

Country report:

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# SLOVAKIA

Implementation 2018 – 2021

Unedited version of the executive summary



**INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS**  
**MAKING A DIFFERENCE**  
**FOR ROMA CHILDREN**

European Union and Council of Europe Joint Project  
Inclusive Schools: Making a Difference for Roma Children

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Funded  
by the European Union  
and the Council of Europe



EUROPEAN UNION

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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# Country report: **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** **SLOVAKIA**

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## Project INSCHOOL

The European Union and Council of Europe Joint Project “Inclusive Schools: Making a difference for Roma children” (INSCHOOL) aims to enhance the social inclusion of Roma by promoting inclusive education policies and practices.

The project pursues the following objectives: setting up support mechanisms and resources for schools; providing support to teachers to practice inclusive teaching; supporting the removal of concrete barriers for vulnerable groups including through changes of legislation in the participating countries; raising awareness of the benefits of inclusive education for the general public as well as for decision makers.

### Schools involved in the INSCHOOL Project in Slovakia

Elementary school Štefana Náhaliku in Liptovská Teplička, Elementary school Jarná in Žilina, Elementary school Milan Rastislav Štefánik in Budimír, Elementary school Štefan Ďurovčík in Palín, Elementary school and kindergarten Bánová, Elementary school Vilka Šuleka in Hlohovec, Elementary school in Raslavice, Elementary school Spišský Štvrtok.

### Policy Framework Update

*July - November, 2020*

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport in Slovakia was not fully prepared for the second wave of the pandemic - which has been gradually approaching in Slovakia in August, 2020 - and school policy in relation to poor pupils from Roma communities was becoming equally unclear. During the summer (June – August 2020), EduRoma was approached by the State Pedagogical Institute to present its research findings in the field of distance education of Roma pupils, which EduRoma carried out in Slovakia from March to July, 2020. During last summer, it was announced that a separate official Department of Inclusive Education was established in the education sector of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, which was originally managed by Ms. Tina Gažovičová who also coordinates the Ministerial Working Group for Desegregation. The working group on desegregation was established in response to the action of the European Commission, which has been conducting proceedings against Slovakia since April 2015 for discrimination against Roma children in Slovak schools. The National Coordinator of INSCHOOL Slovakia, Vlado Rafael, was appointed by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport as a member of the working group for desegregation.

*January - June 2021*

A positive development in this period was the mention of fight against segregation of Roma pupils in the official document of the Recovery Plan, which sets priorities for Slovakia in the area of obtaining European financial subsidies for the reconstruction of the country after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport is in the process of developing a strategy for inclusive education. Since March 2021, the Ministry has entrusted

this task to the well-known school reformer in Slovakia, Professor Miron Zelina. He has been also associated with the project activities in Slovakia and has been appointed as INSCHOOL Ambassador. Representatives of INSCHOOL project actively participate in the Ministerial Working Group for the development of the inclusive education strategy. Currently, regional participatory consultations are taking place in Slovakia with various experts in the field of education. It is a participatory approach in creating the future multi-year strategy on inclusive education. The creation of the strategy takes place under the Department of Inclusive Education of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research. Early on, the development process of the strategy has begun with numerous representatives of school organizations actively participating in consultation part, however the challenge remains to have the process become more accessible to representatives of national minorities, especially that of Roma.

### Pandemic – COVID 19 in the school system

The closure of schools during the first and second waves of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that the vast majority of Roma pupils also had to be educated from a distance. However, the level of quality of distance education was very low, especially in relation to the vulnerable groups of students. A survey of distance education for children from marginalized Roma communities at the time of the pandemic, carried out by EduRoma, shows that up to 70% of Roma pupils were not at all involved in distance learning. The INSCHOOL project responds to this fact in its activities, which are presented in the following part of the report.

### Main activities implemented in the project: meetings at the level of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, INSCHOOL National Working Group, trainings, etc.

