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HOW DO SCHOOLS IN OLD AND NEW MEMBER STATES OF THE EU TREAT MINORITY ETHNIC YOUTH AND SHAPE THEIR PERFORMANCE?

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Summary

- Even before Europe started to face the tangible impacts of the current economic crisis, there was growing evidence of rising residential segregation, of interwoven social and ethnic separation, and of urban unrest coinciding with most tangible minority divisions.
- A general **democratisation** in education took place in Europe after WW II inducing vast upward mobility and guaranteeing a certain level of schooling accessible for basically everyone. Yet, this progress went hand in hand with the emergence of new and subtle differentiations in the benefits that families and youngsters can gain from schooling.
- A fair level of **decentralisation** in education services and management does not necessarily bring about the loosening of quality control and inequity monitoring on national or sub-national levels. By the same token, particular combinations of management, finance, and quality control may be the source of indirect discrimination in legal and policy terms.
- There are major differences across the investigated countries in how **early child care** becomes accessible for minority families: Roma children and migrant children are usually highly affected by poor access to pre-school facilities or lack of trust in parent-school relations, although their attendance would be key to later school performance and inclusion.
- **School districts** can easily become the basis for institutional discrimination, yet, their regular adjustment rather than complete dissolution is viewed by many education experts to be an apt response. **Inter-school and intra-school segregation** occurs in all nine countries of the inquiry. Roma are often disproportionately directed to special schools for students with mental disabilities, irrespective of their actual mental condition. The concentration of minority ethnic pupils in certain types of schools and classes on the lower end of the school status hierarchy is the result and an indicator of white flight.
- **Separate education** organised for the benefit or by the initiative of certain minority groups requires special attention to its ambiguous messages and controversial impacts. Newly established schools for specific ethnic community often lack state monitoring and quality control. Observations prove that in separate minority education parents and pupils face less tension but often perform at lower expectations.
- The dominant school practices are based upon **values, norms, and curriculum choices** driven by the experience of majority children. In this environment, minority ethnic students may quickly or gradually develop a sense of inferiority, irrelevance, and resentment. Regardless of the length of residence and status of ethnic minorities and one-time migrants in a country, genuine bilingual education is rare.
- Overall **educational attainment** of minority ethnic youth in Europe looks much less favourable than the average with some important internal variations. Within the same social status group, minorities often do better than their majority peers while some ethnic groups clearly compound socio-economic disadvantage. **Dropping-out** is much more likely in lower status schools segregated with ethnic minorities than in better-quality educational units dominated by the majority.
- Although the ethnically divided societies show major differences in their potentials of **integration and antagonism**, in general it is fair to argue that ethnic minorities, or at least substantial segments of them, are becoming the **low performing users** of the schools system.



In old and new EU member states, education at primary and secondary level is one of the oldest public services that states deliver, organise, or at least closely monitor. Education concerns public finance, requires a distribution of major human resources, and its management mobilises various segments of public administration. Moreover, education articulates prime visions of social norms and order, and encourages prevalent patterns of socialisation still dominated by the political structures and concepts of the nation-states. The educational system is an interface of schools, levels of governments, local institutions, communities, and families, motivated by different sets of interests and capacities that shape this interface. For the EDUMIGROM research agenda¹ the educational system demonstrates the **quality of equality thinking** in society in general and the strengths and weaknesses of **educational institutions and policies** serving social integration.

Educational systems, shaped and reshaped by wider social transformations, do not simply deliver their services to a homogenous body of citizens. Old and new member states in the European Union embrace differently structured societies allowing various patterns of inequalities, including the ones that minority ethnic people face and articulate. Across the continent, educational service providers encounter partly similar and partly different problems related to ensuring the participation of minority ethnic youth in education. In all countries addressed by EDUMIGROM, minority communities are divided by socio-economic status and cultural traditions among and within themselves that further differentiate the needs and claims for equity, equality, and recognition.

This policy brief makes a contribution to some recently published reports and analyses in the field of education for minorities by reviewing knowledge from both old and new member states through a comparative lens. The history, social environment, and the political and policy reflections are different regarding the integration of minority youth in countries hosting **labour migrants** (old member states) and those embracing larger **Roma communities** (new member states). Nonetheless, the potentials of discussing and adjusting policy responses should be connected in a European space of debates on social inclusion and justice. This is the underlying assumption behind the EDUMIGROM research and the presentation of its outcomes.

The brief reviews the impacts of the main educational structures and dominant school practices on the daily lives and opportunities of minority ethnic youth in the countries concerned. Impacts will

be captured by the performance of schools hosting different social compositions of students and the attainments of minority students in contrast to mainstream peers and relative to each other. The EDUMIGROM background reports produced in 2008 on the structures and differentiating mechanisms of educational systems in nine countries, the research project's **Comparative Report on Educational Policies for Inclusion** and the **Comparative Report on Education** serve as the main sources of this fresh synthesis, in addition to some internationally recognised comprehensive reviews and evaluations of educational performance and advancement (Eurydice Network 2004; OECD 2006, 2007, 2008; European Commission 2008; Brind, Harper, and Moore 2008; Huttova, McDonald, and Harper 2008; Crul and Schneider 2009).

