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STATEMENT ON THE PROBLEM OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN ROMANIA

Rroma Center “Amare Rromentza” expresses its concern regarding the problem of the educational system in Romania.

Rroma Center “Amare Rromentza” is an NGO which has developed many programs in the educational field. In the implementation of these projects and programs we face many problems, most of them being the consequences of the educational policies of the Ministry of Education.

In Romania, the educational system is a mono-cultural one. School does not include cultural specificities of different communities to which students belong; does not ensure the opportunity for the minorities to find themselves the curriculum, it theoretically promotes diversity and multiculturalism, but unevenly and unequal and not in practice. History and culture of the Rroma community are missing from school curricula for compulsory courses, as well as references to the role of Rroma in Romanian society.

This monoculture education leads to the situation that minority students do not meet their cultural needs as minority. The school is perceived, in many Rroma communities, as a tool of ethnic assimilation. Furthermore, Roma children feel the school rather unfamiliar and as a potentially hostile environment.

A child with a negative perception towards his/her ethnic identity will for sure encounter huge problems of social integration, because a low self-esteem and the negative labels referring to his/her culture of origin lead to frustrations and self-exclusion.

The initial training of teachers does not include elements of intercultural and acceptance of cultural diversity and continuous training is often insufficient to correct this deficiency. Even when teachers are well-intentioned, the lack of training in the field makes intercultural and diversity issues addressed as improvised, inaccurate and inefficient.

Also the ethnic segregation continues to exist in schools and classes, resulting in unequal participation of Rroma children to education and reduced access to quality education. Although the Ministry of Education issued an order prohibiting segregation in

education, it continues to survive because of a bad tradition, prejudice and inertia. Different practices are used frequently in the Romanian system of education to justify the segregation of Roma children for example by creation of special classes for children who attend optional Rromani language, fact which is absolutely false, because taking Rromani language as a school discipline has nothing to do with segregating these children.

All these elements contribute to a low school participation, a high absenteeism and drop out.

Although the government, together with the National Agency of Roma, worked to the Strategy of Romanian Government for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens belonging to the Roma Minority for the period 2011-2020, in the education field there were not included the ideas mentioned above. In spite of the fact that the public consultation period was extremely short, we addressed a consistent recommendations' paper to the Agency, but our recommendations were not taken into account.

In our opinion, all the actors on education (NGOs, public institutions, Ministry of Education) should share and implement a common view about intercultural education and diversity in school, in order to improve students' access to **quality education**.