



# **NOSEGREGATION**

## **Local Action Against School Segregation of Roma**

### **D.2.2**

#### **Practicing Non-segregation and Desegregation**

#### **Compendium of practices from Belgium, Bulgaria and Spain addressing the educational segregation of Roma students**

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## Introduction

*The compendium is one of the deliverables prepared within Nosexegregation project, financed by the European Commission, DG Justice, Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program. The project was implemented by a consortium led by Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance Amalipe (Bulgaria) in partnership with Fundacion Secretariado Gitano (Spain) and European Roma Information Office (Belgium).*

The **overall project objective** was to create preconditions and to raise political commitment for local actions for fighting school segregation and improving the access to quality education of Roma via: combating anti-Roma stereotypes and raising the stakeholders' awareness, empowering the local Roma communities, establishing cooperation that involve educational authorities, professionals and Roma community representatives.

The **project goals** were:

- to research the existing situation with school segregation at local, regional and national level;
- to facilitate mutual learning and exchange of successful models for creating preconditions and raising political commitment for preventing segregation (from Spain), for desegregation actions (from Bulgaria), for integration of migrant Roma children in mainstream schools in the hosting countries (Belgium, Spain)
- to train professionals and other stakeholders to carry out activities for avoiding school segregation and overcoming the existing one,
- to raise the awareness and create supportive public environment for desegregation;
- to invest in capacity building of Roma and pro-Roma civil society active at the local level.

The present compendium is prepared by a research team composed of Boyan Zahariev, PhD, Deyan Kolev, Prof. Yosif Nunev, Lalo Kamenov, Myriam Lopez de la Nieta, Gonzalo Montaña Peña. The authors combined a desk research, field visits, focus groups and interviews with stakeholders (including online meetings because of the Covid pandemic) for preparing the Compendium. Different types of successful practices were object of the research:

- desegregation of urban segregated schools
- prevention of secondary segregation in urban areas
- raising the quality of education and prevention of segregation in rural areas
- integrating Roma children from Bulgaria and Romania in ethnically mixed schools in Spain and Belgium
- pedagogical toolkit for desegregation and intercultural education.

The research team would like to thank the Ministry of education in Bulgaria and Spain, the Center for educational integration of children and students from the ethnic minorities which provided the necessary



information for identifying the most successful practices. Special thanks to the Minister of Education and Science (2017 - 2021) Krassimir Valchev, who consistently identified segregation as one of the key problems Bulgarian education faces and saw in our study hope for cultivating a shared experience of desegregation.

We would like also to express our gratitude to the contributors from Bulgaria and Spain who collected additional information and facilitated the contacts with the schools and organizations.

But our deepest thanks go to the schools, teachers, mediators and parents who accepted our invitation and shared their experience, successes, victories, disappointments and lessons learned with confidence. We easily found a common language and built mutual trust, as we are united by the understanding that education is the key to the dignified realization of every person, and the best education is obtained in an ethnically mixed environment.



## 1. What is segregation?

There are a variety of definitions and measures for segregation. The most used ones have a continuous metric, i.e. we can speak of a gradually changing degree of segregation. Others use binary transitions to classify a situation, environment, or institution as either segregated or non-segregated, or use a limited number of additional intermediate categories. Often the assessment of segregation is based on subjective data, collected using questionnaires. One typical form of a question used to assess segregation is to ask current or former students what they would say about the schools they study in or used to study in. Usually respondents are offered several answers of the type: 1) "more Roma students than non-Roma students" 2) "almost equal numbers of Roma and non-Roma students"; 3) "a certain number of Roma students, but mostly from non-Roma students; 4) "almost entirely non-Roma students." Such scaled answers can also be used in binary form, e.g. in the example above the first two answers can be taken to identify the school as segregated and the second two as non-segregated.

The scientific literature on the topic of segregation is very extensive. Below there is an overview of just a few of the sources that we consider to be typical methods of analysis related to segregation. At least two important areas can be identified in the segregation literature.

The first area is related to the theoretical understanding of the phenomenon and the development of abstract metrics, axiomatic approaches to analysis (Aslund and Nordström, 2007) and a common understanding of segregation in different social and institutional contexts (Mora and Ruiz-Castillo, 2005). An overview of some of the known metrics for assessing segregation commonly used in education is given in Frankel's article (Frankel and Volij, 2010). Of particular interest, including in the context of our analysis, is the measurement of segregation, not through the composition of the surrounding population, schools or other institutions, but through real measured social contacts (Fryer & Echenique, 2007). Students who are immersed in an ethnically segregated school environment are not necessarily deprived of social contacts outside their ethnic group.

The second area focuses on segregation in specific sectors, among which housing and educational segregation naturally dominate. These are the two most common forms of segregation that have enormous political, social and economic importance. They have large-scale effects, overcoming them requires enormous resources, and they have given impetus to mass social movements. Much attention is also paid to labor market segregation. Segregation in different sectors can be considered in the same empirical study, especially if there are any hypotheses about how they are related to each other: for example, residential and educational segregation is usually assumed to be related to broadly defined economic segregation, which includes the spatial division of income, education, and skills and occupations (Florida & Mellander, 2017).



The links between different types of segregation can be **explored across generations**, with diverse transmission mechanisms: from the skills or education of parents, through the choices of where to live and consequently where to study (in a segregated or non-segregated environment), a decision which in turn affects the chances of realization of children in one or another profession. Some studies combine a theoretical section where axiomatic definitions or abstract regression models are presented, which are then illustrated with practical application.

Usually, the desegregation of education as a political process is associated with positive effects. There are analyzes showing that desegregation in the United States can account for half of the dropout rate among black students between 1970 and 1980, while at the same time not affecting negatively the performance of white students (Guryan, 2001). According to Gurjan, at least part of the reduced dropout in US can be attributed to peer influence. However, the influence of the ethnic composition of schools is complex and significant (Hanushek et al, 2009; David & Matthias, 2003).

The assessment of the effects of residential segregation is also not straightforward, especially when segregation arises from the desire to be close to one's own cultural and linguistic community. In some countries, there have been episodes of the distribution of immigrants by region in the past, creating the conditions for a natural social experiment. A study from Sweden in a similar context (Edin et al, 2000) finds positive effects on income from living in an ethnic enclave. A similar study conducted in Germany has found negative effects from residential segregation on mastering the official language of the host country and school dropout, but these effects did not depend on the economic situation and contacts with the local population, but on the official language spoken by the parents of the immigrant children (Danzer et al, 2018). The economic role of the ghetto as a whole gave rise to a wide variety of conclusions in various contexts and the concrete assessment of the effects depends on many additional circumstances (Cutler et al, 2007). Housing and school segregation in particular can interact in complex ways. From a child's perspective, the ethnic composition of the neighborhood is external, but parents are usually presumed to be able to make some choices, within their economic and social means and opportunities available to them, such as where to live, taking into account the potential choices of schools for their children and the possibility for interethnic contacts (Borjas, 1997).

Horvath and Samogi's recent guide to residential urban desegregation, intended for local urban authorities, provides guidance for a comprehensive assessment of the situation of segregated communities, including the causes of segregation. Segregation indicators that are recommended for review are those related to education, employment and the overall socio-economic composition of an urban area. The two most common strategic approaches are the relocation (displacement) of segregated households or the gradual creation of conditions for a socio-economic mix in the segregated areas themselves. In particular, in the field of education, they cite indicative ceilings of 20-25% for the share of children from marginalized groups



which they do not recommend to exceed in any school or class in a particular school (Somogyi & Horváth, 2019), presumably because of the risk of “white flight” or negative effects on learning.

Measurement of segregation can be based on continuous or discrete measures:

- Continuous measures of segregation (measures of dissimilarity, entropy and others ) are typical for economic analyses. The data in such cases are usually derived from statistical or administrative sources (population censuses, data on ethnic composition of schools, data on distribution of ethnic groups across occupations etc.)
- Discrete measures are usually based on a scale which produces a ranking of situations of segregation. A special case of a discrete measure is the binary measure, which tags a place (neighbourhood, school, etc.) is either segregated or not segregated. A discrete measure without ranking produces a typology of segregation. Typologies are used less often than rankings, i.e. very often the main questions are ‘how segregated a place is’, ‘what does an increase or decrease of segregation lead to’ or similar. Discrete measures are more often used in context of sociological surveys. Questionnaires collect subjective information, which can refer to a current situation or use recollection (retrospective assessment)



## 2. How is segregation defined and measured in practice in Belgium, Bulgaria and Spain?

There are various definitions and ways for measuring segregation both in the research literature in the policy domain and in the practice of central governments and various territorial jurisdictions. The very working definitions of "segregation" that practitioners rely on in their daily work do not necessarily correspond to the definitions used in the scientific literature. In addition working definitions may be different in Spain, Belgium and Bulgaria. In Bulgaria for example specific terms such as "primary segregation" or "secondary segregation" are in wide use referring to specifics in the process segregation in the national context<sup>1</sup>.

In Bulgaria school segregation is defined in the educational legislation/ strategic documents in the field of education. The Public education act does not contain the term "segregation" itself but forbids explicitly the formation of classes with children from one ethnic group in the ethnically mixed schools and kindergartens. The State standard for Civic, Ecological, Health and Intercultural Education further develops these statements into anti-segregation instructions. The Strategy for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities<sup>2</sup> defines educational segregation as one of the key problems before the education of Roma minority. Segregation means a high concentration of Roma students into separate schools or classes.

In Spain segregation in ethnic terms can thus be only captured via proxy indicators relating to the socio-economic status of the students and their families. Segregation is defined differently, if at all, in the different Autonomous Communities because of diverging definitions of phenomena such as 'special educational needs' (SEN). i.e. students in need of support due to their personal circumstances or educational history.

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1 Both terms "primary" and "secondary" segregation were popularized by researchers such as Y. Nunev and later found their way into government analyses (Nunev, 2017). The term 'primary segregation' refers to educational segregation that had existed from the very beginning, i.e. since a school was founded. Primary segregation is almost always related to residential segregation – it is about schools located within or in close proximity to Roma neighbourhoods. The term 'secondary segregation' refers to the process that turns a school with ethnically mixed student population into a Roma-only schools. This type of segregation arises as a result of the Bulgarian analogue of 'white flight' – Bulgarian parents starting to move their children to other schools in response to a growing number of Roma students enrolled in the current school.

<sup>2</sup> Approved with Decisions of Minister of Education in 2014, 2010, and 2015.



For this reason it is not possible to make comparisons between ACs in terms of the concentration of students with SEN, which can serve as a proxy for ethnic segregation. Measuring progress is even more demanding than taking a baseline because it requires persistent measurement and supply of data.

