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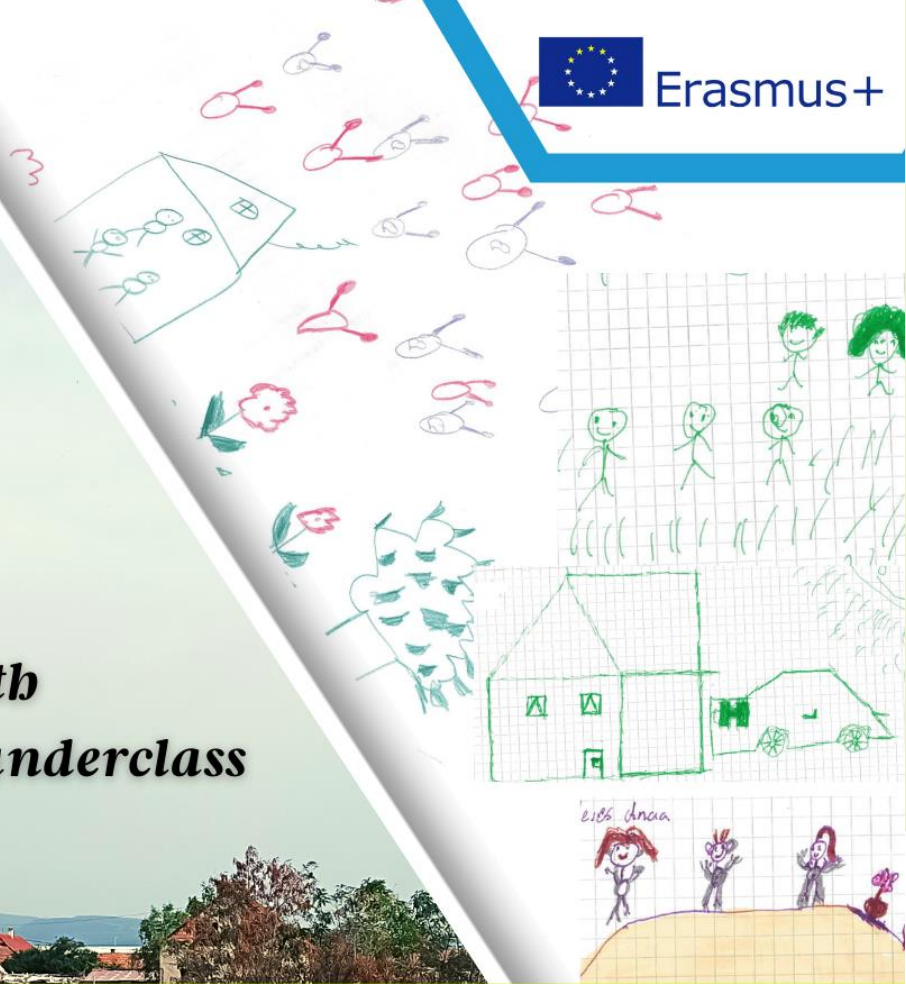ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Erasmus+

L O O S E ENDS

Mapping the roots of youth marginalization in the underclass

JOINT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

HUNGARY
ROMANIA
NORTH MACEDONIA

JOINT
POLICY
RECOMMENDATIONS

HUNGARY
ROMANIA
NORTH MACEDONIA

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About the project

The 'Loose Ends' project is an international collaboration of three civil society organizations from Eastern-Europe engaged in education, social work and/or advocacy. The strategic partnership is financed by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.

As evidenced by several studies and reports Roma children are overrepresented in lower social stratas, are more vulnerable regarding early school leaving (ESL) and often children of Roma families find themselves in segregated educational institutions. Our project is a follow up of the research conducted by Együttható Egyesület and Nevo Parudimos in the frames of the LEADNFL project mapping ESL patterns in segregated communities and is aiming to collect and analyse data in a very specific way of segregation: educating Roma children with special needs in special schools.

Együttható has been running an afterschool in Gyöngyös since 2014, providing daily youth work for disadvantaged youth. The programme is aimed at children and young people aged 5-23 living the local segregated areas. In the process of first interviews with the students and their families we've learnt that almost all have young parents under 30 years old who were once enrolled in the local special education school. 'Loose Ends' wanted to get to know better their life situation, their needs, their past, and then build on this to develop services for young people that could support their development, improve their position in the labour market.

The research programmes in Romania and Macedonia were born out of a similar need, with a focus on identifying the problem.

