Editors
Nikoleta Gutvajn
Milja Vujačić

CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Nikoleta Gutvajn
Николай Константинович Сергеев
Danimir Mandić

Editors
Nikoleta Gutvajn
Milja Vujačić

English language editor
Esther Grace Helajzen

Technical editor
Mladen Radulović

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Vlada Polić

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VOLGOGRAD STATE SOCIO-PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY, RUSSIA
FACULTY OF TEACHER EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE, SERBIA

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FOREWORD

Ensuring conditions for a quality education for all children is a key goal that is supposed to be achieved within the process of reforming the education system. Efforts to ensure both equality and quality in education have become fully made through the idea of inclusive education. The importance of this concept has also been confirmed by the fact that inclusive education in many countries represents a key indicator of the quality, efficiency and humanity of their education systems. Experiences so far in the application of inclusive education have been very valuable, because they point out some important elements of this process and provide guidelines regarding the manner in which those necessary changes should take place. It is important to highlight that it is impossible to develop one unique inclusive model that could be applied in various countries with the same level of success, but that adequate solutions can be only achieved by analyzing specific contextual conditions, taking into consideration the specificities of each social and cultural environment and the existing conditions of education systems and schools. In order for this idea to be actually implemented, it is important that decisions regarding public policies be based on insights obtained through careful research of various problems in the field of inclusive education. Those insights can be very significant both for decision-makers and practitioners in considering the process and results of the implementation of inclusive education as well as in getting ideas for further development of inclusive practices in educational institutions. It is possible to single out two approaches to the research and perception of inclusive education based on the different interests of researchers. The first approach is about searching for practical solutions to certain problems of inclusive education (a partial reform of the education system and schools), while the other approach perceives inclusion as a cultural policy that requires complete reconstruction of society and a new way of thinking.

Research in this field shows that, in spite of great efforts and endeavours to improve this idea, the inclusive education implementation process in most countries develops slowly and with difficulties. There are still many unresolved issues and dilemmas related to this process: (a) In what way is inclusive education related to key challenges in education such as quality, failing classes, lack of resources, rigidity of school programmes? (b) Is inclusive education the right solution for all children with developmental disabilities? (c) Is there is a best solution for the successful application of an inclusive programme and is there a clear plan to be followed? (d) Is the introduction of inclusive education possible in all countries?

The results show that official education policies in this field haven been completely implemented in practice and that existing differences can be explained by the existence of numerous barriers and challenges relating to the practical application of planned changes. Overcoming existing problems has not yet been fully solved, even in countries that have a long tradition of inclusive education and good economic conditions for its implementation, and it is clear that challenges and problems which developing countries encounter, having less experience in this field and unfavourable economic conditions, are bigger and more complicated.

Education policies in the field of inclusive education can be successfully implemented in practice if the key actors in this process (principals, teachers, students, and parents), strongly support planned changes and express a positive attitude towards them. Research shows that the resistance and negative attitudes of teachers and other stakeholders towards the inclusion of children from marginalized groups in regular schools lead to numerous problems in the implementation of inclusive education. It is therefore highlighted that changing attitudes is one of the challenges and key conditions for the success of this process. Changing and overcoming negative attitudes towards inclusive education is progressing very slowly and with difficulty, and that is why many other planned activities in this field encounter difficulties in the process of realization.

The problems in the application of inclusive education to a great extent relate to teachers, as key actors in this process. Research shows that the successful development of inclusive practice is particularly obstructed by teachers' negative self-assessment of their professional competency for the realization of inclusive education, as well as a lack of adequate professional training and expert support in working with students who need additional support. These problems cause teachers who work in inclusive contexts to become overwhelmed and stressed, which additionally affects their work negatively. Modern educational approaches show the importance of the new role of teachers in establishing the required conditions for encouraging the individual development of children and recognizing their individual abilities, affinities, family and cultural heritage. Therefore, adequate professional training of teachers for working in inclusive education, the implementation of innovative approaches in work, and cooperation with parents has been highlighted as one of the most important goals in the process of adapting education to meet the abilities and needs of all children.

Research indicates that, apart from the conditions of education systems, the achievement of inclusive education is hindered by numerous barriers, including social and local community factors, as well as the those relating to children who need additional support and their families. Therefore in considering key challenges and perspectives of inclusive education, barriers and problems should not only be tackled within the education system, but also in connection with other segments of society, such as the family, local community, as well as healthcare and social security.

A collection of papers "Challenges and Perspectives of Inclusive Education" contains thirteen papers by authors who are, by their thematic orientation, focused on elaborating on numerous issues significant for inclusive education. This book aims to examine current problems in inclusive education from the standpoint of their significance for the improvement of public policies and the practice of inclusive education. No theoretical and stylistic harmonization was required from authors of the articles. They were expected to show the results of their own theoretical and empirical research, thus making them accessible to both an academic audience and the wider public, in the hope that the results of such scientific research will be implemented to a greater extent in educational practice.

This collection of papers addresses certain questions of inclusive education, but it does not give a comprehensive account of all aspects of inclusive education. We thought that it was important to publish and present in a single collection papers by authors who are dedicated to examining inclusive education from various perspectives. Papers contain relevant information about the current conditions of inclusive education in Serbia; dominant discourses of inclusive education within legal frameworks of preschool education in Serbia; the connection between teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education and their implicit pedagogies; attitudes of school counsellors towards the education of students with special needs; preschool teachers' competences for working in inclusive education; preschool teachers' opinions about the benefits of professional development in improving competences in the field of inclusive education; possibilities for inclusion of socially marginalized individuals and groups in an institutional environment and the local community in the context of education for human rights; institutional foundations for the inclusion of Roma people in the education system in Serbia and Croatia; frequency of symptoms of emotional and behavioural problems of older primary school students, with an analysis of gender differences, in the presence of symptoms and students' perception and assessment of the influence of difficulties on their own functioning; inclusive support in preventing bullying in the Italian education system; higher education programmes for teacher training in Montenegro and problems inhibiting improvements in inclusive education in music schools, with suggested solutions for their solution ; characteristics of career development for various types of teacher in regular and special education systems.

The paper authored by Tinde Kovač-Cerović, Dragica Pavlović-Babić, Tijana Jokić, Olja Jovanović and Vitomir Jovanović *First comprehensive monitoring of inclusive education in Serbia: selected findings,* presents selected findings of the first comprehensive evaluation of inclusive education in Serbia, five years after its systemic introduction. This evaluation is based on indicators defined by the Framework for monitoring inclusive education in Serbia. The research was conducted

on a representative sample of 28 schools, and it encompassed 1537 students, 794 parents and 742 teachers. The structure of the framework, which implies predefined indicators and criteria, as well as the assessment of that same indicator by various informants, enabled the identification of the areas which are strong points in our education system, as well as areas that require immediate system development. The results of the monitoring constitute a reliable basis for improving the policy and practice of inclusive education in Serbia.

In the paper *Inclusiveness of preschool education within education policies documents of the Republic of Serbia*, Lidija Miškeljin deals with an analysis of relevant legislative documents with the aim of showing that theoretical starting points interwoven with public policies discourse perceive a child differently, as well as inclusion itself thus bearing different implications for the practice of preschool education. A key question from which the author starts her analysis of the legislative framework is: What are the dominant discourses in legislative solutions for preschool education in Serbia and what kind of construction of inclusion do they offer? This paper uses one method of theoretical analysis implementing the technique of content analysis through the following dimensions: accessibility, employees, monitoring and evaluation, and management and financing. Based on the given criteria and categories we can observe that: children's rights remain at the level of political proclamation because they are not operationalized through the participation of children in education guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child; that reducing inclusion to a separate single consideration (such as the scope of children) becomes its own goal and displays particularity in understanding and recognition of inclusion; and that the concept of inclusion itself in documents of public policy is not based on a clear ideology because of existing terminological inconsistencies.