In the Spanish context a balanced distribution of pupils is pursued in various ways. For example, in Catalonia and the Community of Valencia a pre-allocation of school places to families in receipt of welfare benefits is in operation. In the case of Spain semi-private educational establishments play an important role, so they must be part of the effort to reduce segregation by means of legislation or by School Commissions. Inclusion of semi-private (publicly-subsidized) schools in the purposeful distribution of students would ensure commitment and transparency. For this reason, it is important to examine their agreements and funding models. Moreover, there are various ways of applying this measure and we will need to discover which is most appropriate in each AC there. Four out of five Roma enroll in public schools, almost all of the rest enroll in semi-private schools, which are publicly subsidized and for that reason do not charge high fees.

Belgium is considered a country with a very high social segregation in state schools. Private schools are usually not included in such estimates as it is considered that by accepting students of parents who are able to afford fees they are socially segregated and contribute to the overall social segregation at national level. A study carried out with the use of a dissimilarity index<sup>3</sup> and a Hutchen's index<sup>4</sup> put Belgium second only to Hungary in terms of social segregation among in a group of 27 countries including besides European countries also Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and the USA. In the study family background was defined by a parental occupation index looking at values above (below) the national median or using other cut-off points. Similar results were demonstrated by looking at whether the child's mother had tertiary education.

An analysis of results from PISA made by the King Baudouin Foundation showed that:

- 1) Socioeconomic and migratory origin is the direct cause of a difference in performance compared to other students of almost 20%;
- 2) Stronger students spend more than eight years longer in school than weaker students;

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3 A dissimilarity index is a dichotomous index using the share of children of low social position and the children of high social position in each school in comparison to the corresponding shares at national level. The dissimilarity ranges from 0 (no segregation at all) to 1 (complete segregation).

4 Like the dissimilarity index the Hutchen's index also uses a dichotomous classification of students in two groups – those of low and of high social position and then compares the share of each of the two groups in each school to the national one. The Hutchen's index ranges from 0 (no segregation at all) to 1 (complete segregation).



3) In the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, 23% of students do not reach the minimum skill level to fully participate in modern society<sup>5</sup>.

A study of the Flemish secondary school education system finds that tracking<sup>6</sup>, which is ubiquitous leads to social segregation, different access to knowledge and unequal opportunities for children belonging to different economic classes. This study also provides a strong case for desegregation by demonstrating that the social composition of school has a strong influence on student test scores: students with the same family background achieve different test scores depending on their peers in the same school.

## Patterns of segregation

**1) Segregation in specific education tracks**, which is motivated by the assessment of students' academic capability. In reality it often reproduces existing differences in the means that parents can invest in education, in their social networks.

**2) Segregation in specific academic programmes**, which appears to be grounded in the diversity of students' interests and capabilities rather than ethnicity or a different social and economic standing of the family.

In Spain a new educational law (LOMLOE), approved on 23 December 2020 specifically limits the application of admission rules which could result in segregation in different academic programmes.

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<sup>5</sup> La Ligue des familles, "Ségrégation Scolaire : En 2017, Toujours Une Réalité Belge." Retrieved May 16, 2021 (<https://www.laligue.be/leligueur/articles/segregation-scolaire-en-2017-toujours-une-realite-belge>).

<sup>6</sup> Tracking in this context means grouping students by ability and putting them into different educational programmes or tracks in a way that prevents them from further interaction, i.e. they end up in different schools or classes. 'Tracking is the grouping of students into classes by ability/prior achievements and organizing curriculum by its level of difficulty.' (Hindriks et al, 2010)



**3) Segregation in education resulting from residential segregation** in conjunction with some admission rules and practices such as the application of school catchment areas based on distance or proximity. Both in Spain and in Bulgaria there is certain correlation between residential and educational segregation though many other factors are at play. The mechanisms that translate residential segregation into educational include closeness and convenience combined with a lack of information about other opportunities. Venturing out of the known environment into the unknown can be a serious challenge. Families experiencing residential segregation often don't have social networks extending beyond their neighborhood.

**4) Segregation resulting from market relations in education.** This is the case of the Spanish system which is characterized by the operation of both public and semi-private schools. Private costs in the forms of fees for certain services or payment of materials can result in some vulnerable families being unable to move to centers with a more socially diverse student population. In Spain a recent new educational legislation is awaiting to be translated into local regulations.

In Spain two Autonomous Communities have implemented their own policies to reduce school segregation. The key to the success of desegregation practice according to the analysis made by FSG is to combine support for students with anti-segregation interventions.

The overall improvement of the quality of education in some educational institutions often has as a side effect a more diversified student population.

### **How is segregation typically controlled?**

The most straightforward way to limit segregation is to impose some rules which typically control the way students are enrolled in schools.

### **Rules limiting segregation**

There can be various provisions in legal frameworks which aim at reducing the level of segregation by ethnicity, social status or other student characteristics. These provisions take the form of a set of rules which block known mechanisms producing segregation or try to reduce existing segregation by desegregating educational institutions.



- 1) Rules directly prohibiting the formation of schools or classes where students of certain ethnic background are over-represented (Bulgaria)
- 2) Rules that impose limitations on practices which are known to produce segregation in education such as: a) limiting the possibilities for segregation in academic programmes (Spain)
- 3) Admission rules defined in a way that reduces segregation, e.g. based on ethnicity, socio-economic status or other characteristics (Spain, Belgium). In Bulgaria admission rules limiting segregation are sometimes applied at municipal level as part of pilot projects but have never been part of the legal framework.

### ***Why does desegregation or non-segregation work to improve student outcomes?***

**Peer group effects** are expected to play a major role in bringing about a positive outcome. The environment in schools with socially diverse student population can be more demanding in terms of expectations for student performance. Having contacts with students of higher academic achievement provides role models that stimulate effort and exertion.

Xavier Bonal, Professor of Sociology at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, believes that students “build their life goals highly influenced by those of their classmates, if students from a disadvantaged environment are not exposed to other types of aspirations, they will probably stagnate”. Bonal also notes that school segregation does not occur mainly in depressed peripheral areas, but within neighborhoods with a diverse social composition. Sometimes schools with immigrants are situated next to schools with other pupils, while existing policies have proved incapable of stopping the process of segregation and formation of ghettos (Menárguez & Torres, 2021).

Sometimes there could be a trade-off between equity and efficiency in desegregation. Even if such a trade-off does not exist and everybody benefits from desegregation some parents still believe that their children will have better educational opportunities if moved to a school with better-performing students or with students of higher socioeconomic status. It is very important to address these concerns when planning and launching any policy or programme for desegregation in education.





## 3. Practicing Non-segregation and Desegregation

### 3.1. Belgium

The education system in French-speaking Belgium is characterized by strong school segregation. The education system is marked by a great variance of results and a strong correlation of these with the socio-economic origin of the students (Gil, Ferrara & Friant, 2017). In some studies depending on the methodology and definition of segregation applied, Belgium as a whole appears among countries with the highest indices of social segregation in schools among the EU countries and in comparison with other developed countries (Jenkins et al, 2008).

Between 2008 and 2010 the Belgian government initiated a series of reforms embodied in legislation, which were aiming at increasing the social mixing of students (*mixité sociale*<sup>7</sup>) and thus reduce segregation on socio-economic grounds which was found to be strongly linked with poorer performance in the international programme for student assessment PISA. The special decree on social mixing issued by the Belgian government makes an attempt at reconciling parental choice of school and the autonomy of school teams with the targets of achieving a more proportional distribution of students across secondary schools. The decree formulates 5 main objectives, not necessarily by order of importance: parental choice comes first followed by transparency, while social mixing comes third. The last two objectives address convenience for parents (reducing queues during the enrollment campaign) and the school autonomy. Those objectives, as known from a variety of educational contexts, often involve trade-offs and are not easy to pursue simultaneously. School autonomy on the other hand has been found to have a strong positive impact on student performance in Belgium as well as in other countries that have strong school institutions (Verschelde et al, 2015).

In Belgium like in other countries academic and political interest in segregation was partially spurred by the results from PISA tests and grew rapidly approximately from the beginning of the

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<sup>7</sup> In 2008 the Belgian government issued a special decree on “Social Mixing”, which entered into force from the academic year 2009-2010. *Enseignement.be*. Retrieved May 16, 2021 ([http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=23827&do\\_id=4321](http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=23827&do_id=4321)).



21<sup>st</sup> century. In Belgium the interest was both in the concentration of students based on academic achievement, socio-economic status and cultural similarity (which includes in some case ethnicity) (Gil, Ferrara, and Friant 2017). All these type of concentration are arguably incompatible with the idea of an equal access to education. In Bulgaria similar findings were made based on PISA results. A report of the World Bank based on the analysis of PISA results recommended a series of reforms the most important and widely debated of which is postponed tracking of students based on academic ability which often overlaps with segregation according to the social and economic status of the students (Gortazar et al, 2014). According to the report **peer characteristics** and **school segregation** are the key drivers of the Bulgarian education system's performance. In Bulgaria, peer characteristics explain more of the differences in PISA test scores than do individual characteristics. That is, the performance of a child on the PISA test depends more on the type of his or her classmates than on his or her own individual factors. This is because the system sorts students into schools populated by other students with similar socioeconomic status, rendering Bulgaria with one of the most stratified educational systems among PISA participating countries.

The Belgian educational reform focuses on the interplay between socio-economic, gender and residential segregation and factors related directly to education such as the educational tracks and concentration of students with specific characteristics in separate schools or classes (Demeuse et al, 2007). The new polices demonstrated the will to oppose certain practices, more or less openly displayed, at school level leading to the enrollment only of certain 'type' of students or practicing a selection at the entrance. Typical feature of the Belgian reform which distinguished it from similar developments in Spain and Bulgaria is the very active civic participation involving the academia, public figures but also grass roots organizations. The public debate preceding and accompanying the reform leaves a very specific trace on the language of the policy documents which combines straightforward and rather blunt statements in plain language such as "*les moins bons côtoient les moins bons*"<sup>8</sup> with in depth analysis of the cause for the concentration of students.

In Spain investment in educational establishments that are already segregated and complementary support services to assist the most vulnerable students is under way in some ACs. In the educational centres in many ACs working with students who require special educational support. This category includes among others also students in 'certain personal circumstances or with a certain educational history'. As a result examples of good practice are emerging focused on the

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8 "those that are not so good rub shoulders with others who are not so good".



issue of segregation (in all its senses, not only ethnic segregation) and of good practice in a more general sense, focused on interventions with students and their families.

### 3.2. Bulgaria

In the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century innovative practices in Bulgarian education, both those implemented by NGOs and some large-scale programmes implemented by the government in partnership with municipalities have been supported primarily by EU funds. This situation is not uncommon in other parts of the European Union especially when it comes to social innovation systems that involve many actors from different sectors and levels of government (Sabato and Verschraegen, 2016). But EU support is particularly relevant and even crucial for countries like Bulgaria which joined the EU relatively recently.

