



Roma Education Initiative (REI)

ANNUAL RESEARCH AND EVALUATION REPORT
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»EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL« PROGRAM
Integration of Roma children and youth into the educational system
(Serbia)

EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Executive Summary

External evaluation has been focused on two basic goals of “Equal Opportunities for All” program. The research study was conducted (May 2005) to assess institutional application of educational programs at pre-school and primary school level. Interviews/questionnaires were conducted with children, parents, teachers, Roma teaching assistants and school’s principals.

Key findings and recommendations are:

Ad 1. Integration of Roma children into school institutions

Finding	Recommendation
There is still a positive tendency of improvement of the social status of Roma children in class, especially after the two years of realization of the “Equal Opportunities” program.	To continue work with children on eliminating prejudice, developing tolerance, mutual acceptance and respect of differences. To stimulate joint classroom work and activity of Roma and non-Roma children which could support integration of students of different social and ethnical background as well as students achievements. Whenever the contents of the curriculum allow it introduce examples from the Roma culture, tradition and life.
The data show that the non-Roma parents have a distance towards the Roma, as well as other nationalities (the Croatians and Albanians).	To continue in realization of small projects aimed to modification of prejudice and national stereotypes; it would be recommendable to increase activity of local partners in the project, in organizing activities within the local community.
The teachers treat Roma and non-Roma children relatively equally but the difference exist in teachers expectations from school achievements	To continue working with teachers, focused on identification and overcoming of prejudice and provide them an opportunity to exchange their experiences in work with mixed classes, clarify their expectations, work together in resolving problems

Ad 2. Improved educational achievements of Roma children

Finding	Recommendation
Step-by-Step showed to be a very good program in the first grades of elementary school	To continue implementation of the Step-by-Step program and increase the number of classes in which the program is to be realized.
The Roma children have lower results in Serbian language and mathematics at the end of the 1 st , 2 nd , 4 th and 8 th grade, compared to results of non-Roma children	It is necessary to increase activities focused on improvement of Roma children's school results. It is recommended to focus more on individual work.
There are differences in excused absences between the Roma and non-Roma children: the Roma children are more absent from school compared to non-Roma children. Irregular school attendance of Roma children has been pointed out as a special problem in work with children.	It is necessary to additionally examine the causes of absence of Roma children from school; Roma teaching assistants should give special attention to children with numerous absences and to work with parents and families stressing the importance of regular school attendance.
Teachers stressed cooperation with parents as an important aspect in their engagement with the program.	Further develop the accomplished cooperation of teachers and parents. Stress the importance of teachers and stimulate exchange of information with families, counselling and assistance for parents in education and upbringing of their children.
Teachers create joint work with the assistant which points to the rising tendency of strengthening of the joint work in educational activities. Most teachers estimated that the teaching assistant was needed and useful in class.	Continue and support positive relationship, cooperation and joint activity between teachers and teaching assistants. Support their joint work in educational activity.
The Roma teaching assistants feel accepted by the teachers and estimate cooperation with them as positive. They gave more positive estimation about their engagement in regular class teaching activities.	Continue and support positive relationship, cooperation and joint activity between teachers and teaching assistants.
The presence of Roma teaching assistants in the classes has shown to be one of the most positive component of the project from the perspective of all participants.	Continue with the current working and cooperation methods between the children and Roma teaching assistants. Since now the status and the role of the Roma teaching assistants in school and classroom is established and accepted, it would be recommended to emphasise in the future assistants work with parents and families and to intensify their cooperation with a single family.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Roma Education Initiative in Serbia is being implemented in an extremely positive political context, bearing in mind that the government and NGO sector, the Roma and non-Roma communities, as well as the donors' community, think in a similar way and are ready to work together on defining a national strategy for making education more accessible to Roma children and youth. The initiative is based on expertise, experience, programs and projects designed by both Roma and non-Roma organizations, supported by a number of donors, the aim of which is to secure better access to education.

Joint initiative has been expected to reach the consensus at all the levels - national, local, in Roma and non-Roma communities – on the strategy for improving accessibility to quality education to Roma children and youth and improving integration of Roma in educational institutions.

The project is to be implemented at three levels - national strategic, local strategic and local - by the creation of models for the efficient inclusion of Roma children into the educational system.

Work at the national level envisages forming an expert group by the two ministries, which will expand the existing strategic document on the development of education in Serbia with a section that responds to the specific educational needs of the Roma community and the strategy of providing accessibility for Roma children and youth.

Work at the local level envisages forming two local teams, consisting of representatives of a local authority, educational institutions and non-governmental Roma and non-Roma sectors. The local teams will work in two Serbian towns with a large concentration of Roma, but with different local contexts, given the general situation of Roma.

By relying on the existing programs,

- the creation of a unified educational model of support to Roma children from pre-school to university age, and the linking of all forms of educational practice into the system of unified educational influence on children through strengthening the existing Roma education programs;
- developing the facilities of elementary school institutions for working on educational projects and their implementation;
- the development of new programs of support for children of high school age;
- increasing the role of educational centres in the Roma community and forms of non-institutional help for Roma children;
- increasing the number of Roma teaching staff through the continuous monitoring and education of grant-receiving students of educational vocations.

The programs are being carried out in Niš and Kragujevac in conjunction with Roma and non-Roma organizations, educational institutions and local authorities.

The project puts special emphasis on developing the capabilities of Roma teaching staff, as well as on making university staff of teachers' training faculties more sensitive to the problems of educating Roma children and youth.

Given that either a most efficient model of cooperation between institutional and non-institutional forms of working with Roma children or a model for their inclusion and "seeing" them through the educational system to the highest levels of education is yet to be found, it is expected that this initiative could create and perfect the most efficient model of making education accessible to Roma

children, with the main goal to increase the real-term accessibility to quality education for Roma children.

Basic components of the program

- 1) Creation of an educational strategy for the integration of Roma children and youth into the system of education at the national level
- 2) Creation of an educational strategy for the integration of Roma children and youth into the system of education at the local level
- 3) Pre-school, elementary school and high school educational programs – training of teachers and teaching assistants, preparations for the program's implementation
- 4) Institutional application of educational programs
- 5) Reinforcing Roma teaching staff – university level programs and training of Roma teaching assistants

External evaluation will be applied to the fourth component of the program, namely the effects that institutional application of all educational programs makes on the integration of Roma children in the system of education. The evaluation of the impact of programs' implementation on children, parents, teachers and teaching assistants will also provide an evaluation of the fifth component of the project – the reinforcement of Roma teaching staff. The first and the second component of the program - devising of the strategies for integration of Roma children in the system of education at the national and local level - will be monitored by program authors and a final analysis of the quality of the documents will be made by external experts, advisors to the Ministry of Education and sports. The programs themselves (the third component of the program) will not be evaluated individually, but only their cumulative effect through the effects of their institutional application (the fourth component).

3. METHODOLOGY

Evaluation is supposed to answer the key question whether application of educational programs within “Equal Opportunities for all” project, would contribute to a more efficient and better integration of Roma children into the system of education. The external evaluation aimed to monitor and evaluate the extent to which the goals of the “Equal Opportunities for all” program have been achieved at local level of the program implementation, as well as its effects. Evaluation encompassed institutional application of educational programs (pre-school, primary school, secondary school level), as well as all the participants in the program for the inclusion of children into the educational system (children, parents, teaching staff). Three researches have been conducted as a part of the project evaluation: the first research aimed to assess the current state in school, in connection with the status of Roma in educational institutions. The following two research studies (June 2004, May 2005) had, as their aim, the effect monitoring of the “Equal opportunities for all” program.

