

ACTION PLAN

ON THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF ROMA AND MEMBERS OF OTHER NATIONAL MINORITIES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

**Developed by the Task Force on the Educational Needs of
Roma and Other National Minorities**

**Adopted by the Entity and Cantonal Ministers of
Education of Bosnia and Herzegovina
on
17 February 2004**

PART I:

ACTION PLAN ON THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF ROMA

Recognising that the disadvantaged position of Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be overcome unless equality of opportunity in the field of education is guaranteed for Roma.

Having in mind Pledge 1 of the Education Reform Agenda, which commits educational authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to:

- *Ensure that all children have the opportunity to complete primary education.*
- *Ensure that all children who are members of national minorities (particularly Roma children) are appropriately included in the education system throughout the country.*
- *Ensure that national minorities and especially Roma are enabled to define their own needs and to support them in assessing what is necessary for successful education.*
- *Develop a flexible BiH-wide implementation plan to include all children belonging to national minorities (in particular Romani children) within the educational system that addresses the problems of access financing of textbooks and transportation.*

Pursuant to the provisions of the *Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No.18/03) which stipulate that:

- *Every child has a right of access and equal possibility to participate in appropriate educational process, without discrimination on whatever grounds (Article 4).*
- *Equal access and equal possibilities signify ensuring equal conditions and opportunities for everyone, to start and further pursue education (Article 4).*
- *The language and culture of any significant minority in BiH shall be respected and accommodated within the school to the greatest extent practicable, in accordance with the Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities (Article 8).*

In accordance with international instruments directly applicable in Bosnia and Herzegovina by virtue of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Annex IV of the General Framework Agreement for Peace;¹

In accordance with the provisions of the *Law on Protection of the Rights of Members of National Minorities* (Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina No. 06/03) which stipulates that:

¹ European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; International Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages; Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

- *Regardless of the number of persons belonging to a national minority, the entities and cantons shall ensure that persons belonging to a national minority, if they request so, receive teaching of their language, literature, history, and culture in the language of the minority to which they belong, as additional training.*
- *For the purposes of the realization of the rights from the preceding paragraph the authorities of the entities, cantons, cities and municipalities shall ensure the financial resources, the training material for teachers, the necessary rooms and other practical means for additional training, as well as the printing of textbooks in the languages of national minorities.*

Recognising the responsibilities of the relevant authorities (BiH Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, BiH Ministry for Civil Affairs, Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Social Welfare, Pedagogical Institutes, the Institute for Education and Municipal Authorities) to fulfil the aforementioned legal and political commitments;

Acknowledging the crucial role of Romani representatives and Romani parents in defining their educational needs and actively participating in the development of solutions to address the access barriers they face;

The expert members of the Sub-Group on the Educational Needs of Roma hereby present the following recommendations to the relevant authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, BiH Ministry for Civil Affairs, Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Social Welfare, Pedagogical Institutes, the Institute for Education and Municipal Authorities).

OVERARCHING GOAL

To improve the access of Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the mainstream education system through addressing the variety of obstacles currently faced – namely practical, systemic and wider issues, while enhancing Romani communities' participation in and commitment to their children's school enrolment and completion.

IDENTIFICATION OF BARRIERS TO THE FULL INCLUSION OF ROMA IN THE BiH EDUCATION SYSTEM

Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to suffer from widespread poverty, unemployment, homelessness and a lack of access to education. A large majority of Romani children are unable to attend school due to their extremely poor living conditions, which prevent them from being able to afford proper clothing and the necessary schoolbooks and supplies. These factors, combined with occasional verbal harassment from other students, as well as the mandatory administration and financial costs of schooling have in many cases prevented Roma from accessing schools, despite a willingness of many parents to enrol their children.

Currently, the presence of Roma in schools is sporadic at best and Romani children are nearly absent in the later grades of primary and secondary education. According to a 2002 assessment report by UNICEF, Council of Europe and OSCE, in Tuzla Canton (where the highest level of school enrolment among Roma exists) approximately 80% of Roma do not attend school. Further, more than 60% of Roma in Tuzla Canton are illiterate, around 80% are without any professional qualification and only two Romani students attend university.