In Bulgaria the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was increasingly marked by a surge of nationalistic and populist movements and political parties. Despite the systematic measures for desegregation and the persistence of the policy for desegregation of education national populism left its footprint on the implementation of desegregation policies. Some Bulgarian parents started to oppose more openly the that Roma children and students should not be separated from the rest. Some teachers and directors of educational institutions, influenced by parental attitudes, also started displaying a negative attitude towards the process of desegregation and existing negative stereotypes and prejudices towards the Roma community became more manifest in school-level policies.

In Bulgaria several challenges have emerged from the analysis of desegregation practices applied at local level first as pilot innovations and later on in response to national policies and requirements set in legislation.

- 3.2.1. Closing a segregated school followed by enrollment of students in ethnically mixed schools: this model is exemplified by the case of Gabrovo. It could be observed in few other municipalities, such as Dryanovo, etc. The segregated schools that have been closed are relatively small schools. At present, it does not seem that municipalities have the political will to close the segregated schools in the biggest Roma neighbourhoods. (*The practice of Gabrovo*)



- 3.2.2. Return of students from the ethnic majority to a school that has become segregated. This appears to be by far the most challenging task and only few examples could be found in Bulgaria. The compendium presents the successful experience of Trayko Simeonov Secondary School in Shumen. It is especially relevant to upper secondary and vocational schools. Re-enrollment of Bulgarian students in vocational schools that have become segregated appears to be possible if the school manages to offer attractive specialties, acquire modern equipment and apply innovative teaching. At the same time the school has to be careful not to lose its Roma students who may prefer other specialties. Thus within-school segregation could persist in some schools with ethnically diverse student population due to the choice of specialties. *(The practice of Shumen)*
- 3.2.3. Desegregation of part of the students from segregated schools and their integration into ethnically mixed schools while the segregated schools continue their existence and many Roma children continue their study into these segregated schools: usually this model is applied in many projects initiated by NGOs and other stakeholders when municipalities do not intend to close the respective segregated school/ kindergarten: for example. In Vidin, Sliven, Plovdiv, Sofia, etc. Most often, the children of the more educated and motivated Roma parents are bussed and integrated into the ethnically mixed schools. The positive effect for them is visible while this model worsens additionally the educational process and the quality of education in the segregated schools. *(The practices of Vidin and Berkovitsa)*
- 3.2.4. Prevention of secondary segregation, i.e. segregation that takes place due to the withdrawal of students from a dominating group as a result of which only students from socially disadvantaged background remain in the school. In Bulgaria there are a few examples of successfully preserving the ethnically mixed character of vocational secondary schools in the face of a growing share of Roma students: one such example is a school in the town of Gotse Delchev. *(The practice of Samokov)*
- 3.2.5. Systematic collaboration between Roma-only schools located in or close to segregated neighbourhoods and Bulgarian schools in the same settlement. Since the number of Roma students in the segregated urban schools is very high some schools found successful ways to link Roma and non-Roma students from different schools through out-of-school activities, long-term partnership between segregated and not segregated schools. Similar models link many village schools with Roma students and urban schools with non-Roma students. *(The practices of Rakitovo, Dzulyunitza and Tundzha)*

### 3.3 Spain



In Spain public schools have the highest concentration of students of lower socioeconomic background as measured by the education and occupation of their parents. In addition to that there are publicly-subsidized private schools and private schools who do not receive any public subsidy. A study based on the analysis of PISA results from 2006 showed that 44% of fathers of students in public schools had at most primary education, compared to 27% in publicly-subsidized private schools and only 10% in private schools, which don't receive any public subsidy. Differences between the distribution of white and blue-collar professions among parents followed a similar pattern. Concentration of students according to their parents educational and socioeconomic status results in significant differences in PISA scores across types of schools, which especially large in science and mathematics (Mancebón Torrubiá, & Pérez Ximénez-de-Embún. 2010).

This distribution is important to remember also when considering patterns of segregation in the different autonomous communities as some of them have a relatively small share of public schools (Catalonia - 59%, Madrid - 54%) while in others the share of public schools is much higher (Castilla-La Mancha - 81%, Extremadura - 77%, Andalucía - 75%, Murcia - 72%) (Mancebón Torrubiá, & Pérez Ximénez-de-Embún. 2010).

Another study based on results from several waves of PISA finds the effects on performance from a higher proportion of immigrant peers and the segregation of students across public and private schools are indistinguishable from the effect of the parental background of native peers (Zinovyeva et al, 2008).



## 4. Policies Implemented by National Governments and Subnational AC Authorities

### Controlled choice Programmes

#### (Belgium with examples and lessons from Bulgaria and Spain)

In this section we are providing a brief review of the so-called controlled choice programmes – some of the designed and pioneered by the OECD. There are several reasons for putting a focus on these programmes. Firstly they are directly targeting the challenge of school segregation. One of the countries included in our review (Belgium) is among the book examples of implementing such a programme. In Spain there is an increasing interest in the idea of controlled choice as evidenced by media publications and research (Menárguez, 2021). In Bulgaria a highly selective system driven by parental choice in combination with achievement-based selection produces a pattern of high socioeconomic segregation in schools. This makes controlled choice a good candidate for an issue deserving an in-depth analysis and a potential topic for deliberation.

School choice has both ardent proponents and opponents, who sometimes use the same criteria to support or criticize. School choice is seen by some as a tool for reducing inequalities as it is believed to provide the most disadvantaged students the opportunity to change to better schools. But school choice also allows for more sorting of students according to their socioeconomic characteristics and their abilities (Musset, 2012).

For many years until at least 2005 parental right of choosing a school for their children was a main tenet of the education system in francophone Belgium. Since then the government started to seek a balance with other priorities, which could bring benefit to society, ‘social mixing’ taking a prominent place among them. In the context of Belgian educational policies social mixing can be regarded to have a close similarity to what would be called desegregation in other institutional contexts. The change of focus started with the adoption after extensive public consultations of a document concerning mandatory education called “Contract for the School” (Renard, 2017). One of the 10 priorities in the document, which calls directly for desegregation is called ‘no to ghetto schools’.



In Bulgaria parental choice has been dominating all school enrollment practices and remained a key feature of the school education system after the enactment of a completely new Law on Preschool and School Education, which came into force in 2016. In the Bulgarian context the right to choose a school for their children is in principle granted to all parents. In practice however many parents and students do not have any choice or at least have a very limited set of opportunities. As shown in the case of Spain, where many governments of ACs restricted choice of educational centres, freedom of choice has limits or at least must have limits if equity in education is to be pursued. It reaches its limits at the point where it collides with societal values such as equity.

There are many reasons why school choice may not always work in the desired way. In particular some parents, e.g. based on their socioeconomic or ethnic background may be more willing to actively exercise their right to choose or they may have more options available due to location (urban/rural) or to the resources at their disposal (accessing private schools). And of course in a system using performance-based selection parent choice is restricted by the academic aptitude of their children, thus for disadvantage families choice could be in reality non-existent. In Bulgaria many desegregation programmes run by NGOs, especially those that are considered more successful have incorporated an element of awareness building, trying to convince parents that it makes sense for them to change routines, get off the beaten track and take some risk by enrolling their children in a more distant, probably less welcoming school against the promise of better academic achievement and improved life prospects. This is an indication that unguided parental choice in communities that face educational disadvantage may not be driven to options that are considered academically superior. Many other factors are at play such as issues of convenience and comfort, not least parental concerns about the environment in receiving schools. Some of the desegregation programmes in Bulgaria have taken such concerns seriously and explicitly incorporated some interventions that aimed to influence positively the attitudes of students, parents and teachers in the receiving schools and reduce the risk of conflict.

For a long time the Belgium had a tradition of unrestricted school choice for parents. But this has started to change in the French part of Belgium towards the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and later – also in the Flemish part of Belgium.

Belgium implements the so called controlled school choice programmes designed by the OECD under which families are offered the option of choose a school with certain limitations putting in place mechanisms to ensure integration, such as maximum percentage of disadvantaged students per school.



Issues of social segregation were recognized in Flanders (Belgium) before the start of the current reforms in school enrollment but for some time parents were encouraged through informational campaigns to break away with their routines and prejudices. However information campaigns alone did not produce satisfactory results and in 2018 the implementation of a central on-line registration system for school enrollment triggered a broader reform of school enrollment. Initially the so-called double list system has been implemented, which involves reserving places in the enrollment process for students with low and high incomes, so that mixing is guaranteed. Later the lists were replaced by the use of a more complicated algorithm, which in its final stage includes also an opportunity for students to exchange their school tickets, i.e. when two students ended up holding the other's first choice<sup>9</sup>. The Flemish reform is usually quoted as an example of success though it is probably too early yet to assess the outcomes.

In Bulgaria the introduction of a central on-line school enrollment system also has limited the opportunity for school directors to cherry pick students by discriminating students of lower socioeconomic background or students from the ethnic minorities. Unlike Belgium however the system is yet to trigger a wider reform. Proximity to school now plays a very important role in enrollment but while some forms of disadvantage such as disability are taken into account, socioeconomic disadvantage is not recognized either as a reason for prioritizing the choice of certain parents or as a characteristic to be incorporated into a mechanism for achieving a better social mix. Such a policy would be difficult to reconcile with the enrollment rules after grade 4 and especially after grade 7, which involve performance-based selection which uses national standardized test (after grade 7) in combination of school-specific tests and other performance requirements (after grades and 7).

At the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Spain and especially Belgium was among the developed countries offering the largest choice of school to parents. Less than 5% of parents had no choice, while more than 80% of Belgian parents could choose among 3 and more schools. In Spain parental choice was a bit more limited but still quite rich compared to many developed countries: about 20% of Spanish parents had only one option while those who could choose among

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<sup>9</sup> "In Flanders, an Algorithm Attempts to Make School Choice Fairer." *AlgorithmWatch*. Retrieved July 26, 2021 (<https://algorithmwatch.org/en/flanders-belgium-schools-algorithm>).



many schools were more than 60%. These figures are estimated on the basis of the actual number of competing schools in the area, so they reflect the actual offer available to parents, which depends on the structure of the school network relative to the distribution of the population. Any administrative regulation of choice would come on top by imposing further limitations on school choice. No comparable study is available for Bulgaria for that period but we know that massive school closures occurred in the period 2007-2008 after which the choice of schools especially in less urbanized territories became very limited for many parents, while at the same time many families of low socioeconomic background live precisely in such areas and their children on average tend to have lower achievement at school. Spain is the only of the three countries in which some form of geographical assignment to schools formally exists. However in Bulgaria a complex scoring system is used in the process of application for schools which put an increasing weight on geographic proximity by defining specific catchment areas for schools: a student gets additional points for living within the administrative catchment area. This system tends to reinforce further existing residential segregation. In all three countries including both the Flemish and the French part of Belgium parents can enroll their children in another public school. The Bulgarian and Spanish education systems are quite selective in contrast to the Belgian one. Achievement-based selection tends to increase socioeconomic and ethnic segregation because disparity in performance tends to increase with every next grade especially in settings where students of disadvantaged background cease quite early in their school careers to have contacts with peers of more well-off backgrounds.

