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Provisional Institution of Self-Government
Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

DEPARTMENT OF DEMOCRATIZATION

Regional Roundtable on Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) Education in Kosovo

29 – 30 July 2003
OMIK HQ, Prishtinë/Priština

Executive Summary

The regional roundtable discussion on Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) education, held at the OMiK HQ, Prishtinë/Priština, from 29 to 30 July 2003, was jointly organised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and the Department of Democratization of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK).

Around 60 participants, including representatives of the Ministry, the Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG), local experts and activists, members of the Central Assembly of Kosovo, international experts from South Eastern European countries and NGOs active in the educational sector participated in the roundtable discussion.

Taking into account the various challenges involved in RAE education and the urgency to address them publicly, the roundtable was organised with the primary objective to discuss three main issues related to RAE education:

1. *Low enrolment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in all education sectors and high drop-out rate;*
2. *Teacher training for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian;*
3. *Re-integration of Roma language as a school subject.*

The presence of those directly involved in the educational process, at the receiving end as well as decision-making level, provided a unique forum for a high level discussion and a balanced exchange of views.

The meeting deliberated practical recommendations which will serve as a starting point for the Ministry to develop an educational strategy on RAE education that shall lead to the elaboration of an overall policy for the education of RAE communities.

1. Challenges of RAE Education.....	3
1.1 Enrolment figures	3
1.2 Priority areas.....	4
2. Recommendations	4
2.1 Recommendations to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST).....	4
2.1.1 Low enrolment of RAE children at all levels of education and high drop-out rate.....	5
2.1.2 Training for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian teachers	6
2.1.3 Roma language	6
2.2 Recommendations to OMIK.....	6
2.3 Recommendations to the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.....	7
2.4 Recommendations to the Kosovo based NGOs.....	7
3. Annex A	8
4. Annex B	11

1. Challenges of RAE Education

A society can only develop if all members of its communities have equal access to education and resources. RAE communities in Kosovo¹ cannot keep pace with the members of other communities, due to a number of reasons. One of them is that they have lagged behind in imparting education to their children both because RAE parents lack awareness of the importance of education as well as because of the preferential treatment of members of other communities compared to that of RAE communities. This has been a long-standing issue not only in Kosovo but also throughout Eastern European countries. However, the events and developments since 1999 have compounded the difficulties and worsened the disadvantaged position of the RAE communities in Kosovo.

According to estimates, the RAE population in Kosovo, after the 1999 conflict, dropped to 45,000 from an unofficial figure of over 100,000. The school population dropped accordingly. Four years after the conflict, the living conditions and security situation for communities remain far from satisfactory. Despite gradual security improvements, RAE parents are still reluctant to send their children to schools.

RAE communities' education is also linked to their weak socio-economic status. Due to their economic situation, RAE parents often cannot afford sending their children to school. The children attending schools do not perform well often due to language problems or because of discriminatory treatment. As a result, RAE communities have a high dropout rate from school.

1.1 Enrolment figures

According to data collected by the World Bank in April 2002², RAE enrolment in regular schools is 2,963 (Roma: 1,332, Ashkali: 1,192, Egyptians: 439). The enrolment figures are 6.5% of the total RAE population, currently estimated at 45,000. In comparison, the enrolment of Kosovo Albanian students is 22% of the total Kosovo Albanian population; the percentage of Kosovo Serb students, in relation to their total population, is approximately 24%. These figures reflect the very low enrolment rate of children from RAE communities.

