the most excluded would increase.

The allocated facility currently operates on a dual-shift operation due to space constraints. Despite children's eligibility to attend from age three, enrolment typically occurs only at the compulsory pre-primary level. Efforts to transition away from the dual-shift system and address language and self-service skill deficits among first graders are ongoing. Additionally, the city has explored transferring Roma children to schools with majority populations, observing smooth integration until puberty, when challenges arise.

The head of social services stated that the settlement does not need an increase in support services; they have an adequate framework and portfolio of programmes. The main problem is the onset of puberty in teenagers and their rejection of services, and prejudices of community members. There is potential in one smaller location in the city. However, the problem is the lack of field health programmes; they are currently battling drug use by children, sexually transmitted diseases, parasitic diseases, and insufficient health education.

The mayor sees the busing project as a solution for municipalities lacking educational facilities and need to transport children to other locations or for municipalities that can no longer cover the demand for places in schools within their jurisdiction. The mayor further mentioned that it could be utilised within the city, but he fears that the bus service will not be sufficiently utilised due to poor school attendance of Roma children. The mayor presented an experience that during the reconstruction of a school, bus transportation was used about ten years ago, but it lost its effect; parents "made a trip" to the city, and the children still did not go to school.

However, he sees a potential in transporting some Roma children with disabilities to a special school that is located further away from the community, and parents do not usually enrol their children there due to the need to commute there.

²⁰⁸ Interview with the mayor, director of an elementary school located in the community, representative of the city's transport department, and head of the social services department.

The mayor stated that the city is currently developing a Transport Service Plan through Žilina University, with the potential use of bus transportation (contracted carrier) as school buses so the city could effectively set the strategy for public transportation.

Concluding, the mayor expressed optimism for clear and well-set calls for busing, provided they do not impose undue burdens on the city and offer meaningful services to its citizens. While acknowledging financial co-participation possibilities, the mayor lamented the council's lack of priority for marginalised Roma communities.

Focus Group Discussions

Insights from conversations with Roma community members

During the focus group discussions, Roma parents stated that most parents opt to enrol their children to the allocated facility of the primary school located in the community. However, some of the children also attend a special school located further away from the community. Children who commute to this school must buy bus tickets (0.50 euros/one-way) that might be very costly for some families.

Parents expressed their willingness to allow their children to attend schools in other parts of the city, which hinges on providing accompaniment and free transportation, highlighting the importance of safety measures during transit. The availability of free transportation was particularly underscored as a means to reduce the financial burden on families and ensure the safety of children en route to school. Parents also indicated that material support, notably food provision at school, is crucial for motivating children. They pointed out that school attendance varies greatly among children, with many facing consistent absences due to various issues, including material deprivation and poor school environments that offer little hope or motivation for future prospects.

The need for improved school quality and atmosphere was noted as another significant factor that could enhance motivation and attendance. Parents also spoke about the nutritional deprivation faced by the most impoverished families, where children collect plastic bottles to earn money to buy food, suggesting that providing snacks and lunches at school could serve as a strong incentive for attendance. The potential for free transportation to motivate high school students was discussed, considering the minimal family budgets restricting educational aspirations.

Hygiene issues were a concern among many parents, who described the struggles in maintaining essential cleanliness for their children, leading to frequent school absences. Children suffer from parasitic diseases such as lice, have scabies all over their bodies, and wear “smelly” clothes. Their hygiene standard is very low, which is why teachers send children home from school. Parents subsequently write excuses, which the school accepts based on guidelines. The challenge of ensuring proper hygiene, coupled with the high costs associated with community hygiene centres (0.50 euros/shower; 1.50 euros/laundry), exacerbates the difficulties the poorest families face.

Parents also touched upon the broader social challenges and discrimination the community faces, particularly highlighting the adverse effects of societal exclusion on children's educational opportunities and future job prospects. The exclusion of community members following the killing of a non-Roma woman in the city by a Roma individual, residing in an area known for its negative reputation, obtaining a diploma from what is perceived as a substandard school with limited job opportunities for its graduates, and facing discrimination in the employment sector, all contribute to the prevailing gloomy outlook on educational opportunities and future prospects.

Online Questionnaire Findings

Responses from teachers and director of a potential sending school

Composition and Dynamics of School Environment: The director reported that the school is attended by Roma children from marginalised community. Teachers have not specifically commented on the composition of their classes in the provided answers, but from the context, it can be inferred that they are primarily teaching Roma children. The lack of student interest in education and parental guidance is highlighted as a significant issue.

Impact of School Operation Mode on Education: The school operates in a double-shift model due to spatial constraints, as shared by the director, which affects the allocated workplace's operation for 1st to 4th graders. Teachers' responses indicated mixed opinions on double-shift operations; however, specific impacts on teaching resulting from this operational mode were not clearly detailed in their responses.

Preparation and Resources for Inclusive Education: No specific comments were made by the teachers or the director regarding the preparation and resources for inclusive education in their survey responses. However, during the interview, the director highlighted the educational approach adjusted for the first graders due to language and self-service skills, which indirectly touches upon the resources for inclusive education.

Involvement and Perspectives on Desegregation Programmes: Teachers and the director showed reluctance towards desegregation programmes. The director is unsure about supporting such initiatives, citing issues like lice, low hygiene standards among students, and insufficient self-service skills. Teachers express scepticism about the effectiveness of transporting children to schools outside their community, suggesting that without a genuine interest in education from both students and parents, mere physical inclusion in different schools might not yield the expected improvements.

Challenges and Barriers in the Integration Process: The responses revealed significant challenges in integrating Roma children with those from the majority population, including socio-economic disparities, such as inadequate clothing and a general lack of engagement with education from the Roma community's perspective. The director and teachers highlighted issues such as absenteeism tied to social benefits, hygiene problems, and educational disengagement. The comments from the teachers also suggest a possible anti-Roma sentiment, reflecting a deeper societal and systemic issue that impacts the educational integration process.

Responses from teachers and director of a potential receiving school

Educational Experiences and Attitudes: According to the school director, the school is attended by children from marginalised Roma communities, comprising about 16% of the student body. Despite the presence of these students, there is a clear indication from the director and teachers that there is resistance to further inclusion. Teachers report issues with attendance, lack of home preparation, and poor hygiene among Roma students, significantly influencing classroom dynamics and learning outcomes.

Views on Segregation and Inclusion: The director and teachers are generally resistant to desegregation initiatives. They predict difficulties with integrating these students, citing concerns such as absenteeism and lack of basic hygiene practices. The director does not support desegregation programmes due to potential negative effects, such as the departure of non-Roma students to other schools. Teachers have mixed feelings; while some see potential issues with an increase in non-compliant and absentee students, others show no explicit stance against such programmes.

Preparedness and Support for Inclusion: Significant challenges and barriers identified include health issues among Roma students (e.g., scabies, lice, hepatitis, syphilis), substance abuse, and a lack of hygiene habits. Teachers noted challenges with attendance and adaptability among Roma students, emphasizing that increased numbers could exacerbate problems with attendance, hygiene, and classroom relationships. The director and teachers express a clear lack of readiness for inclusive education. They highlight a lack of necessary support structures such as psychologists, special educators, and social workers. The director specifically pointed out that no supportive measures would help without the interest and willingness to integrate from the marginalised community itself.

Impact on School Dynamics: The principal and teachers predict that integrating children from marginalised communities would significantly impact the school's dynamics. Teachers fear that increasing the number of Roma students could disrupt the educational environment and exacerbate existing challenges, such as absenteeism and hygiene issues. The director stated explicitly that including children from Roma communities would likely lead to the departure of other students to different schools. When asked about the acceptable number of Roma children in each class, the director and some teachers suggest that the figure should be zero, reflecting a strong reluctance

to change the current composition and dynamics of the classroom environment. One teacher, however, stated one to two children would be still manageable.

The potential receiving school exhibits a significant degree of resistance and apprehension towards the integration of students from marginalised Roma communities. The identified barriers range from material (such as hygiene and absenteeism) to systemic (such as the lack of support staff and educational resources). The responses underscore a need for comprehensive strategies that address not only the in-school support mechanisms but also broader societal attitudes and policies to foster genuine inclusivity and equity in education.