The brief reviews three major components of the educational system that shape the school career and life prospects of minority ethnic youth: the **institutional infrastructure** of compulsory education, the **regulation of admission and attendance**, and the **dominant school practices**. The variety of impacts regarding the access of minority ethnic youth to good quality education will be discussed at each structural component and also highlighted in a separate section regarding school attainments.

Management, finance, and quality control in education

Ownership and finance

In the nine investigated countries² different models serve to organise and manage primary and secondary education. Corresponding to larger traditions of state administration and governance, **federal** (Germany), **centralised** (France), **regionally organised** (Sweden, Denmark, and also Romania) and differently but **fairly decentralised** structures (UK, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary) are responsible for managing, financing, and providing inspection over the delivery of educational services. Where local authorities have a major role in financing (often by shared revenues with the central state budget) and managing public schools, central authorities usually master the national curriculum, teacher training, and inspectorates (Slovakia, Romania, Denmark, Sweden, UK). Decentralised systems, however, may escape from the regulations and directions of the central educational authorities, and this fact certainly has immediate consequences on educating ethnic minorities in society by inducing a high risk of increased territorial inequality (OECD 2006, 2007).

1 See 'About EDUMIGROM' on p. 12

2 Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Throughout Europe there is public sector dominance in ownership and funding of schools even if a division of labour between the government, the regions (*Länder* in Germany), and the municipalities is established. Generally speaking, on average, 80–90 per cent of funding of primary and secondary education comes from public sources. In most countries of Europe, private schools are also financed partly or entirely from public funds. Therefore, OECD classifies private schools into two further categories: private schools which receive more than half of their funding from private sources named 'independent private schools' and those receiving public funding exceeding 50 per cent named 'government-dependent private schools'. The number of both types of private schools is growing in Europe among which the most typical ones are the faith schools in old member states and a mix of secular/alternative and faith schools in the new member states.

Both forms of private schools often work at better teacher-to-pupil ratio than mainstream schools and their academic achievement is also significantly higher. As they have high leverage in selecting from the applicant pool, the proportion of public-private schools fosters or hinders equal access to quality education in the respective communities. Statistics show that students from different socio-economic backgrounds are distributed unevenly across school types: generally speaking, students of higher socio-economic backgrounds are overrepresented in private schools, while public schools host middle class and socially disadvantaged students (OECD 2005, p.75). According to the EDUMIGROM background reports, private schools usually do not educate minority students in any significant numbers with the exception of some newly created, experimental multicultural schools (UK, Denmark). In Denmark and Sweden the private schools do admit pupils from all social segments of society, although residential segregation has become a factor in the latter. In Denmark, 'government-dependent private schools' (some of them active for more than 20 years now) enrol minority ethnic children and Arabic or Muslim communities started to take major advantage of these institutions. It is also apparent that the number of private schools created by and for specific minority/ethnic groups (e.g. madrassas, schools teaching in Roma language) has been on the rise in recent years in both the old and the new member states – a rather new phenomenon triggering hot and cold social responses from all political angles.

Supervision, teacher selection

Teachers' appointment is managed through centralised selection procedures in some countries

in EDUMIGROM's focus (Germany, France), but in most of the rest (UK, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia), it is the right and responsibility of the school principal. The most important argument for a centralised selection procedure is that it prevents quality segregation of teachers, a mechanism which results in the most prestigious schools selecting the most qualified teachers and leaving lower quality or geographically isolated schools with under- or unqualified teachers. The argument for a decentralised human resource management of schools is rather obvious: it is a flexible system, in which demand and supply might meet and schools may find the best fitting teachers to fill vacant positions.

The EDUMIGROM background reports reveal that in some countries the decentralised system of teachers' selection results in vast differences of quality of education among public schools. In Hungary, for example, where a decentralised system goes together with a complete lack of independent institutions for quality control, many under- or unqualified teachers teach in village schools in economically depressed regions, where a critical mass of socially disadvantaged students would rather need highly qualified teachers. Slovakia faces similar problems: during the transition period, pedagogical professions lost much of their previous symbolic prestige and the relatively decent remuneration for teaching steadily decreased. The benefits and disadvantages of the centralised system are also debated in France where the advantage in choice of districts is given to those who have seniority leaving the youngest, most inexperienced teachers over-represented in low income schools. Attempts at building affirmative action into hiring processes of teachers with a view on the needs of minority ethnic students are often blocked by formal equality considerations (Germany) or by fear from the accompanying stigmatising perceptions (Romania).