The results of the research aimed at examining teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education were presented and analyzed by Milja Vujačić, Rajka Djević and Nikoleta Gutvajn in their paper *An examination of teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education*. What distinguishes this research from similar studies in Serbia is its examination of the relationship between teachers' attitudes and their implicit pedagogies. The authors offer an account of key results of related research published both in our country and worldwide and recommend how to create further research on teachers' attitudes, which would lead to a more comprehensive and detailed consideration of this important variable, on which the quality of application of inclusive education depends to a great extent. A basic conclusion of this research is that teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education are moderately positive. The research has shown that there is a connection between teachers' implicit pedagogies and their attitudes towards inclusion, that is, the closer teachers' implicit pedagogies are to the contemporary education paradigm the more positive their attitudes towards inclusion are.

In the paper *How students with special needs should be educated,* Janez Drobnič shows that special schools can be seen as an opportunity to ensure the right to education for students with special needs, while on the other hand, they imply inequality in education because of students' exclusion from conventional learning environments provided to other students. Considering the fact that school counsellors' task is to help the integration of students with special needs, the

author conducted research on school counsellors' attitudes towards the education of students with special needs, in particular as to where such education should take place. One hundred and one school counsellors from primary, secondary, and special schools in Slovenia were included in the quantitative study. The prevailing opinion of counsellors in schools shows that they prefer the partial model of inclusive education, as they support all students – including those with special needs – being offered education in ordinary schools and classrooms, with the exception of students with learning difficulties. This suggests that we should seek new solutions for modern schools, in particular the education of all teachers for inclusive teaching in a classroom where all students are allowed to be different and individual, rather than being dealt with in two categories: students with special needs and others. This also means that we should revise education curricula and training for all teachers.

In the paper *Attitude towards inclusion: an important factor in implementing inclusive education,* Vanja Riccarda Kiswarday and Tina Štemberger focused on preschool teachers' inclusive competences. The research, in which 124 preschool teachers were included, aims to establish how they value and assess their competences for inclusion, whereby competences are understood on three levels: attitude, knowledge, and skills. The authors also checked whether preschool teachers with longer work experience and those who had attended in-service training for inclusive settings assessed their inclusive competences higher than others with less experience did. The survey results indicate that preschool teachers see themselves quite competent for work in inclusive settings – they rated themselves high in all three dimensions of inclusive competences. It turned out that there are differences in the assessment of skills and knowledge: teachers with 10 - 20 years of service rated these dimensions higher, but no difference could be noticed between teachers in relation to in-service training for inclusive settings.

In the paper *Preschool teachers' perception of professional training contribution to the development of competences in the field of inclusive education*, Isidora Korać presented a segment of research whose goal was to examine teachers' opinions about the contribution of professional development in developing competencies in the field of inclusive education. The research was based on a questionnaire answered by a sample of 150 preschool teachers employed at preschool institutions in several towns in Serbia. The findings of the research show that the current concept of professional development accentuates the adoption of *ready-made decontextualized* knowledge, development of preschool teachers' competencies as individuals, without connecting individual and organizational changes that inclusion initiates. The author concludes that if we want for the system of professional development to contribute to obtaining preschool teachers' professional competencies for application of the current model of inclusive education, it is necessary to enable their greater participation and reflective practice via programmes for professional development. Inclusion is a change and a challenge for organizations in which various protagonists participate, who are supposed to interconnect from their various positions, roles and responsibilities, aiming for horizontal learning and organized action. Future programmes for professional development

in the field of inclusive education should be directed at the following areas: (a) working with gifted children (b) adapting work organization in preschool institutions in order to meet the needs of children who need additional support, (c) assessment and revision of individual education plans and (d) teamwork and cooperation in preschool institutions.

In the work *Inclusion of socially marginalized individuals in the light of human rights education,* Olivera Gajić, Milica Andevski, Spomenka Budić and Biljana Lungulov consider possibilities for inclusion of socially marginalized individuals and groups in an institutional framework and a local community in the context of human rights education. The authors consider the context of social inclusion and human rights education in order to collect qualitative indicators concerning the existing knowledge, interest, and recognition of social inclusion and human rights with the purpose of shedding light on this problem by protagonists of the education process, as well as the wider community, which forms the basis of strategic decisions and guidelines of education in a democratic society. Finally, the authors conclude that a well organized support network for workers in this area, who are required to ensure conditions for the fulfilment of human rights on the principles of accessibility, participation and equality.

Studying the Roma minority, which is one of the most economically and socially deprived minorities in Serbia and Croatia, is the focus of the paper *Inclusion of the Roma in Croatia and Serbia: the institutional framework and its implementation,* whose authors are Nikola Baketa and Dragana Gundogan. The goal of this paper is to show the institutional foundations for including the Roma people in the education system, as well as the way in which institutional foundations changed in the process of approximation to the European Union. On the basis of these insights it can be established that, despite the legal framework, there is a high level of exclusion in the education system so that this approach leads to the more difficult advancement of the Roma people within it dropping out, or deciding not to continue education, which in turn perpetuates the problem of education and the social position of the Roma people. The methodological approach of the authors included analysis of legislative documents and reports, as well as that of available statistical data about the education of the Roma minority.

In the paper *The symptoms of emotional and behavioral problems in older primary school students*, Branislava Popović-Ćitić and Lidija Bukvić have shown the results of the research on the frequency of emotional and behavioural symptoms in primary school students, with analysis of gender differences in the presence of symptoms and assessment of students' perception about the influence of difficulties on their own functioning. The data was obtained by means of a Strengths and difficulties questionnaire, a version for self-assessment of adolescents aged 11 to 16 with an addition about the influence of symptoms, on a sample of 630 students from 5 secondary schools in Belgrade. The obtained results were discussed in the context of considering the need for additional support, which, within an inclusive education system, would be provided for students with difficulties in their emotional and social development.

In the paper *Bullying and strategies for confronting the phenomenon in Italian schools,* Ignazia Bartholini starts with a review of literature about bullying, published since the 1970s to date. On the bases of the outcomes of some studies previously conducted, she aims to explain how the phenomenon of bullying has accompanied the raising of the period of mandatory school. Through the research of eminent scholars, she argues that the crisis of values and the loss of perspective for the future of teenagers increase the possibility of violent relationships among peers in school, where they spend much of their time. An interpretative model on bullying is therefore highlighted, using the "dramaturgic metaphor" of Goffman and focusing the role of viewer/witness (often the same classmates) in breaking the violent triangle where the perpetrator and victim are similarly victims of the same cruel play. Finally she describes the strategies devised by the Ministry of Education which are currently applied in schools in the Italian peninsula from the perspective of preventive and rehabilitative education, on potential protagonists - victim and bully - on spectators viewers - on all those adolescents who just look at the "violent drama" for fun or for weakness, without interrupting it and preventing a recurrence. In the light of empirical evidences, it is suggested that such programs accompanied by informal practices should be encouraged. The author suggests that after Italy another of the European nations that has invested very much in terms of support for inclusion and prevention for confronting the problem of bullying at school can be considered.