Locality D: Small-sized municipalities (19 000 – 2000 inhabitants)

This locality represents a cluster of schools spanning across many small rural municipalities and a few bigger towns. The cluster is of type 1, representing potential sending schools with many bigger potential receiving schools in close proximity. From the point of view of logistics and capacity this situation is possibly the most favourable in terms of implementing desegregation initiatives, but many additional factors can affect the implementation of a busing programme, including pedagogical and attitudinal.

In this locality, the field research covers two municipalities: the sending municipality lacks a sufficient capacity at the existing primary school:

Locality D1 – sending municipality. The first municipality is among those with the highest concentration of Roma in Slovakia: it has about 2000 Roma inhabitants. The majority of the inhabitants are Roma, residing in a segregated settlement approximately 1 km from the municipality's centre. The municipality operates one primary school and one kindergarten. The kindergarten is located within the municipality and operates in two shifts due to capacity constraints. The elementary school's main building is also within the municipality, while its larger, annexed part is situated in the segregated Roma settlement. The annexed part operates in two shifts due to capacity constraints. Special classes are housed in the original building within the municipality, alongside mainstream classes for second graders. The remainder of the mainstream classes are located in a separate building adjacent to the Roma settlement. Only Roma children attend the kindergarten, as well as the school in this municipality. Non-Roma parents transport their children to kindergartens and schools in other localities. A development team also operates in the village.²⁰⁹ All households have access to public water supply and 9 in 10 households have access to public sewage. Access to garbage is also secured for all households. A large majority of households rely on solid fuel for heating, but there are no indications that this has affected the quality of air in the settlement. The closest medical services are located 5 km away – a distance which is not large for people who have access to transport. There is however not any bus stop in the settlement.

Locality D2 – receiving municipality. The second municipality has 2 Roma settlements with a total of about 200 Roma inhabitants according to the ARC. Roma live within the boundary of the settlement. Access to basic communal services is quite good including almost full access to water and sewage, garbage collection. There are no problems with access to kindergartens in terms of availability of places, which means that probably Roma students are better prepared for school. GPs and paediatricians are available at close proximity as well as public transport.

Summary of Interview with the mayor of a potential sending municipality

In the interview, the mayor stated that approximately 90 per cent of the municipality's inhabitants are Roma. According to the mayor, about 30 per cent of the Roma population lives in deplorable conditions. He considers the coexistence between the majority and the minority to be good. He faces mainly problems with Roma people who have moved into the village from other locations. According to the mayor, the municipality faces issues with land settlement and the legalisation of illegal construction.

²⁰⁹ National project Development teams (Národný projekt – Rozvojové tímy) - Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities, more information available at: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/narodne-projekty/narodny-projekt-rozvojove-timy-i/>

Concerning education, the municipality is currently in the process of eliminating the two-shift operation in the kindergarten. The municipality also applied for funds from the Ministry of Education²¹⁰ to extend the container school (annexed part of the school in the segregated Roma settlement) that operates in two shifts. However, according to the mayor, the Ministry rejected the project since it did not meet the 3D principle.²¹¹ He is now facing a problem on how to solve and eliminate the two-shift operation.

There is no available land around the original school built within the municipality. According to the mayor, this school building is also attended only by Roma children. Almost all non-Roma children from the municipality attend schools in other localities.

The mayor does not consider the education acquired in the local school to be of good quality; according to him, the school and Roma parents, who sometimes need to take care of their children sufficiently, are responsible. He also informed about a few Roma families from the segregated Roma settlement who transport their children to elementary schools and kindergartens in the nearby city due to their concerns about the level of education received in local schools and due to their wish for their children to attend schools together with children from the majority population.

The mayor expressed that he considers inclusive education as very important for Roma children and their future. As a Roma himself, he sees the benefits, especially from the perspective of developing children's communication skills. In many cases, Roma children speak only Roma in home environment.

The mayor informed that he would be interested in applying for funding opportunities or grant calls to ensure busing for children. According to the mayor, the municipal council would also support this plan. He expressed that, however, he might feel resistance from some Roma parents. The resistance might arise because children will have to travel longer distances, and parents would have problems attending parents' meetings.

He also stated that some families, due to their children's commuting, might face problems in meeting the materials needed to be connected to it—to ensure proper clothing, especially during winter, or to provide adequate food (lunches and snacks).

The municipality encounters challenges due to limited public transport options. Only three bus routes currently serve the village, which terminates within the village centre. This arrangement presents difficulties for inhabitants of the segregated area—predominantly Roma residents—located about 1 km from the village centre, as they lack direct transport access. This scarcity of convenient transportation complicates daily commutes and adversely affects the employment opportunities available to the community's residents.

A development team also operates in the village, cooperating with the school to improve children's school attendance. The team also works closely with the families in the areas of housing, youth, education, and social counselling.

The mayor sees an opportunity to cooperate with the members of the development team during any busing initiative to assist children and families, accompany the children on the buses, etc. In an interview, he also stated that in the case of any grant call for municipalities to ensure busing, he sees it as a better option for the municipality to

²¹⁰ The Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MESRS SR) runs a call for submitting of applications for funding from the Recovery and Resilience Support Mechanism for the area of eliminating two-shift operation of primary schools. From 24.8.2022, primary schools operating in two shifts can apply for funding for projects aimed at its elimination. The purpose of the call is to expand the capacities of primary schools through new constructions, extensions, superstructures, and renovations of existing buildings. At the same time, the goal in the renovated spaces is to achieve a saving of primary energy of at least 30%. By the end of the year 2026, the two-shift operation should be eliminated in at least 35 primary schools by this method. More information can be found here: <https://www.minedu.sk/vyzva-na-odstranenie-dvojzmennej-prevadzky-zakladnych-skol/>

²¹¹ Principles of desegregation, deghettoization, and destigmatization. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport of the Slovak Republic for the submission of applications for funding from the Recovery and Resilience Support Mechanism includes section dedicated to the conditions for fulfilling the 3D principle.

In this context, the applicant must commit to describing how the project will reduce or not deepen segregation, the current level of stigmatization, and ghettoization. More information can be found here: <https://mirri.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/mpsr-files/priloha-c-10-principy-3d.pdf>

buy its own bus/microbus and the possibility to employ a driver. However, renting such a service might also be an option, depending on the availability of funds. The mayor views the first option, owning a vehicle and employing a driver, as better, based on the municipality's previous negative experiences with busing initiatives. In the past, Roma children from the municipality were bussed to school in the nearest town due to a lack of capacity in the municipal school. According to the mayor, although they were bussed to a school attended by children from the majority, Roma pupils were educated in a separate building of this school.

The Slovak bus company SAD provided the bus service, with the municipality covering the fare for the children. However, SAD expressed dissatisfaction, complaining about the children being noisy and misbehaving. In response, the municipality later implemented supervised rides for the children. The mayor expressed that the bus drivers displayed anti-Roma sentiments. He acknowledged that there were instances of misbehaviour by the children but asserted it was not as severe as reported by SAD. Consequently, the mayor believes a preferable solution would be for the village to provide its bus and driver familiar with the community to prevent similar issues.

Additionally, supervising the children on the bus would be essential. The same bus service could accommodate Roma children attending secondary school in the nearest city. The bus could also be used to transport parents to the school for meetings and parental engagements.

Focus Group Discussions

Insights from conversations with Roma community members

During the focus group discussion, Roma mothers described commuting challenges to the kindergarten and primary school located in the municipality, as these institutions are situated over 1 km away from their homes. With most families not owning a car and lacking public transport within the municipality, parents must walk their young children to kindergarten in all types of weather. The path to the village is unlit, presenting additional difficulties, especially during winter when children return from the second shift at the kindergarten, which operates in two shifts.

Mothers with multiple children find it particularly hard to walk this distance, especially during adverse weather conditions. A dedicated bus service from the settlement to the municipal kindergarten and school²¹² would significantly aid these families. The mothers commended the development team's efforts and suggested that team members could assist in busing children from the settlement to the village centre.

When discussing with Roma mothers the potential elimination of the two-shift system in the local kindergarten—considering solutions like constructing an extension (since the current facility primarily serves Roma children) or transporting children to city kindergartens for integration with non-Roma peers—the mothers preferred keeping their children in the village's kindergarten for proximity and convenience. They expressed concerns about the additional financial burdens they would face if their children attended kindergartens in the city, as currently, they are not subjected to kindergarten fees. Additionally, the lack of available bus service poses a significant barrier. However, some mothers acknowledged a potential benefit: their children attending kindergarten with non-Roma peers could enhance their communicative development.

