



Roma Education Initiative (REI)

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**“Quality public education against segregation”
REI-project**

Final Evaluation Report

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1. Introduction

The aim of the present paper is to evaluate the activities of Local Integration Networks in the period of September 2004 to October 2005 and to measure the level of desegregation in the involved – formerly mostly. That’s why in the focus of our study there are two hypotheses:

- *The Local Integration Networks are working against segregation and discriminative actions; and*
- *Roma pupils are integrated into local educational institutions.*

1.1 Methods used

The functioning of the Local Integration Networks was measured with interviews and focus group discussions. We also used the same methods as tools to examine the level of relationship between parents and institutions. However, we have to note that in all setting we also made observations, participating observations as well – even though not systematically, and not with rigorous criteria.

In order to measure the level of desegregation besides the above-mentioned tools we used the method of document analysis, too. All the “desegregation contracts”, action plans and in the case of Patka an ombudsman’s report and some articles were analyzed. During the analysis of documents, we compared the objectives of the networks and of the REI project, and further more, we compared the documentation with the data gained in discussions (and partly with our observations).

2. The three settings

2.1 Local Integration Network – Budapest, 7th district

Since June 2004 the situation of the Budapest setting has gone through influential changes. The centre of the local network, the Hernad School, was emerged with another school, which was situated also in the same Hernad Street. So in September 2004, a new school – called Baross Gabor Primary School - began to work. The same thing happened to the kindergarten, participating in the Local Integration Network, too. In September 2004 the Muranyi Kindergarten became a part of Istvan Kindergarten (situated also in the 7th district).

Both fusions were caused by the decision of the local self-government of the 7th District. According to their explanation creating one school from two, and connecting three kindergartens together was necessary because of financial reasons (number of children is decreasing year by year). But it is important to state that after this decision the self-government could apply for “integration normative”, a normative government support for introducing integrative education. They could apply for this support because emerging Roma dominated educational institutes with non-Roma dominated ones has changed the proportion of Roma- non-Roma pupils enormously.

Before September 2004 nearly 90 % of the pupils of Hernad 3 Primary School were of Roma origin. Now in Baross Gábor Primary School not more than 50 % of students are Roma. In Murányi Kindergarten more than 90% of children were Roma, now in István Kindergarten their proportion is only 40%.

However, “integration” of Roma and non-Roma children of school and kindergarten did not happen in the same way. While the pupils of the two primary schools learn in one building, the children of the previous Muranyi Kindergarten remained – because of lack of space in Istvan Street – in their old building, which is in a very bad condition.

The following analysis will concentrate only on the primary school, because the head and the staff of kindergarten refused giving interviews¹.

Baross Gábor Primary School

According to our data there are 510 pupils in this new primary school. The proportion of Roma children is nearly 50%. Their number is increasing: there are less Roma children in upper, and more in lower grades. But the percentage of disadvantaged children is very high. According to school-data nearly 70% of their pupils come from poor families.

The principal of the school became the previous principal of a non-Roma dominated primary school (called Hernad 42), while one of her deputies was a deputy in the ex-Hernad 3 School, too. In September 2004, nearly all of the teachers of the Hernad 3 School and of Hernad 42 School began to work in this newly created institution. So there are 61 teachers in the staff.

2.1.1 Integration in practice

After the final decision of the local self-government about merging the schools, the two teaching staffs met in August 2004. They decided to make an action plan, in order to coordinate the process of integration. The head and the teachers of the new school agreed on keeping the previously existing class communities together. It means that pupils coming from Hernad 3 School remained in their previous classes and their previous teachers continued to teach them, and the same happened to the ex-Hernad 42 students, too. According to the interview, made by the deputy principal of Baross Gabor Primary School, their main principle in organising the “integrated form of education” was to “*be as gentle as possible*”. She highlighted that it was the exact wish of parents, too.

In teacher-interviews this type of integration is regarded to be a first step of a long process, a kind of “*physical-integration*”. Our respondents highlighted that this type of integration is true only for grades from 2 to 8, because the classes at first grade are organized as mixed classes. There is no selection of children while creating them.

¹ After emerging the kindergartens, the ex-leader of Muranyi Street became the head of Istvan kindergarten. But in the first half of 2005, parents of the ex-Muranyi Kindergarten began to protest against the segregated, bad-conditioned setting of their children. After a public discussion with parents, the representatives of the local self-government decided to appoint a new head to Istvan Kindergarten.

These above-mentioned practices, which tried to minimize conflicts between the pupils and staffs of two original schools, were not totally satisfactory. Some teachers reported about serious conflicts between children and some misunderstandings between the members of the two teaching staffs. The children-children conflicts usually appear during breaks, when pupils of different classes meet. It is important to note that classes of the ex-Hernad 3 School are in one part of the corridors, while the classes of ex-Hernad 42 School are in another.

(According to parent-interviews, in some cases Roma children, who previously attended the non-Roma dominated Hernad 42 School, after the “integration of the schools”, were put into classes coming from Hernad 3 School, where the majority of children are Roma. In parents view this is because some teachers of Hernad 42 are very prejudiced and do not like teaching Roma children. The deputy-principal and the members of the teaching staff refused this statement, they said such a practice did not exist in the school.)