Evaluation and monitoring provided a basis for assessing the program's success in taking a comprehensive and effective approach which has:

- 1) Improved integration of Roma children into school institutions
- 2) Improved educational achievements of Roma children

Main outcomes that were evaluated in this research are:

- a. Educational institutions are accessible to Roma children
- b. Roma children have improved educational achievement
- c. Roma children are integrated in the classroom (peer group)
- d. Improved quality of education provided for Roma children
- e. Roma culture is present in schools and education

Indicators used for program evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of goals achieved and effects made by the “Equal Opportunities” programs at the level of school institutions has taken into account the following indicators:

1. Pre-school level

1.1. CHILDREN:

- greater number of Roma children in pre-school institutions
- increase in the number of Roma children who enrol in elementary school
- better assessment of Roma children preparedness for going to school

1.2 DAY-CARE WORKERS:

- greater expectations regarding the educational achievements of Roma children
- reduced social distance
- better cooperation with the parents of Roma children
- greater interest of teachers in the “Equal Opportunities for All” program

2. Elementary school level:

2.1 STATISTICS:

- greater number of Roma children in classes and schools
- decrease of the number of Roma children dropping out of school

- better school grades of Roma children
- lesser number of excused and unexcused absence of Roma children
- less Roma children takes remedial classes

2.2 CHILDREN:

- more positive relationship of Roma children towards school
- better social status of Roma children in schools

2.3 TEACHERS:

- greater interest of teachers for the “Equal Opportunities for All” program
- reduced social distance
- better cooperation with parents of Roma children
- greater expectations regarding the educational achievements of Roma children
- better acceptance of teaching assistants

2.4 PARENTS:

- more positive relationship towards education
- better integration of children in the classroom seen by parents
- greater expectation regarding education of their children
- reduced social distance
- more active involvement in education
- better acceptance of teaching assistants

2.5 TEACHING ASSISTANTS:

- greater presence of elements of Roma culture in schools and in teaching
- increased perception of one's own role
- higher degree and quality of cooperation with teachers
- better acceptance by children and teachers
- better acceptance by Roma and non-Roma parents
- more positive assessment of the social status of children
- better acceptance by school administration, professional service and management

2.6. SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

- The evaluation of the realization of “Equal Opportunities for All” program
- Evaluation of the effect of the “Equal Opportunities for All” program
- Evaluation of the teacher’s activity
- Evaluation of the Roma teaching assistant’s activity
- Evaluation of the cooperation between the school and Roma parents

Methodology

A follow-up to the evaluation of the “Equal Opportunities for All” program has been conducted. In the study classrooms from 2nd grade have been monitored. These were the classrooms from the same schools that were included in the sample within the last year’s research. Beside the children, a sample of their parents as well as the teaching staff was included. This study, also, included the 1st grade classrooms as well as their teachers. The idea behind the sample being designed this way was to monitor and compare the effect of the “Equal Opportunities for all” program. Findings from the last year research study served as a base line for comparisons and conclusion about the effects of program implementation after 3 years of implementation. The research was conducted in May 2005. The research was based on the same methodology, but on the revised instruments and smaller sample than the last year research study.

The following methods were applied in this year evaluation of the “Equal Opportunities for all” program:

- a) Direct observation
- b) Interviews/questionnaires conducted among program participants
- c) Sociometry
- d) Analysis of documentation

Process of instrument development

Based on the data and experience from the last year study, certain modifications of the instruments have been made. Some questions from the parent and child interviews have been deleted (the data showed that they overlapped, or were not informative or they were too difficult for the participants), while the questionnaires for the teaching staff had some additional questions. A questionnaire for the principals was, also, created. This study used the following instruments:

1. Interview for the children of elementary school age
2. Questionnaire for day-care workers
3. Questionnaire for elementary school teachers
4. Interview for parents
5. Questionnaire for teaching assistants
6. Questionnaire for school principals
7. Sociometry method

Data collection process

The data needed for evaluation of effects of the “Equal Opportunities for All” program were collected by trained pollsters, which were supervised by the evaluation team. The research study took 4 days. Whole sample included one kindergarten and two primary schools in Niš and Kragujevac (table A). The sample consisted of children from sampled groups/classrooms present in school on day the testing was conducted, day-care workers, school teachers, Roma teaching assistants and school principals involved in the project, as well as parents of the children in the sample, who accepted the teachers’ invitations. All the participants took an anonymous and voluntary part in the research study. School staff (day-care workers, teachers, Roma teaching assistants and principals) has filled out a questionnaire, while the children and parents were interviewed. In addition, documentation was analyzed in order to collect data on school results of 1st, 2nd, 4th and the 8th grade pupils.

Table A: The sample for research studies

<u>Kragujevac</u>
Primary school “Natalija Nana Nedeljkovic”
<u>Niš</u>
Preschool group within primary school “Vuk Karadzic”
Primary school “Vuk Karadzic”
Primary school “Sreten Mladenovic Mika”

The research study was conducted in the end of May 2005. The following table (B) shows the sample structure:

Table B: The sample structure in third research (2005)

	Roma	non Roma	Total
Preschool children	5	14	19
Day-care workers	3		3
Roma TA in kindergarten	2		2
Primary school children	15	65	81
Primary school parents		25	25
Teachers		22	22
Roma teaching assistants	6		6
School principals		3	3

Description of analytical techniques used

Depending on type of data, different statistical analyses were applied. Majority of the questions in the instruments was open, which required a qualitative analysis of responses. The responses were then submitted for content analysis and wherever possible (depending on sub-sample size, whether the category was sensible, etc.), categorized. Descriptive statistics (establishing frequency of certain responses /response categories) was used on the raw data or its categories. In most cases, raw data or response categories (data comparison between two sub-samples, etc.) were compared qualitatively, since implementation of statistical methods of significance of difference (ANOVA) was not possible due to the small number of responses (subjects).

Depending on nature of the collected quantitative data, different descriptive statistics were used: establishing the frequency and percentage of responses or response category, establishing average values and standard deviation.

In addition, comparative analyses were also done, comparison of data between different sub-samples. Depending on type of data, different techniques for establishing correlation of tested variables and significance of differences have been applied (correlation, t-test, and analysis of variance).

Challenges and Limitations

1. One of the problems we faced the sample design was identification of Roma subjects, while maintaining their anonymity and avoiding direct inquiry of their nationality. In former studies, Roma nationality of the parents in the sample was established based on their answer concerning languages they use in communication within their families – the subjects who stated that they speak the Roma language have been classified as members of Roma nationality. In this year's research, next to the fact that only a small number of parents has answered on the teachers' call (thus leading to the problem of a very small sample) none of the parents stated that they use Roma language in their communication, leaving us without reliable information for identification of Roma parents. Therefore, we were not able to perform the analysis of the parents' answers and their comparison with the last year results have not been possible.
2. Similar problem of identification of Roma children occurred in primary school in mixed classes. Concerning the sociometric method, in order to identify the Roma children which were stated as a choice, Roma teaching assistants from every class were consulted. For some children, however, even the assistants were uncertain whether the child was from a Roma or non-Roma family. The subjects, for which it was difficult to establish to what group they belong to, were excluded from these analyses where differentiation of Roma from non-Roma subject was crucial.
3. The second problem concerning the sample was the small number of subjects in certain sub-samples. This problem was the biggest with the day-care workers (the questionnaire was filled by only two day-care workers in each study), although the small number of teachers and Roma teaching assistants also made the complex statistical analysis, as well as comparison of responses between two studies more difficult (especially when taken into account that some subjects refused to fill out the questionnaire or answer all the questions). Therefore, analyses concerning day-care workers, teachers and Roma teaching assistants were conducted based on a small number of responses, which significantly lowers the possibility of generalization or drawing of reliable conclusions.
4. This study was conducted on a significantly smaller sample than the one last year. There are two reasons for this. First, some schools have not continued with the project this year, and were therefore excluded from the sample. Beside, the budget limitation for the field work influenced the decrease of the size sample. A question is raised if it is possible to draw out reliable conclusions based on such a small sample (Table B). Our opinion is that since this is a follow up study the sample is sufficient for making conclusions on the program's effects.
5. Based on the experience from the first research, we have done some changes in evaluation instruments. We excluded questions which did not give as any relevant information or on which most of subjects refused to answer. There for, we can not say whether subjects would be more receptive to answer these questions a second time, what would be a sign of attitudinal change. This limitations primary regards to questions about social distance for theachers.
6. A special problem for the evaluation of the effects after three years of program realization is the refusal of some schools to continue with the project, as well as the lack of involvement of new schools. Out of the four schools involved at the beginning of the program, only two remained, and in them there were also problems in realization of the project.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings will be discussed according to two main goals of the “Equal Opportunities for All” program:

- 1) Improved integration of Roma children into school institutions
- 2) Improved educational achievements of Roma children

FINDINGS ON INTEGRATION OF ROMA CHILDREN IN SCHOOL INSTITUTIONS

Preschool children

The data from evaluation of the “Equal Opportunities for All” program show that all the children showed a positive attitude towards kindergarten. As in the last year research, all children in this year preschool sample like going to kindergarten and feel good while being in kindergarten.

Table 1: Do you like going to the kindergarten?

	2004 study		2005 study	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	31	100.0	19	100.0
No	-	-	-	-
No response	-	-	-	-
Total	31	100.0	19	100.0

Since this year preschool group in the primary school V. Karadzic was of a mixed ethnic structure, we were able to conduct a sociometric method. The results showed that there is no difference between the Roma and non-Roma children regarding the choosing or rejecting Roma or non-Roma peers. In this pre-school group, every second non-Roma child chose one Roma peer as a positive choice, although the number of negative choices is still higher. However, the choices of the Roma children also have the same pattern (they chose or rejected their Roma peers equally). Upon this, Roma children have a large number of non-Roma peers as their positive choices. Based on this information it might be assumed that the choices, both positive and negative, are made based on the individual characteristics of the child and not based on ethnic differences.