Roma mothers generally expressed satisfaction with their children's education at the primary school located within the Roma settlement. In discussions with Roma mothers about potential scenarios for eliminating the two-shift system at the primary school by having some children commute to schools in the neighbouring city, mothers voiced concerns, particularly for young students, such as first graders, who are only 7-8 years old. They worried about the safety and well-being of these young children travelling to distant schools and preferred having them attend a nearby school for ease of access and peace of mind.

²¹² The municipality operates one elementary school and one kindergarten. The kindergarten is located within the municipality and operates in two shifts due to capacity constraints. The elementary school's main building is also within the municipality, while its larger, annexed part is situated in the segregated Roma settlement. The annexed part operates in two shifts due to capacity constraints. Special classes are housed in the original building within the municipality, alongside mainstream classes for second graders. The remainder of the mainstream classes are located in a separate building adjacent to the Roma settlement. Only Roma children attend the kindergarten, as well as the school in this municipality.

The mothers also expressed apprehensions about their children's lack of experience in mixed ethnic environments and feared that their children might face challenges integrating with non-Roma students. According to Roma mothers, if their children were to attend classes with non-Roma children, there would be at least 5-6 Roma children in the class.

They expressed concern over potential emergencies in which they could not reach their children quickly due to a lack of personal transportation and poor public transport links to the village, which would also hinder their ability to attend parent-teacher meetings.

Furthermore, they recounted personal negative experiences of discrimination and prejudice from their non-Roma peers during their schooling. One mother, despite being the mayor's daughter, highlighted how classmates still marginalised her because of her Roma identity. This historical context intensifies their fear that their children might face similar racism and bullying, potentially leading to truancy if the children feel alienated or unsafe.

They also noted a trend where non-Roma village parents opt out of local education, choosing instead to send their children to schools elsewhere, thus reinforcing segregation. Roma mothers mentioned that a few families within the settlement had enrolled their children in schools and kindergartens in the nearest city. According to the mothers, these families are better off financially, owning cars and allowing them to drive their children. They also started enrolling their children from kindergarten, facilitating early adaptation between Roma and non-Roma children.

The situation in the sending municipality, with its predominantly Roma population, highlights significant challenges in accessing quality education due to segregation, infrastructure limitations, and capacity constraints.

In addition to addressing the significant challenges in accessing quality education due to segregation and infrastructure limitations, the situation in the sending municipality underlines the urgent need for improved transportation solutions within the municipality itself. The Roma mothers' insights reveal that Roma children and their families face substantial barriers even within short distances, such as the 1 km journey from the segregated area to the centre of the village, which lacks adequate lighting and safe pathways. This scenario illustrates that effective busing initiatives should not only focus on facilitating access to distant educational institutions but also consider the intra-municipal transportation needs that ensure safe, accessible, and inclusive education opportunities for all children within their communities.

Therefore, developing a busing grant call for municipalities must incorporate provisions for intra-municipal transportation solutions. Such busing could significantly improve daily access to education for children living in marginalized areas of the municipality, such as those 1 km away from educational facilities, especially where pathways are unlit and pose safety risks.

Interview with Roma Families Transporting Their Children to Schools and Kindergartens in the Nearby Town from the Sending Municipality

In the community, only some families independently enrolled their children in kindergartens and primary schools in the nearest town. These families, whom we also interviewed, primarily seek a superior education for their children. They believe their children receive a better education in mixed schools attended by non-Roma children. They have initiated this practice from the kindergarten level to foster early acclimatisation between different community children.

These families are financially stable, possessing their vehicles for transportation. They benefit from support from friends from the majority community, who assist them during the school registration process and help address any school-related issues. During the interviews, these families recounted initial challenges, such as when their children faced peer prejudice. However, they highlighted the pivotal role of teachers who intervened positively, safeguarding their children's well-being. Following these interventions, the families have observed no further issues, noting that their children now feel secure and are thriving socially at school, even forming friendships with children from the majority and participating in community activities like birthday parties.

One father emphasized the importance of portraying a positive image of the Roma within the broader community to counteract the often-negative stereotypes propagated by the media, which tend to focus exclusively on the adverse conditions experienced by some Roma individuals.

Interview with the Director of the Education Department in the Receiving Municipality

The representative asserted that there are three primary schools within jurisdiction of the municipality. One private church school operates in the city. Roma children are integrated into all schools in the city. Additionally, there is a special primary school in the city. According to the Education Department Director, there is no segregated Roma settlement in the city and the municipality face no significant issues between Roma and non-Roma children in education, as they are accustomed to each other from kindergarten.

Special classes are not established in the primary schools. If children perform poorly, they are provided with assistance and supportive measures. Children from surrounding villages also attend schools in the city. The city's schools operate at 90% capacity.

Regarding whether the city would create a joint district if requested by a neighbouring municipality to allow children from marginalised communities to attend schools within its jurisdiction, the director stated that the municipality would not have an issue with it. However, it could only be done within the schools' capacity limits. However, the director believes this would not resolve the situation of the surrounding municipalities significantly due to the lack of substantial available capacity.

The Education Department Director spoke about a rental agreement for a school building situated within their city but owned by a higher territorial unit with one of the neighbouring municipalities. This arrangement has enabled the neighbouring municipality to manage the premises, including providing teaching staff and transportation for children from a marginalised Roma community. This solution was necessitated by a lack of space in the neighbouring municipality's school and has been in place for eight years. This municipality had submitted a grant request for the school's expansion to the Ministry. However, the Ministry rejected the Project because, given the school building's location within a Roma settlement, it did not meet the 3D principle. The director noted that there had yet to be a request from this municipality or any other neighbouring municipality for the city to accommodate additional children in its schools.

According to the Education Department Director, schools within their jurisdiction would need support teams if they were to work with marginalised children and address their integration into city schools. Support teams, including psychologists, special educators, and assistants, have begun operating in schools this year. However, there is a challenge in obtaining an adequate number of psychologists.

Regarding material and technical equipment, schools within the city's jurisdiction do not require additional provisions; they are adequately equipped. However, they are limited by their maximum capacity. The city does not plan to build any additional schools.

However, the Education Department Director believes that children from marginalised communities should have access to education in their place of residence, and commuting to other locations is not suitable. When asked about supporting the education of Roma children, the representative mentioned her over 20 years of experience in a segregated school. She sees the problem in irregular attendance, as parents can currently excuse their children for up to five days. Consequently, these children miss many hours of class, and the law does not allow them to repeat classes more than once, so they continue without achieving the required education.

The representative notes differences mainly between Roma children living in the city and those in surrounding villages. She believes that Roma parents in the city collaborate more with the schools. According to her, children from neighbouring villages would not face problems at schools in the city, but it largely depends on the ratio of new students. She states that if there were 25 students in a class, 5 Roma students would integrate without any major problems; such a ratio would be manageable and would not change the class dynamics.

From her experience, working in a segregated school, the director asserts that the percentage of Roma children has increased over the years, reaching nearly 100%. As the number of Roma children increased, non-Roma parents began enrolling their children in other schools. According to her, this was not due to racism but rather dissatisfaction with the pace of learning in the school. There were also issues with the hygiene of some children, as some lacked water and electricity at home and did not know how to use a toilet.

She concludes that busing children is not beneficial; pupils finish school at different times, especially in higher grades. According to the director, it would be best for children to attend schools in their place of residence. Forcing them elsewhere is not appropriate. She does not see educating children in ethnically homogeneous schools in neighbouring villages as a problem; it results from demographic changes. According to her, all other children attend schools where they grow up; only these children are artificially mixed and transported.

When asked if segregation affects children's education, the representative stated that it is no longer possible to mix schools in neighbouring villages due to the higher number of Roma children. She believes that education is undoubtedly worse in such schools. However, if hygiene standards were met, introducing Roma children from segregated to mixed schools would not pose a problem. She also has experience with such children who, at the behest of their parents, transferred from segregated to mixed schools. In such cases, she emphasizes the importance of active cooperation between parents, the class teacher, and the school.

Online Questionnaire Findings

Overall, the responses from the receiving schoolteachers and directors reflect concerns about the practical feasibility of integration, lack of resources, and potential impacts on academic standards and school reputation. These concerns contradict the sending school's willingness to integrate and focus on support and understanding.

The sending school, situated within the Roma community, has developed a certain level of adaptability and understanding towards the unique challenges Roma students face. This proximity fosters a more empathetic perspective and a pragmatic approach towards addressing educational barriers.