In the wake of high drop-outs, a very limited number of RAE children manage to reach the level of secondary schools (presently only 168 students) or university (10 students each in the higher pedagogical and university level; there is only one post-graduate student enrolled at present). The acute shortage of qualified RAE teachers - most of them are unemployed - contributes to lowering the quality of education for RAE children. Non-RAE teachers usually lack awareness of the specific needs of RAE pupils. Old customs and traditions, like early marriages, also contribute to the low school enrolment, in particular of girls. Members of RAE communities have raised their concerns repeatedly to the education authorities and international community. Today, there are approximately 1,600 RAE children who miss schooling (see below) and are looking forward to be re-integrated within the educational system. With improvements in the security situation, members of RAE communities are increasingly returning to Kosovo. According to a report from the Office of Returns and Communities (ORC), 46% of the total number of returnees in 2002, were RAE community members.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have started co-operating with local schools in this important area immediately after the conflict. This is how the concept of catch-up class programme (an accelerated learning programme to help children who missed school, to integrate into regular classes) was introduced for RAE communities. In summer 2002, UNMIK launched the first catch-up programme. It was entirely developed and managed by MEST staff and co-financed by the international NGO "Save the Children". 257 RAE children attended this programme in Pejë/Peć, Gjakovë/Đakovica and Shtime/Štimlje. 248

¹ It is acknowledged that the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities have different backgrounds and consequently do face different problems in regard to education, especially when it comes to education in their mother tongue. Still, as many obstacles of these communities are similar or the same, i.e. low enrolment of pupils, access to education and trained teachers, a general approach may be valid. The roundtable was organized for all these three communities and for practical reasons, the abbreviation "RAE" will be used further on.

² Source: World Bank/EMIS – Education Management Information System.

passed the assessment test and most are now ready to be integrated into regular schools in 2003/2004 academic year.

According to current data collected by the Communities and Gender Division of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, approximately 1,600 RAE children have been identified for the catch-up class programme. Approximately 300,000 Euro is required to ensure the implementation of the programme, fund for which should be provided by MEST. If programme implementation and the necessary conditions for integration are met, this may possibly increase enrolment of RAE children to regular schools by up to 40% within two years.

1.2 Priority areas

The roundtable identified a number of priority areas which key-players should focus on.

- Promoting the linguistic and cultural identity of RAE communities within the Kosovo education system;
- Ensuring the right to education of all RAE children as guaranteed under the Law on Primary and Secondary Education;
- Developing an education system that addresses the specific socio-economic needs of RAE communities;
- Establishing regulation of catch-up class programme and developing standard procedures for tests, evaluation and certification for catch-up programmes;
- Devising a teacher-training programme for RAE teachers. This programme should be conducted in co-operation with the KEDP (Kosovo Educator Development Project);
- Under Section 3.2 (c) of the Law on Primary and Secondary Education, the Communities right to education in one's language is guaranteed. The introduction of Roma language, history and culture as subjects for Roma pupils – aside from the other subjects taught in the majority language - would help preserve their linguistic and cultural identity and ultimately help the Roma community to better integrate into the Kosovo education system and eventually into Kosovo society.

2. Recommendations

Given these priority areas, the roundtable made a number of recommendations for all relevant actors, including MEST, OMiK, the Kosovo-based NGOs as well as the RAE communities. These recommendations are outlined below.

2.1 Recommendations to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST)

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is the most important agency involved in the resolution of the educational problems faced by the RAE. In addressing the problems of access to education for RAE communities, MEST should recognise the principles enshrined in the international and regional human rights instruments³ on educational rights of children. The current applicable domestic standard is UNMIK Regulation 2002/19 *On the Promulgation of Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Kosovo*, Sections 10.1 (a) and (b) and 17.1 (a) and (b), and 22.1.

In view of the factors that added to the overall disadvantaged situation of RAE communities' members in the educational system, MEST should develop and implement policies that address the entire constellation of problems and causes to improve schooling for RAE communities in general. In order to

³ European Convention on Human Rights, Article 2, First protocol; International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, Articles 2.2 and 5 (e) and (v); Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Article 12.3 and 15; International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 26 (free-standing prohibition against any right protected by law) and 27; European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages, Articles 2 and 8 (Annex 3); UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, Articles 1, and 4 (c) (the latter re: catch up classes); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Articles 2, 13, and 14; The Hague Recommendations regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities and Explanatory Note – The Foundation on Inter-Ethnic Relations, October 1996; Council of Europe Recommendation No R (2000) 4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe – 3 February 2000.

work on a strategy leading to the development of an education policy for RAE pupils, the relevant authorities are encouraged to take into account the recommendations that were made at the roundtable.