All our respondents highlighted that in order to promote the integration of the pupils they lay stress upon the sport and afternoon in-school activities. Mixed sport teams represent the Baross school in all competitions, and the school’s sport club is open for every child. The afternoon study circles are also organised on mixed basis. The popular afternoon activities of both ex-schools have been kept and opened for everyone. In Hernad 3 School there was a popular fine art club, led by a Roma teacher. This teacher was the only Roma teacher in the school and besides leading the club her duty was to communicate with parents, and she taught Romani language and dances to children, too. She continues her activity in Baross Gábor Primary School but not only for Roma children. In her opinion participating in multicultural activities is the best way of getting rid of prejudices and stereotypes. In her club Roma and non-Roma children sing various ethnic songs together, get familiar with different dances and make mutual exhibitions. By trying out different forms of self-expression such an atmosphere is created that children become open to discuss their everyday problems.

In Baross school there is no other teacher of Roma origin. That’s why her activity is not supported by all of her colleagues. In her interview she expresses that the majority of teachers ignore her, there are a few people who openly refuse her. and there is a small part of teachers who appreciate her activity. In her opinion it is much more problematic that the local minority self-government does not care about her activity. They do not understand the importance of cultivating afternoon school activities. The president of the local minority self-government was invited to school many times, but he came only once, to open an exhibition made of pupils’ paintings.

According to our respondent organising public exhibitions and performances for pupils is of utmost importance. In the one hand, it strengthens self-esteem of Roma children, shows them that they are able to produce things which can be interesting for many people, and on the other hand, participating in public activities together increases the level of tolerance of non-Roma children towards Roma.

The non-Roma teachers’ attitude towards Roma children can be well illustrated by a case, when many teachers of a new school asked this Roma teacher not to make an exhibition in the corridors of the school, because they were sure that Roma children would steal and destroy the pieces of art. When it did not happen at all, most of the teachers were extremely surprised.

2.1.2 Step by Step Program

The Step by Step Program was introduced to the Hernad 3 Primary School three years ago. After the fusion of the two schools the SbS classes have continued to work in Baross Gabor School, too. In the first grade there are two classes, one “traditional” and one SbS-class. The problem with providing two types of classes is that this kind of practice can cause segregation. All our interviewees highlight that the “*real integration*” takes place in the first grade and in the future in all newly created communities, but when taking children into two types of classes a selection mechanism can work. The deputy principal of the school told us that those children who come from SbS kindergarten groups automatically get into SbS classes. But SbS program in 7th districts’ kindergartens was a typical program of ex-Muranyi kindergarten, which was nearly a Roma kindergarten, and as we described it in our introduction, after becoming a part of Istvan Kindergarten it remained totally segregated. So if the previous SbS groups are/will be kept together at school, it can mean that the most of the Roma children are/will be in SbS class, while the most of non-Roma children will attend the class taught by traditional methods.

The deputy principal of the school said that the teachers of the ex-Hernad 42 school are afraid of supporting the program, because they think that it has a hidden message towards non-Roma parents that this school is for disadvantaged and Roma pupils only. They have the same feeling about the REI-project, too. And that’s why the school did not apply for being a model-school of National Integration Network.

2.1.3 Evaluation of REI-project

In the Budapest LIN no exact “desegregation contracts” were made. The members of the LIN used the REI action plan made before September 2004. The main objectives defined in the work plans were the followings:

“Promotion of the social integration of disadvantaged, mainly Roma children and families; enhancement of the access to education; promotion of access to the labor market. The supporting system currently covers the period from kindergarten to the successful completion of elementary school, through cooperation with social institutions, which promote family involvement and cooperation in order to achieve the goals. The final aim is to expand the consortium and involve secondary schools, which would promote successful secondary education and access to the labor market.”

These general goals were detailed in an action plan, made and accepted by the original members of the local network, but it was not updated after the merging of primary schools and kindergartens.

When talking about the REI-project in Baross Gabor Primary School our respondents do not make distinction between the Step by Step Program and the REI-project. All activities which are initiated by Ec-Pec Foundation are considered to be the same. This thinking can be well

illustrated by the fact that when we asked the deputy principle of the school to describe the results of the project, she highlighted three things. The first one was that Step by Step program was introduced to the school, the second one was that most of the teachers could participate in anti-bias training and the third one was that anti-bias and community building trainings were organised for parents. After examining this list it becomes obvious that all above-mentioned activities can be linked to Ec-Pec Foundation but not exactly to REI-project. (E.g. training organised for parents was a part of a CIDA-project).

The REI-project was not mentioned in any of the interviews in connection with integration of Roma children, or with the problem of integrating the children of two ex-Hernad Schools.

2.2 Local Integration Network – Pátka

Pátka joined the REI project only in 2004. The reason for entry in the project was that because of the non-existence of a LIN in Pécs, or rather because of its incapacity in achieving the goals of REI, the Ec-Pec Foundation had to find a different location.

Pátka was chosen as the new site, mainly because of the fact that the local primary school –in accordance with a former report of the ombudsman- had already adopted the integrated education of Roma children. Another reason of the choice might as well be the fact that the Ec-Pec Foundation had already been in contact with the school because of the above mentioned ombudsman report. In cooperation between the school and the foundation, the Step-by-Step program had been initiated at Pátka.