On the basis of recent structural and functional changes in the Montenegrin education system, with a special focus on the concept of inclusion, in her paper *The concept of inclusive education in the master's degree curriculum in Montenegro,* Tatjana Novović analyzes high school programmes for teacher training in Montenegro. Almost twenty years since the inclusive concept was implemented in the Montenegrin education system, with substantial changes in teaching practice and education legislation, the problem of vertical discontinuity in the system is still significant, i.e. there is a lack of coherence and compatibility between primary, secondary and tertiary education. The lack of a continual exchange of practical experiences and obtained knowledge about the benefits and marked challenges among all systemic institutional participants, creating a fluid field of inclusive context in Montenegro, induces discontinuity and actualises "old" questions about the purpose and functionality of previous courses of development of this concept in all education segments.

In her paper *Inclusive education of visually impaired students in music schools in Montenegro*, Vedrana Marković presents problems that complicate the improvement of inclusive education at music schools and offers some solutions. Musically talented children with visual impairment should be identified in time and have their music potential developed, i.e. they should be educated in music schools. It is often the case that blind and partially sighted children with musical talent acquire their musical education outside institutions, by private means, whereby they only dedicate themselves to learning how to play a selected instrument, but not to other courses which are envisaged in the elementary music school (solfeggio, music theory, choral singing, orchestra). This way of learning makes their music education incomplete. In addition to the primary goal – achieving a complete music education - there are numerous positive influences that happen through education in a music school.

The text written by Milica Marušić *The career cycle of teachers according to their motives of professional choice: a comparison of general and special schools*, is focused on the consideration of three groups of teachers, based on the dominant motives of their professional choice: realists, idealists and opportunists, with the aim of comparing characteristics of career development of those groups of teachers in regular and special education system. Results obtained by the use of a questionnaire (N=209) show that teacher *idealists* displayed the lowest level of career frustration, out of a total sample. It was concluded that the career development of *idealists*, *opportunists* and *realists* differ depending on the context in which they work: as regular school teachers, *opportunists* are more prone to withdrawal, while at special schools there is a stronger career frustration.

At the end of this foreword we would like to stress that our task was facilitated to a great extent by the readiness of all the authors to fulfill the requirements of the editor both in terms of the scope and structure of the papers. We hope that our gratitude will be a sufficient reward for the efforts they invested. We would like to thank the consulting editors, our distinguished colleagues Professor Nikolay M. Borytko, Professor Susana Padeliadu and Professor Marija Kavkler, whose suggestions significantly influenced the improved quality of the book. We owe a debt of gratitude to Milan Stančić, PhD, who patiently and dedicatedly helped us during all stages of preparation of this collection of papers. We are equally grateful to Rajka Djević, PhD, for her help and constructive suggestions, which significantly contributed to the quality of this collection of papers. We are also grateful to Mladen Radulović, MA, Branko Cvetić and Vlada Polić for their patience, professionalism and friendly understanding during the preparation of this manuscript.

Nikoleta Gutvajn and Milja Vujačić

INCLUSION OF THE ROMA IN CROATIA AND SERBIA: THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION[1]

Nikola Baketa[2] | Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia

Dragana Gundogan | Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Serbia

The Roma minority is one of the most socially and economically endangered minorities in both Croatia and Serbia. The Roma minority is facing problems in all public and private spheres, such as the economic sphere[3], labor market, healthcare, housing and education. Data shows that poverty, unemployment and diseases are more prevalent among the Roma population than the overall population (Burnett & Abdelbasit, 2014: 1). The obstacle to research on Roma communities in Europe is the lack of precise and relevant data. This situation influences "the development, implementation, assessment and transferability of evidence-based policies whose impact can be effectively evaluated" (Guy, Liebich & Marushiakova, 2010: 24). What is more, the important indicators for evaluation on policy program and institutional changes are still missing (Bennett, 2012: 12) as well as reliable information which could form the base for comparisons (Bennett, 2012: 46). Without these aspects, thorough and effective institutional mechanisms and programs for inclusion of Roma children in educational system cannot be successfully introduced and implemented. The reasons for the lack of exact data are following: "lack of personal documentation and/or registration of Roma, mobility of many families in search of seasonal work, and widespread unwillingness of Roma to declare themselves as such in order to avoid persistent prejudices and stereotypes" (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007: 496).

The aim of this paper is to indicate the status and institutional bases for inclusion of Roma in preschool and primary school education in Serbia and Croatia, without neglecting

1 Note: This article is a result of work of the second author on the projects "From Encouraging Initiative, Cooperation and Creativity in Education to New Roles and Identities in Society" (No. 179034) and "Improving the Quality and Accessibility of Education in Modernization Processes in Serbia" (No. 47008), funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (2011-2016).

2 E-mail: baketa.nikola@gmail.com

3 The official data shows that almost half of the Roma population are living in poverty, exactly 49.2% (Vukmirović & Govoni, 2008: 11). Furthermore, "according to the UNICEF report on the status of children in the Republic of Serbia from 2006, almost 70% of Roma children are poor and over 60% of Roma households with children live below the poverty line" (Strategy for improvement of the status of Roma in the republic of Serbia, 2010: 11). Besides, World Bank research in Serbia states that the unemployment rate of Roma population is four times higher than among the overall population (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007: 540).

the sociological and political perspectives. Firstly, accessible data on the social and educational position of Roma community in Serbia and Croatia will be analyzed in order to present the context of the difficult social and living circumstances of Roma community in these two countries. Secondly, the institutional bases of Roma inclusion are discussed. We present the ways in which these perspectives have changed during the process of approaching the EU and also their current level of implementation. For this purpose, official documents are analyzed, such as legal documents and reports.

ROMA POPULATIONS IN SERBIA AND CROATIA

In the European Union, the Roma people are considered to be the biggest ethnic minority, comprising between 10 to 15 million people. According to the Census from 2002, there were 108,193 Roma people in Serbia, which is 1.44% of the whole population (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007: 497). If we look at the data from the last census from 2011, 147.604 Serbian citizens declared themselves as Roma, which comprises 2.05% of the total population. Comparing data from the two last censuses, the absolute increase in Roma population is 36.43% (Progress report 2013, 2014:1). Many experts state that the Roma population is much bigger than official statistics can show. Due to lack of data, estimations on the Roma population in Serbia vary between 270.000 and 500.000 (Realizing Roma Rights, 2008: 4). It is important to mention that the Roma population is younger than the general population, with a growing number of school children, which is a challenge for the educational system to integrate them. Moreover, looking at the data for the period from 1991 till 2002, we can notice that the number of Roma children has increased by about 1.5% per year while the number of non-Roma children has demised by around 2% per year (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007: 499, Baucal & Stojanović, 2010: 57).

Many Roma do not have access to personal documentation, which creates many other problems, and that influences their aggravated social position[4] (Realizing Roma Rights, 2008: 5). The lack of identification cards is an especially prevalent problem for internally displaced people from Kosovo and returned people by readmission (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007: 539). This problem causes many others, which leads to Roma exclusion and puts them in a situation where they cannot fulfill their rights, such as to health and social care. Furthermore, the lack of personal documentation affects their educational possibilities, which is one of the obstacles for Roma families in enrolling their children in preschool and primary school institutions (Stojanovic & Baucal,2007: 487). Other important obstacles to equal access to education are economic factors. Even though education in Serbia is free, there are many expenses which are "hidden costs of education", consisting

4 According to the available data of Centre for InteractivePedagogy 70% of children who participated in their project do not have proof of residence and about 20% do not have a birth certificate (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007: 539).

of "expenses for school supplies, clothing, transport, and extra-curricular activities [which] become prohibitive for the majority of Roma families, who are often living in poverty" (Stojanovic & Baucal,2007: 487).