According to the 2001-02 Save the Children UK country report for Bosnia and Herzegovina *Denied a Future*, among the many reasons behind low levels of participation in the education system on the part of Roma children are the following:

Poverty: The inability to pay for clothes, school supplies and other school requirements; the need for children to contribute to the family's income through work; the inability to provide children with an adequate environment to study at home; lack of conditions to study.

Irrelevance of mainstream education: The lack of relevant studies for children that would prepare them for adulthood as contributing members of their Romani community; pervasive discrimination that would (potentially) preclude employment even if Romani children were educated; parents' experience of being capable and contributing members of the community without having any formal education, and their consequent perception that mainstream education is not important for their children.

Discrimination and harassment at school: In some cases, Romani parents are reluctant to enrol their children into schools due to a fear that they could be physically/verbally harassed just because they are Roma.

Mistrust of government: The relationships of Romani people with the authorities have not historically engendered a feeling of confidence in agencies of the government, including the education system; many Romani children do not possess documents required by school authorities, such as birth certificates or other identity documents.

War and displacement: Thousands of Romani children (including Romani children from Kosovo) were displaced by the wars of this region and have not been able to return to communities where they might have a greater sense of belonging and be able to plan their futures, including the formal education.

Cultural beliefs and practices: Children assume adult responsibilities much earlier in many Roma communities than in non-Roma communities. Children are often married and have children themselves in their teen years. Household and other work responsibilities accordingly increase, providing children with little time for formal education.

Language: Many Romani children are not proficient in written or spoken non-Roma languages to the extent that they would be able to learn effectively in the languages in which classes are taught in BiH.

Lack of an educated leadership or role models: There are few educated Romani leaders who have managed to succeed in spite of all else in BiH and who can provide inspiration to Romani children, making them believe that they too can have a promising future if they complete their education.

According to the opinion of the Sub-group on the Educational Needs of Roma there are additional reasons that present obstacles to the inclusion of Roma to the mainstream education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

ACTION PLAN

<p style="text-align: center;">Goal #1: Promoting Systemic Change to in Order to Ensure Accommodation of the Educational Needs of Roma</p>
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In their efforts to systemically adjust the education system in order to ensure full and equal access for Roma and to prevent segregation of Romani children in mainstream education system, education and other relevant authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina should undertake measures which have the effect of including Romani children in the school population. In introducing systemic change, the legitimacy of introducing specific measures and activities will be recognized to enhance the quality and effectiveness of education of Romani children.

Required Actions:

1. Ensure regular and systemic collection of data on enrolment and school completion rates of Romani children in order to proactively identify children and young people who did not complete school at the appropriate age and who dropped out or never attended school.

***Responsible Bodies:** Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Municipal Education Departments, Entity Ministries of Local Management/Self-Management, Ministries of Social Welfare, Romani representatives/associations, Entity and Cantonal Statistical Agencies*

2. The Council of National Minorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina shall be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Action Plan on the Educational Needs of Roma and Members of Other National Minorities. In this regard, one of the tasks of the Council shall be to assess and monitor education access of Romani and to develop mechanisms to assess and measure the effectiveness of education policies and measures in improving the educational attainments of Roma children.
Responsible Bodies: Romani representatives/associations, the BiH Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees.
3. Undertake specific analysis of the legal framework with respect to education and access to education of Roma in order to ensure inclusion of Roma children in education.
Responsible Bodies: BiH Ministry for Civil Affairs and Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Council of National Minorities of BiH, Romani representatives/associations,
4. Establish within the existing education system, programs for accelerated learning (catch-up classes) and part-time education in order to assist Roma who have never attended school (due to factors such as their need to work part-time in order to contribute to the family income). An adjusted curriculum should be developed for this purpose that could be applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Pedagogical Institutes and Institute for Education, Romani representatives/associations, Standards and Assessment Agency and Curriculum Agency.
5. Develop adult education programs in order to remedy the legacy of sub-standard education and non-schooling and to ensure that youth that are over 16 years of age are given the opportunity to be educated or to acquire additional qualifications in order to obtain employment.
Responsible Authorities: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Pedagogical Institutes and Institutes for Education and Romani representatives/associations.
6. Provide inclusion of Romani children in the pre-school education system in order to enable them to start the primary school as equal counterparts with their age peers.
Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Pedagogical Institutes and Institute for Education, Social Protection Fund/Ministries of Social Welfare, Municipal Authorities, Romani representatives/associations.
7. Provide permanent health care to Romani children.
Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Health and Social Welfare, Public Health Care Centers, Welfare Centers.
8. Establishment of an office for the rights of national minorities and particularly Roma within the existing ombudsman Institutions.
Responsible Bodies: Parliamentary Assemblies, educational authorities, Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, Council of National Minorities of BiH, and Ombudsmen Institutions.