During our evaluation, five interviews were made with the teachers of the primary school in Pátka, including the headmaster, and we also analysed the report of the ombudsman dealing with the inner life of the school, as well as some newspaper articles dealing with the subject. Within the frames of our visit to the scene, we have made a survey of the living- and social conditions of the local Roma people living on the outskirts of the settlement.

In accordance with the observed documents and the interviews we can first of all declare, that there is no strictly taken and formal LIN at Pátka. The school, albeit taking on the goal of desegregation and in a greater part also realizing it or making efforts at realizing it, has not created an integration network in accordance with the REI project. The main external partner of the school in the desegrational project is the Ec-Pec Foundation. The absence of a formal integration network can be reasoned also by the fact that Pátka, being a settlement with low population, can be characterized as dominated by informal relations. The realization of the integrated education is also supported by the local authorities, but this intention of support is not reflected in any documents related to the REI.

2.2.1. Segregation in the past

According to our interviews and the related documents, the process of segregation within the school at the past can be clearly seen and described. In the primary school, a merged special class under the surveillance of two remedial teachers existed at both the lower and upper grades until 2003. These classes contained ca. 15-20 pupils. The deed of foundation of the school contains the goal of working with pupils needing special education that is the running of a specialized section. But these classes, functioning as a grade, only contained Roma students with the need of special education, while the annual 4-5 non-Roma pupils with special education were included in the classes with normal syllabus, undergoing a so-called integrated education.

Connecting the elements of the interview we can draw the conclusion that the structure of the school three decades ago can be described with the term of inner segregation. According to the educational practice of the time, the education went on at three sites. One of the buildings was used only by the classes having solely Roma students, while the other two were used by both Roma- and non-Roma students. According to the interviews, we could suppose that differences between the performance of the classes of the buildings also existed, and that thus the students were entered into "*excellent, average and weak*" classes.

The responding teachers have often used ethnical categorization, which can be explained by the daily routine of the special section within the school. According to this practice, those who were declared needing special education by a professional committee and were of Roma origin, were taught in special merged classes at both upper and lower grades, while those who were non-Roma were educated with an integrated method together with the other students of the school. All of those whom we have made interview with explained this ethnical segregation by the fact that while the non-Roma parent asked for integrated education at the clerk, non of the Roma parents did so.

2.2.2. *Desegregation at present*

After the execution of the ombudsman's review it became apparent that the segregated system used so far couldn't be continued. The teachers of the school had to take into consideration the presence of Roma students in their classes, and (as non-remedial teachers) had to take on the goal of integrated special education of these pupils. Support from the Ec-Pec Foundation was offered by the ombudsman, and the foundation is supporting the integration process of the school with its experts and the Step-by-Step program to the date.

During our conversations with the teachers, all of them mentioned the change in the methodological culture as the biggest improvement over the last two and half years. According to these teachers, the elements of this change that were felt the most were the use of differentiation and group work, the individual improvement of the students' skills, the use of the textual assessment and the systematic mentoring.

Despite of the fact that all of those who have answered was in accordance with the above mentioned facts, their attitudes to the changes differed. Analysing the attitude of the school's teachers towards the changes, the vice-principal emphasised the fear of unknown above the rejection of new methods. The word fear shows up in all other interviews, too, less emphasised in some cases, while at certain conversations it pops up at various topics.

What became clear from the interviews is also that the attitude of the teachers towards taking on new methods of education can be well described by the typization made by Rogers, which describes the relationship of the teachers with the innovations in education. Within the range of the interviewed people, both so-called *early joiners*, welcoming the innovations; and *late users*, sceptic towards the efficacy of these methods, show up.

After speaking about the initial problems with integrated education, the so-called *innovators* and early joiners passed on to their positive experiences with the program. They try to use the various elements of the methodology precisely, but if necessary, they adjust these elements to suit the pupils and them.

2.2.3 *Effect of integration*

The responding teachers were not willing to contemplate the effects of integrated education on the performance of the students, yet. They have spoken about their experiences with the integration so far in connection with three topics:

- New types of cooperation between teachers
- Academic achievement of pupils
- Relationship between parents and school

New types of cooperation between teachers

The first topic, which brought up the experiences with the integrated education was the introduction to the teaching staff. All of the interviewed teachers share the view that the taking on of pupils with particular needs outside the special grade brought the staff together. This new challenge called for the creation of a common strategy for all of them. The members of the staff attended trainings together, where they worked in small groups solving the emerging problems. The individual programs of development for the students are also results of co-work. All teachers had to face the same difficulties, thus they became more sensitive of each other's problems, and try to correct the possible mistakes together.

Academic achievement of pupils

After the ombudsman's report, the leadership of the school, supported by the local authorities and clerk, opted for the cancellation of the segregation practice so far used in the school. For the first time, they only undertook forming integrated classes between the first and fifth years. On the upper grade there remained four over-aged pupils undergoing special education, whom they wanted to keep in a merged, segregated class under the surveillance of a remedial teacher.

Though after the remedial teacher had undergone a serious illness in mid-September, the headmaster decided in his own sphere of authority to place these four pupils in the "normal" classes. Three of them continued their studies in the sixth, one in the eighth year. With this solution, the protests of the four students against the segregated class were also solved, for after a re-evaluation by the competent committee, all four of them were rated eligible for integrated education.