The similar problem regarding lack of data exits in Croatia. According to the census in 2001 there were 9463 members of Roma minority in Croatia but in 2011 there were 16 975[5]. However, the exact number is not known due to unwillingness of people to express themselves as members of this minority. The reasons for this can be found in unpleasant past experiences and probable discrimination. Also, there is certain heterogeneity of Roma population according to language, religion and socio-economic status. Thus, the real number of Roma minority remains unknown, but according to the Council of Europe there are around 30-40 000 Roma in Croatia, which is a considerably lower number than in Serbia (National Roma inclusion strategy 2013 – 2020, 2012: 27).

Furthermore, it is necessary to stress that around 76% of Roma population and 20% of the non-Roma population that lives next to Roma settlements are considered to be poor. This definitely influences their political, financial, cultural and educational exclusion. For example, one of the consequences is that there is much higher rate of unemployment and lower rate of employment than among the rest of population. It is possible to state that the Roma minority is economically, culturally and politically marginalized in Croatia. (National Roma inclusion strategy 2013-2020, 2012: 10)

If we take into account that the exact number of Roma minority is unknown and that data on Roma education in Croatia and Serbia is scarce it is hard to expect that we will be able to compare progress over time and between the overall population and the Roma minority. However, certain trends and conclusions regarding the institutional framework for inclusion of the Roma in preschool and primary school education are possible.

DATA ON EDUCATION AND CURRENT PROBLEMS

Serbia

Figures on the educational level of Roma people are jarring. The last census data from 2011 shows that the percentage of illiterate persons among the Roma population older than 10 years is 15.1%.

Even though this number is decreasing (in 2002 it was 19.6%), the number of illiterate persons is much higher among Roma population compared to the overall population (where 2.0% are illiterate persons). Moreover, this trend is estimated in all regions in Serbia (Radovanović & Knežević, 2014: 69). Furthermore, there are more illiterate persons

5 For detail information see: http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/censuses/census2011/results/htm/H01_01_05/H01_01_05.html

among Roma women: 69% Roma women are illiterate compared to 31% Roma men, which shows the especially aggravated position of Roma women in Serbia (Radovanović & Knežević, 2014: 70).

Taking into consideration the level of education, more than 60% of Roma people living in Serbia have not completed elementary education according toCensuses from 1991 and 2002 (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007: 485).The data from the last census revealed the same situation of educational exclusion of Roma: every fifth Roma citizen who is more than 14 years old has not completed primary education (in the total population, every 37th citizens is without any formal education). 34.2% of Roma do not have primary education, while one third (33.3%, compared to 20.8% of overall population) has completed primary education. Secondary educational level is completed by 11.5% of Roma (compared to 48.9% for the overall population). The proportion of Roma people with higher and university degrees is extremely low (0.7%, while 16.2% is the percentage for the Serbian population as a whole) (Radovanović & Knežević, 2014: 74).

Many Roma children are out of the educational system. The data from 2005 shows that 66% of children from Roma settlements are enrolled at school (White, 2012: 66).[6] According to data from 2005 held by UNDP *Vulnerable Groups in Central and Southeastern Europe*, Roma children spent 5.5 years in the educational system compared to non Roma children from the same settlements who spent on average 11 years at schools (Stojanovic & Baucal,2007 :504). Another problem is that Roma children enroll at school at an older age than non-Roma pupils (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007:505).

According to the Census from 2011, 2334 Roma children attended preschool education. Primary schools were attended by 22 807 Roma pupils, while in high school there were 3020 Roma students. Concerning higher education, 502 Roma university students and 10 PhD students were registered by Census. In the same census, it at least 2453 children between age 7-14 were registered who do not go to school (Radovanović & Knežević, 2014: 74). The estimation is that the number is much higher. Concerning preschool educational level, around 7% of Roma children go to kindergarten while in the overall population 27% children go to this institution (Stojanovic & Baucal,2007: 500). What is more, only 2% of Roma children attend preschool education, which has been mandatory since the school year 2006/2007 (Realizing Roma Rights, 2008: 10). Due to their lack of capacities, Roma children are excluded from preschool institutions, which are supposed to be preparation for primary education. The lack of this kind of preparation can be critical and irreparable for Roma children.

Even if they enroll in schools, Roma children have significantly fewer chances to obtain diploma, facing many obstacles in their school experience. Before the Decade of

6 The exact figures exist only for one school year 2002/2003 when 16.337 Roma pupils were enrolled in primary education (including 2.105 Roma pupils in special schools) (Stojanovic & Baucal,2007: 501).

Roma, Roma pupils who entered the school system had significantly fewer chances to finish primary school (Baucal & Stojanović, 2010). There is also an estimation that between 70 and 90% of Roma pupils who started primary education drop out (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007: 485). Other studies also show drastic and worrying dropout rates: "According to the latest data on Roma children from segregated settlements, 78% enroll in primary school while only 34% complete it"(Strategy for education development in Serbia 2020, 2012: 48).

We can say that during the school experience for Roma children there are a few hard-reaching steps in the educational system. Most of Roma pupils drop out in the first years of primary schools. The data shows that 11% of Roma children repeat the first three grades, while on the national average 1% children have the same experience (Crighton & Kowar 2007, 77 in White, 2012: 65). For this reason, the first phase of the massive dropout rates are in the first three grades. The second phase of dropout is the transition from fourth to fifth grade, when "classroom teaching" is switched to "subject teaching" (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007:505).

Some surveys show data on the practice of segregation of Roma children in primary schools in Serbia. Researchers list the forms of segregation which exist in Serbia: "segregation of children into separate classes; segregation of children in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities – often following improper placement procedures; segregation in adult education where Roma children under 15 are placed in schools for adult learners with an abridged curriculum"(Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007: 485). In the same study, only one school is mentioned in which physically segregated classrooms exist and that is the Vuk Karadžić Primary School in Niš (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007: 485). For this reason, it can be concluded that physical segregation of Roma children is not a common practice even though many other forms of discrimination prevail (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007: 485). We can say that the educational system does not provide an inclusive atmosphere, accepting different language and cultural background, creating "a welcoming multicultural environment for Roma children" (Realizing Roma Rights, 2008: 10). Stereotypes of and prejudice againstRoma people among pupils, teachers, school staff and parents are widespread; Roma children and parents often experience direct or latent discrimination (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007: 487).

Additionally, the quality of education for Roma pupils is questionable since teachers can apply different grading criteria and "abridged curriculum", allowing them to pass the grade without acquiring assessment criteria. For this reason, Roma children are "disqualified" on the next step of the educational ladder, causing dropouts. This problem is known as a "white flag" (Stojanovic & Baucal,2007: 488). As a result, Roma students have lower scholastic achievement due to lower socio-economic status, unfavorable educational stimulations in families, and low levels of education quality in schools (Biro, Smederevac & Tovilović, 2009; Baucal, 2006).

Special schools. A further problem is the fact that Roma children attend schools for special education more often than other children (Bennett, 2012: 38). In that process of "selecting" and "rejecting" certain groups of pupils, school readiness assessment criteria are used as school entry testing. Entry testing is used in order to diagnose disability and enable the inclusion of children in mainstream education (White, 2, 2012: 5). It is estimated that Roma children represent "25–40 percent of pupils in special primary schools for intellectual disability and 40 percent of pupils in special secondary schools" (Crighton & Kowar, 2007, 77 in White, 2012: 66), which shows overrepresentation of Roma population in these schools. Needless to say, diplomas from special schools give fewer opportunities for employment and further education.