**Goal #2:
Removal of Financial and Administrative Barriers to Roma
School Enrolment and Completion**

Romani families are often unable to provide their children with the basic preconditions education requires. The solution to this problem requires active involvement of education institutions and other authorities in the field, and Roma and non-Roma communities. Education and government authorities therefore should provide the necessary funding to implement education policies and arrangements in order to ensure equal educational opportunities for Romani children.

Required Actions:

1. Ensure that specific budgetary means at all levels of government in BiH intended for advancing access to education by Roma (for the purpose of material needs and services) are included in order to overcome the difficult socio-economic position faced by a significant number of Romani families in BiH. Budgetary means reserved for accommodation of material needs will be used for procurement of textbooks, school supplies, meals and either transport fees or organised, free transport to school. Special budgetary means for additional services including the financing of preschool education, the organisation of extra-ordinary exams and the additional learning support should also be included as separate budget lines intended for Roma education. **Special budgetary means, based on available funds, should be allocated within the 2004 budget lines and progressively increased as conditions allow.**

Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Social Welfare, Education, and Finance and Municipal and School Authorities

2. Ensure that lack of documentation for registration of children in municipality identification books does not prevent enrolment and ensure that steps are taken to support Roma when documents are missing.

Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Social Welfare Departments and Municipal and School Authorities.

3. Within existing schemes of scholarships at all levels (Primary, Secondary and Higher Education), provide a certain number of scholarships for Romani students, by municipalities and educational institutes, with an obligation of regular school attendance.

Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Municipal Authorities and Romani representatives/associations.

Goal #3: Preservation of Roma Language and Culture²

Since Roma identity and culture are regarded as part of the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is important that all citizens have the opportunity to learn about Romani history and culture. Not only does this type of public education reaffirm Romani culture and identity, but it also serves to eradicate prejudice and negative stereotypes directed towards Roma.

Required Actions:

1. Introduce Romani language as an optional subject in schools attended by Romani children, in accordance with the Law.
Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Pedagogical Institutes and Institute for Education and Romani representatives/associations.
2. Integrate aspects of Romani culture and history into the existing curricula, so that all students are able to develop a greater understanding of Romani communities.
Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Pedagogical Institutes and Institute for Education, Curriculum Agency and Romani representatives/associations.
3. Develop curriculum resources in order to enable teachers to teach Romani language, culture and history in schools.
Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Curriculum Agency, Pedagogical Institutes and Institute for Education and Romani representatives/associations.
4. Educational authorities should undertake activities (for example: school manifestations, Roma Day celebrations) in order to promote Romani culture and language, and particularly on the occasions of celebrating important dates from Romani culture.
Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, educational institutions, Roma representatives/associations.
5. Ensure adequate promotion of human rights of national minorities, and particularly Roma in the media, including the promotion of educational needs of Roma
Responsible Bodies: Institutions and Bodies for the Protection of Human Rights in BiH, Press Bureaus and Offices in Entity Governments, Regulatory Agency for Communication in BiH and public TV stations.

² In its efforts to protect the culture and identity of Roma, authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina should strongly consider Recommendation (2000) 4 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the Education of Roma/Gypsy and Traveller Children in Europe.

**Goal #4:
Garnering the Support and Participation of Romani Parents and Communities**

In order to strengthen the commitment and engagement of Romani families and communities toward inclusion of their children in mainstream education and continuation through the various levels of education, concrete steps should be taken to raise parental awareness about the importance of schooling and their responsibility to enrol their children.

Required Actions:

1. Develop educational materials in Romani language and undertake other activities in order to inform parents about the enrolment process and steps that can be taken to overcome financial and administrative barriers to enrolment of their children;
Responsible Bodies: Social Welfare Departments, Municipal Education Departments, Council of National Minorities of BiH and Romani representatives/associations.
2. Conduct regular field visits to Romani communities in order to support parents in enrolment their children into primary schools and to proactively identify Roma who have never enrolled in or completed primary school.
Responsible Bodies: Social Welfare Departments, Municipal Education Departments, Roma representatives/associations, educational authorities, Romani teaching assistants/mediators.
3. Promote greater participation of parents into the school life by including Romani parent representatives in school boards, in order to provide them with the opportunity to actively influence school politics,
Responsible Bodies: Educational institutions, local communities and Roma associations, parent/teacher councils, school boards, Romani teaching assistants/mediators.