These recommendations, listed below, envisage a co-ordinated approach that guarantees equal opportunities for RAE communities in the educational system and recognises their rights to education in their mother tongue. These are the actions OMiK and the MEST would like to agree upon, to be implemented as visible and short-term follow up.

MEST should:

- Provide funds for catch-up class programme for 1,600 RAE students identified in 12 municipalities. Efforts should be enhanced to commence the catch-up class programme in October 2003, simultaneously in 12 municipalities.
- Issue an Administrative Instruction to standardise the catch-up class programme Kosovo-wide.
- Develop a strategy of action for RAE education that includes experts (local and international) in developing an education policy, curriculum and address the relevant aspects linked to education in policy development, i.e. health, social welfare, labour, public services, environment, through more effective networking with other ministries and institutions.
- Establish a working group comprising representatives from OMIK and MEST to assess the feasibility of introducing Roma language as optional subject for Roma students. The working group should draft a project and detailing the timeframe and estimated cost of the project to be presented to potential donors. International and regional institutions' assistance should be sought for technical expertise.
- Create conditions necessary for providing access to education and information for all pupils, including improving access to educational institutions through the provision of transport to RAE students.
- Endeavour to benefit from the best practices of the institutions working in the region on RAE education. Visits should be arranged to the regional countries to learn from their experience.

2.1.1 Low enrolment of RAE children at all levels of education and high drop-out rate

MEST should:

- Develop and implement a Kosovo-wide education awareness-raising programme to enhance understanding of RAE parents about the importance of education and on the relevant provisions set in UNMIK/Reg. 2000/51.
- Organise and implement pre-school curriculum and programmes for RAE children as basic determinant for further enrolment in mainstream education.
- Develop and encourage vocational education/training programmes for RAE youth.
- Develop scholarship schemes for non-majority communities with special attention on providing scholarships for RAE students. This should be implemented in close co-operation with the Kosovo Civil Society Foundation that is managing stipends from the European Agency for Reconstruction for RAE secondary school pupils.
- Urge the municipalities to fulfil their responsibility of arranging a safe and efficient transport, especially for children belonging to non-majority communities, according to Sect. 22.1 of the Law on Primary and Secondary Education.

- Increase engagement and commitment of RAE communities to education of RAE children through the involvement of local NGOs or Roma Assistant Teachers.

2.1.2 Training for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian teachers

MEST should:

- Introduce elements of tolerance, democratic values and human rights aspects in teacher training.
- Organise, together with appropriate institutions and NGOs, a Kosovo-wide teacher assistant scheme for training unemployed but qualified RAE teachers and develop seminars on the special needs and background of RAE pupils for non-RAE teachers working with RAE children.

2.1.3 Roma language

MEST should:

- Introduce Roma language as optional subject for Roma students in Kosovo curriculum.
- Establish a regional level working group for developing education material for Roma language education as well as material on Roma history, music and culture and traditions.
- Implement Roma Assistant Teachers programs to support the education of Roma pupils at school level. The Roma Assistant Teachers should be employed on a full time basis.

2.2 Recommendations to OMiK

OMiK should:

- Monitor and support closely the achievements in regard to strategy and policy making by MEST through determining a focal point in the Mission.
- Work with the MEST to identify potential donors to RAE educational programmes.
- Support international exchange of expertise through study trips, conferences, and establishment of working groups.
- Support the establishment of a working group/network of RAE education experts and activists as professional contributors and co-workers to MEST.
- Raise the awareness of funding agencies for financial needs and contributions to RAE educational projects.