Croatia

In Croatia, preschool education is a program for children at the age of six and it takes place before they start primary school. However, it can be conducted as a longer program and then it includes kindergarten children. On the other hand, it can be organized as a shorter program and then it is conducted a year before primary school. This is one of the reasons why there are differences in preschool experience between Roma (average 1.7 years) and non-Roma children (2.6 years) (Bruggemann, 2012: 36). According to the National Roma inclusion strategy 2013-2020 (2012: 39) 99.6% of children are covered by preschool programs (mostly by one year programs). However, the inclusion of Roma children in preschool programs remains low and multiple reasons can be identified for this, such as lack of financial resources, institutional capacities, lack of awareness of how important it is to enroll children in preschool program etc. Also, if we take into account results from UNDP, the World Bank and the European Commission survey regarding Roma education (Bruggemann, 2012) it is obvious that there are certain difference regarding enrolment ratios between Roma and non-Roma neighbors in relation to the national average. This survey suggests that the reason might be underrepresentation of preschool facilities in "localities with a higher than average share of Roma inhabitants". (2012: 32)

Table 1. Number of Roma children in preschool education at the beginning and end of the school year

Preschool Education	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Beginning			661	550	799	623	811	769
End	518	810	692	824	586	740	764	

Source: Izvješće o provođenju Ustavnog zakona o pravima nacionalnih manjina (2013), Report on preschool education (2011 and 2012).

Table 2. Number of children in preschool program carried out in Romany language

Year	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Number of children	411	143	109	72	72	49

Source: Statistical reports – Basic schools and kindergartens and other legal entities implementing preschool education programs (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014).

National reports regarding preschool education show that there has been a certain increase in preschool attendance of Roma children in the past eight years. The number has been quite stable in last 5 years, around 800 children. At the same time, there is a decrease in the number of children in preschool programs carried out in Romany language. This trend is expected since there are no programs in primary schools conducted in Romany language and thus the preschool education in Romany language does not prepare children for further education. Surely, a possible solution should be the establishment of primary school program in both, Croatian and Romany languages. According to Bruggemann (2012) the attendance of Roma children in preschool education in Croatia is 47%. If we compare that to the 99.6% in overall population then it is clear that there is a significant gap between the Roma children and the overall population. Also, as is mentioned, the statistics on Roma population are not accurate and usually the number of Roma is underestimated so this percentage might be even lower.

Primary education. Primary education in Croatia is obligatory for all children at the age of six years and it lasts eight years. According to the Education Sector development plan 2005-2010 (2005), 96.5% of children in Croatia were included in primary education and according to data available[7] the gross enrolment ration in compulsory education of children aged 7-15 in 2011 was 97%. On the other hand, percentages regarding the Roma population varies. According to the Bruggemann (2012) only 7% of Roma children aged 6 were attending primary education in 2012 and according to data available, the gross enrolment ratio in compulsory education of Roma children aged 7-15 in 2011 was 88%. The reason for the low percentage presented by Bruggemann could be the fact that some children are still in preschool institutions when they turn six years. However, the enrolment rate of Roma children remains lower in comparison to the general population.

Furthermore, a serious problem regarding Roma education is segregation of pupils in separate schools or classrooms. Over the last several years there has been an increase in the number of Roma-only classes in Croatia. In 2004 there were 27 classes

7 Available at - http://www.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/ourwork/povertyreduction/roma-in-central-and-southeast-europe/roma-data.html. Two parallel and complementary surveys were carried out in 2011 in an effort to map the current situation of Roma in the EU: One focusing on social and economic development aspects and carried out by the UNDP and World Bank (funded by the European Commission, UNDP and the Nordic Trust Fund at the World Bank), and one focusing on the fulfilment of key fundamental rights carried out by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

in which there were only Roma children and in 2008 there were 68 classes.[8] This kind of arrangement in primary education (but also in pre-school education) resulted in the verdict of the European Court of Human rights, which recognizes segregation in preschool and primary school education in Croatia.[9] The Report on the discrimination of Roma children in Education (Farkas, 2014: 54) regarding this problem states that "the naming and shaming effect of pending procedures or fresh judgments from a regional judicial forum – especially during the process of EU accession – compelled the Czech Republic and Croatia to take measures." In order to deal with this problem, the Croatian government decided to ensure preschool program for all Roma children, lectures in Croatian language (since it is one of conditions to enroll in primary school and those who are not fluent in Croatian are enrolled in special classes (Bruggemann, 2012)), education for parents and specialization for teachers.

Except for these two major problems it is necessary to mention the problem of school leavers. Regarding primary education, this occurs after pupils turn 15 since primary education is obligatory until the fifteenth year and afterwards they can voluntary leave education. Also, there are problems such as stability in financing of extended day programs in schools, support for education staff working with the Roma minority, and lack of measures for prevention of segregation and discrimination.

Farkas (2014) mentions similar problems such as non-enrollment in primary school, a high drop-out rate and high level of illiteracy among the Roma, and segregation. Also, it states that reliable data is still missing. The lack of data creates additional problems in planning further measures and actions in order to improve the position of the Roma minority in Education.

However, despite all problems and deficiencies, the number of Roma pupils has been rising continuously since 2002/2003. In that year there was 1500 and in 2011/2012 almost 5000 Roma pupils (National Roma inclusion strategy 2013-2020, 2012). This positive trend has continued to persist in the last two years and reached almost 5500 Roma pupils (Table 3). However, the problem of the low completion rate remains.

Table 3. Number of Roma students at the beginning and end of the school year

Primary Education	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Beginning			3940	4186	4435	4915	5173	5470
End	3010	3786	3936	4172	4723	4882	5311	

Source. Izvjesce o provedbi Ustavnog zakona o pravima nacionalnih manjina u 2013., Report on primary education 2011 and 2012.

8 Report on measures to combat discrimination, Country report 2013, Croatia (http://www.non-discrimination.net/content/media/2013-HR-Country%20report%20LN_final.doc)

9 More information regarding the verdict in Baričić (2012).

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Serbia

In Serbia, the legal and institutional framework concerning Roma inclusion in educational system has changed significantly in the last 10 years. Many changes have taken place under the influence of the "*Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015*" programs. Especially, more steps forward to inclusive education and a better social position for the Roma community were made during the Serbian presidency over the Decade from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009 (Progress report 2012, 2013: 3). Furthermore, the context of the process of EU integration and harmonization plays an important role in realizing and improving the human rights of different underprivileged groups such as the Roma community. The implementation of relevant Laws, Strategies, and the Action Plan in the area of education of Roma pupils is financed from EU funds and World Bank loans (Progress report 2011, 2012: 3).[10]

In the legislation of the Republic of Serbia, education is defined as a "social, economic and cultural right" (Strategy for improvement of the status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia, 2010: 10), which is guaranteed by the Constitution and regulated by Laws. Concerning Legal grounds, the *Law on the Foundations of the Education System*[11] was introduced in 2009. This Law set the legislative grounds for creating child and student oriented education, inclusive education practices, and mechanisms for their implementation, promoting equal "education and pedagogy without discrimination and segregation based on gender, social, cultural, ethnic, religious or other background, place of residence or domicile, financial or health status, developmental impairments and disabilities" (Article 3). Furthermore, *the Law on Preschool Education*[12] also stresses the importance of education for children from vulnerable groups who have the priority for enrollment (article 13). This applies also to children without proof of residence (Article 14), which is a common problem for Roma children, as we saw previously. Preparatory Preschool Programs became mandatory and free-of-charge, which should provide preparation for school, especially beneficial for children from marginalized and

10 For example,three important programs tackled the issue of Roma inclusion in preschool and primary schools: Education for All: systematization of Pedagogic Assistants (Roma Teacher Assistants), capacity building of schools and raising awareness of Roma parents on the importance of education. They are supported and funded by EU (Progress report 2010,2011:8). Also, it was important program Delivery of Improved Local Services (DILS), which provides financial help for schools to improve inclusive educational programs. This program is funded by World Bank (Progress report 2010, 2011:8).