### **Bulgarian National Programme for Educational Desegregation (NPED)<sup>10</sup>**

This NPED is a model for supporting municipalities to ensure equal access to quality education for all children and students, studying in segregated educational institutions, including (but not limited to) the implementation of measures aimed at promoting and implementing the process of educational desegregation. The NPED was designed to support the achievement of the strategic goals, which were set in a Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities 2015-2020 (SEICSEM) adopted by the government. Both the SEICSEM and NPED refer to basic principle in the Law on School and Preschool Education adopted in 2010 which declared the fundamental principles of “equal access to quality education and inclusion of every child and

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<sup>10</sup> The full official name of the programme is National Programme of the Ministry of Education and Science for Support of Municipalities to Implement Activities for Educational Desegregation



every student” and “equality and non-discrimination in the provision of preschool and school education”.

More specifically the NPED is supporting:

- 1) Activities in non-segregated educational institutions, who have enrolled students from the ethnic minorities to provide an educational environment that encourages communication between children in the mandatory preschool and school education, students, parents and pedagogical specialists.
- 2) Providing free transport for children in compulsory pre-school and school education and students attending segregated educational institutions for training, education and socialization in non-segregated admissions.
- 3) Supporting children in compulsory pre-school and school education and students involved in the process of educational desegregation by providing free teaching aids and materials.
- 4) Institutionalization of the activity of educational mediators through active participation in the process of educational desegregation.

However the take-up of the programme was below the initial expectations, e.g. in 2019 only 6 municipalities were supported by the NPED – Gabrovo, Berkovitsa, Dupnitsa, Stara Zagora, Samokov and Tvarditsa. There could be several reasons for that.

- 1) Some activities that had proven important in the past were not included in the programme. The programme understands the desegregation process above all as a logistical challenge - transporting Roma students to schools with ethnically mixed student body.
- 2) The program does not embrace the idea of supporting in full the desegregation process at the municipal level, it rather limits itself to providing support for paying for some of the costs that municipalities cannot afford to cover from their own budgets.
- 3) In order to implement a full-scale programme for desegregation municipalities have to secure additional funding which is not easy for smaller or poorer municipalities, where a lot of segregated schools happen to be located. Bigger urban municipalities with large segregated Roma neighbourhoods could in principle invest in co-funding desegregation from their own revenue topping up the funding made available by the government, but for many of them desegregation was not necessarily high on the priority list, while participation in the NPED was on a completely voluntary basis and depended on municipal initiative. This reluctance is partially explained by the



fear of facing civic protests and negative reactions from the majority, especially in the context of growing nationalistic sentiment.

### **National Desegregation programme in Bulgaria**

Practices at local level implemented by municipalities, NGOs and schools would often not be possible without special funding, which goes beyond the usual rules and procedures for financing school education. Such funding is usually provided by special funding mechanisms which could be established by national governments or private donors. Here we present some examples of national funding mechanisms which supported local innovations and practices for decreasing different forms of educational segregation.

The project "Supporting the institutionalization of the desegregation process in the Republic of Bulgaria" is implemented with funds from the Roma Education Fund (REF) in Budapest (around 310 thousand euros) and from the budget of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science (100,000 euros). This funding scheme for small projects (up to 30,000 BGN, which is a bit more than 15,000 EUR) was implemented in the period June 2010 - September 2012 by the Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (CEICSEM). CEICSEM is a structure established by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education to coordinate the implementation of various programmes and measures for the educational inclusion of disadvantaged students from ethnic minorities. Within this competitive funding mechanism two tender procedures were announced. Municipalities in partnership with local NGOs working on the issues of educational integration were the eligible beneficiaries.

The activities funded with priority by the mechanism were as follows:

- supporting integration through desegregation and extracurricular activities in primary and secondary schools;
- improvement of the educational environment in focal kindergartens and schools; activities related to parents of children and students in the supported kindergartens and schools;
- activities aimed at a positive change in the attitudes of parents of children and students from ethnic minorities to educational activities in kindergartens and schools;
- introduction and development of full-day forms of education;



- raising the qualification of teachers to work in a multiethnic environment

A total of 99 municipalities out of 264 applied under the two calls for projects announced as part of the funding scheme: 22 municipalities were supported. The typical duration of supported projects was between 10 months and 1 year, i.e. these were mainly innovations implemented within a limited time span.

The projects did not undergo any rigorous assessment but from the administrative reporting provided by municipalities it is clear that they managed to reach out to many students and generated high rates of participation. In 22 municipalities over 7500 children and students participated in the project activities including more than 3,000 Roma children and students from 59 schools and 13 kindergartens. Below we present some concrete municipal projects supported from this funding scheme.

### **2030 Programme in Castile-Leon (Spain)**

In September 2018 the “2030 Programme” was launched, including a set of measures aimed both at students in a situation of socio-educational vulnerability and at centres supported by public funds which face a high level of socio-educational complexity or are at risk of doing so.

This regulation establishes measures of intervention with disadvantaged students, but what is interesting is that it specifically proposes, from the prologue onwards, that its objectives are to “increase the equity of the education system, make progress in terms of educational inclusion and **combat school segregation on the grounds of socio-educational vulnerability**”.<sup>11</sup>

The programme includes, among other measures, measures relating to entry into the education system and the organisation of centres; greater financial support to ensure stability of the teaching body and enable the implementation of compensatory measures which contribute to reversing processes of segregation; and scholarships and grants to enable pupils to study and programmes of student accompaniment (Government of Castile-Leon, 2018). It is a programme aimed at various profiles but which covers a significant proportion of Roma students. In fact, in the school year

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<sup>11</sup> ORDER EDU/939/2018, of 31 August, which regulates the “2030 Programme” so as to favour inclusive, high-quality education through the prevention and elimination of school segregation on the grounds of vulnerability.



2020-21 there are 32 schools participating in the programme, of which four cater for more than 70% of the Roma student population.

Additionally, Castile-Leon is the first Autonomous Community to include content relating to Roma history and culture on the official curriculum<sup>12</sup>, a step which is also being taken by other ACs such as Navarre and Catalonia.

The intention of the 2030 Programme is to change the way in which segregated centres function, by means of measures such as:

- The fostering of educational and technological innovation
- The establishment of teams of experienced, trained teachers
- A management team which can choose its teaching staff
- School-led educational projects supported by the administration
- The existence in centres of guidance tutors and technical staff specializing in socio-communitary integration, as it is also very important to work with families
- The creation of integrated centres, bringing together primary and secondary education, to avoid a loss of students in the transition from one stage to the next
- Support for Basic Vocational Training (monitoring, greater resources, more teachers, etc)
- Encouragement for extracurricular activities beyond the local environment (trips, visits to other countries, etc)
- The fostering of digital education

The main difficulties encountered in the two years since the implementation of the programme, according to the Government of Castile-Leon, can be summarised in the following three areas:

### **The Pact Again School Segregation in Catalonia (Spain)**

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<sup>12</sup> In 2016 a working group was created to develop teaching materials covering Roma history and culture with the intention of including them on the official curriculum (ORDEN EDU/71/2016, of 8 February). These units are included in the regulation of the curriculum and its implementation in Primary schools (Decree 26/2016 of 21 July).



The Pact Against School Segregation<sup>13</sup> signed in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia is an important landmark in the fight against segregation. The Pact is an extensive document consisting of 189 measures which are to be implemented over the coming academic years. It does not offer a response to the problem as a whole. In some centres the heterogeneity of the student body has increased, but at least so far, there has been no significant decrease in the concentrations of students with certain profiles. It is a voluntary programme, as it departs from the premise that unless the educational community is willingly involved, it will be difficult for the programme to succeed. This limits the reach of the project. In many cases, a lack of involvement on the part of families goes hand in hand with a high rate of early student dropout. For this reason, projects are now being launched to work with the families as much in the area of participation as in the accompaniment of students in different stages of their schooling. An element which is highlighted as positive is the continuity of the project, given that 100% of the educational centres have renewed their participation for the coming school year.

As in Catalonia, one of the basic principles underlying these types of measures is that **freedom of choice has limits**; it is necessary to introduce correction mechanisms into the system which necessarily involve the establishment of maximum percentages of students in situations of vulnerability due to various causes. It also necessary to avoid quotas for pupils with SENs in semi-private schools being filled by students who do not have such needs. However, Castile-Leon does not go as far as Catalonia, and the measures of the 2030 Programme are still based on the principle of “compensation for inequalities”, and do not include more radical measures related to the redistribution of the student body through a reform of admissions processes.

### **Kumpania Programme in Valencia (Spain)**

One of the proposals **from organisations which the Ministry for Education, Culture and Sport has chosen to put into practice is the “Kumpania Programme”**, which follows the same model as the FSG’s Promociona Programme<sup>14</sup>. This was launched in the academic year 2019-20 and is based on a social partnership with organisations which work with Roma students. It offers a new, specialized and personalized service aimed at socio-educational improvement, targeting Roma children and adolescents and their social and family environments. The objective is to help children complete Compulsory Secondary Education and to encourage them to go on to post-compulsory education (Valencian Government, 2019)

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<sup>13</sup> [Pacto contra la segregación escolar - Síndic de Greuges de Catalunya - El defensor de las personas \(sindic.cat\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.gitanos.org/que-hacemos/areas/education/promociona.html>



## The Case of the AC of Aragon (Spain)

Establishing a maximum acceptable proportion of students with specific characteristics in a specific establishment is a good safeguard against excessive concentration, i.e. against segregation. The case of the Autonomous Community of Aragon in Spain is an example of parent activism which has brought about legal changes. The Community was obliged to redesign the process of gaining access to schools and the composition of the schools.