Since the preschool groups from the last year were purely Roma, the comparison with this year data was not possible.

Primary school children

The social level of integration of Roma children into the educational system has been examined in two ways: indirectly, based on children’s interview responses and directly – using the sociometric questionnaire.

A. Class relations of Roma and non-Roma children. By examining the attitude of children toward the schools, the same results were obtained as in the previous year. Both the students of the 1st grade and the students of the 2nd grade, both Roma and non-Roma, stated that they like going to school, that they feel good and happy in the school (over 98% subjects in both studies¹). When talking about relations between the Roma and non-Roma children within the classroom, it can be noticed that all the children like spending time with others in classroom, that they have a lot of friends and that they play with everyone from their class. The tendency noticed last year regarding the decrease of the answers where the nationality is a reason for rejecting peers, has been observed

¹ The data mentioned and not fully represented in the in the text is enclosed in the report appendices.

in this study also. Only 2 out of 50 interviewed students stated Roma children as the children that they do not want to socialize with, while in the rest of 2nd grade students, who are already for two years in the “Equal Opportunities for all” program there are no such answers.

In addition, last year in the period between the two studies a tendency was noted that showed that the Roma children felt more accepted by others. The data from this study shows further improvement in Roma children integration.

Table 2: Do the other children play with you?

	THIRD RESEARCH STUDY							
	First grade pupils				Second grade pupils			
	Non Roma Frequency	Percent within column	Roma Frequency	Percent within column	Non Roma Frequency	Percent within column	Roma Frequency	Percent within column
Yes	46	92.0	6	85.7	16	100.0	8	100.0
No	2	4.0	1	14.3	-	-	-	-
Don't know	2	4.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	50	100.0	7	100.0	16	100.0	8	100.0

Next to this, both the children from the 1st and the 2nd grade stated that they have a lot of friends in school and no differences have been seen between their answers.

B. Social status of Roma children within the class. Comparing the data collected with the sociometric questionnaire, we got interesting findings. When we compared the numbers on how many times a Roma child is chosen as a positive choice from the last year research, with the same numbers from this year research, but from the 2nd grade sample (so, longitudinally it is the same sample after a year has passed) we found that during the realization of the “Equal Opportunities for All” program, there has been an improvement of the social status of Roma children within the class. In other words, the data showed that an increasing number of non-Roma children named their Roma friends as someone they would like to sit with at school.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics on how many times a Roma child is chosen as a positive choice

Research	Roma / non Roma choice	Mean Min = 0; max = 3	Std. Deviation	N
2004	Non Roma	.3333	.62217	63
	Roma in non-Roma classroom	.8333	.78591	18
	Total	.4444	.68920	81
2005 I grade	Non Roma	.0800	.27405	50
	Roma	1.000	.81650	7
	Total	.1930	.47953	57
2005 II grade	Non Roma	.5000	.51640	16
	Roma	.8750	.64087	8
	Total	.6250	.57578	24

Note: Since each student could select three classmates with whom they would like to share desk (positive choice), and three classmates with whom they would not like to sit together in the desk (negative choice). Mean is calculated as number of Roma students noted on the positive list divided with (number of non Roma students x 3). Mean suggests what is probability that Roma students will be chosen on the positive list (for example, mean = 0.33 can be interpreted as if every third non Roma student mentioned one Roma student)

Comparing to the last year’s 82% in the first study and 73% in the second study of non-Roma students who did not chose even one Roma peer as a positive choice, this year in the same sample 50% of non-Roma students stated one Roma student as their positive choice.

On the other hand, when comparing the results on the 1st grade samples (both this and last year's) somewhat worse results are made. Namely, in the 1st grade sample from this year a smaller number of Roma children as positive choices have been made, 92% of non-Roma children has not stated even one Roma child as their positive choice. Still 52% of non-Roma children have neither rejected any Roma students.

Table 4: Number of Roma children as positive or negative choice in I grade 2005

		Non Roma	Roma	Total
		chooser		
Roma as positive choice	No. of choice			
	.00	46	2	48
	% within Roma	92.0%	28.6%	84.2%
	1.00	4	3	7
	% within Roma	8.0%	42.9%	12.3%
	2.00		2	2
	% within Roma		28.6%	3.5%
	3.00			
	% within Roma			
	Total	50	7	57
% within Roma	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Roma as negative choice	.00	26	5	31
	% within Roma	52.0%	71.4%	54.4%
	1.00	9	2	11
	% within Roma	18.0%	28.6%	19.3%
	2.00	6		6
	% within Roma	12.0%		10.5%
	3.00	9		9
	% within Roma	18.0%		15.8%
	Total	50	7	57
	% within Roma	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Analysed together, the results lead to assume that the first school year is a period when it is too early to speak on integration of Roma children in classroom, since this can be effect of a short time of knowing the peers. During the second year of the school, it can be said that the Roma children show a significant level of integration in their peer group.

Primary school parents

A. Social integration viewed by parents. Since we do not have the data if there are Roma parents in the sample, we are not able to say anything regarding their opinion on the social integration of their children.

On the other side, examination of the parents' social distance showed that social distance towards the Roma existed, but that it was also present towards other nationalities (Albanians and Croatians). In the last year researches, about 30% of questioned parents stated that they would like for their child to go to school with Roma children, compared to 40% of questioned parents this year.

Primary school teachers

Based on the experiences from previous studies that have showed that teachers are not prepared to answer the questions regarding the issue of social distance, this time we did not ask them.

Roma teaching assistants

A. Presence of Roma culture elements in the school and in the school curriculum. Elements of Roma culture are still poorly present in schools, and regarding this there are no changes from the last year. Amongst the elements that are present are photographs, costumes, musical instruments and video cassettes with different material from the life of Roma people.

Regarding the presence of elements of Roma culture in school curriculum, there are no changes compared to the last year. Namely, all the Roma teaching assistants stated that elements of the Roma culture were absent from the school curriculum.

Proposals that Roma teaching assistants gave, regarding the ways of introducing elements of Roma culture, were the same as the last year:

- The art centre / art classes can introduce work on Roma music, drawing symbols tied to Roma people, getting to know the Roma tradition (customs, costumes)
- Songs of Roma poets, stories, mythology can be taught in language classes
- 'The world around us' classes can introduce learning about customs, tradition, art of the Roma
- Teaching Roma history in history classes
- Organization of workshops for children, parents and the teaching staff, focused on learning about the Roma culture
- Parallel presentation of characteristics of the Serbian and Roma culture within appropriate teaching units

Out of the three tested schools, only one had graffiti expressing negative attitude towards members of the Roma community.

B. Cooperation between the teachers/day-care workers and Roma teaching assistants.

Cooperation between the teachers/day-care workers and Roma Teaching assistants has improved. In the second study, most of the assistants estimated the cooperation with the teacher or day-care worker as excellent (20%), good (30%) or satisfactory (20%). In the third study the satisfaction is still higher (62.5% of the assistants estimated the cooperation as excellent and 37.5% as good). The trend of cooperation improvement between the assistants and the teachers can also be noticed when 87.5% assistants claims that they are fully accepted by the teachers, only 12.5% that they are mostly accepted and there are no those claiming that they feel unaccepted. Analysis of estimations made by teaching assistants on their cooperation with teachers did not involve separation of responses given by assistants from the Step-by-Step class (as part of regular classes) from those not involved, because no differences have been registered in answers within the preliminary analysis.

In first two studies four assistants stated there were problems in cooperation with the teacher/day care worker:

- They are not very interested in Roma children
- Communication problems
- A day-care worker had trouble managing the "Step-by-step" program

In the third research there were no assistants claiming that they had problems in cooperation with the teachers. This is another indicator of the improvement of this cooperation.

In the third research can be noticed the improvement regarding the quality of cooperation between the assistants and the teachers. The assistants stated, as a subject of the cooperation: joint work in classes, joint realization of remedial classes and realization of out-of-class activities. This research showed that the good cooperation can be seen, also, in frequent discussions between teachers and assistants on problems of Roma children, as well as joint resolving of these problems.

Evaluation results of the “Equal Opportunities for All” program show that between the two studies last year, there has been intensified cooperation between teachers and Roma teaching assistants, concerning joint structuring of contents and activities to be realized in classes. The third study shows even more visible improvement (table 5).

Table 5: Do you make lesson plans together with the teacher?