Our project aimed to

- understand the reasons, associated life-paths and the consequences of education in such institutions by condicting, analysing and publishing 25 in-depth interviews/country involing stakeholders
- formulate policy recommendations by an expert panel, on the grounds of our findings addressed at national and European decision makers, highlighting the importance of secondary support structures in the form of youth organizations and their toolkits
- raising awareness on the issue amongst representatives, professionals and decision-makers of the sectors of formal education, secondary youth services, child protection structures, government administration

More information is available at the project website.

Introduction

According to Loose Ends research in this policy recommendations we are making proposals that obviously do not solve the structural problems arising from the economic system and the organization of the states.

Youth organizations from three countries participated in the research project, and they primarily examined **the educational situation of young Roma living in segregation**. The research was primarily focused on their exclusion to special education. The latter shouldn't be an existing phenomenon, since the Salamanca Declaration (1994), which called for the integration of students with special educational need (Ainscow et al., 2019). Segregated education should not affect young people of any identity/origin who do not have multiple sever disabilities. Despite all this, **Roma students even in the early 2000 years were mainly segregated in special schools** (Havas & Liskó, 2005), and we can clearly state that they are **constantly face with discrimination at school** and/or segregated education (Julia M. White, 2012; Radó, 2018).

Currently, segregated education does not primarily take place in special education schools, but we do not have recent reliable data on this, at least in Hungary (Cserti Csapó, 2019). In Hungary, however, it is demonstrably present, and **the root of segregation is the free choice of school by parents** (Radó, 2018). The significant state support for church schools contributes to this, in addition church school do not have compulsory district enrolment, but they have the right to freely choose their students from anywhere. Together, these strengthen **the spontaneous segregation, especially the white flight phenomenon, as a result of which purely Roma schools and classes are created**. In these classes, **the separate-but-equal principle of education fails** again, because in the segregated environment the teachers set the requirements lower, and at the same time, they do not invest more energy in a higher-quality pedagogical work to achieve the higher requirements for further education of the Roma students (Ercse, 2018; Fejes, 2018; Havas & Zolnay, 2011; Kiss, 2018; Radó, 2018; Zolnay, 2018).

The mandatory district school is therefore primarily chosen by parents who live in residential segregation and/or parents of SEN students (Kiss, 2018). **As a result, ghetto schools are created, where the number of disadvantaged students is very high**, even exceeding 50%, amongst them there are typically many Roma students exists in Hungary. Only those parents

can live with the possibility of the free choice amongst schools, who have a higher educational qualification, who can finance their child's commuting, and whose child do not considered as a problem by the chosen school based on some unwanted characteristic eg. poverty, skin-color, disability (Kiss, 2018; Varga, 2018).

Residential segregation – A distant risk factor of marginalisation

The political decision-makers mostly support desegregation processes, however, the experiences regarding socially mixed communities are mixed. The advantage of residential desegregation and housing interventions is that it can contribute to the development of a better quality of life and social integration, on the other hand it doesn't count with the relational/social capital of people who live and grow up in segregated areas whose connections primarily tied to the settlement. These connections are one of the keys to survival in the absence of state subsidies. The criticism of desegregation is actually that it is always aim only at a marginalized community, it never wants to do anything with the foundations of capitalist economic processes, furthermore, **it never wants to move the rich out of their rich settlements** (Méreiné-Berki et al., 2021). The researchers states that the residential segregation and desegregation is under-researched from the perspective of the stakeholders, so they examined trough qualitative data collection and analyses the impact of one desegregation project. The research found that **high entry thresholds for desegregation programs left many families out** of the opportunity, leading to tensions within the community. The programs did not provide further support to those moving to a new place, so they felt rootless in their new homes and communities, which in some cases resulted to moving back. Successful move was only possible for those who moved to a bridgeable distance from the settlement, and also, in the case of those who moved to residence with a similar social composition. Here, the new community was more accepting of the new residents. In other words, the result of the research was that it is not possible to manage the desegregation process without dealing with social rejection and stigmatization. **The possibility of maintaining existing ties helps desegregation, and also a supportive, culturally aware institutional network is necessary** (Méreiné-Berki et al., 2021).

Our findings confirm that **residential segregation could clearly be mitigated by expanding the social housing interventions and other desegregation measures** like in the above mentioned

research, and the local stakeholders know about it. According to the (Hungarian) municipal *Equal Opportunity Program*, the city is committed to eradicating residential segregation, yet the number of **available social housing is decreasing**, and new municipal housing is not being built. The goal of the program is not to move out or demolish, but to improve the quality of life in the segregated areas by improving the accessibility of infrastructure and public services (*Helyi Esélyegyenlőségi Program, Gyöngyös Város Önkormányzata*, 2018).