The High Court of Justice ruled in favour of the Parents' Association of Lucas Mallada Secondary School in Huesca (Ruling nº 409), which challenged the **School Order for academic year 2017/2018** for the whole of Aragon on the grounds that it did not meet the legal requirement to establish, for the Secondary education years, a maximum proportion of students with specific needs for educational support “which would guarantee a **balanced distribution across all centres** and thereby guarantee high-quality education, equality of opportunity and social cohesion”. On this occasion it was the mobilization of parents which led to a change in the way that processes of entry into the education system are understood. As a result of the court ruling the School Order for the following year (2019-20) included certain specific measures which had not been included in previous orders:

- It is explicitly prohibited to charge families for services related to compulsory education. This is a step forward regarding a practice which acts as a differentiator, and can lead to more financially vulnerable students being unable to attend the semi-private schools which make these extra charges. However, it allows schools to charge for complementary and extracurricular activities, which, as has been demonstrated (Greuges, 2016), tends to perpetuate the situation of segregation in some districts. In a similar vein in Bulgaria participation in non-mandatory activities, which entail additional costs for the parents can alienate some parents and students from the school community and thus make it uncomfortable for them to stay.
- Whenever possible, centres are limited to having no more than 15% of students in need of educational support. When setting such limits the education authorities have to keep in mind the distribution of the characteristic among the target population: the average percentage of students in need of educational support has to be way below 15%. In other words educational authorities must dispose of reliable and up to date data.



- In cases where there are schools with a high concentration of pupils with specific needs for educational support, the School Commissions can decide on the distribution of these pupils across the schools in a district.

Measures relating to the admission of students to schools and the regulation of the process of entry into the educational system are crucially important in Spain, both in theory and in practice (Benito, 2007; Alegre, 2017). In particular Alegre (2017) makes an in-depth review of existing research and evidence on the effect of different enrollment policies on segregation. Another study focusing on results from PISA in the autonomous community of Galicia argues for putting the effectiveness of the results first over the quality of the processes. Although native students tend to be more represented in publicly-subsidized private schools even in public schools the share of immigrant students generally does not exceed 10%, which means that segregation measured by any index is low (Santos-Rego et al, 2012). This case shows that in practical terms it is sometimes good to aim at and achieve some reasonable situation of non-segregation, i.e. by managing the flows of students to various schools, instead of trying to achieve some unrealistic ideal situation. Autonomous Community governments (some more than others) are considering the need to plan and create a balanced geographical distribution in order to achieve greater diversity in the composition of the student body, whether in socioeconomic terms or in terms of ethnicity. Only a few ACs have so far made systematic changes in this direction, although in almost all of them there are specific cases of pupils being transferred from one centre to another, or of highly segregated centres being closed. In most cases these have been specific actions taken to resolve particular issues, but they demonstrate that there is a problem for which more general solutions must be found.

On some occasions, the balanced distribution of pupils across different centres in a district has had beneficial effects for the entire educational community. However, in Spain there has been very little evaluation of such measures, given that they are relatively new, and in any case the impact they are having on Roma pupils is not known. Most FSG guidance tutors who have reported cases of balanced distribution of students across educational centres (Andalusia, Aragon, Castile-La Mancha, Castile-Leon and the Community of Valencia) believe that the most important consequence it has had has been an improvement in integration into the school environment, followed by an improvement in student performance. In any case, they have not observed any negative effects in such cases and in all these ACs except Aragon, such models are starting to be replicated in other centres.



## 5. Policies Implemented by Municipalities, NGOs and Schools

### Gabrovo (Bulgaria)

The Gabrovo model to address secondary segregation has been thoroughly presented at the Roma Civil Monitoring report 2019.<sup>15</sup>

There are just 367 Roma in Gabrovo Municipality out of 61,482 inhabitants, according to the 2011 census. They are not separated into a ghetto and live under relatively normal conditions. Prejudice, intolerance and the mistakes of some principals have led to the transformation of the Third Primary School „Tsanko Dustabanov” into a „Roma” school. On March 29, 2018 the Municipal Council decided to close the school and enrol its students into all other schools in Gabrovo. This was the result of a public discussion held by the municipality, as well as numerous meetings with parents, especially Roma ones, organised by the Amalipe Centre. Thus, since September 2018, there is no „Roma” school in Gabrovo. The approach of Gabrovo Municipality for desegregation and preventing secondary segregation includes:

1. Overcoming already established secondary segregation by closing the „Roma” segregated school;
2. Integrating Roma students into all the other schools in order to prevent secondary segregation. It is important that all the other schools accept Roma students and that no other school develop the profile of a „Roma” school;
3. Permanent work with Roma parents is carried out by a respected NGO. Roma parents generally realize the low quality of segregated education and want their children to study together with ethnic Bulgarians, but they are afraid of how the „Bulgarian school” will deal with admitting them. The real partnership of a community-based Roma organisation is the surest way to persuade Roma parents to enrol their children into mainstream schools;
4. There should be constant work with the non-Roma parents to convince them that the enrolment of Roma children will not lead to a decrease in the quality of education;
5. Political courage and leadership is needed: the decision to stop secondary segregation by enrolling Roma children into all the other schools or by closing schools is never popular. It requires courage and strong leadership.

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<sup>15</sup> Available at <http://amalipe.com/files/publications/RCM-Y2-C1-Bulgaria-PUBLISHED.pdf>



The desegregation approach of Gabrovo is applicable to irreversible, relatively advanced processes of secondary segregation. If efforts are made from the beginning, it is unlikely that school closures will be needed. It would be even more successful if preventive measures would be taken. At the same time, the approach of a relatively balanced enrolment of Roma students in all schools in order to achieve similar proportions can and should be applied in many municipalities. It is one of the prerequisites for avoiding secondary segregation.<sup>16</sup>

### **Shumen (Bulgaria)**

The town of Shumen is one of the 28 district centres in Bulgaria with a population of about 100 thousand persons. Along with the Bulgarian Shumen has significant Turkish and Roma population and a smaller Armenian community.

Until 2010 the secondary school "Traiko Simeonov" in Shumen had students from all four main ethnic groups in the city (Bulgarians, Turks, Roma, Armenians). The school is located in a large and populated residential area located at the periphery away from the town center. Shortly after 2010, the parents of the children from the Bulgarian, Turkish and Armenian ethnic groups gradually began to withdraw their children and enroll them in the central schools in the city. Thus, mostly children from the Roma ethnic group remained in "Traiko Simeonov". The driving force behind this process was probably the enrollment of a larger number of Roma students from two nearby neighbourhoods populated primarily with Roma - *Byalata Prast* and *Vitoshka*.

A newly appointed school head teacher took the initiative to address the issue of increasing ethnic segregation of the school due to the flight of non-Roma students. Since 2015 the school joined the programme of 'Centre Amalipe' which extends support also to schools experiencing a process of segregation. The aim of the school formulated by its leadership was to create a vibrant multicultural school community thus contributing to a 'just and tolerant multicultural society'. 'Centre Amalipe' started to introduce in the school all components of its Intercultural Education programme in an effort to raise the quality of education in the school and make it attractive again for parents from different ethnic backgrounds.

The school gradually began to attract parents and children from the Turkish ethnic group and their percentage gradually increased. Emphasis was placed on the success of students at standardized national tests, which are organized after grades 4, 5 and 12. The students of secondary school "Tr. Simeonov" were ranked 4th in the whole town. The news spread among parents. It took another 2-3 school years to improve

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<sup>16</sup> More information see at: <http://amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&id=3318&lang=2>



the school facilities and equipment and make the school attractive also for the parents of Bulgarian children. The change of student population became first visible in early grades. In 2020 in the first grade Roma children are only 30%, and 40% in the second grade compared to Roma-only classes a few years ago. Parents are very content with the quality of premises and equipment in stark contrast to many segregated schools, which have run-down premises and outdated equipment.

The majority of parents are not worried about their children's performance because they feel that their children are entrusted to professionals. Roma parents also don't have to worry about how their children are treated at school because they know that their teachers respect them and try their utmost to excel in teaching. Parents are perceived by teachers as an active partner and supporter. Students attend school willingly, which is also in contrast to many segregated schools where the low motivation of students to attend and passivity of teachers often translates into systemic truism. The public sees the difference and is increasingly changing its attitude towards the school institution.

Teachers in the school are ready to work with each student individually whenever necessary, taking into account her cultural and family specifics. Teachers work daily to increase the success of their students. High expectations are among the main reasons for the good student outcomes as measured by the test scores at standardized national examinations.

The model includes the use of a full time educational mediator who speaks both Romanes and Turkish. The educational mediator is usually a municipal employee whose main task is to sustain the connection between schools and the most disadvantaged parents. Many educational mediators are of Roma background.

## **Vidin (Bulgaria)**

The desegregation project implemented by the Roma organization Drom from Vidin is the first from a series of similar projects implemented in different Bulgarian towns with support from the OSI/ Roma Education Fund. The project was most active in Vidin in 1999-2000 and was later replicated in Sofia (the capital), Pleven, Haskovo, Stara Zagora, Montana, Berkovitsa, Plovdiv, Pazardzhik and Sliven. The settlements where the family of related desegregation projects were implemented with the only exception of Berkovitsa (a small town in the district of Monata) are district centers with at least one segregated Roma neighbourhood. However the size of the segregated neighbourhoods, the socio-economic situation of the Roma communities and the access to public services widely differs in each of the towns where desegregation projects were implemented.

The project of the Drom Association aims to evenly enroll Roma children from the segregated Nov Pat neighborhood, which occupies a rather peripheral position, in all primary schools in Vidin. The process of desegregation involves an all-Roma primary school located in the center of *Nov Pat*. This pilot project



probably comes closest to the idea of complete removal of Roma children from the separate school in their neighbourhood.

Alongside busing the project offers a variety of activities for the subsequent adaptation and emancipation of Roma children among their non-Roma peers. The idea to pursue an even distribution of Roma students in all other schools was also adopted by many subsequent projects. This idea has a twofold explanation: on the one hand this represents technically the ideal situation of non-segregation, on the other hand this approach is meant to prevent secondary segregation caused by 'white flight', i.e. Bulgarian parents would have no chance to find a Roma-free school whereto they could move their children. The project actually managed to enroll Roma students in 11 different schools and put a limit on the number of Roma students in a specific class at 5-6 students, which would normally mean no more than a third of all students in the class. Prior to the start of the project over 100 children from the Nov Pat neighborhood were already studying among their Bulgarian peers downtown, ie. the process of desegregation had started on its own in response to the growing demand for better education and better life chances in part of the Roma community. It is however very difficult to attain such an even distribution of Roma students when it is not supported by binding legal provisions or at least a clearly formulated national policy. The Bulgarian education system is firmly based on a free choice of schools by parents in combination with achievement-based selection particularly after grade 7 (at the entry to upper secondary education).

However even this ambitious project was never able to remove all the students from the segregated school, which continued to exist and in 2021 still has a lot of students and an organizational development strategy published on its web site<sup>17</sup>. One of the aims stated in the document is to support the cultural identity of their (Roma) students.

### **Berkovitsa (Bulgaria)**

According to the National Statistical Institute from the 2011 census the municipality of Berkovitsa had about 15,000 people (82.38%) who identify as Bulgarians and 3059 Roma (16%) living in the municipality and an insignificant share of citizens who self-identify as Turks or of another ethnicity. The municipality of Berkovitsa is small municipalities with quite constrained own budgetary resources which limits its capacity to implement independent educational policies without the support from the central government.