Since April 2021, INSCHOOL project focused mainly on A) the creation and establishment of the INSCHOOL National Working Group at the Ministry of Education, B) more intensive cooperation and exchange of experiences between schools and teachers, and C) public media coverage of the INSCHOOL project, which was a cross-cutting activity.

During the period from February to mid-April 2021, several introductory meetings were held with the new director of the Department of Inclusive Education of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, Ms. Svetlana Sithová. Her mandate in the National Working Group (NWG) is to reconvene, oversee and coordinate the group on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport. On April 28, 2021, the first meeting of the INSCHOOL National Working Group in Slovakia was organized. The results of the INSCHOOL project’s „Mapping teachers needs for improvement of compensatory education of Roma pupils after they return to school” identified gaps and barriers in the education of Roma pupils after returning to schools. The team has also carried out self-evaluation assessment based on Index of Inclusion methodology and planning cycle of the INSCHOOL project.

On May 17, 2021 the team carried out a nationwide training for teachers involved in the INSCHOOL project under the auspices of the Government Plenipotentiary for the Roma Community of the Slovak Republic, Ms. Andrea Bučková.

A series of thematic workshops were held remotely and a number of school teachers and principals have attended the international INSCHOOL training programme on quality and inclusive education.

## Main findings from the self evaluation of schools in Slovakia

### *1. Demographic information / Basic data*

A Self-evaluation was carried out based on Index of Inclusion methodology and planning cycle of the INSCHOOL project. The perspective of children, teachers and parents was collected through questionnaires from the Self-evaluation report. Quantitative data collection and subsequent analysis at all participating schools was done (Baseline survey).

Data collection took place in the period from February 2021 to March 2021. A survey was conducted in all schools involved in INSCHOOL project. To provide a framework for the expression of adults and children in relevant schools, 4 types of questionnaires have been used, focusing on 4 types of respondents (school staff and relevant bodies (School Board, Supervisory Board), Parents and legal guardians, children in Primary and Secondary education).

The Likert scale was used for school staff and relevant bodies (a total of 136 responses), with answers ranging from Strongly Agree to Need more Information, whereas the scale for parents (286 responses) and children (416 responses from both Primary and Secondary schools) was adapted from Strongly Agree to Disagree.

Within this policy brief only selected features are presented.

#### *Questionnaire 1: Indicators for inclusion*

*(addressed to the members of the Board of Directors and school staff: didactic, auxiliary didactic, non-didactic)*

The perception of school staff in creating an inclusive culture was generally positive. As many as 85.2% of staff expressed the view that everyone is welcome in their school. No one even expressed an opinion completely on the opposite spectrum. 37,6% fully agree with the statement that children help each other, and according to 52,2%, employees and children at school cooperate with each other. 66,7% agreed fully that employees and board members get along well.

Within the framework of creating an inclusive culture, 72% fully agree there is an establishment of inclusive values. 23.5% of respondents fully agreed with the statement that together they promote inclusive values. 89% partly agree and less than 10% of respondents fully agreed with the statement that they support and respect all human rights at school. 78% of respondents see inclusion as a tool to increase the active participation. 26.7% completely agreed with the statement "We have high expectations from all children", which is a response to be further elaborated and discussed. As many as 89% of respondents stated that they

value all children equally. With the fight against discrimination and the school completely agreed with 94.1%. 94.1% fully agreed with the fact that they support non-violent communication and dispute resolution at school.

As part of the implementation of inclusive measures - Promoting Diversity, up to 35.8% of respondents stated that the school does not provide learning the Slovak language as a foreign language.

In the open statement to the question "What do I like most about this school", the respondents most often stated: good mutual cooperation between colleagues and good relationships in the team, good school management, school environment, access to students (several stated inclusive environment), openness, opportunity to learn, search for new teaching methods, respect, humanity, cooperation, equipment, school atmosphere, etc. A qualitative survey of the things that the respondent would like to change within the open answers pointed to a situation that does not fully correspond to the answers declared above. Respondents mentioned materials, the need for professional staff such as a psychologist, family assistant, premises, cooperation with parents, greater flexibility in curricula, poor expertise etc. However, answers were also proposals for segregation measures or signs of discrimination.