	First research study		Second research study		Third research study	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Often	3	27.3	4	40.0	5	62.5
Sometimes	1	9.1	2	20.0	3	37.5
Rarely	3	27.3	-	-	-	-
Never	3	27.3	4	40.0	-	-
No response	1	9.2	-	-	-	-
Total	11	100.0	10	100.0	8	100.0

The Roma teaching assistants see their work as consisting of the following:

	No. of responses
• Helps all the children during regular classes	8
• Holds remedial classes for Roma children only	8
• Serves as connection between the Roma families and the school	7
• Serves as a model of behaviour for all the children	6
• Serves as a model of behaviour for Roma children	6
• Holds classes for some parts of the school curriculum to all the children	5
• Represents interests of Roma children in school	5
• Holds remedial classes	4
• Helps Roma children during regular classes	4
• Holds regular classes together with the teacher	4
• Translates for Roma children	2
• Introduces elements of Roma culture and Roma language in school curriculum	1
• Holds some parts of the curriculum to Roma children only	1
• Only present in class, but does not take part in working with children	0
• Does not attend lessons	0

The improvement can be seen also in the assistants’ estimation that they now feel more equal participants in teaching with the teacher. Last year, this type of cooperation has received an average mark of three (from 5) compared to average mark of 4 this year.

To the question if there are some changes in the relationship with the teachers in the second year of the program realization compared to the first year, 3 out of 8 assistants provided the answers. Two of them stated that earlier they only conducted remedial classes and that they are now involved in the class work, and the third stated that the changes are positive but did not explained further.

C. Cooperation of Roma teaching assistants and school departments. In the third study a significant drop regarding the quality of cooperation of assistants and school administration was observed. Thus, the cooperation with the administration is evaluated as good (mark 3 out of 5), while the cooperation with professional services and the school management was evaluated on average with 2 (out of 5). The assistants did not explain their answers.

D. Cooperation of Roma teaching assistants and the children. Same as the last year, evaluation results show that Roma teaching assistants are fully accepted by both the Roma and non-Roma children. The assistants did not name any problems in relations with the children they worked with.

E. Cooperation of Roma teaching assistants and parents. Evaluation results show that the assistants are overburdened when it comes to working with Roma families. In fact, only one assistant works with at least 10 families, 3 of them work with on average 15 families, 2 with 30 families, and 2 even with about 40 families. This is in accordance with their estimation of being overburdened (75% say they are sometimes overburdened).

Same as the last year, the Roma teaching assistants have estimated their relations with Roma families as excellent (50%) or good (37%).

This cooperation is primarily characterized by the following:

- house visits
- offering help with schoolwork to parents and children
- joint resolving of children's problems
- counselling parents on raising and education of children
- information exchange about child's activity or problems

Most assistants (62.5%) have no problems with cooperation of parents of Roma children. Amongst the problems stated is the lack of interest or not coming of the parents, or their not "sticking" to the agreements. As the way of improving the relationship between the school and the Roma parents, the assistants stated:

- Organizing a larger number of parent meeting with the issues specially for Roma parents,
- Organizing the cultural programs with the participation of their children and
- Creating and conducting the programs of cooperation between the school and the parents.

To the question if they have noticed some changes in the relationship with the parents of Roma children during the second year of the project's realization only one (out of 8) assistants answered this question by saying that Roma parents seek his/hers help more often.

In the third study a further improvement in the relationship between the assistants and non-Roma parents have been observed. Thus, 50% of assistants see the cooperation as excellent, 37.5% as good and 12.5% as satisfactory. Besides, in the second year of the realization of the program "Equal Opportunities for all" 57.1% of assistants feel fully accepted by the non-Roma parents while the rest feel mostly accepted. Cooperation with non-Roma parents mostly included talks on their children's achievements and joint resolving of possible problems of their children.

F. Relations between Roma and non-Roma children viewed by Roma teaching assistants.

Based on estimation of 70% of assistants in the first two studies, Roma and non-Roma children work together, play and spend time together often or very often. In the third study this claim is made by 85% of the assistants. During the school year, or between the first two studies, an increasing mutual acceptance and respect between the Roma and non-Roma children was noted (36% of assistants in the first study and 70% in the second study claim this was often or very often the case in their classes). The improvement is continued in the second year of project realization since 85% of the assistants claim that there is a mutual respect between the Roma and non-Roma children. In the second year of realization of the program, in the opinion of the assistants, a further drop of hostilities between Roma and non-Roma children can be seen. Namely, all assistants in the third study claim that the fights are rare or very rare, and beside this 86% of them claims that the labelling of the children is rare or very rare as well as the avoidance of Roma children by non-Roma children. According to Roma teaching assistants, insults and abuse are rare in children's relations, although still present.

G. Attitude of the teaching staff towards Roma children viewed by teaching assistants. When estimating relations of teachers towards the Roma children, 90% of assistants in three studies claims

that teachers often or very often respected and accepted all the children equally and offered them equal help with their learning. 87.5% of assistants estimate that teachers very rarely or rarely abused, labelled or insulted Roma children. In this study the equal treatment of the children by the teachers has been evaluated better. Namely, comparing to the 60% of assistants that stated that the teachers very often or often had the same expectations for Roma and non-Roma children, last year, in this research 87.5% of assistants gave the same response.

FINDINGS ON IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF ROMA CHILDREN

Preschool children

Evidence of improved educational achievement of Roma children on preschool level is very poor. The data on number of Roma children enrolled in the four pre-school groups in the two primary schools involved in the project are given in the following table:

Table 6: Number of enrolled preschool children in two schools

	Total No. of children	No. of Roma children
Preschool groups in PS "V. Karadzic"		
A	32	31
B	32	27
Preschool groups in PS "N.N. Nedeljkovic"		
A	19	4
B	42	/

As we can see in the table, one school have a large number of enrolled Roma children, but the groups are not ethnically mixed. The other school, have just a few Roma children enrolled this year in preschool group.

On the other side, primary schools don't have a complete data on how many children from preschool groups have enrolled in the 1st grade this year.

Primary school children

A. Number of Roma / non-Roma children in primary schools. Compared data on enrolment of students in the 1st grade are shown in the following table:

Table 7: Data on enrolment in 1st grade for schools in project:

	Enrolled in the I grade 2003/2004	Enrolled in the I grade 2004/2005	Enrolled in the I grade 2005/2006
PS V.Karadzic, Nis			
Roma children	91	31	31
Non Roma children	-	13	13
PS R.Domanovic, Nis			
			<i>not in project</i>
Roma children	17	16	
Non Roma children	99	105	
PS N.N Nedeljkovic, Kragujevac			
Roma children	17	17	19
Non Roma children	41	67	62
PS S.Sremcevic, Kragujevac			
			<i>not in project</i>
Roma children	8	6	
Non Roma children	114	132	

Those data indicate that in one school there is a less Roma children enrolled in the school, but compared to the first year of program implementation, in last two years there are more non Roma children enrolled. This would suggest better integration of Roma and non Roma children in mixed school classes. The other school in this year project have a stable number of both Roma and non Roma children enrolled in the 1st grade. From the total number of 50 Roma children enrolled in the 1st grade this year, 42 of them have attended preparatory preschool groups

On the other side, schools have no information on the number of students which have not completed a grade (mostly due to absence or bad grades) or who have dropped out of schools. Only one school has the evidence that four Roma children in first three grades, from total number of 70 Roma children in eight grades, are very often absent from school.

B. Attitude towards school. Based on children’s answers in the interview, we can conclude that all have a positive attitude towards school. The results on the positive attitude are seen in all three studies. Beside, the students stated as the reasons why they like to go to school most often the studying (and only after it they stated socializing and other reasons). Most children prefer the school subjects in general (writing, reading, mathematics, drawing, music, gym) and no differences were registered between Roma and non-Roma children in this respect. Children stated that they liked learning new things. In the following tables show the self-estimations regarding the achievement in a number of main school subject obtained in the third study.

Table 8: How do you find reading?

	First grade pupils				Second grade pupils			
	Non Roma Frequency	Percent within column	Roma Frequency	Percent within column	Non Roma Frequency	Percent within column	Roma Frequency	Percent within column
Easy	25	50.0	4	57.1	9	56.3	4	50.0
Hard	3	6.0	1	14.3	2	12.5	1	12.5
Just right	22	44.0	2	28.6	5	31.3	3	31.3
Total	50	100.0	7	100.0	16	100.0	8	100.0

Table 9: How do you find writing?

	First grade pupils				Second grade pupils			
	Non Roma Frequency	Percent within column	Roma Frequency	Percent within column	Non Roma Frequency	Percent within column	Roma Frequency	Percent within column
Easy	30	60.0	4	57.1	9	56.3	4	50.00
Hard	1	2.0	1	14.3	1	6.3	2	25.0
Just right	19	38.0	2	28.6	6	37.5	2	25.0
Total	50	100.0	7	100.0	16	100.0	8	100.0

Table 10: How do you find mathematics?