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17 <http://ouesv-vidin.org/стратегия-на-училището/>



Rakovitsa district is separate and inhabited mainly by Roma, located at the outskirts of the town of Berkovitsa, away from kindergartens and schools, most of which are located in the central part of the city. There are important intra-group division among among Roma, which play a significant role in modeling their social relations: specific Roma subgroups include Leshetari, Koshnicari and a small number of Kelderari (Kaldarash). A primary segregated school with 100% Roma students is located close to the Roma neighborhood, where however there is no kindergarten so Roma children attend mandatory pre-school in non-segregated kindergartens of the town of Berkovitsa. The lack of public transport impedes communication between the Roma neighborhood and the rest of the city and is an obstacle to enrolling children in kindergartens. The process of desegregation in Berkovitsa began in 2006 with the implementation of a project managed by the Foundation for Regional and Cultural Development "Nangle - 2000" in partnership with the Municipality of Berkovitsa and with the support of the Roma Education Fund in Budapest. The policy for desegregation in education on the territory of the municipality of Berkovitsa has its own traditions and was systematically maintained ever since through the implementation of projects funded by various sources. Apart from logistical support the Municipal Plan for Integration of the Roma 2014-2020 envisaged also other forms of support such as psychological support, supplementary pedagogical activities, free textbooks and other materials for student up to grade 7 etc., but it is not clear to what extent they were fully implemented bearing in mind that the resource dependency of the municipality is a risk for the sustainability and continuity of many of its policies. At least the municipality was able to sustain its commitment to supporting the logistics of desegregation by providing free busing to schools and kindergartens located far from the Roma neighbourhood, which would otherwise remain inaccessible for Roma children.

In 2019 the municipality of Berkovitsa applied under the national programme of the Ministry of Education and Science "Support to municipalities for the implementation of educational desegregation activities" to support the educational integration of children of Roma origin living in the town of Berkovitsa. Some of the students from Rakovitsa are transported to three host schools in the city. Transport is provided by the schools. The Municipality of Berkovitsa provides transportation of 5 and 6-year-old children to kindergartens in the city. Schools that accept Roma children rely on support from the Municipality of Berkovitsa or funding from projects.

It should be noted that in the case of Berkovitsa like with most of the desegregation projects implemented by NGOs in Bulgaria, which were inspired by the pilot practice in the town of Vidin, the segregated school located in the Roma neighbourhood was never closed. Rather parrrt of the Roma parents were convinced to enroll their children in other schools among Bulgarian children by being offered in exchange free transport, special attention from the project staff in addressing potential conflicts and other issues and additional support for the receiving schools improving the facilities, the overall environment and offering supplementary services.



## Samokov (Bulgaria)

In the town of Samokov the percentage of Roma children compared to the children of the majority increases over the years. Roma parents prefer their children to study near their homes due to convenience but also because they are concerned about how their children are treated at school. Roma parents who prefer that their children go to school outside of the Roma neighborhoods are growing in numbers, but even they prefer a schools located nearby – some place close to where they live. Many Bulgarian parents believe that enrolling more Roma children in schools outside the neighborhoods will lead to a decline in the quality of education. As a result, they are ready to withdraw their children from schools where Roma students are increasing and enroll them elsewhere.

The municipal administration is aware of the threat of educational segregation and is trying to stop and reverse the negative trend. For years, the mayor has been proposing that Roma children leaving the neighborhoods be enrolled proportionally in all other schools, but this guidance is often disregarded by some principals. In Bulgaria most of the public schools are municipal. They are funded by the state but via the budgets of the municipalities, which receive a state grant based on the number of students on the municipality and additional criteria related to the settlement structure and the school network of the municipality. Despite that school headmasters enjoy a significant autonomy and in some cases have the power to disregard or not implement strictly certain municipal policies especially if they are not legally binding.

As a particularly worrying fact, it was pointed out that some of the students who enroll in an ethnically mixed primary school in the city are re-enrolled in the segregated school in the Roma neighborhood in the junior high school classes - because for administrative reasons they are not re-enrolled in ethnically mixed schools. On the opposite, as positive practice could be pointed out the efforts of the principal of Hristo Maximov Primary School Antoaneta Nikolova to prevent secondary segregation of the school and to maintain the equal enrollment of students from the Roma community and the majority. The school is located close but outside the Roma neighbourhood. At present the ethnic composition of Hristo Maximov Primary School is mixed: 60% Bulgarian and 40% Roma students. There is huge interest of Roma parents from the neighbourhood to enroll their children in the school. At the same time, there is “white flight” of some Bulgarian parents who withdraw their children from the school because of the increasing percentage of Roma children. In order to keep the ethnically mixed composition, the school principal does not allow the formation of segregated Roma classes and has refused opening a new class with predominantly Roma students. Her efforts are not supported by the Regional



Inspectorate of Education and are de facto obstructed by the other ethnically mixed schools in Samokov which „steel“ Bulgarian students from Hristo Maximov School.

In addition, the segregation tendency in Samokov was deteriorated in 2017 with the decision of the Municipal Council and the following order by the Minister of education to transform the existing elementary and primary segregated schools from the neighbourhood into a United School that educate students from 1st to 10th grade. In this way, the Roma students from 8th to 10th grade who used to go to ethnically mixed schools outside of the neighbourhood stayed „trapped“. The case is described in the Roma Civil Monitoring Report 2018.<sup>18</sup>

### **Rakitovo (Bulgaria)**

The project was initiated by a local NGO called Edelweiss and was active mainly in the second half of the 90s of the XX century. The goal was to compensate for the divisions along ethnic lines that existed in the town of Rakitovo. At that time in Rakitovo there was a secondary school teaching from grade 1 to grade 12. with over 800 students, one secondary school school for students with disabilities from 5th to 12th grade with over 200 students from all over Bulgaria, a primary school with two full-day groups of students from 1st to 8th grade for the adolescent Roma from Zapad district (with over 500 students), an auxiliary school and a boarding penitentiary school for children with light sentences from all over Bulgaria. The division lies mainly between the secondary school and the segregated school. The secondary school does not avoid admission of Roma children, but only the most educated and successful Roma parents take advantage of this opportunity. Before the start of the project there were no organized contacts and common extracurricular activities between the two schools. There was some fear and reluctance among Bulgarian parents at the prospect of Roma children enrolling in the secondary school in large numbers. Roma parents were also cautions for not being familiar with the educational environment at the secondary school and preferring the familiar environment at the segregated primary school, despite the obvious worse results achieved by the students there.

The project included students from all schools in the city, but primarily from the secondary school where the children from the small Roma neighborhood in the town of Rakitovo had always studied and a segregated primary school. The segregated school had opened as a basic school in the 1947/1948 school

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<sup>18</sup> Available at [http://amalipe.com/files/publications/For%20printing\\_RCM\\_2017\\_Bulgaria\\_EC.pdf](http://amalipe.com/files/publications/For%20printing_RCM_2017_Bulgaria_EC.pdf)



year and had always been segregated. Later the school expanded and started teaching children up to grade 8.

The main idea of the project promoters was to create favourable conditions for warming the relations between Roma and non-Roma parents in the city, by helping them to get to know each other and making friends between students from different ethnic groups. To make it easier for parents and their children, both Roma and non-Roma, to accept diversity within their school, *Edelweiss* rented a large building in the city center and adapted it into a training center. Attractive extracurricular activities were organized for students such as: teaching English language, playing musical instruments, puppet and theater groups, a group for authentic folklore, painting and applied arts, mathematics, writing a student newspaper and others.

Courses for acquiring professional skills and raising the qualification were organized for the parents. At the same time, everyone became part of an attractive group for debates, which included the most prominent intellectuals of the city and the municipality. At the end of the each semester, children got the chance to demonstrate their own progress in front of the city community in a joint production involving students from the predominantly Bulgarian and predominantly Roma school.

Local leaders, both Roma and non-Roma, including spiritual leaders - the priest, the hodja and the local pastor, were a bit cautious at the beginning of the project but then dropped their reservations and volunteered to contribute to various activities.

The project had been quite successful in building bridges between the two communities and resulted in a significant increase of Roma students enrolled in the secondary school. Almost all Roma graduates from the secondary school who participated in the project went on to become established specialists with higher education: 6 of them became teachers. Never before had Roma from the neighborhood completed higher education, and those with secondary education were exceptions.

## **Dzulyunitsa (Bulgaria)**

The village of Dzulyunitsa is located in the Bulgaria's Lyaskovets municipality. It has a population of 1,600 (2020) and hosts the largest school in the municipality of Lysakovets. The whole municipality has a



population of 13,600 persons (2020). Roma in the municipality are concentrated in the *Chestovo* of the neighbourhoods of the municipal centre – the town of Lyaskovets and in the village of Dobri Dyal.

After the closure of the school in the village of Dobri Dyal with over 75% Roma population and the Chestovo neighborhood of Lyaskovets with over 95% Roma population. It all started when Petko Rachev Slaveykov Primary School in the village of Dzhulyunitsa started enrolling some of the students of Roma origin from the closed school in the village of Dobri Dyal. In the first year, there were only 8 Roma students in the school out of a total of 109 students. In 2020 as a focal school, Petko Rachev Slaveykov Primary School in the village of Dzhulyunitsa teaches 116 full-time students from 4 settlements. About half of the students are Roma. After completing pre-school education, almost all Roma children from the village of Dobri Dyal and the Chestovo neighbourhood continue their education at the school in the village of Dzhulyunitsa. The local population in Dzhulyunitsa is entirely of Bulgarian origin.

Petko Rachev Slaveykov Primary School is a key educational institution that integrates Roma children from the closed school in the village of Dobri Dyal with over 75% Roma population and the Chestovo neighborhood of Lyaskovets with over 95% Roma residents. Students from both settlements study together with children from the Bulgarian ethnic group in the village of Dzhulyunitsa. Thus, a multi-ethnic composition is formed: over 47% of students from ethnic minorities / mostly Roma / and 53% of Bulgarian origin. The colorful group of students is joined by children of the Bulgarian ethnic group from the neighboring village of Kesarevo, which has a predominant Roma population.

The practice in Dzhuyunitsa is a project implemented by a (primary) schools with support from a non-governmental organization. This is a typical case for Bulgaria in the context of a sharp contraction of the school network that took place throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century but was sped up by a specific government policy from 2007 onwards. The application of the model did not encounter opposition from any stakeholders not least due to communication across interest groups and efforts to involve all categories of stakeholders was embedded in the model.

The practice includes the establishment of a student parliament which has functioned successfully in the school for many years. This type of student self-management creates organizational and leadership skills in students and develops their sense of responsibility and commitment to the school and other students. The student parliament performs various activities addressing also cases of students at risk of dropping out, involving them in various initiatives, organizing campaigns and holidays.