#### *Questionnaire 2: My child's school*

*(addressed to parents / legal representatives)*

Almost 75% of parents perceive that all children's families are equally important for teachers. A significant majority of parents are convinced that it is good for children of different backgrounds to attend school.

Regarding perception of homosexuality and transgender identity, 34% of parents agree with the statement that non-heterosexuality at school is perceived as a normal part of life, more than 42% partially agree and almost 25% disagree. A high percentage of parents (92.7%) agree with the statement that everyone is an equal part of the school, regardless of religious beliefs, and almost 90% agree with the fact that the school respects everyone for skin color. (It would be interesting to examine in depth how parents from the majority and minorities perceive the situation but also what exactly the word "respects" represents in this case).

Regarding the three things that parents like most at school, the most common statements were: proximity to school, school approach, environment, friendships between children, communication with parents, community, quality and expertise of teachers, friendliness, community, the school's efforts within pandemic measures, or school support (school psychologist). Things parents would like to change include: technical equipment, teacher access, few hobby groups, more demands on children, problems during distance learning, school surroundings, status in some classes, style and way of learning.

#### *Questionnaire 3: My school*

*(addressed to secondary school students)*

Almost 70% of children think that it is good that they have children of different backgrounds at school. 54.3% of children believe that they learn what democracy is just by attending a given school. Just for comparison, 65% agreed with this statement and 30% partially agreed. 60.2% of

students agree that they have learned how their actions affect others at school. 30% agree and 15.6% disagree with the statement that people at school admit when they make a mistake. 30.8% of students do not agree that the school has a pleasant place where they can come during the lunch break. Almost 16% of pupils did not help make school a better place. 71% fully and almost 27% partially agree that every child living near a school is welcome. 32% of students do not agree that homosexuality is perceived as a normal part of life at school. On the other hand, significant agreement was expressed with the statement that children with disabilities at school are respected and accepted by everyone (70.1% agree and 24% partially agree).

*24.5% of children think that at school their children name each other offensively. 7% of students do not believe that if they have a teaching problem, the teacher will help him. Almost 11% do not believe that teaching assistants will help him if they are in the classroom. 18% of students state that they are not exposed to work at school.*

The things that pupils like most in secondary classes at school include: team, specific teachers, location, school premises, chemistry class, exterior, playground, system, breaks, gym, etc. Among the things that students would like to change are: technical equipment, hygiene, bullying against homosexuality, gym, some teachers, rest area, playground, discrimination, class size, etc.

#### *Questionnaire 4: My school (addressed to primary school students)*

The lowest rate was recorded when asking whether children are "good" at school and when asking if no one is hurting or insulting them at school. The highest agreement rate was recorded when deciding whether children like teachers and when saying that they learn a lot of interesting things at school.

In addition, the most common things they like at school are: friends, school cleanliness, gym, classroom, playground, breaks, schoolyard, club, teachers. Things they would like to change include: food, gym equipment, toilet hygiene, more rings, "respect", there is often a desire not to have so many Roma / to be separated, school equipment, larger locker rooms, longer breaks, allowed mobile, etc.

## Project main findings and recommendations

It is clear from the research findings that in the next project period it will be important to focus on working with teachers who work in schools with children from marginalized communities. Some of the findings suggested to the lack of understanding of the concepts and principles related to inclusion. Further cooperation, capacity building and exchanges should focus not only on the practical solutions to inclusion in school but also on understanding the philosophy, principles and benefits of an inclusive approach in the educational environment.

Another beneficial aspect for the next phase of the project is to focus on qualitative data collection at selected schools in order to identify the perception about inclusion in schools among relevant groups (representatives of schools, parents, students or community). The generated data should support, on one hand the policy making process and decision-making, and on the other, the identification and application of inclusive education methodologies with students.

A higher engagement of representatives of national minorities, including Roma within the processes of consultation, coordination and implementation of education policies could be systematically addressed as to secure that policy measures have a better reach out and impact.