In contrast, receiving schools exhibit apprehension and resistance towards integrating Roma students. This resistance stems from concerns about resource allocation, maintaining educational standards, and managing class dynamics. The school's priority consideration falls around the attitudes of non-Roma parents, who may have expectations of academic excellence and classroom stability that they fear could be compromised by integrating students from marginalised backgrounds.

Responses from teachers and director of a potential sending school.

Educational Impact and Classroom Dynamics: Teachers reported significant impacts on teaching and learning due to the homogeneous composition of Roma students. The main challenges include cultural and environmental differences leading to students' devaluation of education, language barriers, and low attendance rates. The absence of homework and poor physical conditions, such as lack of nourishment, further hinder students' concentration and learning readiness.

Effective Teaching Strategies: To counter these challenges, educators highlight the effectiveness of patience, constant repetition, and peer learning. Additionally, digitising classrooms and interactive tasks has successfully engaged students and enhanced their learning experience.

Perceptions on Homogeneous Classes: Teachers recognised the need to address the issue of ethnically homogeneous classes, citing segregation and lack of socialisation as key concerns. Conversely, the director does not view the homogeneous composition as a significant problem, indicating a divergence in perceptions between teaching staff and administrative leadership.

Eliminating double shift Operations: Both educators and the director acknowledged the operation of a double shift system within their schools. Teachers believe eliminating this system could improve students' fatigue and

academic performance. The director, while agreeing, emphasises that a transition to a single-shift operation would simplify educational processes.

Desegregation and Integration Efforts: There is a unanimous agreement among respondents on the potential benefits of desegregation programmes. Such initiatives are believed to foster social integration, reduce isolation, and build a more inclusive school environment. Teachers specifically note the positive impact on social division, while the principal envisions a modern, 21st-century educational model.

Challenges and Barriers to Integration: The transition to an integrated educational approach is challenging. Educators anticipated issues such as social differences, racial discrimination, and faster progression rates among the majority of children due to more extensive parental involvement. The director highlighted long-term solutions and bureaucratic challenges as the main barriers.

Operational Changes and Dynamics: The director expressed that the introduction of the majority of children into the school would not significantly alter the school's dynamics. This contrasts with the teachers' perspective, which foresees positive role modelling and improved cultural acceptance.

Responses from teachers and director of a potential receiving school

Educational Experiences and Attitudes: Educators reported significant challenges related to the preparation, interest, and home environment of Roma children, affecting their educational engagement. The director also noted difficulties, especially in parent-teacher interactions.

Views on Segregation and Inclusion: Teachers expressed concerns over potential negative impacts on the educational quality. The director's resistance to inclusion is primarily due to capacity limitations and fear of losing the school's established reputation and decrease of non-Roma student.

Preparedness and Support for Inclusion: Both teachers and the director feel unprepared for the inclusion of Roma children, citing a lack of resources and the need for specialised staff. Teachers advocate for additional support measures, such as individual assistants and dedicated spaces, to manage integration effectively.

According to the responses from the teachers, there appears to be a consensus on the maximum number of newly admitted Roma children in one class that would not affect the operation and climate in the class. The teachers uniformly suggest that the maximum number of newly admitted Roma children into one class is one student per class.

Impact on School Dynamics: Respondents predict that inclusion would alter school dynamics, leading to decreased educational quality and shifts in attention. The director emphasized the need for adaptation from Roma families for successful integration and expresses concern over maintaining the school's established standards.

Locality E: Rural village (rural municipalities with less than 2000 inhabitants)

In this locality, the field research covers two municipalities, one lacking a mainstream primary school. Roma children from this sending municipality attend a mainstream primary school in a neighbouring municipality. This school has reached its maximum capacity, resulting in the need to educate some children in a second shift during the afternoon, exclusively comprising Roma children. Efforts by the sending municipality to establish school catchment areas with other surrounding municipalities²¹³,—to enable children to attend primary schools operating solely in a single morning shift—have been unsuccessful.

The cluster of schools in this locality belongs to type 3, i.e., small to mid-sized sending school with just a few potential receiving schools, which are smaller or of similar size. Desegregation in this cluster can encounter serious limitations in terms of physical capacity. Potentially the busing programme may require serious support measures.

²¹³ The According to Act no. 596/2003, if a municipality does not establish a primary school, it may coordinate with neighbouring municipalities to create a joint school catchment area for a primary school. For more information, please see Chapter III: The School Segregation Status Quo in Slovakia and the Need of Change.

Municipality E1 – sending municipality

This municipality has more than 600 Roma inhabitants which constitute a large part of the overall population of the municipality. Some households are not connected to public water supply. Roma live outside of the main settlement and have no access to sewage. Garbage collection is available only to 1/3 of Roma households. Closest GPs and paediatricians are more than 10 km away. There is a bus stop in the settlement.

Municipality E2 - receiving municipality

This municipality has no Roma inhabitants.

Interview with the mayor of sending municipality

The municipality lacks a mainstream primary school. However, there is a special primary school for children with mental disabilities operating in the municipality. The founder of the special school is a Regional Office of School Administration.

Roma children from the local marginalised community either attend the special primary school or a mainstream primary school located in another village 2.5 km away. The latter operates in double shifts due to capacity constraints, with Roma children predominantly placed in the afternoon shift. The municipality's attempts to collaborate with surrounding municipalities to establish school catchment areas, aiming for children to attend primary schools that operate exclusively in a single morning shift, have not been successful.

When discussing a potential busing project, the mayor expressed his willingness to participate but also raised several concerns. According to the mayor, the municipality cannot afford co-financing in any project. The municipality currently lacks the personnel capacity to manage a project's agenda and the funds for co-financing.

The municipality could instead participate in a busing project as a participant. However, it would not be able to handle the implementation of the project on its own, for example, buying a vehicle, servicing it, etc. The municipality would welcome a grant project for bus service, but given its capacities, it could only be a passive participant.

The mayor suggested hiring support staff as a supportive measure for busing. Within the project, staff should ensure that children board the bus in the morning; this would undoubtedly be a good tool to increase attendance. There should also be one coordinator per municipality, who would ensure the implementation of the entire project and supervise the support staff.

The mayor noted that initiatives aimed at enhancing inclusion for marginalised Roma communities are often formulated without input from experienced practitioners. He advocates for more in-depth and focused discussions involving key stakeholders and a select group of mayors facing similar challenges to evaluate strategies' effectiveness and optimal application before initiating new grant calls. He observed that frequently organised large meetings fail to facilitate a detailed examination of the issues at hand.

The mayor highlighted the issue of the disproportionate number of children from the local marginalised Roma community in the special education school, attributing their placement not to mental disabilities but to their lack of Slovak language proficiency. He regards this as a significant concern he has unsuccessfully addressed. Additionally, the mayor observed financial management difficulties among some Roma families, complicating their ability to afford bus fares for their children. He also noted that material deprivation within these families often prevents them from providing their children with proper clothing.

The mayor expressed that school attendance and enhanced educational outcomes of children are closely linked with housing quality and water access. He emphasized that in larger marginalised Roma communities similar to the one in the municipality, with around 950 inhabitants and a youth population constituting about 80%, actively involving the Roma in constructing their homes emerges as the most effective strategy to elevate housing standards.

Focus Group Discussions

Insights from conversations with Roma community members

During the focus group discussion, Roma parents expressed that financial constraints represent a significant issue for several families in need, making it challenging to afford bus tickets for school transportation. Consequently, there have been instances where children had to endure an hour-long walk to school, a situation exacerbated for families with multiple children. Despite decent employment within the community, around 30% of families rely heavily on social benefits.

With regards to the quality of education their children receive, there is a split in parental satisfaction based on the type of education their children receive. Parents whose children attend mainstream primary school, particularly those in mixed classes with children from the majority population, generally expressed contentment, noting that children attend the morning shift. However, dissatisfaction arose among parents of children who are educated in the afternoon shift, where education is conducted in Roma-only classes. These classes not only segregate Roma children but also subject them to a reduced curriculum, further widening the educational disparity between them and children from the majority population who do not attend these afternoon sessions.

The enrolment to other primary schools in surrounding municipalities poses new challenges, chiefly regarding logistics and safety for Roma parents. Parents are primarily concerned with providing adequate and safe transportation should their children be reallocated to schools in neighbouring villages. The absence of reliable transport could impede their ability to respond swiftly in emergencies. Moreover, parents stressed the importance of having a bus escort familiar with the Romani language to ensure the children's safety and comfort during transit.