But, according to the teachers, three of the four boys turned out to be unsuitable for integration. According to a number of interviews, the non-Roma parents of the sixth year class protested against the participation of the three boys in the class because of them continuously abusing girls they attended lessons with. The situation became so acute, that because of fear for the safety of the girls, the leadership of the school had to remove the boys from the class and resume the segregated education.

No such problems occurred with the other pupils joining the integrated education. The only mentioned difficulty in the transition is the temporarily increased aggressive behaviour of the students so far attending the special classes. This form of leading down tensions was successfully cut down with the help of the remedial teachers. Up to date, relations between the transferred and non-transferred students are mostly good.

The effect of the integrated education on the pupils with special educational syllabus can be also observed on the decreasing number of absences from the school. According to their class-teachers, the transferred pupils miss only a minimal number of lessons, and are clearly happy to join the schoolwork. High absence shows up only in the case of one pupil, but he, too, has improved against his practice so far.

The attachment of the Roma pupils with special education to the school was also emphasised by the remedial teacher, who had so far taught in the specialized class. According to her opinion, her former students have profited from the integrated education in two ways. On one

hand, these students, arriving from a closed family community had entered a closed school community. The only non-Roma person whom they've communicated with was their remedial teacher. Now, they have got a chance for a daily interaction with their non-Roma mates, learning integration to the majority's society through direct interactions.

According to the remedial teacher, the other result of the integrated education is that learning in non-merged classes, the students have more time to acquire the requested knowledge. In the segregated class, students had to solve the tasks designed for deepening and practicing the new syllabus individually because of the more grades studying together. There was less time for each pupil, and those having lingual difficulties could not have been taught the Hungarian language intensively.

Relationship between parents and school

As we have already mentioned above, the Roma population of the settlement lives segregated, on the edge of the village in visibly very poor conditions. But as a result of the changes in the school, big emphasis has been laid on the relationship between the school and the parents. This seemed to be a new challenge, as it is a common phenomenon that the keeping touch with disadvantaged parents is hard, even more, when their habits, traditions and lifestyle differ from that of the teachers. Successful building of relationships is possible also in this situation, but it requires elasticity.

The most visible sign of changes at the primary school in Pátka after the ombudsman's report is exactly the maintaining of connection with the parents. It was also to be felt on the level of the narrative, that before the Step-by-Step program, the school functioned as some kind of bureau, where the parent would, if not necessary, not go in. The remedial teacher made some efforts to cover this hole in communication:

"The remedial teacher, who taught the class, it was she, that sometimes helped them, I think, with the small things, not that much about the children, but rather filling out enquiries, or helping out in this and that"

With the distance kept by the parents, no strategy against absence existed in the school. According to one of the people interviewed, if the voivode didn't bring the children to school, then practically no class was held.

After the launch of the Step-by-Step program, the ways of making connection have become different; the talks, parents' conferences, family visits have become more common, and the school tries to create programs together.

But one of the most important results is that the parents have come to terms with the school, while the school has somewhat familiarized itself with the parents. Today, parents don't visit the school only when they have something to settle, but also at other times.

"Nowadays they come in more. I see them more often, too, mostly the parents of the smaller. It is easier for them, both the parents and children, to get used to this type of education."

2.3 Local Integration Network – Miskolc

In Miskolc

2.3.1 Analysis of the agreements on consortial cooperation

Related to the REI project, four so-called *Agreements of cooperation* were created at Miskolc.

All of these consortial contracts show two main goals:

- the first goal, in accordance with the desegregation goal of the REI is: “concrete, numerical Roma desegregation, that is the elimination of segregated education”;
- the second goal is about the continuation of the project: the sides undertake further cooperation (after the end of the project) in the future to ensure the best realization of the desegregation.

Analysing the tasks undertaken in the contracts, we can say that the four contracts tackle the organization of two different activities. Three contracts undertake the creation of a kind of “educational path of life” for the schools in accordance with the goals of the REI, while one contract takes on the goal of a so-called “initiative of adult education” apart from the original goals: besides searching for the children at the Lyukó estate, who are not included in institutional education at the kindergarten, it also emphasises searching for and educating those mothers who have missed elementary education.

The contracts about the management of educational walks of life “operationalizes”, that is supports the fact of institutionalisation of desegregation goals in a separate appendix. According to this, 34 Roma children going to kindergartens will join elementary school, and 13 more from elementary to secondary school, to classes with a non-Roma majority.