**Goal #5:
Increasing the Representation of Roma Teaching Staff and Sensitising Non-Roma Teaching Staff to the Needs of Romani Students**

The best way to create an awareness and sensitivity of teaching staff towards the specific needs of Roma is to ensure the representation of Romani teachers within the existing teaching staff. In order to rectify the under-representation of Romani teachers, education and school authorities should ensure as a minimum condition that Romani teaching assistants are hired. In order to ensure the full integration of Roma into regular classes, teaching staff should receive additional information and training about Romani traditions, culture and customs so that they are fully aware of and sensitive to the specific needs of Roma.

Required Actions:

1. Sensitise teaching staff on by introducing them to Romani traditions, culture, language and customs.
Responsible Bodies: Educational authorities and educational institutions in cooperation with Romani representatives/associations, Romani teaching assistants/mediators.
2. Develop a manual for education authorities and teaching staff containing an overview of Romani culture, history and traditions with a summary of compiled “good practices” in the inclusion of Roma into the education system.
Responsible Bodies: Council of National Minorities of BiH to compile based on input by Romani representatives/associations and educational authorities.
3. Institute measures to rectify the under-representation of Roma among primary and secondary school teachers such as granting scholarships to Romani students to complete pedagogical studies.
Responsible Bodies: Educational authorities and educational institutions in cooperation with Romani representatives/associations.
4. Develop mechanisms for determining necessary qualifications of teachers and work out possibilities of in-service training of teachers.
Responsible Bodies: Educational authorities, Pedagogical Institutes/Institute for Education in cooperation with Romani representatives/ associations.
5. Increase the number of mediators and teachers as a link with the Romani community in order to improve dialogue between school authorities and families/parents.
Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education and Romani representatives/associations, local community and school.
6. Schools located in areas with large Romani population should undertake efforts to establish positions for Romani teaching assistants, who would assist in the organization of extra-curricular activities and to help facilitate the dialogue between Romani parents and education authorities.
Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Romani representatives/associations, educational authorities.

PART II:

ACTION PLAN ON THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF MEMBERS OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

Recognizing that the crucial importance of education in preserving and strengthening the identity of persons belonging to national minorities;

Having in mind Pledge 1 of the Education Reform Agenda, which commits educational authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to:

- *Ensure that all children who are members of national minorities (particularly Roma children) are appropriately included in the education system throughout the country.*
- *Ensure that national minorities and especially Roma are enabled to define their own needs and to support them in assessing what is necessary for successful education.*
- *Develop a flexible BiH-wide implementation plan to include all children belonging to national minorities (in particular Romani children) within the educational system that addresses the problems of access financing of textbooks and transportation.*

In accordance with the provisions of the *Law on Protection of Rights of Members of National Minorities* (Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 06/03) which stipulates that:

- *Regardless of the number of persons belonging to national minority, the entities and cantons shall ensure that persons belonging to a national minority, if they request so, receive teaching of their language, literature, history, and culture in the language of minority to which they belong, as additional training (Article 14).*
- *For the purposes of the realization of the rights from the preceding paragraph the authorities of the entities, cantons, cities and municipalities shall ensure the financial resources, the training material for teachers, the necessary rooms and other practical means for additional training, as well as the printing of textbooks in the languages of national minorities (Article 14).*

Pursuant to the provisions of the *Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No.18/03) which stipulates that:

- *The language and culture of any significant minority in BiH shall be respected and accommodated within the school to the greatest extent practicable, in accordance with the Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities (Article 8).*

In accordance with international instruments directly applicable in Bosnia and Herzegovina by virtue of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Annex IV of the General Framework Agreement for Peace;³

Acknowledging the crucial role of members of national minorities in defining their educational needs and in actively ensuring that their educational rights are realised;

The Task Force on the Educational Needs of Roma and Other National Minorities hereby present the following recommendations to the relevant authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, BiH Ministry for Civil Affairs, Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Social Welfare, Pedagogical Institutes, the Institute for Education and Municipal Authorities).