Interview with the mayor of receiving municipality

No Roma inhabitants live in the municipality. During the interview, the mayor expressed feelings of discrimination due to the absence of essential infrastructure, including public water supply, sewage systems, and wastewater treatment facilities. He pointed out that the village's exclusion from categories of less developed regions and the absence of a marginalised Roma community hinder its ability to obtain resources for developing its water system—a long-standing objective. As a result, he contends that the majority of the population faces discrimination.

The mayor expressed opposition to the concept of educating children from marginalised Roma communities of other municipalities in the local mainstream elementary school, which is already operating at 90 to 95 per cent capacity. He suggested that the busing project prioritise children from the majority population residing in nearby small villages.

The mayor is concerned that integrating Roma children into the local school might trigger a "white flight" phenomenon, where children from the majority population, along with some teachers, might leave the school. He advocates for addressing the educational challenges the sending municipality and school face within their communities. Additionally, he does not view the education of Roma children in ethnically homogenous classes as a form of educational segregation.

The mayor would not endorse desegregation efforts or busing Roma children to local schools. He asserts that, should external authorities or institutional mandates require the admission of Roma children into local education facilities, he would first demand enhanced funding for municipal infrastructure projects, such as sewage and water treatment systems, as a precondition. He stated that he would only back such educational measures if they simultaneously serve the interests of children from the majority population.

The village exhibits anti-Roma sentiment. The mayor reports that homeowners prefer selling properties exclusively to non-Roma buyers. Furthermore, the mayor demonstrates a lack of interest in pursuing initiatives aimed at promoting harmonious coexistence between the majority population and Roma minorities.

Online Questionnaire Findings

Responses from teachers and director of a potential sending school

Educational Impact and Classroom Dynamics: The director reported that 70% of the children at their school come from marginalised Roma communities. This has been attributed to demographic changes and a higher birth rate within the Roma community. Teachers agreed that being in classes primarily composed of students from marginalised Roma communities impacts teaching, necessitating individual approaches and acknowledging that such homogeneous composition does not significantly affect the teaching method.

Effective Teaching Strategies: Teachers pointed out that an individualised approach improves education in classes predominantly attended by Roma students. However, the teachers identified large class sizes and extensive curricula as problematic, suggesting a need for more manageable classes and tailored curricula to improve educational outcomes.

Perceptions on Homogeneous Classes: The director does not view ethnic homogeneity of classes as a problem, in contrast to the teachers, who believe that the education of Roma students in ethnically homogeneous classes needs addressing. The teachers suggest that current educational models do not sufficiently consider the unique needs of Roma students.

Desegregation and Integration Efforts: The school operates on a double-shift model. Changing to single-shift operations would require additional space, transportation, and enlargement of the canteen. The director and teachers support the change from double-shift to single-shift operations. The director and teachers also support the idea of desegregation, with the director noting that the school has previously functioned in a mixed environment, which was beneficial from their perspective.

Challenges and Barriers to Integration: The teachers anticipate resistance from parents of non-Roma children against the integration process, highlighting societal attitudes as a significant barrier to desegregation. According to them, the arrival of children from the majority could alter classroom dynamics significantly, requiring teachers to adapt to varying skill levels and potentially leading to changes in teaching methods and more time needed for repetition.

Operational Changes and Dynamics: According to teachers, the integration of non-Roma children into the school could lead to the utilization of different teaching methods and more time allocated for revision. They anticipate that including children from the majority would demand adaptation to cater to all students' abilities and possibly improve educational outcomes by introducing a more diverse learning environment.

Responses from teachers and director of a potential receiving school

Educational Experiences and Attitudes: The director and teachers from the receiving school exhibit a notable lack of experience and interaction with children from marginalised Roma communities, as none of the students currently attend the school. Despite recognizing the problem of segregation in education, the director has not had firsthand educational experiences with Roma children. Apart from one, teachers lack direct experiences as well, with the exception of describing the work as challenging.

Views on Segregation and Inclusion: Both the director and teachers understand the issue of segregation; the director acknowledges it as a problem. They expressed willingness towards inclusion but are deeply concerned about its feasibility and potential negative outcomes, particularly fearing the departure of non-Roma students to other schools. This reflects a broader apprehension that integrating Roma children could lead to significant changes in the school's demographics and possibly its culture and reputation.

Preparedness and Support for Inclusion: There is a consensus that the school is currently not prepared for the inclusion of Roma students, citing a severe lack of necessary support mechanisms. The director emphasizes the need for comprehensive supportive measures, including a dedicated support team that is not dependent on EU funding. Teachers voice the need for individual assistants and psychological support.

Impact on School Dynamics: According to the director and teachers, the anticipated impact on school dynamics is considerably significant. The director believes that prejudices among parents could lead to discrimination and bullying within the school environment, exacerbated by a language barrier that could affect learning and interaction

among students. Teachers share concerns about changes in the school atmosphere, fearing that integration could slow down the educational pace and disrupt the existing harmony. They suggest a maximum of 1 to 5 Roma students per class to minimize disruption.

Despite these concerns, the director and at least one teacher acknowledge the potential benefits of desegregation, indicating a cautious openness to the idea provided substantial support is in place. They underline the need for a systematic approach involving the entire community and state-level support to improve conditions for Roma children.

The responses indicated a readiness to support desegregation efforts, albeit with significant reservations about the outcomes. There's a clear call for additional resources and structural changes to facilitate a smoother integration process.

Conclusion

Municipalities' needs vary significantly depending on their size, the number of students, the presence of elementary schools, and existing transportation connections. Smaller municipalities, especially those with segregated settlements situated at a greater distance, need solutions for transportation between these communities and the municipality centres. Transportation is critical, especially in large urban areas lacking adequate public transit for significant Roma-populated districts.

For larger municipalities with existing networks of buses, financing travel costs may present a more efficient and direct method of supporting student transportation, mainly when aiming to improve access for children from socio-economically disadvantaged environments. In contrast, smaller municipalities might find owning a vehicle a better option, allowing for a more personalised and flexible approach to transporting students and parents from marginalised communities. However, very small urban villages may lack the necessary resources and capacities to act as the sole implementers of such programmes. In these cases, collaboration with neighbouring municipalities or higher-level administrative support may be necessary to ensure adequate transportation solutions. In some cases, certain schools might also be included as eligible applicants for the grant call.

It is essential to provide comprehensive support for students during transportation, including the presence of a trusted adult or chaperone who can accompany the children, addressing both safety concerns and providing a sense of security. Discussions with Roma parents have unveiled concerns over the quality and safety of buses that some municipal transport services provide for Roma children.

The provision of food, adequate clothing, and ensuring hygienic and health standards are critical, particularly for children from marginalised communities who may face food insecurity and material deprivation. Providing suitable attire, especially during the colder months, is essential for maintaining children's health and attendance. Adequate winter clothing is essential in preventing cold-related illnesses and absenteeism. This approach supports their physical well-being and promotes a sense of belonging and equality among all students.

Ensuring that students receive adequate nutrition during school hours can significantly affect their ability to concentrate, participate, and benefit from educational opportunities. Therefore, supporting initiatives can include the provision of breakfast, snacks and lunches to support children's nutritional needs and enhance their school readiness and attendance.

Moreover, implementing regular health checks, teaching personal hygiene practices, and providing necessary sanitary supplies can further improve health outcomes and school attendance rates and mitigate the 'white flight' phenomenon.

To mitigate concerns such as potential 'white flight' and ensure successful integration, it is vital to limit the number of Roma children per receiving school or class. A carefully considered ratio should be established to prevent overwhelming existing structures and to maintain a balanced and inclusive learning environment.

This approach also involves preparing the receiving schools with necessary support mechanisms, training staff on cultural competency and inclusive practices, and fostering an environment that welcomes diversity and promotes mutual respect among all students. Additionally, receiving schools should be equipped with adequate resources, including access to psychologists and specialised inclusive teams of professionals to address the diverse needs of incoming students and support their integration.

Responses from educators underscore a range of challenges within schools predominantly attended by Roma children. These include barriers like language differences, lack of home preparation, and socio-economic hardships, such as inadequate clothing. The integration process in receiving schools necessitates smaller class sizes, individual approach, IT technologies and a more significant support system comprising professionals familiar with Roma culture and language to foster an inclusive learning environment.