Supervision and quality control in most educational systems are ensured by national/federal authorities, although in more decentralised systems local school boards and local authorities also have quality control responsibilities. Our background reports show that a fair level of decentralisation does not necessarily bring about the loosening of quality control and performance inequity monitoring on national or sub-national levels. Well functioning supervisory systems may send warning signals to national policy-makers and school managers on tangible inequality problems across and within schools. Yet, due to the lack of major standardised supervision, even problem signalling is missing or passed on to researchers and civil society actors (e.g. in Hungary). In some countries, quality control in education is the responsibility of school inspectorates as separate institutions (Czech

Republic, Slovakia, UK), in others, it is delegated to centralised multifunctional institutions or to a subdivision of the ministry of education (Denmark, Germany, France, Romania).

In some countries, school boards and local authorities also have major roles in setting the curriculum, and shaping broader pedagogical standards and admission policies. The participation of parents in school boards or other school related bodies differs country to country. Except for France, some efforts and spaces are created to connect parents to school management and decision making. In principle, parents' involvement in inspecting school decisions and performance may make school administrations more sensitive to special needs of minority ethnic youth, yet in practice, this path of inclusion may only give possibilities for parents of middle and upper classes to voice their views. Participation in formalised bodies requires some level of self-confidence that minority ethnic parents often lack.

Financing, managing, and providing quality supervision to schools exert mostly indirect influence upon the accessibility and quality of education available to minority ethnic youth in Europe. These systemic forces work primarily in a colour-blind way that may ensure in certain conditions an equal provision of education resources and service. But colour-blind systemic effects also work through the socio-economic division of society, which is often combined with or exacerbated by regional or residential inequalities that are not detached from ethnic, religious, and citizenship divisions in society. As a consequence, management, finance, and quality control may be the **source of indirect discrimination** in legal and policy terms.

Enrolling, directing and tracking children

In reflection to differences in capacities and abilities of children, schools create pathways to match demand and supply in the educational space. This matching endeavour takes into account the manifold diversities in societies in a passive or active way with various ideological underpinnings.

Preparing for entrance

The basic structure of compulsory education shows some important similarities across the member states of the European Union: following (compulsory or optional) pre-school young people (from 5–7 to 16–18 years of age) go through three stages of schooling. According to the OECD vocabulary: elementary (first phase), lower secondary (second phase), and upper secondary (third phase) schools compose the full cycle. In some countries, only the first four to five years belong to 'elementary', and the next eight to nine

years to 'secondary' (lower and upper) education; in other countries, the staging starts with the first eight years as 'primary' followed by the next four to five years as 'secondary' education. There is considerable difference among countries regarding the age of entrance into the educational institutions.

Childcare facilities prior to school age vary due to distinctive family, gender, and welfare policies in Europe. However, attending some form of pre-school is considered as having strong positive effect on the subsequent educational career and success of children. EDUMIGROM background studies highlight that in many countries (in our sample, Sweden, in most Länder in Germany, France, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia) pre-primary education is not compulsory, though in some of these countries it is widely practiced. Children of socially disadvantaged families, however, are typically not cared for by nursery schools for various reasons: payment requirements, physical distance, discriminatory enrolment, and mutual suspicion between management and parents (this is not the case in France where attendance of public pre-school of 3 to 6 year olds is virtually universal, close to 100 per cent). Roma children, as well as children of migrant background, are usually highly affected by poor access to pre-school facilities or lack of trust in parent-school relations, despite the fact that they need and would profit most from nursery schools and early childhood socialisation.

In spite of a generally accepted norm that elementary education should be accessible for all children regardless of their status in society, school entrance is not unproblematic for a number of minority ethnic groups in Europe. According to internationally available statistics, on average roughly 5 per cent of children are not in school even in the best performing countries (European Commission 2008; Brind, Harper, and Moore 2008). The most obvious groups vulnerable to disappearance from school are the children of refugees, internally displaced people, nomadic groups, and illegal migrants (Huttova, McDonald, and Harper 2008). Our background reports portray different systems for regulating the access of undocumented and documented migrants and minorities to schooling. In Germany the policy differs by Länder, some allowing, others blocking a smooth path to education for undocumented migrants. In the UK elementary schooling is universally provided, whereas in Romania authorities could deny access to those who do not have birth certificates which is quite frequent among Roma.

Enrolment

Placing children in primary schools is one of the most contested elements of the entire education system in

all countries in EDUMIGROM's scope and has special relevance to the life of minority ethnic youth. **School districts** are the most commonly used device to regulate catchment areas based on travel distance, head counts, and resource allocation considerations. Originally, school districts were designated also to ensure a balanced mix of students of different social and ethnic background. The EDUMIGROM background reports reveal that these days administratively defined boundaries of enrolment are debated or in some cases fiercely attacked from two angles: they do not seem to give enough space for competition, while they are not very successful in catering to equity objectives either. A geographical division in school districts exists in many countries, whereby any given school is obliged by law to give preference to resident pupils in its particular school district, at least at primary and lower secondary level. Where ethnic minorities tend to be concentrated in certain urban localities or rural regions, the rigid district system turns schools ethnically compartmentalised by default. In France and Germany it is acknowledged that school districts are reproducing the territorial inequalities between nearby communities: the financial and human resources of schools tend to mirror residential segregation. **School districts** can easily become the basis for institutional discrimination, yet, their **regular adjustment** rather than complete dissolution is viewed by many education experts to be an apt response. Such dissolution can make the competition for good schools even harsher and the segregation even stronger.