2.3 Recommendations to the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities

Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities should:

- Increase their interest in participating and contributing to improvements in RAE education sector.
- Improve the professional approach of RAE NGOs able to implement educational awareness raising projects on a local level.
- Take over increased responsibility for professional contributions to the MEST by establishing a working group to promote communities' identity and interests.
- Create links among RAE teachers to work on the common good of all communities with regard to education and not to hinder developments through stressing their differences.

2.4 Recommendations to the Kosovo-based NGOs

Kosovo-based NGOs should:

- Create a network of NGOs working in the RAE educational sector to exchange information and to contribute to the implementation of a common strategy under involvement of MEST.
- Advocate for the needs of RAE education improvements at the international level.
- Raise the awareness of funding agencies for financial need and contributions to RAE educational projects.

3. Annex A

Agenda of the Roundtable

Tuesday 29 July 2003

1030 – 1100	Registration of the participants
1100 – 1115	Welcome address <i>(Mr Adam Schmidt, Deputy Director, Department of Democratization)</i>
1115 – 1130	Opening Remarks <i>(Mr. Isuf Zeneli, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, MEST)</i>
1130 – 1140	Minorities right to education <i>(Mr. Abdul Aziz Khan, Principal International Officer, MEST)</i>
1130 – 1200	Current Status of RAE Education in Kosovo – Issues/achievements <i>(Mr. Zafeer Ud Din, International Advisor, Communities & Gender Division, MEST)</i>
1200 – 1330	Lunch at OMIK Restaurant

Topic 1: Low enrolment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in all education sectors and high drop-out rates

1330 – 1345	Obstacles to equality in access to education for members of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo: a human rights perspective <i>(Mr. Gregory Fabian, Senior Legal Advisor/Non-Discrimination Section, Human Rights/Rule of Law Department, OMiK)</i>
1345 – 1415	Discussion
1415 – 1420	Wrap up
1420 - 1435	Educational awareness raising and weak motivation to learn <i>(Ms. Enesa Kadic, Head, Communities and Gender Division, MEST)</i>
1435 – 1505	Discussion
1505 – 1510	Wrap up
1510 – 1530	Break
1530 – 1545	Integration of RAE children into mainstream Kosovo education system <i>(Ms. Jadranka Huljev, Advisor for Education of Minorities, including Roma population, Ministry of Education and Sports, Croatia)</i>
1545 - 1615	Discussion
1615 – 1620	Wrap up
1620 – 1635	Integration and Roma language

(Ms. Suzana Zivkovic, Friends of the children, Kosovo; Ms. Vladislava Milic, Caritas France, Kosovo)

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| 1635 – 1705 | Discussion |
| 1705 – 1710 | Wrap up |
| 1710 – 1725 | Concluding Remarks for 1 st day |

Wednesday, 30 July 2003

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| 1030 – 1045 | Right to Education in the Mother Tongue – Law on Primary and Secondary Education
<i>(Mr. Xhavit Rexhaj, Head, Department of Education, MEST)</i> |
| 1045 – 1115 | Discussion |
| 1115 – 1120 | Wrap up |

Topic 2: Teacher training for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian

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| 1120 – 1130 | Break |
| 1130 – 1145 | Teacher training - need, magnitude and scope
<i>(Ms. Milica Kostadinovic, Kosovo Educators Development Project)</i> |
| 1145 – 1215 | Discussion |
| 1215 – 1220 | Wrap up |
| 1220 – 1235 | Training in multicultural education
<i>(Ms. Jelena Vidmar, Teacher trainer, Educational Research Institute, Developmental Research Centre for Pedagogical Initiatives Step by Step, Slovenia)</i> |
| 1235 – 1305 | Discussion |
| 1305 – 1310 | Wrap up |
| 1310 – 1430 | Lunch at OMiK restaurant |
| 1315 – 1345 | Press Conference
<i>(Mr. Sven Lindholm, Deputy Spokesperson OMiK;
Mr. Gregory Fabian, Senior Legal Advisor on Non-Discrimination;
Ms. Julianne Markard, Program Officer Ethnic Community Support Team;
Mr. Isuf Zeneli, Permanent Secretary, MEST;
Mr. Abdul Aziz Khan, Principal International Officer, MEST)</i> |