Effective integration requires active engagement and collaboration between schools, communities, and local and state governments. Initiatives should strive to involve parents from the minority and majority in the planning process, provide clear information about the busing project, and establish feedback mechanisms to improve the program based on community input continuously.

Establishing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of the busing initiatives and make necessary adjustments is essential.

By addressing these critical aspects and ensuring a holistic approach that considers the varying needs of different-sized municipalities and the unique challenges faced by Roma children and their families, the busing project can contribute to eliminating educational segregation and fostering equitable educational opportunities for all children.

Annex 4. Long list of potential sending schools²¹⁴

Number	School ID	Municipality code	Lau2 code	Region (Kraj)	School name	Address	Name
1	100002122	504076	SK0212504076	Trnavsky	ZŠ s MŠ VJM - Tomášikovo	Tomášikovo 4	Základná škola s materskou školou s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola és Óvoda, Tomášikovo 4
2	100005053	502189	SK0232502189	Nitransky	ZŠ s VJM - Dolné Semerovce	Dolné Semerovce 154	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola, Dolné Semerovce 154
3	100005156	502341	SK0232502341	Nitransky	ZŠ - Hronské Kosihy	Hronské Kosihy 189	Základná škola, Hronské Kosihy 189
4	100005776	500011	SK0233500011	Nitransky	ZŠ - Nitra, Krčméryho	Krčméryho 2	Základná škola, Krčméryho 2, Nitra
5	100007762	510262	SK0315510262	Žilinsky	ZŠ - Lipt.Mikuláš, Nábr.Dr.Aurela Stodo	Nábřežie Dr. Aurela Stodo	Základná škola, Nábřežie Dr. Aurela Stodolu 1863/49, Liptovský Mikuláš
6	100007830	510963	SK0315510963	Žilinsky	ZŠ s MŠ - Pribylina, Emila Janotku	Ulica Emila Janotku 2/6	Základná škola s materskou školou Jána Lajčiaka, Ulica Emila Janotku 2/6, Pribylina
7	100009785	509051	SK0323509051	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ - Telgárt	Telgárt 68	Základná škola, Telgárt 68
8	100009967	511234	SK0326511234	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s MŠ - Belina	Belina 185	Základná škola s materskou školou s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským, Belina 185
9	100009972	557315	SK0326557315	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s VJM - Biskupice, Gagarinova	Gagarinova 4	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola, Gagarinova 4, Biskupice - Fülekpüspöki
10	100009976	558273	SK0326558273	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s VJM - Bulhary	Bulhary 12	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola, Bulhary - Bogárom 12
11	100009983	511323	SK0326511323	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s VJM - Čakanovce	Čakanovce 28	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským Magyar Tanítási Nyelvű Alapiskola, Čakanovce 28

²¹⁴ This tentative list is based on the application of selection procedures as described in the report. It does not constitute a recommendation to undertake any measures concerning any of the schools on the list. As explained in the introduction to this report, policies including bussing should be undertaken after careful examination of the local context, local validation of data, confirmation of the situation in each school community as well as stakeholder consultations.

Number	School ID	Municipality code	Lau2 code	Region (Kraj)	School name	Address	Name
12	100009987	511331	SK0326511331	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ - Čamovce	Čamovce 33	Základná škola - Alapiskola, Čamovce 33
13	100010026	511404	SK0326511404	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ - Filakovské Kováče	Filakovské Kováče 274	Základná škola - Alapiskola, Filakovské Kováče 274
14	100010155	511854	SK0326511854	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s VJM - Šávoľ	Šávoľ 51	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola, Šávoľ - Sávoly 51
15	100010170	557340	SK0326557340	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ - Trenč	Trenč 98	Základná škola, Trenč 98
16	100010180	512010	SK0326512010	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s VJM - V.Dravce	Veľké Dravce 220	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským, Veľké Dravce 220
17	100010249	514721	SK0328514721	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s VJM - Gemer	Gemer 61	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským, Gemer 61
18	100010253	514756	SK0328514756	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ - Gemerská Ves	Gemerská Ves 204	Základná škola - Alapiskola, Gemerská Ves 204
19	100010265	525791	SK0328525791	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s MŠ - Jelšava, Železničná	Železničná 245	Základná škola s materskou školou, Železničná 245, Jelšava
20	100010270	525812	SK0328525812	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ - Kameňany	Kameňany 8	Základná škola, Kameňany 8
21	100010283	525987	SK0328525987	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s MŠ - Muráň	Muráň 353	Základná škola s materskou školou, Muráň 353
22	100010289	525995	SK0328525995	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ - Muránska Dlhá Lúka	Muránska Dlhá Lúka 52	Základná škola, Muránska Dlhá Lúka 52
23	100010334	526258	SK0328526258	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ - Sirk, Sídliisko	Sídliisko 165	Základná škola, Sídliisko 165, Sirk
24	100010361	557757	SK0329557757	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s MŠ - Abovce	Abovce 165	Základná škola s materskou školou s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským Magyar Tanítási Nyelvű Alapiskola, Abovce 165
25	100010365	514501	SK0329514501	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s VJM - Barca	Barca 24	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským, Barca 24
26	100010376	514594	SK0329514594	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s VJM - Cakov	Cakov 21	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským, Cakov 21
27	100010387	514624	SK0329514624	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s VJM - Čiž	Čiž 145	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola, Čiž - Csíz 145

Number	School ID	Municipality code	Lau2 code	Region (Kraj)	School name	Address	Name
28	100010394	514713	SK0329514713	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ - Figa	Figa 103	Základná škola - Alapiskola, Figa 103
29	100010441	514861	SK0329514861	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s MŠ - Hostice, Hlavná	Hlavná 144	Základná škola s materskou školou s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola és Óvoda, Hlavná 144, Hostice - Gesztete
30	100010449	514942	SK0329514942	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ - Husiná	Husiná 156	Základná škola - Alapiskola, Husiná 156
31	100010470	515027	SK0329515027	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ - Kaloša	Kaloša 50	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola, Kaloša - Kálosa 50
32	100010486	515078	SK0329515078	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s VJM - Kráľ	Kráľ 266	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským, Kráľ 266
33	100010491	515132	SK0329515132	Banská Bystrica	Zákl. škola s MŠ s VJM - Lenartovce, Hlavná	Hlavná 30	Základná škola s materskou školou s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola és Óvoda, Hlavná 30, Lenartovce - Lénártfalva
34	100010511	515353	SK0329515353	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s VJM - Radnovce	Radnovce 63	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským, Radnovce 63
35	100010521	515442	SK0329515442	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ - Rim.Seč, Záhradná	Záhradná 31	Základná škola - Alapiskola, Záhradná 31, Rimavská Seč
36	100010542	514462	SK0329514462	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s MŠ - Rim.Sobota, Dúžavská c.	Dúžavská cesta 1054/11	Základná škola s materskou školou s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola és Óvoda, Dúžavská cesta 1054/11, Rimavská Sobota
37	100010592	515604	SK0329515604	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s VJM - Sútor	Sútor 52	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola, Sútor - Szútor 52
38	100010595	515621	SK0329515621	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s VJM - Šimonovce	Šimonovce 167	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským, Šimonovce 167
39	100010597	515639	SK0329515639	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s VJM - Širkovce, Hlavná	Hlavná 27	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským Magyar Tannyelvű Alapiskola, Hlavná 27, Širkovce
40	100010603	515655	SK0329515655	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s VJM - Štrkovec	Štrkovec 63	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským, Štrkovec 63
41	100010626	515701	SK0329515701	Banská Bystrica	ZŠ s VJM - Uzovská Panica	Uzovská Panica 127	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola, Uzovská Panica 127