11 http://www.seio.gov.rs/upload/documents/ekspertske%20misije/protection_of_minorities/the_law_on_education_system.pdf

12 http://www.seio.gov.rs/upload/documents/ekspertske%20misije/protection_of_minorities/the_law_on_preschool_education.pdf

underprivileged groups, such as Roma. Furthermore, in *the Law on Primary Education13* special attention is paid to implementation of inclusive education and additional support for students from vulnerable groups (Article 64). Introducing inclusive education should improve the position of Roma minority in the educational system in Serbia.

Furthermore, it is important to mention relevant strategies for improving the position of Roma in the educational system. In 2012, *The Strategy for Education for 202014* for all educational levels was adopted. In this strategy, stepping stone strategic guidelines and goals are introduced in order to improve the educational system in the Republic of Serbia (Progress report 2012, 2013: 9). Concerning Roma pupils as one of the vulnerable groups, specialized programs for providing support are mentioned and developed (The Strategy for Education for 2020, 2012: 37).

An important step in the process of Roma social inclusion was the adoption of *The Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia15*by the Serbian Government on April 9, 2009 (Progress report 2012, 2013: 3). This Strategy for improvement of the status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia has a main goal to reduce differences between the position of the Roma population and the overall population (Strategy for improvement of the status of Romain the Republic of Serbia, 2010: 9). The education of Roma has an important place in the Strategy, together with other issues such as: employment, housing, access to personal documents, social insurance and social and health care, status of women, information, culture, political participation, discrimination, and other relevant problems concerning the Roma community (Strategy for improvement of the status of Roma in the republic of Serbia, 2010: 9). Strategic goals in the area of education are stressed: "inclusion of Roma in the education system and provision of continuity in education, provision of high-quality education for Roma, establishment of mechanisms that will foster tolerance and respect for diversity and fostering cultural identity" (Strategy for improvement of the status ofRoma in the Republic of Serbia, 2010: 14-15). In order to improve social and living positions of the Roma national minority in practice and not only on paper, *The Group for the Implementation of the Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma* was formed as part of the Department of National Minorities (Progress report 2013, 2014: 2). Furthermore, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the *Action Plan for Implementation of the Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma* on 10 June 2013. The Action Plan was created following principles and measures set out in the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and in the Guidelines of the European Commission for the development of national Roma

13 The Law on Primary Education, published in the "RS OfficialGazette", no. 55/2013 from June 25, 2013, it came in to force on July 3, 2013, and shall be effective as of 2013/2014 school year.

14 http://erasmusplus.rs/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Strategy-for-Education-Development-in-Serbia-2020.pdf

15 http://www.inkluzija.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Strategija-EN-web-FINAL.pdf

integration strategies (Progress report 2013, 2014: 3). Finally, *Strategy for the Improvement of Roma Education in Serbia16* is concerned with: "exclusion from the education system and early drop-out rates (for example, due to language barrier, costs); Poor-quality education (for example, overrepresentation in schools for underachievers); Discrimination and segregation; Lack of respect for Roma identity"(Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007: 517).

As part of the "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015", *The Decade Action Plan for Education*[17] was introduced, based on the Strategy for the Improvement of Roma Education in Serbia and tackling four main problems: "inclusion of Roma children in pre-schools; assistance to pupils who underachieve in school (supplementary classes and preparation for final exams); preparation for taking the exam to enroll in a secondary school; campaigns aiming to support enrolment in secondary schools and universities, and to ensure accommodation in pupils' and student's dormitories" (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007: 517). Based on the *Decade Action Plan for Education,* the *Strategy of Education in Serbia (2005–2010)* was set up in 2005*,* integrating and summing up main programs and goals (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007: 517). Concerning the "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015" programs, *The Council for Improvement of the Status of Roma and Implementation of the Decade of Roma Inclusion* started to operate in June 2013. The Office for Human and Minority Rights gives the Council administrative and technical support (Progress report 2013, 2014: 2).

The legal and strategic frameworks for combatting Roma exclusion and discrimination in preschool and elementary schools have changed significantly in the last 15 years. Looking at examples in EU legislation and supported by the *Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015* programs, this change in Serbian legislation should be a significant base for improvement of the Roma position in the educational system. Nonetheless, the inclusion and equality of the Roma in the first levels of education is still the ideal we have to aim to. There are still many obstacles to equal educational possibility for Roma children. For this purpose, new plans and strategies are in preparation.

Croatia

The development of policies, strategies, and a legal framework regarding the inclusion of the Roma minority in Croatia from 1991 until today can be divided into two phases. In the first twelve years (1991-2003) there was no serious improvement and the government did not show significant efforts in these matters. On the other hand, as is explicitly

16 Ministry of Education and Sports, Strategija za unapredjivanje obrazovanja Roma u Srbiji (Strategy for the Improvement of Roma Education in Serbia), 2003, available at http://www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/str-improv-roma-educ-rep-ser-yug-srb-enl-t02.pdf

17 http://www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9296_file29_ap-education-serbia.doc.pdf

mentioned in National Roma inclusion strategy 2013-2020 (2012: 23), things started to change in 2003 when Croatia started negotiations with the European Union and through "following trends of European countries and recommendations of European institutions, the Republic of Croatia recognizes difficulties of Roma in Croatia and takes initial steps regarding inclusion of Roma community in society".

In the same year Croatia adopted the National program for Roma, which includes problems and measures for different areas such as social care, employability, health care and education. The final step in this year was joining the Decade of Roma inclusion 2005-2015 through which Croatia stands in line with the social inclusion policy of the European Union. In line with that, in 2005 the Action plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 was adopted, which contains goals, measures, indicators and institutions in various areas, including education. This is the key document in the Roma inclusion area and as part of it a working group was established to follow the process of implementation,.

Furthermore, in 2007 the Joint Memorandum on social inclusion was adopted as a result of the EU negotiation process and was signed between the Croatian government (Ministry of health and social care) and the European Commission DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. The Memorandum concerns, among other things, inclusion of the Roma population. It follows measures previously mentioned in the National program and Action plan, but also complements them.

The Croatian government, as part of The Decade of Roma inclusion program, started to create various documents such as action plans for 2009/2010 and 2011/2012, reports following those action plans, and reports regarding progress in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. There are also reports regarding National program in conjoint documents for 2007, 2008 and 2009. All these documents provide valuable insights into matters regarding the education of the Roma minority, statistics, and detection of problems and possible solutions.

The last national documents regarding inclusion of Roma are the National Roma inclusion strategy 2013 – 2020 (2012) and documents related to it, such as Action plan for the implementation of National Roma inclusion strategy for the 2013-2015 period and the Report on the implementation of the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Roma inclusion strategy for 2013.

The great influence of the European dimension (Council of Europe in this case) is obvious through the verdict of the European Court of Human rights. This verdict deals with the segregation in preschool and primary education. The recognition of segregation in educational system by the European authority forced the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport to act in order to improve the position of Roma minority. This resulted in measures

and activities which should remove the obstacles and provide an equal treatment for pupils regardless of which nationality they are.