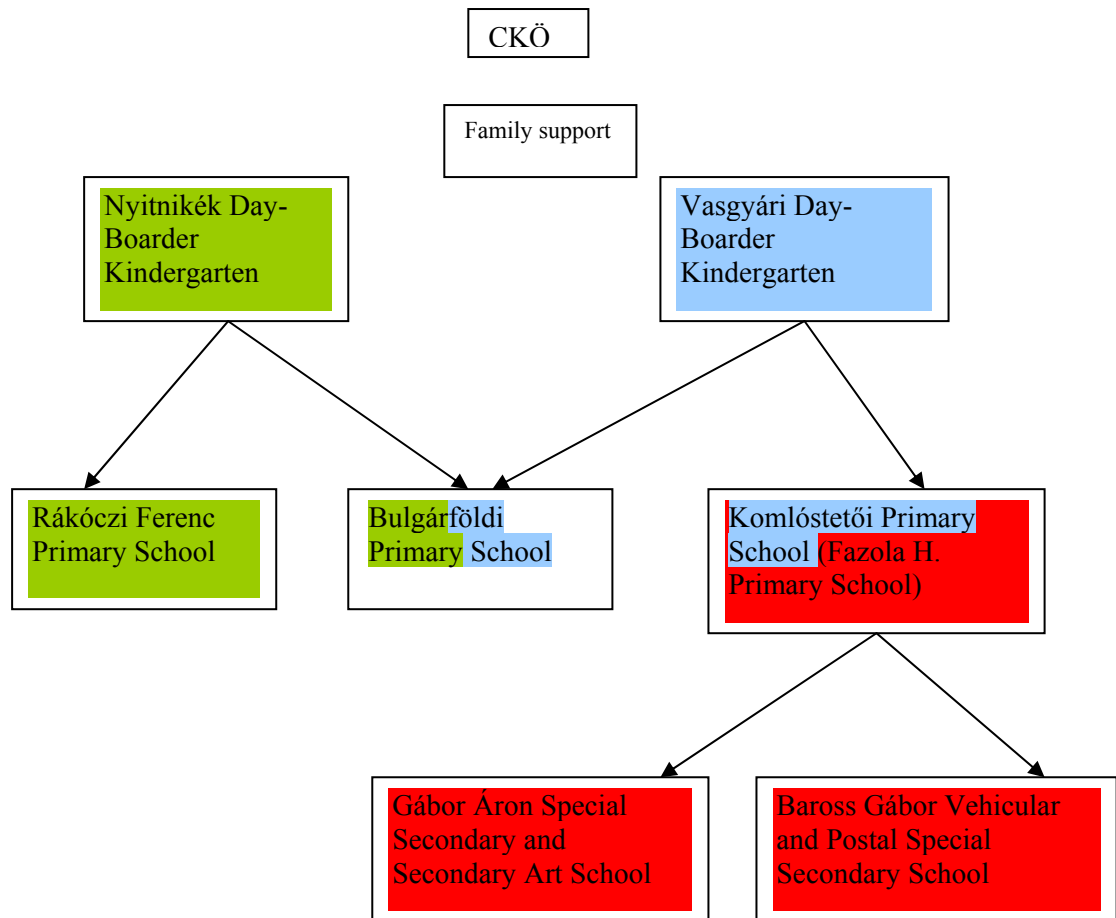
There are ten actors included in the four contracts. The Ec-Pec Foundation has a central role, and is listed as the leader of the consortium in all cases. The Komlóstetői Primary School, Fazola Henrik Primary School, is part of three contracts, the Nyitnikék Day-Boarder Kindergarten shows up twice, the other members of the consortium (Miskolc Family Support Centre, Miskolc CKÖ, Rákóczy Ferenc Elementary School, Vasgyári Day-Boarder Kindergarten, Gábor Áron Specialized Secondary and Secondary Art School, and the Baross Gábor Vehicular and Postal Specialized Secondary School) once.

For a better overview, we can compress the contents of the contracts into a “consortial network”. On the illustrational graph below (illustration n. 1), we can see the actors of the three consortial contracts about the educational walks of life. Same colours show belonging to the same consortium, while the arrows show the directions of the educational progress as undertaken by the contracts. The Ec-Pec Foundation is not shown separately, for it is the leader of all consortiums, and thus in contact with all consortium members. The CKÖ and Family Helpers are both shown in the picture, albeit –as said above,– they have also formed consortiums with the Nyitnikék, Bulgárföldi and Komlóstetői.

According to the contracts, the effort of desegregation (following the routes of education) is realized in the following way:

1. The Ec-Pec Foundation helps with training and financial support. The contracts don't fix, who and in what method does the foundation train. It is there, though, that this support is ran through an action plan and budget, which would imply on the services and finances used according to the "local needs".
2. The kindergartens undertake, that they shall enlarge the number of Roma children enrolling to non-Roma dominated primary schools. This is to be reached through hospitation (kindergarten – school), programs where children, parents, teachers and kindergarten teachers can get together, and individual developments. In case of the Nyitnikék Day-Boarder Kindergarten, the teachers shall receive training in methodology.
3. The admitting primary schools undertake, that –as non-Roma dominated schools– they shall help in enlarging the number of Roma students learning in their institutions. As sending school, the Komlóstetői Primary School's Fazola Henrik Primary School undertakes the enlarging of the number of pupils enrolling into (non-Roma dominated) secondary schools giving graduation.
4. The (non-Roma dominated) secondary school giving graduation has undertaken expanding the number of Roma pupils accepted in their institution, which is to be supported by preliminary programs organized together with the primary schools. The consortial agreements also state (besides rehearsing the concerned children), that the preparation shall be made from mathematics and Hungarian language. The two secondary schools and the sending primary school also undertake, that for the cause of integration, successful education and tracking of the accepted children they shall cooperate with the Ec-Pec Foundation.

Illustration nr. 1



Three of the consortial contracts touch the issue of supporting the transition of the schools. The interviews with the institutional executives were made after the entrance exams, but before enrolling (during June, 2005). This is important because the real success of the project could be measured on the number of enrolled on 1st September.