	First grade pupils				Second grade pupils			
	Non Roma Frequency	Percent within column	Roma Frequency	Percent within column	Non Roma Frequency	Percent within column	Roma Frequency	Percent within column
Easy	24	48.0	4	57.1	9	56.3	4	50.0
Hard	11	22.0	1	14.3	4	25.0	2	25.0
Just right	15	30.0	2	28.6	3	18.8	2	25.0
Total	50	100.0	7	100.0	16	100.0	8	100.0

It can be seen from the tables that there are no big differences between the self-estimation of Roma and non-Roma students. The only bigger difference is present in 1st grade students who have estimated that mathematics is hard. This is stated by only one Roma student, and on the other hand 11 of non-Roma students stated this. However, when this self-estimation is compared with the real achievement of the students it can be seen that the discrepancy is significantly bigger within the Roma students. Data on school achievement of children are presented on the following pages.

C. School achievements of Roma and non-Roma first grade pupils. Analysis of final marks in Serbian language and mathematics shows that Roma children had a lower grade in average, in both subjects, compared to non-Roma children.

Table 11: Average marks of Roma and non-Roma children in Serbian language and mathematics

Subject	Year Pupils	2003 /2004		2004/2005		2004/2005	
		Mean 1 st grade	Std. Error	Mean 1 st grade	Std. Error	Mean 2 nd grade	Std. Error
Serbian language	Roma	2.81	.141	2.82	.156	2.95	.160
	Non Roma	3.89	.054	4.38	.134	3.95	.156
Mathematics	Roma	2.53	.151	2.79	.171	2.73	.132
	Non Roma	3.65	.058	4.33	.126	4.01	.135

In the last year research we found a positive effect of the program on Roma children's achievements. The results (school marks) of Roma children from the Step-by-Step program were scientifically better than results of Roma children from classes not involved in the project (or which have only remedial work or a Roma teaching assistant from the project), and better than results of the Roma children's national average for marks in Serbian language and mathematics².

The similar results were found in this year research. This comparison is shown in table 12a.

Table 12a: Average marks for Roma children

	Average mark in SbS classes	Average mark in not SbS classes (only remedial classes)	National average for Roma children
Serbian language	3.33	2.36	2.64
Mathematics	3.25	2.50	2.51

The same data for non Roma children are shown in the following table (table 12b). As we can see, non Roma children in the sample classes have reached a very high achievement, so we can assume that program could not make it better ("the ceiling effect").

Table 12b: Average marks for non Roma children

	Average mark in SbS classes	Average mark in not SbS classes (only remedial classes)	National average for non Roma children
Serbian language	4.46	4.32	4.24
Mathematics	4.43	4.36	4.09

² Data of the Centre for Evaluation in Education, Belgrade, 2004.

D. School achievements of Roma and non-Roma 4th and 8th grade pupils. As part of the program evaluation, we have analyzed the achievements of 4th and 8th grade elementary school pupils, which attended remedial classes within the “Equal Opportunities for All” program. Comparative analysis of achievements of Roma and non-Roma children at the end of the 4th and 8th grade, for the subjects of Serbian language and mathematics, shows that the Roma children have lower results compared to non-Roma children. The difference between the Roma and non-Roma results is constant, i.e. doesn’t change from 4th to 8th grade of elementary school.

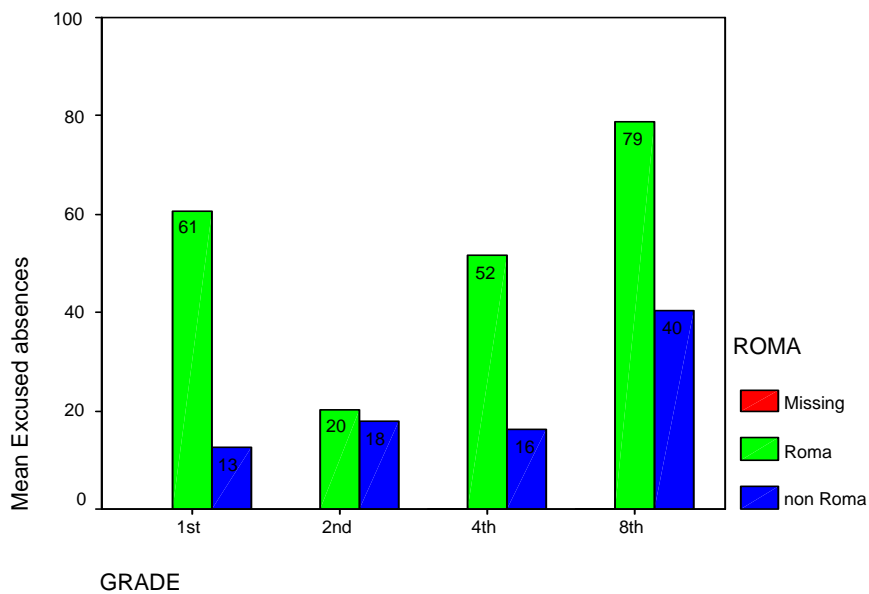
Table 13: Average marks in Serbian language and mathematics for Roma and non-Roma pupils of the 4th and 8th grade

Subject	Pupils	Grade	Mean	Std. Error	Mean	Std. Error
			(from 5)		(from 5)	
			2003/2004		2004/2005	
Serbian language	Roma	4	3.08	.206	2.89	.132
	Non-Roma	4	4.18	.079	4.37	.067
	Roma	8	2.58	.192	2.75	.175
	Non-Roma	8	3.61	.075	3.90	.085
Mathematics	Roma	4	2.78	.220	2.61	.124
	Non Roma	4	3.94	.084	4.20	.080
	Roma	8	2.29	.205	2.28	.124
	Non-Roma	8	3.37	.080	3.30	.094

E. Remedial classes. Data from remedial classes have been analyzed separately. The data show that a bigger number of Roma children attended remedial classes in Serbian language and mathematics, compared to non-Roma children, which is in accordance with their poorer results. It can also be concluded that the Roma children attending remedial classes for Serbian and mathematics have lower results at the end of first grade of elementary school, compared to non-Roma children.

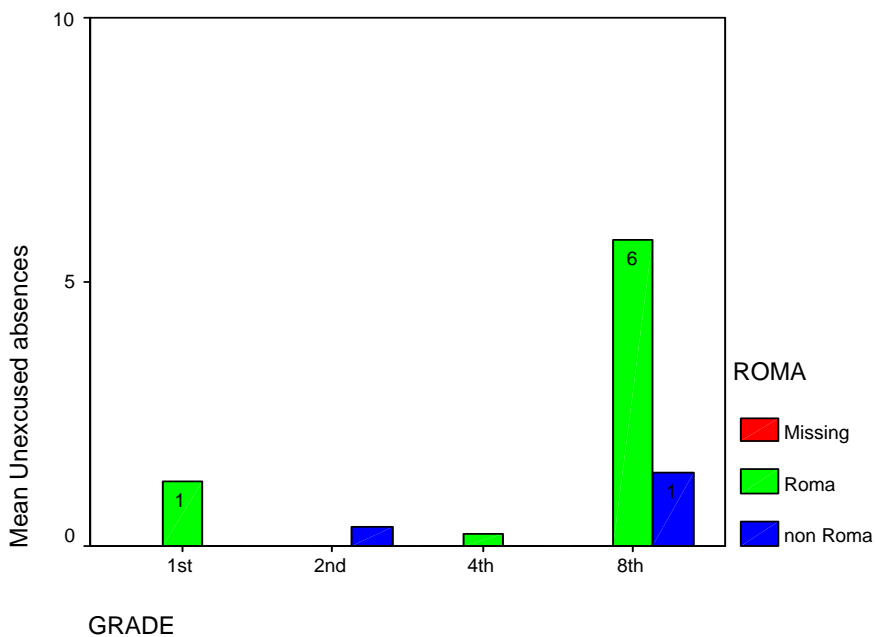
F. Class attendances. Comparative analysis of excused absences of Roma and non-Roma children in the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 8th grade of elementary school shows that Roma children have a greater number of excused absences. All four tested age groups have shown the same results.

Graph 1. Estimated marginal means of excused absences



Comparative analysis of unexcused absence shows no difference between the Roma and non-Roma children in the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 8th grade of elementary school.

Graf 2. Estimated marginal means of unexcused absences



Primary school parents

Since we were not able to extract Roma parents in the parent sample, the results of the analysis of non-Roma parents will not be shown.

Day-care workers

Since only two day-care workers entered the sample, their responses will be analyzed qualitatively.

A. Engagement of day-care workers within the “Equal Opportunities for All” program. The day-care workers from preschool groups within the sample have completed numerous seminars including those which are a part of the “Equal Opportunities for All” program. The relevance, quality and applicability of the program were estimated by day-care workers excellent (mark 5).