In order to harmonize its legal framework and measures, Croatia joined the camping DOSTA,led by the Council of Europe and European Commission. Cooperation was established in several different aspects: during the 2007-2009 period the Office for Human rights established strong cooperation with the European Commission against racism and intolerance (ECRI), which functions under the Council of Europe and the Office for national minorities of the Government and the European training foundation organized a seminar about inclusive education, while Croatia started the development of intercultural dialogue as an integral part of the EU and Council of Europe membership.

The most direct influence of the EU regarding education of the Roma minority is seen through Chapter 23 of the negotiation process, through which Croatia committed itself to include Roma children in the educational system. Finally, Croatia is committed to these goals through the European strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth, the European platform against poverty and social exclusion, and Social economic integration of Roma in the Europe Strategy.

Except for the principles, policies, and cooperation, the European influence is visible in the financial aspect too. Clearly, in order to receive the EU funds it is necessary to satisfy certain criteria regarding promoted beliefs and principles. Thus, the EU is in the position to promote its position and values through calls for funds and to influence the position of the candidate and member states. Croatia was involved in a great number of projects and these are some of the examples which are related to antidiscrimination, inclusion, and education: development of antidiscrimination database through IPA 2009 project, Integration of disadvantaged groups in the regular system of education (IPA project aiming at solving problems related to the verdict of the European Court of Human rights), fourteen EU projects aiming at inclusion in preschool education, education system and extended day program in schools. Also, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport intends to finance further activities in this area through the European social fund.

Through analysis of official national documents it is clear that certain principles and policies have been downloaded from the European level. As mentioned earlier, the beginning of the Roma inclusion policy was induced by the development in other European countries and in the European Union. The European Union can be recognized as a role model and authority in these matters. In national documents which deal with the Roma inclusion, the EU dimension is often stressed. Usually these documents involve: cooperation with the EU; harmonization with the EU framework; harmonization of fundamental strategic documents with the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and Committee of the Regions regarding EU framework for National Roma strategies up

to 2020; linking the main results of the Decade of Roma inclusion in education with EU educational policy etc.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of secondary available data shows the deprived position of Roma in Croatia and Serbia in the social, economic and political sense. Their position is endangered by poverty, unemployment, poor housing and health care position, prejudices and stereotypes. This leads to exclusion of Roma students from the educational system. Concerning institutional grounds, we can see that many steps have been taken in the last 15 years. The changes in institutional and legal frameworks tackling the position of Roma communities in Croatia and Serbia are held under the same international institutional influence of harmonization with the EU framework and other European institutions (Council of Europe and associated institutions), international level (OSCE and UN) and certain initiatives (Decade of Roma inclusion). This international influence consisted of ideological, financial, and organizational support. However, in the two countries many aspects of exclusion and deprivation of Roma citizens remain unchanged when it comes to everyday problems.

Concerning Serbia, even though there are many improvements on legal and policy levels, the comments of experts in the field are not always positive. "In practice, however, progress remains uneven: as promising initiatives are developed, a host of obstacles are identified and not adequately addressed" (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007:485). The conclusion is that many strategies are passed, but stronger coordination between state institutions on national and local levels is missing, which influence the implementation of strategies and laws. Furthermore, usually information is not effectively spread to all relevant institutions and individuals who are concerned. The obstacles are: legal regulations are not well connected with the reality, the lack of financial support, planning and monitoring are not transparent, indicators are missing, existing discrimination, data are still incomplete, the lack of support for Roma families, quality of education for Roma is not on the satisfactory level, drop out and lower grades are more present among Roma students (Praćenje sprovođenja romskih politika na nacionalno milokalnomnivo u u Republici Srbiji, 2013: 18).

In the Constitution, the right to education is defined as a fundamental right, but the state is not able to ensure the exercise of this right to all citizens equally. "The basic problem is the fact that, although policies concerning Roma education are very thorough and have been integrated in general policies, they typically remain on paper. There is an evident gap between declarations and practical implementation of policies. The implementation of educational policies is still taking the form of isolated" (Stojanovic & Baucal, 2007:517).

In conclusion, it is necessary to continue to harmonize the legal framework in Serbia with EU standards.

A similar situation exists in Croatia. Even though the Roma population in Croatia is significantly lower, the problems and *modus operandi* remain similar. It is clear that the process of development of policies regarding inclusion of Roma and education of Roma minority is closely attached to the Croatian process of accession to European Union. Except for the EU, there are also other influences on European level (Council of Europe and associated institutions), international level (OSCE and UN) and certain initiatives (Decade of Roma inclusion). However, Croatian authorities always point out harmonization with the EU and link goals from other sources (Decade or Council of Europe) with EU policies. One example is the verdict of the European Court of Human rights. Regarding that case, Croatian authorities are using the EU funds to deal with the problems which were addressed in that verdict. There are slight improvements regarding the legal framework, strategies and number of pupils in preschool and primary school education, primarilyy as a result of the process of integration into the European Union. However, the problems of discrimination, segregation, and unequal access to preschool and primary education remain.

In spite of significant and valuable changes in the legal and institutional framework, the high level of exclusion of Roma students from the educational system in Croatia and Serbia is still present. Consequently, the Roma minority in two countries is facing difficulties in completing the regular and obligatory educational program. Fewer chances and rights to quality education, prejudices, and dropping out from education by Roma people mean perpetuation of the problem of the education and social position of the Roma.

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AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES

Milica Andevski, PhD, full professor at Faculty of Philosophy University of Novi Sad for constricted scientific area – Pedagogy for Bachelor, Master and PhD degrees. Participating in scientific projects financed by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Development of the Republic of Serbia. Publications: Over 300 scientific papers and 15 monographies.

Nikola Baketa, PhD student at the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Zagreb. Graduated from the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Zagreb with a specialization in Public policy, as well as at the Central European University in 2011 with a specialization in Comparative politics. He is a participant of the international project of the University of Oslo, University of Zagreb and University of Belgrade called "European Integration in higher education and research in the Western Balkans".

Spomenka Budić, PhD, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad, for constricted area – Pedagogy for BA, MA and PhD degrees. Participating in a number of national and international projects. Bibliography and participation in scientific conferences: 7 monographs and over 140 papers in periodical journals and proceedings of national and international significance. Participated with reports in more than 25 conferences.

Lidija Bukvić, is a special education teacher and a master student at the University of Belgrade – Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation. She is the author of more than 30 scientific papers and she participated in more than 10 applied professional projects in the field of promoting positive development and preventing behavioural problems of children and youth.

Ignazia Bartholini, PhD, is a senior researcher of Sociology (tenured professor) at the University of Palermo, Department of "Culture and Society" where she is also an adjunct professor of "Sociology", "Sociology of Deviance" and "Social Policies". Her main scientific interests are the sociology of violence, a field that she helped start in Italy and where she provided a major scientific contributions. In this field, she analyzed the following topics in detail: gender violence (indicators, performance and triadic relationship); memory and social construction of gender identities in Eastern Europe; bullying and deviant behaviour in adolescence.

Janez Drobnič, PhD, assistant professor at the University of Primorska, Faculty of Education, is an established expert in the field of inclusive education, vocational and career guidance, and vocational rehabilitation of persons with special needs. In his career path he has linked theoretical knowledge with practice while counselling, or has

developed operational models, forms and approaches to these persons in education and employment.

Rajka Djević, PhD, has been a research assistant at the Institute for Educational Research since 2005. She studies inclusive education through various projects at the Institute. She is especially focused on examining various participants' in the education process attitudes towards inclusive education, as well as examining social relationships of students with developmental disabilities. She has published several scientific papers and participated at numerous conferences in our country and abroad.