Of the two kindergartens participating in the REI, 24 children out of 34 (some 70 percent) enrolled into the institutions determined by the contracts. The so called realizational ratio of the Nyitnikék Kindergarten² is 65 percent (13 out of the 20 said in the contract), while the Vasgyári Nursery has 79 percent (11 out of 13)³.

13 of the Fazola Henrik School's students were chosen to participate in the preliminary training. After the entrance exams, 5 of them were accepted into the Baross Gábor Vehicular

² In order to see the parents' ideas we made interviews with five parents of kindergarten-children. These parents sent their children to the kindergarten "preparatory class", because in their opinion the strictest the teacher the better the achievement of children. They think in non-Roma dominated schools the discipline is much better. They reject the Step by Step method, because - in their own words - in SbS classes children only play..

³ Because these children are of school age, these percent doesn't mean that the other kids didn't go to one of the primary schools, only that the routes of education planned in the contract were realized to this extent: at least after the entrance applications.

and Postal Special Secondary School, and one of them to the Gábor Áron Special Secondary and Secondary Art School. If we look at the realization ration mentioned above, we can see that it is 46 percent for the whole contract, 39 percent for the Baross Gábor, and only 7 percent for the Gábor Áron. It has to be noted, that pupils of both A. and B. classes took part in the preliminary training. The B class followed SbS syllabus, while the A class the traditional one. All of the students accepted to the secondary school – except one - were from the B class.

It can be clearly seen, that the kindergarten – primary school transition is more successful, than the transition between the primary school and the secondary school. Some institutional specifics can also be traced: the Vasgyári Kindergarten will guide the children most likely to the Fazola Henrik, and they will most probably enroll to the Baross Gábor afterwards. It has to be emphasised, that only one child has got into the Gábor Áron Special Secondary School, although it is in the vicinity of the Fazola Henrik Primary School. According to this, the educational routes are independent of the physical distance of the institutions, at least on this level. It has to also be noted, that these educational walks of life didn't unconditionally come into being as a result of the REI. As we will see below, the only importance of the REI is that it has emphasised these routes, what could later become the base for route planning.

2.3.2 The REI project described by institutional executives

After analysing the contracts and looking at the realization of real, numerical goals of desegregation, we shall look at what the school and kindergarten headmasters, crucial in this project, think about its realization.

Four contracts were made at the LIN at Miskolc, and in one of these, two secondary schools giving graduation are participating. The first version of the contract brought up what seemed to be legal queries from the headmasters' side, for the place quoting the students will be accepted to the schools upon application had to be modified. This was in accordance with the law of education which talks about equal chances for all participants of the entrance exams. Although the legal query is valid, the “defending” attitude of the principals, as well as the covert prejudices that could often be traced during the conversations, we could theoretize, that the legal help was very much welcome already in the beginning of the project. On the other hand, the possibilities of the project lead beyond this for the secondary schools, and lead to an unmatched attitude. The demographical downturn has also reached the secondary schools, and practically all of them are competing for the students, for keeping the number of pupils, and the foreseen growth of the proportion of Roma students in these institutions can already be felt.

“We should anticipate these problems, for we can already see, that the minorities are going to appear in the Hungarian education in great percents for sure.”

The REI has shown this side of the trend, and has presented a kind of tools to face these new challenges institutionally.

“The work together was also good for this, at least we could see the problems we were to expect from these children.”

A similar thing could be said about the Rákóczi Ferenc Primary School, that has joined the project later. In this context, the added value of the REI could be that it emphasises this new challenge, and also institutionalises the care for the continuation of the studies.

“It helps me to build up the things I knew without the program more consciously.”

This care can be also seen in the used pedagogical methodology (SbS), in the purposeful creation of connections between the schools, and the mentoring of the students who shall continue their studies.

The project passed off roughly according to the made agreements. The teachers from the primary school took part in the education at the kindergarten, and the teachers from the secondary school made trainings for the pupils from the primary school (Fazola). The actors of the project were mostly of accord, that they completed most of what they undertook. We shall note, though, that not all of this went fluently. Communicational programs occurred inside some of institutions, and sometimes also between the institutions and the Ec-Pec Foundation. We should separately emphasise that more of the institutional leaders mentioned the inactivity of the Bulgárföldi Primary School (which was part of 3 contracts), and no-one could report on one point of the contract, the one called initiative of adult education.

The problems with communication made the stabilization of the program’s identity harder, but we think that this wasn’t the biggest obstacle, but two other factors were: the merging of schools which occurred in the meantime, and the insecurity of the continuation, preservation of this project.

2.3.3 Effects of school mergings

During the course of the project, the local authorities (sustainers) merged the Fazola Henrik Primary School and the Komlóstetői Primary School. Because of this, the Roma dominated Fazola school became the latter’s Primary school. In the meantime, there was a change in the leadership of the Fazola, for the former headmistress did not continue her task (she didn’t take on leading the Primary school). The leadership of the new, merged school, didn’t belong to the already mentioned “SbS-group”, and neither can the new leader of the Primary school described as pledged to the SbS program. From the sustainer’s point of view, the merging of the schools can be considered a statistical integration, because of which they can be part of the integrational normative, newly established by the government. In practice, though, one of the school’s associates has mainly disadvantaged students (the local folklore calls it the “gypsy school”), while the number of Roma students in the other school is relatively small. The two associate institutions, although they represent one administrative unit, will according to the executive “stay with different identities”, “are together and separately at the same time”. Although he admits, that the methodological culture of the Fazola school is wealthier, he says that “the important thing is if the teacher loves the children or not”. Another actor of the REI thinks that it is a real challenge, that what shall the leader of the Komlóstetői Primary School do with his Roma students.