The day-care workers described their activities within the program in the following way:

- Doing educational work according to a new program (the kindergarten as a family centre),
- Cooperation with parents,
- Preparation of working material.

Amongst the difficulties they face in their work, the day-care workers have named children’s irregular comings, lack of discipline and obedience, poor concentration, not fulfilling the demands.

Regarding the changes in the realization of the program compared to the last year, one Roma assistant stated that there were no changes since there was no need to change anything.

They felt their work would be more efficient if they had:

- Exchange of information between colleagues
- Additional education
- Bigger engagement of parents in working with their children at home.

B. Day-care worker - parent cooperation. Cooperation between day-care workers and parents can be seen in day-care workers’ estimations that 50% to 75% parents attended the parent meetings. Moreover, day-care workers stated that 80% of parents frequently came to kindergarten to talk to them.

The day-care workers estimated their cooperation with parents as good and excellent. This cooperation consists of:

- Exchange of information concerning their children’s upbringing and learning
- Joint organization of different activities in and outside kindergarten (plays, workshops, walks...)
- Joint care about children

The day-care workers have learnt about the following from parents:

- children’s behaviour at home
- children’s activities
- children’s health
- family relations and problems
- conditions for work at home

Day-care workers advise parents on the following:

- to take care about personal hygiene

- how to work with children
- to practice language and writing

According to day-care workers, most parents accept this advice and offer feed-back information. Based on day-care workers' estimation, it can be concluded that there are no problems in cooperation with Roma parents, in general. The day-care workers also stress the fact that there is a need for more frequent meetings and longer talks with the parents.

Primary school teachers

A. Engagement of teachers in the “Equal Opportunities for All” program. The teachers in the study have finished a large number of seminars, of which some are from the “Equal Opportunities for All” program (Step-by-Step, Nor Black Nor White, Roma child in school) as well as other seminars. They decided to participate in the “Equal Opportunities for All” program because they estimate it as useful for integration of Roma children into the educational system as well as a program offering a chance to every child to show his worth and achieve the best results he can. Last year, the relevance, quality and applicability of the program were estimated by teachers as very good (mark 4 from 5) in both studies. In the third study, also, most of the teachers estimated the relevance of the program with marks 4 and 5 (only one out of 22 gave the mark 3). Regarding the quality of program the situation is similar (only 2 out of 22 teachers gave the mark 3 and the rest gave 4 and 5). Regarding the estimation of the applicability of the program the situation is somewhat different. Although most evaluate applicability with 4 and 5, lower marks can also be seen (2 teachers gave mark 3 and 2 gave the mark 2).

As in the first two studies, in this study the teachers also describe their activities within the Program as following:

- Cooperation with teaching assistants in regular and remedial classes,
- Organization of workshops, classes and seminars focused on integration of Roma children into the educational system,
- Cooperation with parents.

It is noticeable that beside workshops more and more teachers try to create additional mini-project who could with their goals be incorporated in the “Equal Opportunities for all” program.

On the question have they noticed some changes in the “Equal Opportunities for all” program compared to the last year less than a third of teachers gave the answer (6 out of 22). Two teachers stated that the period is too short to notice the changes, while the other 4 teachers saw the changes as positive and connected them primarily to the improvement of the cooperation with the assistants and parents, better realization of the program and higher interest of the children and parents for school activities.

As in the first two studies, in this study the teachers have also seen as the biggest problems in working with the children lack of discipline and infrequent comings to the school, but now as the problems appear also big number of children in classes and the difficulties the teachers have in motivating the children to work.

As in the first two studies the teachers feel that their work would be better and more efficient if they had more educational materials and teaching aids (teachers whom are not in Step-by-Step program), and also if they had additional education through workshops and seminars.

B. Teacher - parent cooperation. More than half of the parents regularly attends parent meetings, according to the teachers' estimations (from the first and the second study), with non-Roma parents being more regular.

Table 14. How many parents regularly attend parents' meetings?

	Third research study % of teachers	
	Roma parents	Non Roma parents
Less than 25%	4.5	-
Around 25%	13.6	-
Around 50%	9.1	13.6
Around 75%	18.2	27.3
Almost all	50.0	59.1
No response	4.5	-
Total	100.0	100.0

Based on average values of teachers' estimations on the number of Roma parents who come to school to inquire about children, we can notice that over 80% of Roma parents comes to school to inquire about their children often or very often.

Most of the teachers in last year studies estimate their cooperation with Roma parents as excellent (30.8%), good (23.1%) or satisfactory (15.4%). In the third study even more teachers estimated positively the cooperation with the Roma parents. Thus, 31.8% of teachers estimated the cooperation as excellent, 40.9% of them estimated the cooperation as good and 13.6% as satisfactory.

In the third study, also, the main issue of cooperation between Roma parents and teachers deals with the exchange of information regarding the child's improvement or with the advising the parents how to work with the children at home. Contrary to the previous two studies the joint problem solving is not mentioned but the visits to the Roma families by the teachers and inclusion of the Roma parents in the project activities are. All of this implies that the cooperation between the teachers and Roma parents has become closer and more intensive.

Good cooperation between teachers and Roma parents can be seen in relatively regular exchange of advice and information on work with children. The rising tendency of the exchange of information between the Roma parents and teachers is continued in the third phase of the research as can be seen in the following tables.

Table 15: Do you ask Roma parents for advice or information on work with the children?

	First research study		Second research study		Third research study	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Always	5	38.5	7	43.8	17	77.3
Only when needed	5	38.5	4	25.0	4	18.2
Sometimes	1	7.7	4	25.0	-	-
Rarely	1	7.7	-	-	-	-
No	-	-	1	6.3	-	-
No response	1	7.7	-	-	1	4.5
Total	13	100.0	16	100.0	22	100.0

Table 16: Do you give Roma parents advice on how to work with the children?

	First research		Second research		Third research	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Always	5	38.5	9	56.3	12	54.5
Only when needed	5	38.5	4	25.0	6	27.3
Sometimes	1	7.7	1	6.3	3	13.6
Rarely	1	7.7	2	12.5	-	-
No	-	-	-	-	-	-
No response	1	7.7	-	-	1	4.5
Total	13	100.0	16	100.0	22	100.0

Pattern of information exchanged between parents and teacher is the same as the last year.

What the teacher learns from the parent:

- child's behaviour at home
- ways of working with the child
- the child's working habits
- problems with work
- family atmosphere

Teacher's advice for the parent:

- how to work with the child at home
- the importance of regular school attendance
- methods of resolving problems, etc

According to teachers, the parents accept advice and are prepared to cooperate. Most of the teachers believe that the Roma parents accept their advices and are holding on to them. A small number of teachers pointed that the Roma parents are not consistent in holding on to the advices they gave them. Once again the same problems in cooperation with Roma parents are stated: children's irregular school attendances as well as parents' infrequent visits.

In the third phase of the research the improvement of the cooperation with the parents is mainly seen in their more often presence in the school. In this phase of the research this is not only a statement since the teachers are proposing the organization of parents' social events, larger involvement of Roma parents in teaching and more often discussion between the teachers and parents.

To the question if they have noticed the changes in the cooperation with the Roma parents during the second year of program's realization, only 6 out of 22 teachers answered. One teacher said that there is no change, and one claimed that the project is too short to observe big changes. The other 4 teachers claimed that the cooperation with the Roma parents is improved, that they are involved in the project started in the school, that they are involved to a greater extent in the class activities, and that they come more often to inquire about their children.

C. Teacher – Roma teaching assistants cooperation. In the third study, also, the answers of the teachers point to the good cooperation with the assistants, as well as to the more and more positive evaluation of the cooperation by the teachers when compared to the first two studies. Namely, over 80% teachers estimated the cooperation as excellent or good.

Obtained results show accordance between teachers' expectations concerning the role of Roma teaching assistant and assistants' real activities in school.

In all three studies the teachers named the following as main activities of teaching assistants:

- holding remedial classes,

- helping children with the regular curriculum
- connecting Roma families and the school

In the third study about 70% of the teachers stated that often or sometimes they create joint work with the assistant which points to the rising tendency of strengthening of the joint work in educational activities. In this phase of the research a positive attitude of teachers towards the different aspects of cooperation with the assistant can be seen. This cooperation deals mostly with the problems children might encounter, especially when Roma children are in question.

In the previous studies we have noticed that there is a satisfaction of the teachers regarding the hiring of the assistants. In the third study a growth of the teachers' satisfaction regarding the assistants' work can be seen. This growth is seen in comparison with the first study and especially in comparison with the second study. Namely, 94.7% of the teachers are very or mostly satisfied with the assistants' work.