Olivera Gajić, PhD, full professor at Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad for constricted scientific area – Pedagogy at Bachelor, Master and PhD degree. Engaged as an expert on a few projects of national and international significance. Bibliography and participation in scientific conferences: 10 monographs and over 100 papers in periodical journals. Participated with reports and papers in more than 30 national and international conferences.

Dragana Gundogan received MA degree in Sociology and Social Anthropology at Central European University Budapest, and she is currently a PhD student of sociology at University of Belgrade. She is currently working as a research trainee at the Institute for Educational Research in Belgrade and as a PhD student she is engaged in teaching at Faculty of Philosophy. Main research fields: sociology of education, economic sociology, and political sociology.

Nikoleta Gutvajn, PhD, is a pedagogist, research associate and director of the Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Serbia. She studies the identity of unsuccessful students and application of the psychology of personal constructs for improving quality and access to education. Her research approach is based on the contemporary paradigm of qualitative research in education. She has published over 40 scientific papers and participated in numerous international conferences both in our country and abroad. She participated in the realization of several national and international projects in the field of education, as a team manager or a team member.

Tijana Jokić is a researcher in the Centre for Education Policy in Belgrade, Serbia and a PhD student at the Faculty of Philosophy, University in Belgrade, Serbia where she assists in teaching. She has published and participated in a number of national and international projects in the field of inclusive and intercultural education.

Vitomir Jovanović, PhD, is a researcher in the Centre for Education Policy in Belgrade. He obtained his PhD in Educational Psychology, analyzing factors of school progress in PISA tests. He has worked as an assistant in the Department of Psychology, University of Belgrade. He has participated in various educational projects regarding inclusive education, higher education and primary education. He published several research papers and publications and participated in huge number of international conferences.

Olja Jovanović is a research assistant and PhD student at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, where she also assists in teaching. As a researcher she has participated in numerous research projects in the field of educational and social psychology. Her primary research interest lies in examining social barriers to inclusion of marginalized groups, particularly in an educational context.

Vanja Kiswarday, PhD in special needs education, assistant professor of special needs and inclusive education in the Primorska University, Faculty of Education. Her main fields of interest are related to empowering student teachers and teachers to promote inclusive education and fostering resilience and positive educational approaches in inclusive settings.

Isidora Korać, PhD, is a pedagogist, a professor at Preschool Teacher Training and Business Informatics College of Applied Studies, Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia, and an external expert associate of the Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation and the Institute for the Improvement of Education. She is a coordinator and member of task forces of numerous international projects in the field of education. Her interests include the field of school and preschool teachers' professional development, teachers' competences, and aesthetic education.

Tinde Kovač-Cerović, PhD, is assistant professor of Educational Psychology and Education Policy at Belgrade University. She has conducted numerous applied education research studies, and one of her sustained research interest is integration of vulnerable groups into mainstream society. She served as State Secretary (2008-2012) and Assistant Minister (2001-2004) for education in Serbia, where she was leading the reforms in pre-university education, especially focusing on inclusive education and Roma integration. She has been involved in the establishment and first years of operation of the Roma Education Fund.

Biljana Lungulov, PhD, works at the Department of Pedagogy, at the Faculty of Philosophy, University in Novi Sad. Her fields of interest are higher education, quality of education, competencies and learning outcomes, and development of the curriculum. She also works as a researcher on projects of both international and national importance. She has participated in many scientific conferences, published one book and a number of papers in journals and proceedings of papers. She is a member of the Higher Education Reform Expert Team (HERE Team) named by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological development of the Republic of Serbia.

Vedrana Marković, PhD, has worked at the Music Academy in Cetinje as Assistant Professor since 2009. Her special area of interest is the music education of children with visual impairment. She has published an exercise book for solfeggio classes and around twenty studies. She is a member of committees for the syllabi of Music Culture in primary school and Solfeggio in primary music school.

Milica Marušić, PhD, psychologist and doctor of andragogy, is research associate at the Institute for Educational Research in Belgrade. She obtained her PhD by conducting a comparative research of teachers' education and professional development in Serbia and Greece, as a holder of the scholarship granted by Greek Ministry of Education. She has published 17 papers (two of them referred on the SSCI list), participated in more than 10 conferences and held 5 lectures at different faculties of the University of Belgrade. Her main professional interests are: teacher education, teachers' career cycle and values – structure and hierarchy.

Lidija Miškeljin, PhD of pedagogical sciences, docent for the scientific field of Preschool Pedagogy. Assistent professor in the field of pre-school pedagogy in the undergraduate and postgraduate studies of pedagogy at the Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy of the Faculty of Philosophy University in Belgrade. Main fields of interest are the theory and practice of kindergarten and early childhood education, childhoosd and studies of childhood, action research, and narrative-discursive analysis.

Tatjana Novović, PhD, professor, works at the Faculty of Philosophy in Nikšić, departments of Pedagogy and Preschool Education. She teaches a pedagogical group of courses in these departments. She is Director of Master Studies for Inclusive Education at the Faculty of Philosophy. She was a coordinator of the Tempus Project at the University of Montenegro as well as the project "Monitoring of Preschool Education Reforms in Montenegro". She is the author of numerous articles in national and international journals.

Dragica Pavlović-Babić, PhD, is a senior researcher at the Institute of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade. She teaches several courses in the Department of Psychology and Faculty of Mathematics in Belgrade. Her area of expertise is quality and equity of education and assessment of academic achievements. She has been coordinating a numerous research projects at national and international level. Since 2001 she has been National Project Manager for the OECD/PISA study. She is the president of the Educational Research Association of Serbia.

Branislava Popović-Ćitić, PhD, is a special pedagogist and an associate professor at the University of Belgrade – Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation. She has published more than 150 scientific papers and participated in over 20 research and applied professional projects in the field of promoting positive development and preventing behavioural problems of children and youth.

Tina Štemberger, PhD, is an assistant professor of education research methodology at the Faculty of Education, University of Primorska. Her main research areas are web-based research, combining and integrating of quantitative and qualitative research, creativity in preschool education, inclusive education, school leadership, and teacher professional development.

Milja Vujačić, PhD, is a senior research associate and has worked at the Institute for Educational Research since 2005. She is studying inclusive education, particularly examining the possibilities and limitations of the realization of inclusive education in mainstream schools in Serbia. Within this subject, she pays special attention to the work of teachers, their attitudes and implicit pedagogies. She has published over 30 scientific papers and participated at numerous conferences both in our country and abroad. She also participated in the realization of several national and international projects in the field of education, as a team manager or team member.

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Nikoleta Gutvajn

Milja Vujačić

Nowadays inclusive education is seen as a priority field in development of the system of education for children with disabilities. The authors use relevant research materials and apply modern methodology. Each article shows long-term research interest of its author, reflecting their scientific interests and priorities. The edited book can be recommended not only to researches and educators, but also to students, undergraduates, graduate students, who only begin their path in science and in need of expanding research horizons.

Professor Nikolay M. Borytko (from review)

This book as a whole provides information on several countries in the wider Balkan area, for which there is limited relevant information available and communicates both commonalities and diversity. The mission of inclusive education is propelled throughout the entire book and many of the challenges discussed, are of interest of wider readership. It is certainly a useful book for anyone who is interested in inclusive education.

Professor Susana Padeliadu (from review)

The chapters follow the framework of the scientific papers with clear objectives, adequately described methodology of the studies, consist of clear descriptions of results with discussion and conclusions and also include information how results may affect the practice. Reader of the book will also find the review of relevant literature in the field of inclusive education.

Professor Marija Kavkler (from review)

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