Parallel to district arrangements, **free school choice** is a formal parental right in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK. Even if all parents have the formal right to choose among schools for their children both inside and outside their residential district, EDUMIGROM research evidence show that educational level, migration status, and knowledge of the majority language not only influence the tendency to use, but also the fact of being informed of, this right. When more space for parental choice is allowed, differentiations of student achievements between schools often invoke 'white flight' from certain schools or districts. The policy of free parental choice in Sweden, a country with a fairly equalised system of compulsory education, has resulted in an increased socio-economic and ethnic segregation of schools, at both primary and secondary educational levels. Socially disadvantaged schools situated in the suburban areas are becoming increasingly segregated as the best qualified pupils with a minority ethnic background, often with a comparably higher socio-economic family background, apply to middle class, 'Swede-dominated', schools in well-off inner city areas (Kallstenius 2007).

In Hungary, where district enrolment and parental choice is combined in transparent regulations, no children legally resident in a given area can be denied access to school in their respective district, yet parents can choose schools outside the district as well. This type of mixed system serves to mitigate processes through which better-off parents can take advantage of choice (travel, move, etc.) in contrast to the poorer families among whom the vulnerable (in this case, the Roma) are overrepresented. In addition, regular adjustment of school districts can reflect upon the social composition of communities and achieve a balanced representation of different social groups. But this may not be the political will of the majority population often controlling decision-making bodies in the local authorities.

Tracking and channelling

Tracking of children across types of school and **stratifying** them in different programmes within school in principle matches interests and capabilities with different variants of education and contents of knowledge schools offer. The relevant literature allows little contestation in that the key dividing line with regard to social mobility appears to be between those tracks and programmes that lead to higher or post-secondary education or at least continuing education, and the ones that conclude students' learning career, respectively (Checchi and Brunello 2006; Huttova, McDonald, and Harper 2008). Accordingly, tracking and grouping determine a path not only in the schooling system but in adult careers as well. Thus, the earlier the selection takes place and the more it follows pure performance indicators, the more it blocks social mobility. The timing of the first selection is normally between the age of 10 and 17 in OECD countries. Within this range, it is rather early (age 11 or below) in Germany, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, whereas it is delayed (age 16 or above) in Denmark, Sweden and the UK (OECD 2007, p.38). The PISA International Student Assessment 2006 Survey demonstrates that institutional tracking is in close association with the impact that parents' socio-economic background bears on students' performance. The key findings indicate that **the earlier students are clustered and directed in different programmes, the more the school's mean socio-economic profile affects the performance** of students in an unmediated manner (ibid, p.7).

Stratifying and channelling children based on academic performance rather than tastes and preferences is a basic rule in France and Germany. In the UK, parents' and children's desire and choice are heard and weighed in the decisions. In the new member states, tracking is also driven by performance

thus arranging the disadvantaged Roma students in schools with limited mobility potentials and high drop-out rates. In most countries in the scope of the EDUMIGROM research, inflexibility characterises the tracking systems. If any move occurs, it is **downwards**, with few exceptions. Minority ethnic students' parents are less prepared to comprehend the workings of selection. The success of comprehensive schools in avoiding early tracking (as examples from Germany and UK show) dissolves pre-determined paths for students. Some other examples indicate that tracking could be delayed to the transition from lower to upper secondary stages (Denmark and Sweden), without risking the quality and efficiency of the entire system. The Swedish system, compared to other European models, seems to be rather integrating as it stresses civic and academic knowledge at the expense of vocation training even in schools of practical orientation.

In most countries, secondary education has become more competitive in recent years and thus access often depends on the financial possibilities of parents. In secondary schools, managing authorities and boards have a larger role in defining curricula, subject areas, requirements, etc according to certain peculiar needs, than at the primary schooling stage. It is noteworthy that from similar traditions of secondary education different patterns have emerged in countries of geographical and cultural proximity. The German classical grammar school informed both the Danish model that allows a significant degree of differentiation as well as the Swedish model that is guided by the principle of integration in its secondary education system. Vocational training is often not only the dead-end of schooling but it is saturated by discriminatory practices that minority ethnic students have to face. In some countries, with not the worst unemployment statistics among the advanced European economies, the problem of finding apprenticeship is grave (Denmark, France). Students have their own responsibility in obtaining proper placement which is a troublesome duty for minorities with insufficient social networks and exposed to potential overt and covert discrimination by employers. In other words, in vocational training minority ethnic youths are often subject to mechanisms that not only multiply their disadvantages but **make them feel redundant early in their career.**