Number	School ID	Municipality code	Lau2 code	Region (Kraj)	School name	Address	Name
42	100011490	519006	SK0411519006	Prešovský	ZŠ s MŠ bl. Zefyrína - Bardejov, Poštárka 120A	Poštárka 120A	Základná škola s materskou školou bl. Zefyrína, Poštárka 120A, Bardejov
43	100011528	519111	SK0411519111	Prešovský	ZŠ - Cigeľka	Cigeľka 59	Základná škola, Cigeľka 59
44	100011542	519189	SK0411519189	Prešovský	ZŠ - Gerlachov	Gerlachov 5	Základná škola, Gerlachov 5
45	100011568	519260	SK0411519260	Prešovský	ZŠ - Hrabské	Hrabské 42	Základná škola, Hrabské 42
46	100011609	519464	SK0411519464	Prešovský	ZŠ - Kurov	Kurov 127	Základná škola, Kurov 127
47	100011613	519472	SK0411519472	Prešovský	ZŠ - Lascov	Lascov 11	Základná škola, Lascov 11
48	100011618	519481	SK0411519481	Prešovský	ZŠ - Lenartov	Lenartov 42	Základná škola, Lenartov 42
49	100011626	519553	SK0411519553	Prešovský	ZŠ - Lukov	Lukov 99	Základná škola, Lukov 99
50	100011652	519669	SK0411519669	Prešovský	ZŠ - Nižný Tvarožec	Nižný Tvarožec 87	Základná škola, Nižný Tvarožec 87
51	100011659	519715	SK0411519715	Prešovský	ZŠ - Petrová	Petrová 7	Základná škola, Petrová 7
52	100011680	519774	SK0411519774	Prešovský	ZŠ s MŠ - Rokytov	Rokytov 4	Základná škola s materskou školou, Rokytov 4
53	100011688	519791	SK0411519791	Prešovský	ZŠ - Snakov	Snakov 86	Základná škola Emila Kubeka, Snakov 86
54	100011828	520004	SK0412520004	Prešovský	ZŠ s MŠ - Humenné, Podskalka	Podskalka 58	Základná škola s materskou školou, Podskalka 58, Humenné
55	100011974	521086	SK0412521086	Prešovský	ZŠ - Zbudské Dlhé	Zbudské Dlhé 44	Základná škola, Zbudské Dlhé 44
56	100012000	523577	SK0413523577	Prešovský	ZŠ s MŠ - Jurské	Jurské 140	Základná škola s materskou školou, Jurské 140
57	100012047	523607	SK0413523607	Prešovský	ZŠ - Krížová Ves	Krížová Ves 43	Základná škola, Krížová Ves 43
58	100012077	523780	SK0413523780	Prešovský	ZŠ - Podhorany	Podhorany 68	Základná škola, Podhorany 68
59	100012081	523798	SK0413523798	Prešovský	ZŠ s MŠ - Rakúsy	Rakúsy 81	Základná škola s materskou školou, Rakúsy 81
60	100012113	523887	SK0413523887	Prešovský	ZŠ - St.Lesná	Stará Lesná 102	Základná škola, Stará Lesná 102
61	100012119	523909	SK0413523909	Prešovský	ZŠ s MŠ - Stráne pod Tatrami	Stráne pod Tatrami 33	Základná škola s materskou školou, Stráne pod Tatrami 33
62	100012134	524000	SK0413524000	Prešovský	ZŠ s MŠ - Veľká Lomnica, Školská	Školská 267	Základná škola s materskou školou, Školská 267, Veľká Lomnica
63	100012165	526401	SK0414526401	Prešovský	ZŠ s MŠ - Bijacovce	Bijacovce 5	Základná škola s materskou školou, Bijacovce 5
64	100012358	523402	SK0416523402	Prešovský	ZŠ - Batizovce, Komenského	Komenského 333	Základná škola, Komenského 333, Batizovce

Number	School ID	Municipality code	Lau2 code	Region (Kraj)	School name	Address	Name
65	100012365	523445	SK0416523445	Prešovský	ZŠ s MŠ - Gerlachov, Mlynská	Mlynská 21	Základná škola s materskou školou, Mlynská 21, Gerlachov
66	100012378	523518	SK0416523518	Prešovský	ZŠ - Hranovnica, Sládkovičova	Sládkovičova 501/15	Základná škola, Sládkovičova 501/15, Hranovnica
67	100012382	523542	SK0416523542	Prešovský	ZŠ - Jánovce	Jánovce 212	Základná škola, Jánovce 212
68	100012523	523879	SK0416523879	Prešovský	ZŠ - Spiš.Štiavnik, Slnecná	Slnecná 422	Základná škola, Slnecná 422, Spišský Štiavnik
69	100012569	524093	SK0416524093	Prešovský	ZŠ s MŠ - Vydrič	Vydrič 121	Základná škola s materskou školou, Vydrič 121
70	100012609	524158	SK0417524158	Prešovský	ZŠ - Abranovce	Abranovce 29	Základná škola, Abranovce 29
71	100012645	524361	SK0417524361	Prešovský	ZŠ - Drienovská N.V.	Drienovská Nová Ves 50	Základná škola, Drienovská Nová Ves 50
72	100012705	524654	SK0417524654	Prešovský	ZŠ - Kojatice	Kojatice 84	Základná škola, Kojatice 84
73	100012722	524751	SK0417524751	Prešovský	ZŠ - Lesíček	Lesíček 53	Základná škola, Lesíček 53
74	100012752	524883	SK0417524883	Prešovský	ZŠ - Mirkovce	Mirkovce 37	Základná škola, Mirkovce 37
75	100013028	525138	SK0417525138	Prešovský	ZŠ - Ruská N.V.	Ruská Nová Ves 57	Základná škola, Ruská Nová Ves 57
76	100013060	525294	SK0417525294	Prešovský	ZŠ s MŠ - Terňa, Hlavná	Hlavná 113/68	Základná škola s materskou školou, Hlavná 113/68, Terňa
77	100013065	525332	SK0417525332	Prešovský	ZŠ s MŠ - Tuhrina	Tuhrina 3	Základná škola s materskou školou, Tuhrina 3
78	100013099	525499	SK0417525499	Prešovský	ZŠ - Žehňa	Žehňa 22	Základná škola, Žehňa 22
79	100013157	524603	SK0418524603	Prešovský	ZŠ s MŠ - Jarovnice	Jarovnice 464	Základná škola s materskou školou, Jarovnice 464
80	100013447	526819	SK041A526819	Prešovský	ZŠ s MŠ - Kyjov	Kyjov 176	Základná škola s materskou školou, Kyjov 176
81	100013455	526860	SK041A526860	Prešovský	ZŠ s MŠ - Lomnička	Lomnička 29	Základná škola s materskou školou, Lomnička 29
82	100013530	526665	SK041A526665	Prešovský	ZŠ - St.Lubovňa, Podsadek	Podsadek 140	Základná škola, Podsadek 140, Stará Ľubovňa
83	100013629	527840	SK041B527840	Prešovský	ZŠ - Stropkov, Hrnčiarska	Hrnčiarska 795/61	Základná škola, Hrnčiarska 795/61, Stropkov
84	100013708	527432	SK041C527432	Prešovský	ZŠ - Krajná Poľana	Krajná Poľana 38	Základná škola, Krajná Poľana 38
85	100013712	527483	SK041C527483	Prešovský	ZŠ - Kružľová	Kružľová 103	Základná škola, Kružľová 103
86	100013721	527505	SK041C527505	Prešovský	ZŠ - Ladomirová	Ladomirová 32	Základná škola, Ladomirová 32