In the third study 54.5% of the teachers claim that they do not have any problems regarding cooperation with the assistants (compared to the 87% in the second study), but 40.9% of the teachers did not give any answer to this question and only one teacher claimed that there are problems but did not identify them. In the third study, in comparison with the first two, a number of teachers who claim that there is a need for the assistants and that they have the use for the assistants' work has grown (to about 85%).

Roma teaching assistants

A. Estimations of Roma teaching assistants. Out of the ten tested assistants, half stated they were satisfied with their work at the end of the first year, four stated they are moderately satisfied and only one stated she/he was slightly satisfied. At the end of the second year of the work 75% of the assistants claim that they are very satisfied with their work while 25% of them claims that they are on average satisfied. In the first and in the second study, 40% of assistants estimated they were mostly successful or very successful in their work, while 60% of them stated they were moderately successful. In the third study 62.5% of the assistants estimated that they are very successful or successful in their work, 25% of them claims that they are both successful and unsuccessful, while 12.5% claims that they are mostly unsuccessful. Almost all the assistants at the end of the first year pointed out there are parts of their work they were highly satisfied with. Amongst them are:

- satisfaction with better school achievements of Roma children,
- satisfaction of working with children and the help they are offering and
- successful cooperation with teacher/day-care worker

At the end of the second year of the realization of the program the assistants stated that they are particularly satisfied with:

- the good cooperation with the teacher
- the good relationship with the children

At the second year of the program realization 5 out of 8 assistants claims that there are no aspects of the work with which they are not satisfied. From the remaining three assistants, one did not answer this question and the other two said that there are some aspects with which they are not satisfied. The first states that he is not satisfied with the fee and the other one that he is not satisfied with the relationship with the teachers.

The assistants have pointed out the following aspects they were primarily trying to realize in their work:

- helping the teacher in class
- helping especially Roma children in class
- offering a model of behaviour to the children
- connecting Roma families and the school

School principals

A) About “Equal Opportunities for All” program. The school principals have completed numerous seminars including those which are a part of the “Equal Opportunities for All” program. As the basic idea of the program the principals state the integration of Roma children in educational system and the development of quality education for all children. Their part in the project, the principals see in the coordination and realization of the project. The principals state that during the previous school year all planned activities have been realized.

As the biggest success of the “Equal Opportunities for all” program, the principals stated the following:

- the rising the sensibility of all actors, especially the teachers for the work with Roma children
- introducing the assistant in the classroom and his/hers work with all of the children
- organizing the remedial and preparatory classes and the achieved results of the students in the qualifying exam

One principal stated, as the biggest problem in the realization of the “Equal Opportunities for all” program, a short period of time (in his/hers school the project started this year) to realize a lot of activities. In the opinion of the principal, the program could function even better if:

- more funds were be secured for the realization of the Step-by-Step program
- the burden of the students was decreased (a smaller number of activities and in a longer time)

B) The estimation of the effects of the “Equal Opportunities for all” program. The effects of the program on the school achievement of the children, the principals have seen as good and medium. As the biggest problems regarding the education of Roma children, they stated the following:

- infrequent school attendance
- lack of motivation
- bad work and study conditions at home
- lack of textbooks and school supplies
- bad cooperation with the parents

In the opinion of the principals, the effects of the “Equal Opportunities for all” program would be bigger if:

- Roma children were provided with the textbooks and school supplies
- A whole day stay in the school was provided where they would have the adequate conditions for work and study and be under the professional supervision
- The number of Roma teaching assistants was increased
- A better cooperation with the Roma teaching assistants, students, parents and teachers was provided

The effects of the “Equal Opportunities for all” program on the social integration of the Roma children, the principals have assessed as “evident but insufficient” and “that there is some improvement. The integration would be more successful, in the opinion of one principal if the

Roma and non-Roma children would be given the opportunity to go together in the cinema, on the outings and so on.

C) The estimation of the teacher’s activity. The principals estimated that in the beginning of the realization of the program there were some problems with the work of the teachers (it was not stated what they were) but they now work excellently. In the opinion of one principal, “Equal Opportunities for all” program has introduced some novelties in the work of the teachers but they are not of a great significance, while the other principal estimated that the program will surely benefit the teachers.

The principals have estimated the teachers in the following way:

	principal A	principal B
Motivation for the work in the project	4	5
Satisfaction with the work in the project	4	4
Work with the Roma children	4	5
Cooperation with the Roma parents	4	3

D) The estimation of the activities of the Roma teaching assistant. In the opinion of the principals, the introduction of the Roma teaching assistant is one of the positive components of the program and they believe that there is a need in the school for such assistants. As the most important activities of the assistants, the principals state the cooperation with the students’ families, and helping the teachers in the individual work with the children.

The principals state that the Roma teaching assistants work with the Roma and non-Roma children, that they help the children who make slower improvement, and that their cooperation with the children is excellent.

The principals have assessed the Roma teaching assistants in the following way:

	principal A	principal B
Motivation for the work in the project	4	5
Satisfaction with the work in the project	4	5
Work with the Roma children	4	5
Cooperation with the Roma parents	4	5

The cooperation of the Roma teaching assistants with the Roma parents, was evaluated by the principals with an average mark of 4.5 (out of 5), and the cooperation with non-Roma parents with an average mark of 3.5. In the opinion of the principals there were no problems in the cooperation of assistants and the parents.

The cooperation of the teachers and Roma teaching assistants the principals have evaluated as excellent cooperation without any problems. In the same way the principals have evaluated their cooperation with the Roma teaching assistants.

D) The estimation of the cooperation with the Roma parents. The cooperation of the school with the Roma parents the principals have evaluated with the mark 3 (out of 5). This cooperation reflexes mostly in the organization of different lectures, workshops and joint activities. The principals have proposed that the cooperation with the Roma parents could be improved by organizing a larger number of educational training for the parents, and by involving the parents in certain activities of their children and other students.

The attitude of the Roma parents toward the school and their children’s education, the principals have described in the following way:

- The financial difficulties make the education of the child harder or impossible for the Roma parents
- They are mostly interested in the education of their child
- The biggest problem is the infrequent attendance of Roma children in the school which is also supported by Roma parents
- Roma parents accept the cooperation and the help of the assistant regarding the education of their children
- Lack of education of Roma parents present a problem for the education of their children and their cooperation with the school

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTEGRATION OF ROMA CHILDREN INTO SCHOOL INSTITUTIONS

This goal was monitored through a number of parameters given by participants in the educational process: the children, their parents, teachers and Roma teaching assistants.

- Direct parameters (the sociometric questionnaire) as well as indirect parameters (interview) collected from the children show that there is still a tendency of improvement of the social status of Roma children in class, especially after the two years of realization of the “Equal Opportunities” program.
- This is in accordance with estimations of Roma teaching assistants on better social relations between the Roma and non-Roma children in class after the two years.
- Besides the noted positive effects of the program, problems still exist in relations between the Roma and non-Roma children.

Recommendations:

- 1) To continue work with children on eliminating prejudice, developing tolerance, mutual acceptance and respect of differences. To organize workshops and other forms of activity adapted for different age groups, aimed at dealing with this issue and stimulating an atmosphere of unity. Classic lectures on the subject are not efficient enough, nor are they adequate for the age groups. Accent should be placed on active forms of work with children and modelled behaviour.
 - 2) To stimulate joint classroom work and activity of Roma and non-Roma children; use forms of active teaching/learning to stimulate team work, exchange of ideas, cooperation between pupils with different levels of knowledge and capabilities. Create activities which will give an advantage to difference of opinion, knowledge and ideas in resolving problems. This kind of activities could support integration of students of different social and ethnical background as well as students achievements.
 - 3) Whenever the contents of the curriculum allow it (Arts, Serbian language, History, World around us), introduce examples from the Roma culture, tradition and life. Make the Roma culture more present in school and classes. Stimulate bilingualism, multiculturalism and respect of differences in children by introducing different cultures and customs.
 - 4) In their talks (group and individual) with the Roma parents, the teachers and especially Roma teaching assistants should identify possible problems in school integration and adaptation of Roma children. Problem identification is the first step in creation and focusing of concrete activities which would help resolve them.
 - 5) Focus the Roma teaching assistants’ attention not only to the academic but also social indicators of the children’s integration and adaptation to the school environment.
- The data show that the non-Roma parents have a distance towards the Roma, as well as other nationalities (the Croats and Albanians).

Recommendations:

- 1) Modification of prejudice and national stereotypes is a difficult and lengthy process. It demands a long-term, continuous and intense activity aimed at overcoming them and developing an attitude of tolerance, multiculturalism and respect of differences. In the previous year, schools have got a support to prepare and realize small projects aimed to modification of prejudice and national stereotypes. At the time when evaluation was done,

these projects were at the beginning, so we can recommend continuing with this kind of projects stressing cooperation and joint activities of Roma and non-Roma families.