The *Local Equality Programme* document identifies low education as an obstacle to employment. The acquisition of a general education for adults and the provision of vocational educational opportunities are also emphasized and it is established that there are such options for dropouts in the settlement, but **there is little interest in the vocational education on the part of those concerned**. The program also identifies the presence of discrimination, which is intended to be counterbalanced by positive discrimination, positive examples appearing in local media, and **appropriate, ethical behaviour expected from public services** (*Helyi Esélyegyenlőségi Program, Gyöngyös Város Önkormányzata*, 2018)

Our results suggest that residential segregation and discrimination are closely linked to school failure, so the problem should not be approached solely from the direction of schooling, but vice versa. In our opinion, mitigating residential segregation – and a stable monthly income from the state which is proportional to inflation - could do more for academic success, than the expectation from the school system to tackle poverty.

The people living in the segregated area partly discriminated because of their Roma origin, and partly because of their place of residence. **Discrimination appears in all areas of life**, and based on the interviews, school is also a space for this: in the name of equal treatment, the difficult circumstances of the students are neglected.

Systematic approach

The partnership reached similar results, so in connection with their proposals, in the absence of other options, the emphasis was placed on **the cooperation of the school and youth work**. In particular, the responsibility of the education system is the greatest one in the existing economic order, based on this it has almost an exclusive role in distribution of goods and in the management of poverty by catch-up pedagogy. In Loose ends research our findings shows

that **we clearly can't call the practices of our education systems comprehensive and inclusive education.**

However in the Ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner model) **the child and her/his family are part of a wider system**, in this the elements interact with each other, and these interactions shape the child development. **Through personal development the expected adverse effects resulting from poverty and residential segregation can be offset.** The so-called self-correcting tendencies mean that certain elements of the environment and/or personal traits can guide the development in a positive direction. In other words there are protective and promoter factors which are in dynamic interaction with the elements of the environment, for example personal resilience, which can be shaped by a strong, supportive relationship between the mother-child, high IQ, calm temperament, etc (Danis et al., 2011). Protective factors support the development high-risk children, but these have no effect in non-risk children, for example calm personality of the child, however promoters have good impact on every children's development, for example if a parent provide active support to her/his child's schooling (Zimmerman et al., 2013).

From this ecological perspective, **education and youth services supporting the development of high-risk children** and young people by the shaping their individual resilience, e.g. by developing social competences, improving the self-assertion, self-awareness, at the end these are shaping the temperament of the child with the help of anger management, coping techniques, which **can contribute to a favourable development outcome and positive future opportunities.**

The many assumptions result from the fact that preventive and promoter interventions are difficult to measure, and in fact it is always a question that a given intervention or other previous experiences activated a positive output (Danis et al., 2011).

In the case of **schools, therefore it would be expected that they compensate for the negative impacts** resulting from the primary socialization space. However in Hungary plenty of other research have proven that **the schools fail the students with disadvantaged background** (Patakfalvi-Czirják et al., 2018).

The following figure shows what would be **desirable results** in order to have equality and equity for young people to the benefits of education and youth work based on the Loose ends project research. We see that the **programs should be permeated by an inclusive, promotional and preventive approach.**
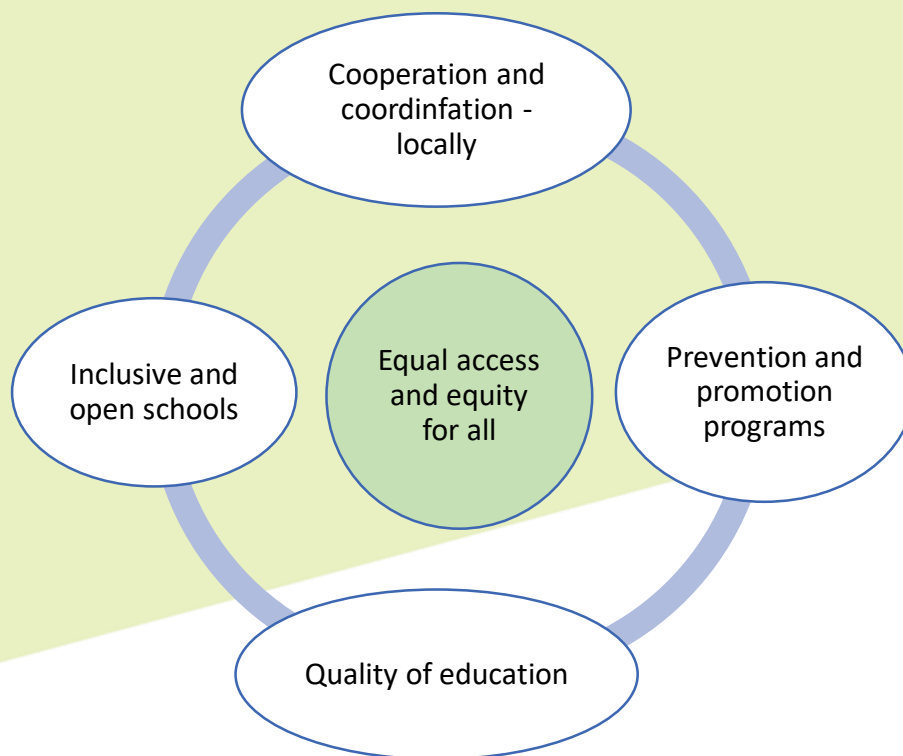
1. Figure How to support social integration of young Roma?