We considered mentioning the merging of the schools for two reasons: once because according to our experience, these kind of fusions are not individual cases, the mergings made in the name of integration often set back the real integration (in our case, the goals of the REI). On the other hand, mentioning the merging is also important because in the REI at Miskolc, the Fazola school (informally) had the initiating role. Maybe these were the facts

that led the project leader of the REI to the recognition, that according to the experiences, a way to success of the project can be if the local governments are included in the local associations of integration. This way maybe the problem of a sustainer making decisions because of financial causes, harming the already started, good-willing project, could be tackled.

2.3.4 Sustainability of the project

One of the returning motives of our discussions with the institutional executives was the problem of the project's preservation. It was said more than once, that it is in vein to draw up grand goals, if nobody can see what happens after the project. Will they be able to continue out of their own resources, or is there such an effect of the project, that can make the undertaken goals self-sustaining in the future? Summarized: is there integration after the project?

He have already said, that one of the project's increments is that the actors have somewhat noted the routes of education. Despite of this, the awareness of routes doesn't solve the question – what happens to the students that make it to the higher levels of education? Otherwise said, if the tools of tracking these students are not established, the original goals can also be jeopardized. This tracking would be the most important on the level of transition between primary and secondary schools, and also during the secondary school, for this is where the drop off is the most significant.

There are also external conditions of preservation: for the actors don't have information about the aims of the tender's launchers about the continuation of the project, they more than often see the whole process as a good idea that could have been continued. Without information about the preservation, the whole project seems to be a short lived shot, a kind of boom that only last through this project.

“So this would be a good thing, and I don't know how this program works, can we further count on it, can we further think about it?”

2.3.5 Opinion of pupils (Grade 8)

In order to become familiar with the opinion of pupils about the preparatory course⁴, we organised a focus-group discussion with 12 pupils. (All of the participants were from Fazola Henrik School: 3 of them represented those students from class „A“ who attended the course, 3 of them were from the same class but did not follow the course, 3 were from class „B“ participating and 3 not participating in the preparatory course). The original aim of the focus-group discussion was to get information about the future career-plans of pupils and discuss their main motivations to participate in the preparatory course. But when analysing the discussion it became obvious that there are two other topics, which dominated the conversation. These are the following: conflicts at school, and the rivalry between the members of Step by Step and “normal“class.

⁴ A preparatory course – in Maths and Hungarian language and literature - was organised for pupils of grade 8 of Fazola Henrik Associate Primary School. Members of A and B classes could participate in it. Teachers of two secondary schools (also members of the LIN) led these afternoon activities.

When talking about school-conflicts, pupils made distinctions between “pupil-pupil” and “teacher-pupil” conflicts. However, in pupils’ view both types originate in one fact, which characterises their whole school-career. This fact can be defined as “favouritism of teachers”. It means that during the 8 years spent in the school, pupils of both classes felt that class “B”, the Step by Step class, was the favourite of the most of the teachers. The “B” class was always treated as “something special”. Teachers, education specialists, journalists, TV-reporters visited the “famous class”, while the members of the “A” class felt neglected. That’s why a kind of rivalry appeared between the pupils of the two classes.

In grade 8 the preparatory course could have been a perfect field of rivalry, but after two occasions the members of class “A” dropped out, because - as they reported us - were not interested in the topics. In their opinion they are not able to study at grammar or secondary schools, so learning in afternoons can be worthless.

Pupils of the Step by Step class were satisfied with the course. They liked both of the teachers, and found no problem in following the “traditional teaching methods”. There were some pupils at the focus-group discussion, who were members of the SbS class but because they would not apply to secondary schools were not advised to attend the course. These children were offended at their headteacher because they would have liked to follow the course.

3 Evaluation of the realization of the REI-project

Partially using the interviews with the more important actors of the project, we have analysed how far have the goals of the REI been reached during the course of the project. To support the evaluation, interviews with the headmasters and the project's leader (Éva Deák, Ec-Pec Foundation) have been made.

We could consider the signing of inter-institutional contracts as one of the first important steps of this project, through which the beneficiary Ec-Pec Foundation wanted to reach the goal of desegregation by means of creating local integration networks (LIN). The existence of these contracts, though, only touch the theoretical issues as far as they do reflect the institutionalisation of the intents leading to the project, but do not show the infiltration of REI goals into the everyday functions of the institutions. In case of Miskolc, the only place where contracts were made, we can clearly compare the realization of the REI with the views of the school's leaders. To have a wider view on the project's evolution, we shall present general information (precedents, realization) about this project.