- 2) Since lectures and isolated activities in school are insufficient ways of modifying prejudices, it would be recommendable to increase activity of local partners in the project, in organizing activities within the local community, aimed at development of unity and cooperation between different cultures and national communities.
 - 3) Increase the presence of elements of Roma culture and language in schools, making them available to the parents who come to school. Organize learning about the Roma culture (and culture of other ethnic groups) through plays, celebrations and similar events.
- According to estimations of teaching assistants, the teachers treat Roma and non-Roma children relatively equally. The only difference can be seen in expectations from school achievements, since the teachers have higher expectations for the non-Roma children, according to the teaching assistants.

Recommendations:

- 1) To continue education and work with teachers, focused on identification and overcoming of prejudice.
- 2) To organize regular meetings of school staff involved in the project (if needed, in the presence of a psychologist, project coordinator, educator, etc.) where they could exchange thoughts and experiences in work with mixed classes, clarify their expectations, work together in resolving problems, etc. This would be a systematic support of teachers' work, which would help greater acceptance of the project's goals and more efficient realization of activities.

IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF ROMA CHILDREN

Children

- Data show that the Step-by-Step preschool groups develop children's curiosity and motivation for educational material and activities, which is an important precondition for accepting educational institutions and motivation for further schooling.
- Step-by-Step showed to be a very good program in the first grades of elementary school as well, because school achievements of Roma children were much better than in Roma children not involved in the SbS program, as well as the national average for Roma.
- The Roma children have lower results in Serbian language and mathematics at the end of the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 8th grade, compared to results of non-Roma children (for one mark in average). The difference between school results is constant at all ages (during eight grades of elementary school).

Recommendations:

- 1) To continue implementation of the Step-by-Step program and increase the number of classes in which the program is to be realized. Even if there are no financial conditions for opening new SbS classes, it is possible to adopt the principles of work.
 - 2) It is necessary to increase activities focused on improvement of Roma children's school results. It is recommended to focus more on individual work, with special attention given to children who are lagging behind in schoolwork. Engaging Roma teaching assistants in regular classes, as help for all the children with learning and schoolwork problems, can be highly useful.
 - 3) It is necessary to additionally investigate the conditions and causes of poorer school results in Roma children, in order to set a right direction for further project activities.
- Comparative analysis shows there is no difference in unexcused absences, but there are differences in excused absences between the Roma and non-Roma children: the Roma children are more absent from school compared to non-Roma children.
 - Irregular school attendance of Roma children has been pointed out as a special problem in work with children by the day-care workers, teachers and Roma teaching assistants.

Recommendations:

- 1) In order to make appropriate recommendations for overcoming this problem, it is necessary to additionally examine the causes of absence of Roma children from school, in order to turn the program's activities in the right direction.
- 2) Roma teaching assistants should give special attention to children with numerous absences, explore the reasons of their irregular school attendance, talk with the children and parents in order to overcome these problems and stimulate the child to attend the school more regularly.
- 3) Special attention should be given to family work: stressing the importance of regular school attendance, providing conditions for children to attend school on a more regular basis.

Teachers and day-care workers

- The relevance, quality and applicability of the program has been graded as very good (mark 4 from 5) by day-care workers and teachers.
- The day-care workers and teachers stressed cooperation with parents as an important aspect in their engagement with the program. The cooperation mostly consists of mutual exchange of information and advice as well as joint problem resolving concerning upbringing and education of their children.
- The day-care workers and teachers pointed out the problem of irregular school visits of Roma parents and their lack of adequate information on the progress and achievements of their own children.
- The teachers named lack of space, teaching material and frequent absence of Roma children as the biggest difficulties in their work.
- The teachers' responses show that they create joint work with the assistant which points to the rising tendency of strengthening of the joint work in educational activities. Most teachers estimated that the teaching assistant was needed and useful in class.

Recommendations:

- 1) Stimulate independent involvement of day-care workers and teachers within the program in creation of activities, workshops and class subjects.
- 2) Organize regular meetings for teachers/day-care workers (as well as school coordinators, educators, etc) so they can express their needs, difficulties and problems in carrying out the project. By giving them attention and requesting their opinions on directions of project development, we are strengthening teachers' motivation for implementation of the program, while the program itself is being adapted to the actual teachers' working environment. The problems concerning realization of the program are identified on time, which is a necessary step in overcoming them.
- 3) Further develop the accomplished cooperation of teachers/day-care workers and parents. Point out to the teachers and day-care workers the parents' satisfaction and positive estimations concerning their cooperation. Stimulate exchange of information with families, counselling and assistance for parents in education and upbringing of their children. Stress the importance of teachers and day-care workers in offering help to families in education and upbringing of their children.
- 4) Consult the teachers on their needs for additional teaching material and education. If possible, supply additional teaching aids for their work, as well as extra education and seminars to support their work in mixed classes and the strengthening of integration of Roma children in class.

Roma teaching assistants

- The presence of Roma teaching assistants in the classes has shown to be one of the most positive component of the project from the perspective of all participants.
- The Roma teaching assistants feel accepted by the teachers and estimate cooperation with them as positive. They gave more positive estimation about their engagement in regular class teaching activities.

Recommendations:

- 1) Continue with the current working and cooperation methods between the children and Roma teaching assistants. Put an effort in maintaining continuity of this cooperation in

order to offer continued help and support in learning and adaptation to the school environment to all the children who need it.

- 2) Continue and support positive relationship, cooperation and joint activity between teachers and teaching assistants.
- 3) Since now the status and the role of the Roma teaching assistants in school and classroom is established and accepted, it would be recommended to emphasise in the future assistants work with parents and families and to intensify their cooperation with a single family.

Presence of characteristics of Roma culture in classes and school

- The Roma teaching assistants and field observation show insufficient presence of elements of Roma culture and language in schools.

Recommendations:

- 1) The Roma teaching assistants have offered suggestions on how to introduce elements of Roma culture and language in the curriculum: show customs and tradition through World around us, present dances and music through Arts, present poets, myths, legends through Language. Introduce more photographs, objects and texts in Roma language inside the school.

6. EVALUATOR REFLECTIONS

Lessons learned

1. **Multiple perspectives on the same issues should be unavoidable part of the evaluation design** – it is necessary to take into consideration different perspectives on the same issue in order to be able to understand why some aspects of project go very well, and some other faced with obstacles and barriers.
2. **Roma parents and Roma community should take part in the evaluation – in other words evaluation should be community based.** In order to get understanding about Roma student in school and in teaching/learning process it is necessary to understand family/Roma community background as well as relationships between Roma families/community and school/teachers.
3. **Evaluation design should be focused on the process and activities as well as on the outcomes.** It is very important to follow up project activities and perspectives of different actors included in the project in order to understand how project activities are realized and what opinions of different actors on the realized activities are. On the other side, it is necessary to include into evaluation design educational and social outcomes in order to follow up what are real effects of the project activities.
4. **School marks should be accompanied with some externally designed tests of student achievements (for example, language and math test) in order to get more valid data on student achievements and improvement.** School marks are an important indicator of educational achievements of Roma students. However, school mark does not reflect just educational achievements of student, but it reflects teacher expectations from and perception of the student. This is why it is necessary to include into evaluation design externally designed student achievement tests which will give more valid and reliable estimation of student achievements. It is important to stress that the externally designed test should not replace school marks in the evaluation design since school marks has advantage because it reflects attitudes and beliefs of teachers about students.

Difficulties or challenges

1. **Identification of Roma and non Roma was done in indirect way.** (This was discussed in the section Challenges and limitations, page 10.)
2. **Teachers could refuse to participate in the evaluation** – it was happened in some cases. In some cases it was necessary to ask schools and teachers few times in order to get at least incomplete data. Consequently we are not able to generalize findings to all teachers since we are not sure what reasons are behind of teachers' avoidance to answers questionnaires. The challenge in collaboration with schools and teachers might be avoided if schools, which take a part in a project like this, would sign a contract which would state, among other things, obligation of school and teachers to participate in evaluation, and to share data with the project team.
3. **Find a way for getting valid and reliable data about implicit beliefs (stereotypes) about Roma students and Roma population, and about teacher expectations on Roma students' achievements.** Teachers expectations could be approached by comparisons of Roma and non Roma students with same school marks on the externally designed student achievement tests.

The most useful techniques, data sources, instruments, and indicators

- Student data from classroom journal (book)
- Sociometric study
- Information from Roma teaching assistant
- Interview with Roma parents

Advices:

- To be part of the project development team from the beginning
- To design evaluation to be in function of project improvement
- To build good collaboration with schools and teachers
- To prepare themselves for interviews with Roma parents (to get knowledge as much as it is possible about specific Roma communities)