Figure 1 shows that the individual elements of the **system are interrelated**, and together they can achieve a fair operation that can support Roma youth.

Equal access and equity for all

It means **that everyone needs equal access**, but the services based on **to their individual needs**. This is the basis of the inclusive approach, in which the community adapts to the needs of individual, therefore the individual adapts to the community according to his or her abilities. This adaptation is based on **acceptance, not under the influence of some coercive force**, but arises from within.

Inclusive and open schools

Inclusion describe a range of activities, services, and collaborations that are permeated by the perspective of equity. Our recommendations do not have a selective approach, so they are not aimed exclusively at helping the vulnerable group, rather they are **universal and recommended for all children, as they do not stigmatize those who need it the most**.

According to our research inclusion starts with the:

Quality of education

- Infrastructural development of the schools
- Pedagogical assistance in classes besides the teacher activities
- Introduction of a two-teacher model or team teaching model
- Case management approach for all children in the school, e.g. individual development plan and consideration of previous anamnesis, details about the family life and the close environment
- Educated teachers who are able to use new technologies, tools, practices in the teaching process, like differentiating and cooperative teaching methods, adapted tools for the children's unique needs, intercultural knowledge and awareness
- Development of social competences, socio-emotional competences integrated into curriculum and subject
- Further free trainings for teachers, and free competency development adult education possibilities for parents

The Center for Studies on Inclusive Education has created the Inclusion Index for Schools, with an easy-to-follow process description that shows how an institution can become open and inclusive (Booth & Ainscow, 2002).

Prevention and promotion programs

- Free early intervention care for all children in reachable distance
- Free meals for all children in the education system
- Inclusive youth community centers in reachable distance maintained by the state or by the local government

- Free, accessible and open-ended, voluntarily based youth work services: career counselling and orientation from the first school years, culturally aware counselling, information and supportive programs, peer mentor and tutoring programs, development program of social competences, socio-emotional competences

The prevention and promotion programs have a holistic approach because of the knowledge about multifactorial causes (combination of risk factors) behind of various social and behavioural disorders, so a variety of interventions are needed. Prevention programs can provide knowledge, and protection against a wide range of socio-emotional problems at a basic level with the increase of resilience (Pichler, 2017).

Cooperation and coordination

As long as the laws should be responsible for enforcing the approach of prevention and inclusion, **the provision of assigned resources should be divided between the state and the local government**. Prevention is expensive, because of the range of possible interventions at different levels and based on this the **need of coordination**.

The results are difficult to measure, so it isn't possible to determine where, how and when the interventions exert their effect. At the same time, its return may extend beyond the area where the intervention was performed.

These approaches require interdisciplinary cooperation. The collaboration between the representatives of the social professions, schools, youth workers and behind them those various organizations and institutions need to involve into the process of decision making the beneficiaries of the programs (Pichler, 2017). **An open school, for example, also means that parents not only have knowledge of the programs, activities, and curriculum, but can also influence the functioning of the system at the local level**. According to the Roma Education Fund (2007), studies related to the involvement of Roma parents show that the school success of Roma children significantly improved when their parents were more involved (Marc & Bercus, 2007).

The most important period is childhood, adolescence and young adulthood from the perspective of prevention, because the first symptoms of serious difficulties in social integration, and/or most mental disorders appear before the age of 14. **The prevention program should be based on the principle of subsidiarity**: local research with the wide range of local stakeholders with the focus of the needs **all** of local people (Pichler, 2017), including Roma.

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