Segregation

As a result of a variety of intersecting causes and practices within the educational system, minority children often suffer from segregation. Segregation is considered as a form of structural discrimination, composed by indirect or in some cases direct

discrimination when not only individuals but a particular social group suffer from disadvantage on a systematic basis. Segregation may take the form of **inter-school** segregation stemming from three major causes: regional and residential segregation transposed to school enrolment through districts or parental choice, culturally biased testing for entry competence placing children in separate or remedial schools, and private, independent and religious schools imposing extra requirements or fees to admittance. In addition, **intra-school** segregation also often occurs when remedial or special classes are organised for minority students of lower language skills and other competences (Farkas 2008, p.4). Chances to return to regular classes and programmes from these placements are few and far between. At the same time, segregated schools normally provide reduced quality of services. Consequently, segregation in schools regularly results in disadvantaged groups being confined to a social space that limits both their exposure to social encounters, decreases the quality of education, and seriously limits further school careers of young people.

EDUMIGROM background research reveals that **inter-school** and **intra-school** segregation occurs in all nine countries of the inquiry. Roma are often disproportionately directed to special schools for students with mental disabilities, irrespective of their actual mental condition. In Slovakia in the past, segregation took place through the excessive placement of Roma children into special schools, often by directly violating legal provisions. In Hungary, the Czech Republic and Romania, the vast exclusion of Roma students from majority education and their segregation in special schools or certain classes within regular schools is commonplace. Furthermore, ethnic segregation between schools is described as a consequence of increasing competition among schools for 'non-problematic' children. The less Roma students are enrolled in a school the more attractive it is. Non-Roma elite and middle class parents exert their influence on school administration and local decision-makers to keep certain schools 'Roma-free'. By choosing such schools or schools outside of their districts with a low percentage of Roma they become part of the 'white flight' phenomenon and further segregation. At the same time, some of the background reports describe that parents of Roma pupils are often not aware of the possibility of opting for a school outside the district, or that they are content with schools with a high proportion of other Roma students as they expect better marks for their children, standards being lower and curricula reduced, or they expect less discrimination from the peers in these schools.

Separate education organised for the benefit or by the initiative of the minority groups requires special attention to its ambiguous messages and controversial impacts. In response to discontent and distrust, new schools often lacking state monitoring have been established to meet the educational needs of certain minority ethnic groups (e.g. the madrassas in the UK). Backyard Mosques and Private Koran classes generate prime suspicion by mainstream society as well. Private schools for minority ethnic middle class also convey the message of solving multiethnic education through separation, though in a less adversarial manner (German Turks). In Romania the discontent of minority leaders with school services inspired them to lobby and organise special schools that would respect their identity and culture, and do away with majority biases. Thinking on Roma integration in this country is complicated by models and spill-over effects of differently structured interethnic relations of the majority population and an acknowledged historical minority (Hungarians). The **idea of separate education** is embedded in the referential relationships of ethnic groups in society obtaining saliently different status. The model of minority education for Roma is framed after the Hungarian national minority that seems to achieve recognition through maintaining its own language and culture, among other things, through separate education. Thus, targeted actions and hidden racism may both contribute to the high number of segregated schools. Statistics prove that in separate minority education parents and pupils face less tension but often perform at lower expectations.

School practices: pedagogy, curriculum and climate

Schools create spaces in which daily routines of teaching and learning reflect upon social distinctions and thus orient students and their parents with regard to acceptable and unacceptable forms of social classifications. Curriculum, student evaluation, pedagogical tools, groupings of children within classes all play into the mix of practices that reflect and form diversity in the school.

Defining basic competence

Linguistic competences and skills in socialisation seem to nourish and facilitate the development of other competences considered as key to performing satisfactorily in elementary education. In all countries of the EDUMIGROM project, a concentration of minority ethnic and immigrant populations could be observed not only in certain districts, but also in types of schools and classes. Tangible presence of these groups often calls for **preparatory and special classes** for language and competence development. Special needs driven

education should trigger little policy concern if it is parallel or optional, and if it leads to integration into mainstream courses. In all countries special schools and classes serve the education of disabled children, and of those considered to have learning and behavioural problems. According to various investigations, these classes show a high percentage of minorities: the cluster of physically and mentally disabled children is merged with minority pupils showing lesser skills or some perceived behaviour problems (Harry and Klingner 2005; Huttova, McDonald, and Harper 2008). Cultural competence, differentially distributed in society faulted by ethnic and other lines, thus becomes cemented in social categories of abilities/disabilities hiding the ethnic or often racial nature of the division.