3.1 The precedents of the REI, the realization of the LIN-s

Apart from the well-known efforts of the Ec-Pec Foundation to realize the intentions of REI, two more important precedents can be noted concerning the foundation. Firstly, it was the foundation that launched the Step by Step (SbS) program in Hungary, which as a result showed that with the corresponding educational support, disadvantaged children also have success at school. On the other hand, the foundation has also taken part in several PHARE-tenders, which, apart from enabling them to continue the SbS program, also brought together a net of institutions to support it. Besides the bettering of the opportunities of disadvantaged children, the foundation had double goals at this time: the creation of an institutional, as well as a training network. This already brought the provider concept with itself, as the included schools became base schools (and later regional centres of methodology), and the trainers were in good positions to become SbS-trainers. Naturally, the foundation had a limited elbow-room, not only because it was part of the civil sphere (unlike the schools), but also because its views on education and methodology counted as non-traditional, new. This inevitably led to resistance at certain places, but as a member of the non-profit sphere, and supported by a certain mission and commitment, the foundation tried to function in mostly those places, where resistance was greater.

We considered an introduction to the Ec-Pec Foundation important because thus its conception regarding the REI, and the events that occurred during the realization can be understood better. The foundation tried to establish the LIN in three places in the first round: at Budapest, Pécs and Miskolc. At all three towns, there was a school, which had already cooperated with the Ec-Pec Foundation as a result of the SbS program. In this view, the success of the REI and the presence of the SbS program are practically inseparable, and –as noted in more interviews,– the mental interlocking of the SbS and the Ec-Pec Foundation often jeopardized even the identity of the project, for the actors could not always differentiate between the Ec-Pec, SbS and REI (LIN). This identity crisis was only worsened by the launching of the government-supported National Integration Network (OOIH) project, which

worked with such concepts (institutions) as so-called bases schools and *small range managers*, just as the REI⁵.

To enable the creation of the LIN, a meeting with representatives from all participating institutions was organized during the autumn of 2003. On this conference, a certain explanatory discussion regarding the goals and roles of the LIN, and the concept of integration was started. But as we have later seen, this discussion didn't remove the problems with interpretation. Even more, these differences in concept can not only be traced between the certain actors of the LIN-es, but also between the Ec-Pec Foundation and its supporter, the OSI. While the first emphasised the creation of integration networks, the later talked about realizing concrete goals of desegregation. The former wanted to initiate inter-institutional processes of institutionalisation in one-two years by forming networks, while the other wanted to see the act of desegregation in numbers and concrete names. These varying conceptions led to the foundation realizing activities that didn't match the OSI's expectations. This led to frequent conflicts during the realization, and later to the foundation giving in. Thus, the goals of concrete desegregation also showed up in the signed consortial contracts (at Miskolc).

During the course of the project, the management discontinued the site at Pécs. This was on one hand because of the fact that while the Ec-Pec Foundation wanted to create the networks democratically, without local central leadership, but the executive of one of the schools (Csokonai primary school) tried to as if gain local hegemony within the network. At that point, the foundation didn't accept this, but as it later showed up, more determined intervention by either the local institutions or the foundation would have been essential for the creation of networks. Because of the conflicts of the foundation and the supporter (as noted above), showing results in the process of desegregation became more important than the establishing of networks. Because of this, the management of the project decided to move one pillar to Pátka (where they have already functioned as a result of an ombudsman's report) instead of Pécs.

Actors were also interchanged at the Budapest site, but the biggest problem in the realization can be seen in the merging of institutions, which practically made the process of desegregation or integration impossible.

⁵ This is one of the reasons why the name of the SbS program's bases schools was changed into centres of methodology.

4. Lessons learned

The key of the sustainability of the project, or in the wider sense, the reaching of the desegregation goals, is to consider those risks and lessons that have popped up during the realization of the project. These are the following:

- At transition from primary school to secondary school the successful entrance exam and the actual enrolling are not fully the same (for this reason, it would be fortunate to start the tracking before the enrolling);
- Merging of schools can jeopardize the reaching of the goals of integration;
- If schools with different prestige can't work together inside the associations of integration, the institutions of the LIN are stigmatised and isolated on the local level;
- Free choice of school coupled by segregation on the level of the settlement powers up segregation in school;
- Because of the maximizing of the number of pupils in classes by the sustainer, not all applying students can be accepted (into the graduating classes);
- Integration and desegregation in school cannot be interpreted separately. Its realization is not possible without drawing in the parents, introducing educational programs for the parents, or other tools for reducing poverty.

Finally we can note, that the analysis of “desegregation contracts” of Miskolc-setting can raise the question of the added value of the program. So we can ask:

- o How up-to-date the allotted educational routes are? If these routes have already existed before, what is the novelty of the REI project?
- o In the consortium, more primary schools have associate schools. In these type of schools, a certain inner segregation is quite common. So how can we talk about integration, if pupils are accepted into segregated (Roma dominated) associate schools?
- o If the project does have added value, how far can it become self-preserving? Did any individual and institutional commitments raise during the project, that could ensure its sustainability?

But the case of Patka Primary School can show that the key to the successful desegregation is the determination of the leadership of the school. If the school do not hesitate to follow its goals, and tries to reach these consciously, the degree of establishment of the local integration network becomes of secondary importance.

Pátka also shows, that the integrated education is much easier to reach where the Step-by-Step program is initiated. But it can have a consequence that no strong “project identity” develops, because the teaching staff mashes up the Ec Pec Foundation and the Step-by-Step program with every other initiative from the foundation. But although only a solid ”project identity” was created at Pátka, the process of desegregation within the school has become irreversible.