Topic 3: Roma Language

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| 1430 – 1445 | Introduction of Roma language, history and culture in Kosovo curriculum
<i>(Mr. Gheorghe Sarau, Advisor for Roma Education, Ministry of Education, Romania)</i> |
| 1445 – 1515 | Discussion |
| 1515 – 1520 | Wrap up |

- 1520 – 1535 Roma language as school subject – the re-integration of Roma language as school subject
(Mr. Kujtim Pacaku, Roma language teacher, Kosovo)
- 1535 – 1605 Discussion
- 1605 – 1610 Wrap up
- 1610 – 1630 Concluding remarks and summary of recommendations.

4. Annex B

List of participants

Name and Surname	Institution/Profession/Location
Osman Osmani	Teacher, Prizren
Kujtim Pacaku	Journalist, Prizren
Sami Cerimi	Teacher, Ferizaj/Uroševac
Shpresa Agushi	Kosovo Civil Society Foundation
Becir Bytqi	Teacher
Abdullah Qafani	Medical doctor
Ramadan Demiri	Teacher, Gjilan/Gnjilane
Florim Bajrami	OMiK Human Rights Assistant, Gjilan/Gnjilane
Islam Elshani	Local Community Office, case worker
Ibrahim Elshani	Professor, Prizren
Emsale Merxhollari	Centari Romane Djuvlenga, Prizren
Shemsije Xhaferi	Women help Women, Rahovec/Orahovac
Agim Hyseni	Shpresa demokratike, Podujevë/Podujevo
Daut Qylanxhi	Durmisi Aslano, Prizren
Ramic Arif	Teacher, Cagllavicë/Caglavica
Bashkim Ibishi	Office Return and Communities
Astrid Fetahu	Mother Theresa Society
Halil Qerimi	Community Activist
Mefail Mustafa	American Refugee Committee
Bajram Maroli	Community Advocate
Bajrush Berisha	Teacher
Mirlinda Vraniqi	Local Community Office, Assistant
Zylfi Mergja	PREBK
Faik Marolli	PDASHK
Xhevdet Neziraj	IRDK
Nafije Gas	Representative "other communities"
Hajredin Kuqi	Committee for Education, Science and Technology / chairperson
Nimon Alimusaj	Committee for Education, Science and Technology / 1 st vice chairperson
Smilka Milisavljevic	Committee for Education, Science and Technology / 2 nd vice chairperson
Isuf Zeneli	Permanent Secretary
Abdul Aziz Khan	Principal International Officer
Johann Schrumpf	Intl. Advisor, Department of Education
Zafeer Ud Din	Intl. Advisor, Communities and Gender Division
Marcella Osinde	Desk Advisor, Communities and Gender Division
Enesa Kadic	Head, Communities and Gender Division
Gjyzel Shaljani	Admin. Assistant, Communities and Gender Division
Esma Basholi	Admin. Assistant, Communities and Gender Division
Xhavit Rexhaj	Head, Department of Education
Ramush Lekaj	Head, Curriculum Division
Remzi Salihu	Chief of Section, Teacher Training Section
Ragip Zekolli	Head, General Education
Valerie Nizigama	Desk Adviser, Division of Education
Fumiko Hakoyama	UNICEF
Dukagjin Popovci	Kosovo Educational Centre
Nicolae Gheorghe	ODIHR, Contact Point on Roma and Sinti Issues
Petrit Sopjani/ Katherine Mahoney	Save the Children
Arbnor Pula	Forum for Democratic Initiative
Idriz Kutllovci	School director, Pandeli Sotiri, Obilic/q

Rame Kryeziu	Kosovo Police Service, Community Police
Bedri Xhafa	AGEF
Cardinal Uwishaka	OXFAM
Omer Dincsoy	Office of Political Affairs, O/SRSG
Avni Sahiti	Education Project (EPIP), World Bank