Teachers got through a series of training for working in a multicultural environment and introducing intercultural elements. They were trained to teach extracurricular subjects such as "Roma folklore". Teacher training aims to create teamwork and continuity between different groups in the school. With the introduction of distance learning, teachers have developed some of the most effective e-lessons, which aim to digitize the content of the manuals on "Roma Culture Classes".

Involving parents as an active partner in school life is a key element in building the overall model. In this model involvement of parents is done through the establishment of a parent's club. The parents' club at the school works in close cooperation with an educational mediator and a pedagogical team, which is tasked to support the involvement of the parents and the activation of the community. Parents participate in school initiatives and celebrations by contributing to the events. Celebrations of important international days is a good opportunity to draw the attention of parents to specific targets and values.

Students participated in various events with students from other schools such as exchange visits. Teachers take part in conferences for the exchange of good practices and successful models; training and activities from the program "Every student will be a winner" of Center Amalipe, as well as participation in traditional ritual called *survakane* – a traditional custom for wishing a prosperous and successful year. Roma kids of institutions in Sofia to celebrate the Roma New Year - Vasilitsa.

## **Tundzha (Bulgaria)**

Tundzha Municipality is the largest municipality in the district of Yambol (one of the 28 districts in Bulgaria). Tundzha is a typical rural municipality: it includes 44 rural settlements, which are inhabited by large minority communities. The Roma communities are unevenly distributed in the settlements across the municipality. A more compact Roma population is present in the villages of Veselinovo, Zavoy, Drazhevo, Kukorevo, Botevo, Hadjidimitrovo, Krumovo, etc. More than 50% of the Roma population is under 20 years of age. The overall population of the municipality is a bit more than 25,000 people with almost 4,000 persons (15%-16%) identifying as Roma.

In 2009 the municipality of Tundzha developed two strategically important documents: the Strategy for Development of the Educational System of the Municipality of Tundzha in the Period 2009-2015 and the Program for Integration of Ethnic Minorities, which is aimed primarily at young



people and has as its main goal the fuller integration of children of Roma ethnic origin in the municipal educational system. In partnership with two non-governmental organizations - the Center for Educational Programs and Social Initiatives and the Tundzha Municipal Youth Council - Tundzha Municipality implemented the School Communities project. It is a model of socialization and educational integration in small settlements, funded by the Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from the Ethnic Minorities and the Roma Education Fund. The project was implemented in 2011-2012. The aim was to make possible the full coverage of children and students living in the Tundzha municipality in preschools and schools, sharing practical experience in implementing measures for educational integration of children and students from the ethnic minorities. The municipal practice is a model for prevention of segregation and the preservation of the ethnic mix of the student body in schools in villages where Roma and Bulgarian students live together despite the declining percentage of Bulgarian children.

The target group of the project included children in school preparatory groups; Roma students from the 1-4 grade included in full-day curriculum; Roma full-day students in the junior stage of secondary education; about 800 parents from the school communities of municipal focal<sup>19</sup> schools in 8 villages; 136 teachers from the schools of Tundzha municipality.

Capacity building activities for informal leadership were organized for distinguished persons from the local communities. Volunteers were involved in the interaction with marginalized Roma communities to support participation of students and parents in the municipal focal schools. As key part of the project implementation, 8 mentors were selected to work with children from marginalized groups, who were trained to work with children, students and parents from ethnic minorities and vulnerable groups. 4 of the mentors were from the Roma community. The mentors worked together with the children, students and pedagogues in the groups for compulsory pre-school preparation, in the full-day groups, extracurricular activities and clubs. Mentors supported children to get accustomed and comfortable with the school environment, supported their interaction with the pedagogues, encouraged the personal development of the students in a multicultural and competitive environment. They also worked with parent to involve them in school community.

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19 In the Bulgarian educational system following a massive optimization of the school network which started in 2007 as a result of which up to 800 schools were closed, some schools were designated as *focal*, which means that they enroll students who travel from different settlements around. Not to be mixed with the term *focal (point) school*.



In the municipal focal schools students in full-day groups increased to 921 from 677 students before the start of the project. Many of the 244 students newly covered in full-day groups were of Roma origin. The model included also the establishment of 16 clubs for extracurricular and extracurricular activities in the eight focal schools to enriched the experience of students included in all-day learning and personal development activities. A “School for parents” was organized with discussion groups around topics of interest for the parents and the community.

### **Teaching Roma Culture Classes at school (Bulgaria)**

Since 2002 the Centre Amalipe has been promoting the teaching of Roma Culture Classes particularly at schools with Roma students. The purpose of introducing this programme in the non-mandatory curriculum is to create an efficient model for the formation of interethnic tolerance, pride and friendship, as well as for the inclusion of children in school through the study of Roma folklore, culture and history. The teaching of Roma culture does not directly pursue any goals related to desegregation, but it does support the co-existence of Roma students and parents with students and parents from other ethnic groups sharing the same schools and the same social environment. The model gave non-Roma children the opportunity to get acquainted with the rich folklore world of the Roma, to see the similarities between Roma culture and the culture of other ethnic groups, to see that the tales, legends and songs of Roma speak of the same justice, affection and human happiness.

In the 2003-2004 school year, with the help of the Ministry of Education and Science, the teaching of Roma folklore/ culture classes was introduced in about 270 schools across Bulgaria, which is a bit more than 10% of all schools. The funding came from the school budgets. In line with its goals, the programme gradually reached more than 6,000 students, many of them Roma, and helped attract and retain them in school. One of the reasons for the high percentage of Roma children who never enroll or drop out of school that the school is seen as an officious and distant institution in which Roma children can find nothing of their own.

A very important feature of the model is that the subject is supplied with attractive materials to be used by the students and a handbook for teachers. In the introduction to the manual of instructions to teachers who start teaching Roma folklore the authors emphasize that this is not a subject to be taught to Roma only but to students from all ethnic groups by teachers who also can belong to any ethnic group (Kolev et al. 2004). However Roma are encouraged to become teachers teaching Roma folklore/ culture. The subject is not linked to knowing or studying the Roma language, as for many



Roma groups in Bulgaria Romanes is not a mother tongue. The authors of the course also note that many Bulgarian students harbour prejudice against Roma sparked by their family or social environment (Kolev et al. 2004).

The model promotes the involvement of parents in the process of collecting activities, participation in common school productions. Teachers are also involved in additional training on the history and culture of the Roma and on how to work with textbooks, specially written for the project.

Educational mediators have also been appointed to the project, whose main task is to establish a strong link between the educational institutions and the families of the children and students engaged in educational activities. The project became a permanent part of the life of many Roma communities not least with the support of special community centers established by the Centre Amalipe. Besides the parents of the students engaged with the study of Roma folklore, community centres sustain ties with local leaders and authorities who gradually came to share the values of the project.

Initially the project was met with adversity or at least with suspicion by some of the stakeholders but gradually trust built up between the key participants – students, pedagogical specialists and parents - and Roma folklore became one of the well accepted extracurricular subjects.

### **Every Student Will be a Winner Programme (Bulgaria)**

The program has been implemented by AMALIPE Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance since 2010 with the financial support first of America for Bulgaria Foundation and later by the Trust for Social Achievement. Its main objective is preventing dropout and retention of Roma children in school, increasing the number of reintegrated and enrolled to school children, empowering and fostering (Roma) parent participation in school life, significantly increasing the percentage of Roma young people who continue their education in secondary schools / high schools.

The comprehensive program has been gradually developed and enriched since 2010 reaching around 40 000 children (60 % of them of Roma origin) in almost 300 schools in 2020. The basic concept of the Program is that a change in the overall school environment is necessary: a change in the pedagogical methods used, in the educational programs, in the organization of learning, in the interaction with parents. Interactive and intercultural education is the best pedagogical basis for overcoming dropout.



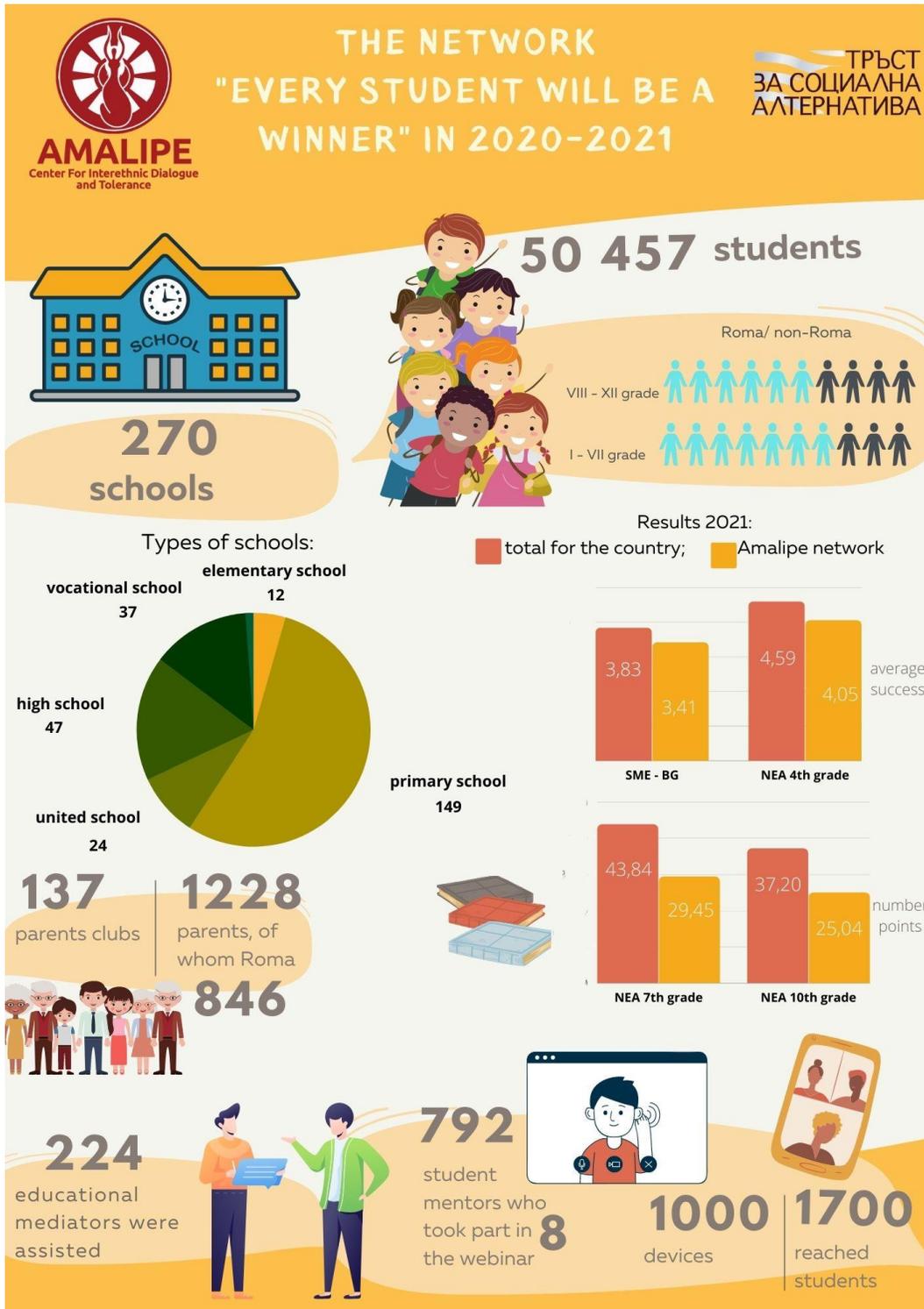
The methods used in the program are aimed at transforming the school into a well-functioning system that activates students, teachers, parents and contributes to the development of the local community. The school program for dropout prevention and keeping children in school is a main tool for planning the activities on keeping children in school. Each school program should include activities in the following areas:

1. Training of all teachers to work effectively in a multicultural environment; a cycle of municipal and regional conferences for sharing experiences, completed by a National Conference.
2. Introducing intercultural education: by means of elective Roma culture classes, extracurricular activities in the classes of the compulsory subjects.
3. Activities for the empowerment and involvement of parents: Creating parental club of active parents in order to involve them in solving problems related to children at risk of dropping out and inclusion in the processes of decision-making; Organizing community discussions/parental lectures and “School for Parents” on actual issues, etc.
4. Establishment of a student parliament and other activities to activate the students – with students of mixed ethnic participants (where possible) for the active involvement of students in school life; their engagement and empowerment for making decisions concerning their stay in school; support for early school leavers.
5. Peers helping peers (mentors).

The program achieved strong results: the number of dropouts in the participating schools decreased from 2,4 % to 0,6 % (that is much below the average of the country), the percentage of Roma students who continue in gymnasiums increase from 38 to 93 %, etc. Independent evaluation of the program carried out by two sociological agencies proved these results and outlined that for the same period the early school leaving in similar schools that were not included in the program dramatically increased. Independent evaluation of the Programme was done by two sociological agencies. It confirms the strongly positive results.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The evaluation could be seen at: [http://amalipe.com/files/publications/Amalipe\\_TSA\\_evaluation\\_sum2.pdf](http://amalipe.com/files/publications/Amalipe_TSA_evaluation_sum2.pdf)





## Innovative practices of specific schools (Spain)

In Spain there are many schools which have started to put into practice specific projects and new methodologies, particularly in Primary Education, with the objective of making internal quality improvements in learning, communication and relationships in the context of segregation. There is a further objective of attracting students with other profiles to these centres.

These projects relate fundamentally to inclusivity across the whole school community and in the local environment, improving co-existence and educational quality (Learning Communities, Magnet Schools, twinning agreements, etc). They also involve technological innovation and active learning methodologies (Project-based learning (PBL) <sup>21</sup>, cooperative learning, etc). These practices are introduced by the management and teaching teams in specific schools rather than by an educational authority.

It is also not completely known what triggers such innovations other than idiosyncratic personal factors. In the case of Spanish and Bulgaria alike innovations it is difficult to find a direct link with the concentration of Roma students: a high concentration of students who need special support does not *per se* guarantee that the school will be looking for new ways to address the challenges. In Spain it appears that the situation of concentration is more likely to spur innovation. For Bulgaria this is true to a lesser extent.

FSG studied 13 ACs to find out about the implementation of innovative practices in segregated schools. In 1/4 of the segregated schools included in the sample FSG found some evidence that actions and methodologies trying to address segregated were applied. Most of those innovating segregated schools were found in the Community of Valencia (16) followed by Castile-Leon (12) and Valencia (12), Castile-La Mancha (6) and Catalonia (5). In the other ACs examples of innovations in segregated schools were rather sporadic, either because schools were not prone to innovation or because there were too few segregated schools. Most of the methodologies developed in segregated schools in Spain are designed by members of the teaching staff. The projects mainly relate to Learning Communities and pedagogical and technological

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21 Project-based learning (PBL) is a form of learning which uses real-life problems to create a rich learning experience. There are various definitions of PBL: 1) "Project-based learning is a dynamic classroom approach in which students actively explore real-world problems and challenges and acquire a deeper knowledge." (Edutopia, <https://www.edutopia.org/project-based-learning>); 2) "Project Based Learning is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge" (PBLWorks, <https://www.pblworks.org/what-is-pbl>).



innovation, given that these are methodological resources which can be used by the schools themselves, without the need for the direct involvement of public authorities. In Bulgaria there is a specific national programme initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science to boost school-based innovations. In the first two years after the start of the programme very few of the schools which participated in the programme had Roma students.

The school-based practices reported by FSG find some measures which are common to three primary school projects, although the specific projects and their impacts differ from one case to another. The three Primary schools which took part were all positioned within a similar reality and context: neighbourhoods which were in very poor condition or which had high percentages of population with few resources, and centres with different histories (including a history of success with a diverse student body) which for one reason or another had become “ghetto” centres with a high concentration of Roma pupils.

In each of the three cases the situation was not improving and it was the management teams of the schools themselves which, since the year 2000, had decided to try to change direction by creating positive projects which would improve life in the school and the results of the students. In all cases it was seen as positive to open the schools up to new profiles and new experiences, while maintaining the involvement of the body of students already attending them.

In Bulgaria reactions of school leadership to increasing segregation was similar in many respects. A striking similarity is that schools whose leadership and staff became concerned about segregation usually had a history of having a much more diverse body of students. In Spain, some of the segregated schools decided to make radical changes to the way of teaching which had become normal for them, introducing new methodological models, not only in terms of learning and teaching, but also in terms of their relationships with the local environment and the models of co-existence adopted by the school.

In the examples of school-based projects from Spain the following features have been emphasized by FSG as essential:

- Strong leadership and a stable management team with the ability to “convince” the teaching staff of the efficacy of the implemented model.



- Some of the schools stressed also the importance of also having a stable teaching body, given that projects would lack continuity if there was a high number of temporary staff or supply teachers. In the case of Zaragoza, it was even negotiated with the authorities that teachers would be chosen for the project through a selection process based on the presentation of a didactic proposal: a rare example of a merit-based selection process for participating in a project in contrast to the usual position-based selection, in which participation happens *ex officio*.
- Training teachers in innovative models, technology and other skills important for the implementation of the projects.
- Creating a centre-led project which included changes in methodology: PBL and Learning Communities are the most common changes, along with participation in projects proposed by other organisations.
- The model of co-existence: creating channels for participation and making it less punitive for students (eg. school mediation, socio-emotional education in some cases). The involvement of families was sought, based on participation in the centre. In some cases this was brought about by setting up workshops to deliver training adapted to their interests, while in others school space was opened up to them for shared use on a day-to-day basis.
- The relationship with the environment. This has been tackled in various ways, but is present in all the projects: from offering spaces for neighbourhood activities and organising communal events to establishing alliances with other organisations to support or launch specific projects.



## Conclusions

The school segregation is one of the heaviest problems that disturb the access of Roma to quality education. According to EU MIDIS II survey done by FRA in 2016 educational segregation exists in every of the researched states. Bulgaria has the biggest share of Roma who study in classes with only Roma students: 27% while other 33 % attend predominantly Roma classes. This is a serious deterioration compared to EU MIDIS I survey. On the opposite, Spain is the country with the least share of Roma who study in classes with only Roma students: 3 % according to EU MIDIS II survey while 28 % of Roma children study in predominantly Roma classes. This is a serious improvement compared to EU MIDIS I survey.

Access to education is the key Roma integration substantive policy area that brings the biggest share of policy attention and good practices. The EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies states “Member States should ensure that all Roma children have access to quality education and are not subject to discrimination or segregation...” The Council’s recommendations on effective Roma integration measures from December 9, 2013 require measures “a) for eliminating any school segregation ... c) reducing early school leaving throughout all levels of education, including at secondary level and vocational training; ... (g) encouraging greater parental involvement and improving teacher training, where relevant ...”

In certain Member states good practices for these measures are implemented by NGOs or municipalities. The present compendium presents a diverse set for good practices from Bulgaria, Spain and Belgium that cover all possible segregation situations and different desegregation approaches:

- for avoiding school segregation (Spain and Bulgaria);
- for desegregation of segregated schools and classes in the urban areas (Bulgaria): through closing segregated schools, through desegregation of part of the students from segregated schools and their integration into ethnically mixed schools while the segregated schools continue their existence and many Roma children continue their study into these segregated schools, etc;
- for desegregation in the rural areas;
- for systematic collaboration between Roma-only schools located in or close to segregated neighbourhoods and Bulgarian schools in the same settlement;
- for integration of migrant Roma children in mainstream schools in the hosting countries (Belgium, Spain).

Nevertheless, the advance achieved at national & EU level is not significant. Both the Roma Civil Monitoring reports and the mid-term & final evaluation of the NRISs throughout EU commissioned



by DG JUST show that member-states reach improvement in the enrollment rate of Roma but fail in reducing school segregation. The political will for ensuring full enrollment in school for all children is increasing while the commitment for overcoming school segregation is very low. The lack of public support for desegregation and the negative reaction of non-Roma parents rooted in the anti-Roma stereotypes are among the main reasons for this.

The Compendium presents also promising practices for national or regional/ municipal policies for desegregation/ avoiding segregation. They show that the desegregation projects could provoke political changes and trends towards inclusive and ethnically mixed education. At present these policy initiatives are limited. Nevertheless, they show that the pedagogical and educational knowhow accumulated in the field combined with engagement of the major stakeholders and political will could bring real change for quality and inclusive education.



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## List of Abbreviations

AC	Autonomous Community
CEICSEM	Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities
CPD	Commission for Protection against Discrimination
EC	European Commission
EP	European Parliament
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ERIO	European Roma Information Office
ESF	European Social Fund
ESGOP	Science and Education for Smart Growth Operational Programme
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
EU MIDIS II	Second European Union minorities and discrimination survey (FRA)
EU	European Union
FRA	EU Agency for Fundamental Rights
FSG	Fundacion Secretariado Gitano
HRDOP	Human Resources Development Operational Programme
LOMLOE	Public Education Act in Spain, adopted on 29 December 2020
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training (young person)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPED	National Program for Educational Desegregation (Bulgaria)
NRCP	National Roma Contact Point
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategy
NSI	National Statistical Institute
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSI	Open Society Institute



REF	Roma Education Fund
SEN	Special education needs
TSA	Trust for Social Achievement