In the new member states, the category of **children of special educational needs (SEN)** denotes a practice through which Roma students are shepherded to separate spaces, in numerous cases in a blatantly discriminatory manner. Separated education offered to special needs children becomes one of the major forms of segregated education. Sheer statistics on SEN placing would be enough to prove the impact of institutional segregation, but sophisticated research also reveals main practices to be faulted (Kende and Neményi 2006). Testing students for SEN status often lacks competence and fairness, or in case of being conducted with basic sincerity and good intention, it is saturated with the perceptions of skills and competencies of the dominant culture of mainstream society. **Roma parents** often willingly accept the SEN clusters for securing a safe environment for their kids, but it is reported that in Hungary they have started to contest the decision of selection bodies, entering the road of **recognition struggle**.

Special schools receive extra funding creating incentives to perpetuate the recruitment of SEN pupils (Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania). Most recently, in Slovakia the standard schools can also get extra funding to arrange individual integration of disadvantaged children in standard classes (on the basis of individual learning plans). In Hungary, as a result of recent decisions, SEN students cannot be clustered in special schools, yet their integration into regular classes through internal, within-school methods has proven ill-fitted so far, thus many of them drop out or lag behind. As a major transnational support on desegregation work, in November 2007 the European Court of Human Rights ruled³ that segregating Roma

3 The case known as D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic was originated by the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) after the unsuccessful filing of complaints in the Czech courts in 1999 on behalf of eighteen children from the city of Ostrava (For details of the case and the Court's judgement, see: The European Court of Human Rights 2007).

students into special schools is a form of unlawful discrimination referring to a widespread practice in Central and Eastern Europe.

In schools of mixed social composition, **language** is considered as key to all competences. In general, the knowledge of the country's dominant language is viewed as a tool for adaptation and assimilation (this concern is especially strong in Denmark). Regardless of the duration and status of ethnic minorities and one-time migrants in a country, genuine bilingual education is rare (Huttova, McDonald, and Harper 2008). In some places, language specific classes are organised, originally based on the assumption of migrants' return to their home countries (some German Länder). Minority language schooling is allowed or even supported for several national minorities in Central and Eastern Europe, yet ethnic Roma do not enjoy similar entitlements (Slovakia, Hungary), or if they do in principle (Czech Republic), the usual problem of ethnic statistics on Roma in Central and Eastern Europe (official statistics distorts downward), obstructs them from using this right. At the same time, poor quality of bilingual education turns to be detrimental to school performance: bilingual students perform badly in lower secondary schools, producing the greatest gap in science (Denmark), although this outcome of course should not be attributed to one single cause.

Classroom experiences

As EDUMIGROM Policy Brief No.1 argued, regulations on assessment and performance-based advancement are in the heart of public education: these are the traits of schooling that provide the immediate justification for selection, while also working as powerful labels of giftedness, ability, and capability by which differentiation is personified. Due to these implications, differential performance has long-term career implications that work as much upward as downward (p.5).

In several European schooling systems, traditional classroom pedagogy and the evaluation of students still prefer **codified knowledge** to creative skills and multiple competencies. Assessment is based on the accumulation of codified knowledge, which is built and stored by cultural screens of the majority society. Thus, the dominant school practice is based upon values and norms closer to the experience base of majority children than to that of minority ethnic students or pupils with an immigrant, or second generation immigrant, background. In addition to key curriculum aspects, designating holidays, dress codes, and food regimes may also embarrass minority ethnic students. As a consequence, the latter groups may quickly or gradually develop a sense of inferiority,

irrelevance, and resentment. In 'benign' cases, well-intended lower expectations by teachers towards minority ethnic youth often become a self-fulfilling prophesy. More often, however, teachers' distrust generates or confirms a perception of undisciplined and low-performing minority ethnic students. As a result, **mutual distrust often emerges** between schools and minority ethnic students and parents.

It is believed that due to the troubled relationship between minority ethnic parents and teachers and school managers, absenteeism is more frequent among these groups in several countries. According to the EDUMIGROM background reports, while absenteeism shows great variance among minorities in the UK, it is high in schools where the majority is Roma in the new member states (Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania). Antagonism rises in particular between teachers coming mostly from the majority population and young minority male students who are considered not only undisciplined and uninterested but also misogynist/sexist (UK, Denmark). The concentration of minority ethnic boys in certain types of schools and classes on the lower end of the school status hierarchy, is the result and an indicator of white flight (France, UK). In German schools, Muslim boys are viewed as the most problematic, developing adversarial behaviour, language, and culture. Elsewhere, the Caribbean males appear to cement racial categories and become a minority within the minority (UK).

In view of diversity challenges, schools introduce special courses to target **cultural competence** and normalisation (civilisation), that is to make all students think and feel democratically in a 'Western' or 'civilised' manner (Denmark, Germany). Migration is often presented as a source of problems rather than a potential resource (Germany). When group differences along ethnicity, culture, religion, etc. are thought to be acknowledged in school practices, multiculturalism driven by identity politics reinforces boundaries instead of nexus. Or, the majority group is put in the centre of representation, whereas other ones are rendered to serve as a carnival-like environment (UK). In past multicultural debates in Germany, a static approach to culture was faulted for its universalistic approach to promote either Western supremacy or a perplexed notion of diversity lacking efforts to introduce the concepts of conflict and hybridism. This perspective still renders a certain effect, although the multiculturalist paradigm no longer dominates the discourse.