³ European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; International Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages; Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

ACTION PLAN

Goal #1:
**Promoting Systemic Change in Order to Ensure Accommodation of the
Educational Needs of Members of National Minorities**

In their efforts to systemically adjust the education system in order to promote and present culture, language and identity of national minorities, education and other relevant authorities should undertake measures which will lead to accommodation of educational needs of members of national minorities.

Required Actions:

1. The Council of National Minorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina shall be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Action Plan on the Educational Needs of Roma and Members of Other National Minorities.

***Responsible Bodies:** BiH Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, representatives/associations of national minorities*

2. Educational authorities shall undertake awareness-raising activities in order to inform members of national minorities about the Action Plan.

***Responsible Bodies:** Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Pedagogical Institutes and the Institute for Education.*

3. Establishment of an office for the rights of national minorities within the existing ombudsman offices.

***Responsible Bodies:** Parliamentary Assemblies, educational authorities, Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, Council of National Minorities of BiH, and Ombudsmen Institutions.*

Goal #2:
**Inclusion of the History, Culture and Literature of National Minorities within the
Mainstream Curricula**

Since culture and traditions of persons belonging to national minorities are part of the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is important that all citizens have the opportunity to learn about their history and culture. Not only do such steps reaffirm the culture and identity of national minorities, but also serve to reinforce the multi-cultural character of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Required Actions:

1. Integrate aspects of the culture, history and literature of national minorities into the mainstream curricula, so that all students are able to develop a greater understanding of the culture, history and traditions of members of national minorities.
Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Pedagogical Institutes and the Institute for Education, Curriculum Agency and Associations of National Minorities.
2. Ensure that the curriculum content related to national minorities is developed with the active participation of representatives of the national minorities in question.
Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Pedagogical Institutes and Institute for Education, Curriculum Agency and Associations of National Minorities.
3. Develop curriculum resources in order to enable teachers to teach the culture and history of national minorities in schools.
Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, Curriculum Agency, Pedagogical Institutes and the Institute for Education and representatives of national minority associations.
4. Undertake activities (for example: school manifestations) in order to promote the culture and language of students belonging to national minorities.
Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education, school authorities and representatives of national minority associations.

<p style="text-align: center;">Goal # 3: Preservation of Identity, Culture and Language</p>
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The right of persons belonging to national minorities to maintain their identity can only be fully realised if they acquire a proper knowledge of their history, culture and mother tongue during the educational process. The *Law on Protection of Rights of Members of National Minorities* provides that members of national minorities, regardless of their number, shall receive teaching of their language, literature, history, and culture in the language of minority to which they belong, as additional training.

Recommendations:

Additional classes should be organised upon the request of parents/students who are members of national minorities for students who are members of national minorities so that they are given the opportunity to learn the language, history and culture of their country of origin.

Responsible Bodies: Entity and Cantonal Ministries of Education and Culture, Pedagogical Institutes/Institute for Education and relevant Educational Services, Associations of National Minorities and Representatives of Embassies of the countries of origin.

Required Actions:

- 1) **Associations of national minorities** shall:
 - a) Collect data about possible attendees of additional classes for national minorities.
 - b) Identify and submit to the Entity/Cantonal Ministries of Education, lists of schools where the remedial classes should be organised.
 - c) Recommend an expert teacher to conduct classes.

- 2) **Pedagogical Institutes or Pedagogical Offices at Ministries of Education** shall:
 - a) Predict the annual fund for organizing additional classes for national minorities or other types of classes (such as summer school).
 - b) Plan out the content of classes for language, history and culture in cooperation with members of national minorities and the Embassies of their countries of origin and distribute the plan to schools organizing additional classes for members of national minorities.
 - c) Develop mechanisms for determining the necessary qualifications of teachers and work out possibilities for in-service training of teachers.
 - d) Address other issues concerning the organization of additional classes.

- 3) **Ministries of Education and Culture** shall:
 - a) Provide necessary material support for teaching.
 - b) Provide payment for teachers.
 - c) Organize activities to raise awareness among members of national minorities about the possibility to attend additional language, history and culture classes.

- 4) **Embassies of national minorities of countries of origin** shall:
 - a) Provide the appropriate textbooks for language study.
 - b) Provide support to members of national minorities in order to ensure that the history and culture of their country of origin is taught.