Number	School ID	Municipality code	Lau2 code	Region (Kraj)	School name	Address	Name
87	100013828	544078	SK041D544078	Prešovský	ZŠ - Banské	Banské 239	Základná škola, Banské 239
88	100013853	544116	SK041D544116	Prešovský	ZŠ - Čaklov	Čaklov 495	Základná škola, Čaklov 495
89	100013856	544124	SK041D544124	Prešovský	ZŠ - Čičava	Čičava 34	Základná škola, Čičava 34
90	100013890	581674	SK041D581674	Prešovský	Cirk. ZŠ - Hencovce, Sládkovičova	Sládkovičova 1994	Cirkevná základná škola sv. Jána Pavla II., Sládkovičova 1994, Hencovce
91	100014013	529222	SK041D529222	Prešovský	ZŠ - Vehec, Školská	Školská 424	Základná škola, Školská 424, Vehec
92	100014047	544051	SK041D544051	Prešovský	ZŠ - Vranov n.T., Kukučínova	Kukučínova ulica 106	Základná škola, Kukučínova ulica 106, Vranov nad Topľou
93	100014103	524531	SK0417524531	Prešovský	ZŠ - Chminianske Jakubovany	Chminianske Jakubovany 27	Základná škola, Chminianske Jakubovany 270
94	100014557	543373	SK0421543373	Košický	ZŠ s MŠ - Nálepkovo, Školská	Školská 684	Základná škola s materskou školou, Školská 684, Nálepkovo
95	100014587	543659	SK0421543659	Košický	ZŠ - Švedlár, Školská	Školská 122	Základná škola, Školská 122, Švedlár
96	100014596	526631	SK0421526631	Košický	ZŠ - Závadka	Závadka 195	Základná škola, Závadka 195
97	100014759	599972	SK0423599972	Košický	ZŠ - Košice, Ľ.Podjavorinskej	Ľ. Podjavorinskej 1	Základná škola, Ľ. Podjavorinskej 1, Košice
98	100015052	599816	SK0425599816	Košický	Súkr.ZŠ - Košice, Galaktická	Galaktická 9	Súkromná základná škola, Galaktická 9, Košice
99	100015083	521141	SK0426521141	Košický	ZŠ - Bačkovík	Bačkovík 63	Základná škola, Bačkovík 63
100	100015101	521213	SK0426521213	Košický	ZŠ - Boliarov	Boliarov 50	Základná škola, Boliarov 50
101	100015119	521281	SK0426521281	Košický	ZŠ - Čakanovce	Čakanovce 80	Základná škola, Čakanovce 80
102	100015136	521337	SK0426521337	Košický	ZŠ - Drienovec	Drienovec 44	Základná škola, Drienovec 44
103	100015172	521477	SK0426521477	Košický	ZŠ - Chrastné	Chrastné 30	Základná škola, Chrastné 30
104	100015178	521493	SK0426521493	Košický	ZŠ - Jasov, Školská	Školská 3	Základná škola, Školská 3, Jasov
105	100015189	521523	SK0426521523	Košický	ZŠ - Kecerovce	Kecerovce 79	Základná škola, Kecerovce 79
106	100015211	521591	SK0426521591	Košický	ZŠ - Košické Olšany	Košické Olšany 215	Základná škola, Košické Olšany 215
107	100015362	559865	SK0426559865	Košický	ZŠ - Sokolany	Sokolany 147	Základná škola, Sokolany 147
108	100015410	522163	SK0426522163	Košický	ZŠ - Vtáčkovce	Vtáčkovce 1	Základná škola, Vtáčkovce 1
109	100015447	528277	SK0427528277	Košický	ZŠ s VJM - Čičarovce	Čičarovce 109	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola, Čičarovce - Csicsér 109

Number	School ID	Municipality code	Lau2 code	Region (Kraj)	School name	Address	Name
110	100015477	528404	SK0427528404	Košický	ZŠ s VJM - Kapušianske Kľačany, Hlavná	Hlavná 36	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola, Hlavná 36, Kapušianske Kľačany
111	100015504	522783	SK0427522783	Košický	ZŠ - Markovce	Markovce 31	Základná škola, Markovce 31
112	100015621	522902	SK0427522902	Košický	ZŠ - Petrovce nad Laborcom	Petrovce nad Laborcom 100	Základná škola, Petrovce nad Laborcom 100
113	100015706	523283	SK0427523283	Košický	ZŠ - Vrbnica	Vrbnica 20	Základná škola, Vrbnica 20
114	100015735	514578	SK0428514578	Košický	ZŠ - Bretka	Bretka 56 -Beretke 56	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola, Bretka 56 -Beretke 56, Bretka
115	100015767	525634	SK0428525634	Košický	ZŠ - Dobšiná, Zimná	Zimná 190/144	Základná škola Eugena Ruffinyho, Zimná 190/144, Dobšiná
116	100015772	525642	SK0428525642	Košický	ZŠ s VJM - Drnava	Drnava 105	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola, Drnava 105
117	100015821	525871	SK0428525871	Košický	ZŠ s MŠ - Krásnohorské Podhradie, Lipová	Lipová 115	Základná škola s materskou školou - Alapiskola és Óvoda, Lipová 115, Krásnohorské Podhradie
118	100015826	525871	SK0428525871	Košický	ZŠ - Krásnohorské Podhradie, Pokroková	Pokroková 199	Základná škola, Pokroková 199, Krásnohorské Podhradie
119	100015835	526274	SK0428526274	Košický	ZŠ - Markuška	Markuška 12	Základná škola, Markuška 12
120	100015841	526045	SK0428526045	Košický	ZŠ s MŠ - Nižná Slaná, Letná	Letná 14	Základná škola s materskou školou, Letná 14, Nižná Slaná
121	100015867	526185	SK0428526185	Košický	ZŠ - Roštár	Roštár 83	Základná škola, Roštár 83
122	100016079	543152	SK042A543152	Košický	ZŠ - Chrasť n.H.	Chrasť nad Hornádom 44	Základná škola, Chrasť nad Hornádom 44
123	100016112	543268	SK042A543268	Košický	ZŠ s MŠ - Krompachy, SNP	SNP 47	Základná škola s materskou školou, SNP 47, Krompachy
124	100016123	543284	SK042A543284	Košický	Cirk. ZŠ - Letanovce, Školská	Školská 55	Cirkevná základná škola Juraja Sklenára, Školská 55, Letanovce
125	100016128	543331	SK042A543331	Košický	ZŠ s MŠ - Markušovce, Školská	Školská 16	Základná škola s materskou školou, Školská 16, Markušovce
126	100016161	543519	SK042A543519	Košický	ZŠ - Rudňany, Zimné	Zimné 96	Základná škola, Zimné 96, Rudňany

Number	School ID	Municipality code	Lau2 code	Region (Kraj)	School name	Address	Name
127	100016277	543586	SK042A543586	Košický	ZŠ sv. Michala - Spiš.Tomášovce, Školská	Školská 1	Základná škola sv. Michala, Školská 1, Spišské Tomášovce
128	100016298	543594	SK042A543594	Košický	ZŠ - Spiš.Vlachy, SNP	SNP 13	Základná škola, SNP 13, Spišské Vlachy
129	100016308	543713	SK042A543713	Košický	ZŠ - Vítkovce	Vítkovce 53	Základná škola, Vítkovce 53
130	100016320	528102	SK042B528102	Košický	ZŠ s VJM - Bačka, Školská	Školská 67	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola, Školská 67, Bačka - Bacska
131	100016323	528111	SK042B528111	Košický	ZŠ - Bačkov, Lesná	Lesná 55	Základná škola, Lesná 55, Bačkov
132	100016342	528188	SK042B528188	Košický	ZŠ s VJM - Boňany, Hlavná	Hlavná 141	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola, Hlavná 141, Boňany - Battyán
133	100016357	528242	SK042B528242	Košický	ZŠ - Čelovce, Hlavná	Hlavná 73	Základná škola, Hlavná 73, Čelovce
134	100016371	528293	SK042B528293	Košický	ZŠ s VJM - Čierna nad Tisou, Zimná	Zimná 6	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola, Zimná 6, Čierna nad Tisou
135	100016387	528374	SK042B528374	Košický	ZŠ s MŠ - Hrčeľ, Hlavná	Hlavná 75	Základná škola s materskou školou, Hlavná 75, Hrčeľ
136	100016424	528510	SK042B528510	Košický	ZŠ - Leles	Leles 211	Základná škola - Alapiskola, Leles 211
137	100016480	528722	SK042B528722	Košický	ZŠ - Sečovce, Komenského	Komenského 707/4	Základná škola, Komenského 707/4, Sečovce
138	100017666	524981	SK0418524981	Prešovský	ZŠ - Ostrovany, Hlavná	Hlavná 277/78	Základná škola, Hlavná 277/78, Ostrovany
139	100018308	525529	SK0428525529	Košický	Evanj. Cirk. ZŠ - Rožňava, Zeleného stromu	Zeleného stromu 14	Evanjelická cirkevná základná škola, Zeleného stromu 14, Rožňava
140	100018377	521698	SK0426521698	Košický	ZŠ s VJM - Moldava n.B., Čsl.armády	Československej armády 15	Základná škola s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským - Alapiskola, Československej armády 15, Moldava nad Bodvou - Szepsi
141	100018432	525111	SK0417525111	Prešovský	ZŠ - Rokycany	Rokycany 46	Základná škola, Rokycany 46
142	100018796	543501	SK0421543501	Košický	ZŠ - Richnava	Richnava 189	Základná škola, Richnava 189
143	100019613	525383	SK0417525383	Prešovský	ZŠ s MŠ - Varhaňovce	Varhaňovce 20	Základna škola s materskou školou, Varhaňovce 20

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