The EDUMIGROM background reports reveal that the introduction of more innovative and inclusion-driven changes is preconditioned by conceptual shifts in understanding multiculturalism, subsequent pedagogical renovations, and altered resource

allocation. Recent experiments for multicultural education stress the inclusion of not only knowledge of other cultures but of oppression and racism in the curricula. Intercultural education contests how cultural heterogeneity is accepted within the liberal Western tradition. **Experiments for integration driven educational models** are in progress, though in most cases evidence for their larger scale impacts is still to be seen. Yet, intercultural education seems to remain marginalised in policy terms (Huttova, MacDonald, Harper 2008, p.5).

Attainment differentials due to school environment

There is vast literature in social sciences and policy studies on how the school system, often in spite of efforts for reducing distinctions considered unfair, tends to reproduce existing social inequalities. Even heavily controlled and tightly structured education systems have internal mechanisms for differentiation (e.g. extra classes to offer better service to higher social classes in the French system). Wealthier and high status families can simply take more advantage of the education services than people on the lower end of the social hierarchy. In other words, social and ethnically blind services may disfavour groups of disadvantage, including ethnic minorities.

The EDUMIGROM background reports as well as other inquiries endorse that overall educational attainment of minority ethnic youth in Europe looks much less favourable than the average with some important internal variations. Statistics show that second and third generations of migrants are making significant academic progress in the old member states (UK, Sweden), although some minority ethnic groups stand as negative exceptions (e.g. Caribbeans and Pakistanis in the UK, Somalis in Denmark). In other countries, descendants of labour migrants from the 1970s are doing worse than children of recent migrants (Germany). In essence, ethnic belonging appears to be a motor of high achievement and motivation to learn, by the same token it also stands as an explanation for school failure and source of oppositional identity (UK). The inspiration of immigrant parents can be higher than that of non-immigrant citizens. Some minority ethnic groups may do better than the mainstream in getting to higher education, whereas others do worse (France). In states of high social diversity, it is far from being evident how school performances of the most 'visible' migrant groups, such as Asians, Africans, Caribbeans, and Turks vary. In new member states, a particular hierarchy of the ethnic groups emerges when all major performance indicators are considered: in an all-round comparison, Roma are gaining the least from the educational system.

When looking at the role that ethnicity (nationality, foreign origin, etc.) plays in relation to other social distinctions, the interpretation of school performance data becomes ever more complex. In all countries of the EDUMIGROM project, education research repeatedly confirms that performance differences between ethnic groups are **intertwined with socio-economic distinctions**. The poorest ethnic groups have the lowest achievements underlining that social status is the strongest factor affecting attainment in education. Within the same social status group, minorities often do better (in the UK the Indians and the Chinese), while some ethnic groups clearly compound socio-economic disadvantage. In some countries it is found that direct family influence on children's motivation has decreased yet the indirect one of socio-economic position has increased (France). Elsewhere it is believed that the cultural capital and educational level of the parents add to the socio-economic divisions (Czech Republic).

In countries where **intersecting social classifications** and inequalities are discussed, the interplay of gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background is also revealed in attainment inequalities. For example, boys in general are conspicuously underperforming compared to girls. White boys of lower classes come out as worst performing, and the single most important group for policy attention (UK). Yet, social class can reverse the gender gap: higher status boys are achieving better than lower status girls. In Romania, ethnicity and gender intersect in the higher drop-out rates of Roma girls compared to boys. This differentiation is complicated by an urban-rural divide: in rural communities distinctively low quality school services are offered to pupils among whom Roma are overrepresented in several regions.

The notion of **dropping out** implies that some children, and more often their parents, choose to stay away from schooling, temporarily or systematically, during the compulsory education period. By the same token, it is well known in education research that being at school and receiving education lacking quality, does not create a sense of learning, dignity, and ambition. In many cases, schools themselves produce circumstances that push out disadvantaged or low-achieving students. School quality and school climate are frequently discussed as the most tangible conditions affecting attendance and drop-out rates (Hövels, Rademacker, and Westhoff 1999; Huskin 2007; Huttova, McDonald, and Harper 2008).

In the new member states, different inquiries highlight that early discouragement of Roma children at school lowers their self-esteem that results, in turn, in self-exclusion, truancy and dropping out (OSIEUMAP 2007). In Slovakia, research indicates that Roma are

30 times more likely to drop out and 14 times more likely to face retention than students from the same age groups within the majority population. In Romania the drop-out rate beyond the 8th year of schooling is much higher among the Roma than in the mainstream (Crighton, Budiene, and Dedze 2005). In all countries of the EDUMIGROM research project, dropping-out is much more likely in schools that belong to lower status and are segregated with ethnic minorities than in better-quality educational units that are dominated by the majority. Minority students are more likely to become drop-outs in secondary schools than their mainstream peers (Eurydice Network 2004).

The 2006 PISA survey provides useful data and explanations for some key domains of school performance differentials. It is clearly shown that institutional tracking is closely related to the impact that parents' socio-economic background has on student performance. In addition, it is also demonstrated that in schools that sort students in all subjects by ability, the overall student performance is lower than average. The survey offers an account for performance variations between schools in some countries of the EDUMIGROM project. In Germany, the Czech Republic, and Hungary the performance variation between schools is much higher than the OECD average. Students' socio-economic difference explains a significant part of between-school differences in countries such as the Czech Republic, Germany, and Slovakia. From our country sample, it is Hungary and France where student background explicates the largest portion of student performance variations (OECD 2007, p.34). Moreover, the widest gap in performances between two students from different socio-economic backgrounds can be predicted in France, the Czech Republic, UK, and Germany, in countries that otherwise belong to the relatively well performing cluster.

Conclusions

In all countries concerned, a general democratisation in education took place in the post-war period inducing vast upward mobility and guaranteeing a certain level of schooling accessible for basically everyone. Notwithstanding, this democratisation process has progressed hand in hand with the emergence of new and subtle differentiations in the benefits that families and youngsters can get from schooling. Differentiations are partly due to growing space for choice that seems to have positive and negative spiral effects. According to the PISA 2006 survey results, those schools that face at least some competition generate better student performances than the ones exempt from competition. At the same time, more choice tends to create involuntary separation and segregation for certain groups that can have relatively

low chances to take part in the competition due to structural conditions (OECD 2007, p.7). Those who are capable players in the competitive arena can take better advantage of the increasing performance of schools, whereas others converge to those segments of the system in which resentment culture and low expectations determine the position and outcome of the service users.

Everywhere in our country sample one can observe that the hierarchy of the more and the less desirable schools has become crystallised and the tracking and placing of children across these schools also display regularised patterns. Although the ethnically divided societies show major differences in their potentials of integration and antagonisms, in general it is fair to argue that ethnic minorities, or at least substantial segments of them, are becoming the low performing users of the schools system. They also tend to have access to lower levels of the school system leaving limited potentials for life-long learning. In sharper cases, 'white flight' is in progress or has been completed creating or reinforcing patterns of educational segregation. Parental and student reactions often converge in avoidance and resentment strategies. As a typical result, involuntary ethnic segregation intensifies the tensions between teachers and pupils and reinforces ethnic/racial antagonisms (Huttova, McDonald, and Harper 2008).

Debates on inequities in education address the share of education system in producing discrimination compared to other walks of life (Czech Republic, France). It is argued by strong voices that school segregation is a product of external forces such as increasing division in wealth, housing, and on the labour market (UK). Ethnic lines are deployed in different ways to explain differential access to good quality education. One can observe an overemphasis of school problems (violence, lack of respect) in ethnic terms whereas denial of ethnic discrimination is an ordinary fact of daily life (France). In another context, the invisibility of ethnicity in the education policy agenda transpires whereas its omnipresence in public debates on order, security, police, employment, etc. is conspicuous. The debates on the avenues of Roma integration in all new member states embody the dilemma of targeting racial segregation or solving broader issues of inequality, poverty, and social exclusion. It is also pronounced that targeted support programmes may trigger embarrassment about affirmative action among the members of the beneficiary social groups (Czech Republic, Romania).

Even before Europe started to face the tangible impacts of the current economic crisis, there was growing evidence of rising residential segregation, of interwoven social and ethnic separation, and of

urban unrest coinciding with most tangible minority divisions. Therefore, advanced policy thinking on the access to good education for all members of society has no choice but to tackle broader social inequalities, residential segregation, access to public services, etc. By the same token, research and debates should reveal more about the effects of school life, the dominant classroom practices, and curriculum choices on the life of multiethnic communities and their youths. Further outcomes of the EDUMIGROM research are envisioned to bring comparable data from both old and new member states of the European Union for policy makers committed to tackling educational inequalities.

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About EDUMIGROM

The initiative on "Ethnic Differences in Education and Diverging Prospects for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe" (EDUMIGROM) is a collaborative research project under the auspices of the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme (Grant Agreement 217384). The project aims to study how ethnic differences in education contribute to the diverging prospects for minority ethnic youth and their peers in urban settings. It is a comparative endeavour involving nine countries from among old and new member states of the European Union, including Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. EDUMIGROM began in March 2008 and will run through February 2011.

About EDUMIGROM outputs

The EDUMIGROM research project plans to produce a variety of outputs connected to its research agenda: country studies, comparative reports, policy briefs, a series of occasional papers, newsletters and other publications, which are intended to provide background and stimulate discussion on issues related to the education and integration of minority ethnic youth in Europe.

We encourage dissemination and duplication of this Policy Brief, with proper acknowledgment.

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