

# Roma in Public Education

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Giorgos Mavrommatis

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## Executive summary

In Greece, there is no official or commonly-accepted definition or particular criteria by which to define someone as Rom. It is estimated that people of Roma origin in Greece are between 150,000 and 300,000. Greek state accepts that nowadays Greek Roma number about 80,000 persons, of whom some 4,000 families or about 25,000 persons are travellers/ nomads.

Until 1955, the Roma in Greece were stateless. From then on they were all gradually granted Greek citizenship up until 1978, but still many (and the older ones especially) did not register.

Most Roma in Greece are Christian Orthodox and most have Romani as their mother tongue, while, to a greater or lesser extent all speak Greek.

The attitude of the Greek population towards the Roma is mostly negative. Roma are usually employed as unskilled and unregistered workers in agriculture and trade, and experience insecurity and discrimination despite the fact that they are Greek nationals.

In Greece there is an unknown number of Balkan – mainly Albanian – Roma who migrated at the beginning of 1990s. Nowadays most of them have been adapted to the Greek society and economy; they prefer to show off their Albanian/ migrant identity, receiving for their children all that the Greek state offers migrant children.

Besides, there is a population of around 20,000 Muslim Roma with Greek citizenship mostly inhabit Thrace, in north-east Greece, having mostly Turkish as their mother tongue, while adults speak Greek, with varying degrees of fluency. Their children attend the semi-private semi-public minority schools, where half of the lessons of the curriculum are taught in Greek and half in Turkish.

Official data concerning Roma pupils' enrolment and attendance till 1997 are partial or not reliable. According to estimations, mid '90s approximately 60-80 per cent of the Roma (18-50 years old) were illiterate since they had never attended school.

Poor school attendance was connected mainly with ignorance of the Greek language, delayed enrolments and lots of absences due to frequent movement to different places in search of work, racist behaviour on the behalf of classmates (and especially on behalf of the classmates' parents) and of teachers and also low expectations. Almost all Roma children did not receive any pre-school / nursery education, while a significant number of Roma children could not enrol at all due to the lack of necessary documentation and proof of vaccination.

The mid-1990s constituted a turning-point in the education of Roma children in Greece, since at that time (1996) the Greek government – Ministry of Education – proceeded to a major project named "Ekdedefsi Tsiganopedon" (Education of Gypsy children) of four years' duration (1997 – 2001) and a budget of about 3,228,000 euros, 75 per cent financed by the European structural fund and 25 per cent by Greek national funds.

The main target of the project was to ensure the enrolment and attendance of all Roma children of school age. Aiming at the improvement of Roma childrens' fluency in Greek, the project proceeded by a) pointing out and studying all the linguistic, educational, cultural and economic factors determining the social integration of Roma children, b) producing appropriate teaching materials and methods and c) teacher-training.

The project administrators have declared that due to the implementation of the project, over a four-year period (1997 – 2001) the drop-out rate of the Roma pupils in primary school decreased from 75 per cent to 24 per cent, while there was a boost in the flow of primary school Roma children graduating to junior high school.

After the formal completion of the 'Education of Roma Children' project in 31.12.1999 a new project named 'Éntaxi tsignopédon sto scholio' (Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools) started in 21.11.2002, planned to continue till 2006. It has a budget of

about 5.8 million euros and it could be characterised as a continuation of the 'Education of Roma Children' project, since perceptions of the situation and of most of the staff remain the same.

The project accepts that neither Roma have some special needs, nor should some special rights be awarded to them. Its aim is to integrate Roma children into the Greek society and economy, mainly by Roma children attending Greek public schools, learning the Greek language and obtaining professional skills.

According to the project's administration the problem Roma children face in school has to do mainly a) with the (structural) reservation the Greek school has towards "aliens" – here the Roma, b) with the mentality and (pedagogical) practices of the educators and c) with society which does not "recognise" Roma.

In September 2004 more than 90 per cent of Roma children of school age were attending primary schools in Greece, with relevant high degree of drop-outs and school performance far below the national average

The education of Roma children could be characterised assimilative; there is no usage of Romani language. Non Roma pupils learn nothing about Roma and their culture.

The education of Roma faces many administrative/ structural problems since there are differences in perception and priorities among the various levels of bureaucracy, the project administrators, local authorities and the teachers.

In the last ten years (1995 – 2004) a great effort has been made by the Greek state, resulting in a significant improvement in the position of Roma in Greece and, more specifically, in the education of Roma children.

However, some of the findings of quantitative data analysis are disputable, and there is a lack of qualitative analysis. Further independent research is needed on completion of the project (2006) in order to ascertain the results of the educational policy Greece has implemented regarding the education of the Roma population.

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## Roma in Greece

In Greece, there is no official or commonly-accepted definition or particular criteria by which to define someone as Roma. The terms ‘Roma’, ‘Romides’, ‘Romiogifti’, ‘Gifti’, ‘Tsigani’, ‘Katsiveloï’ etc.<sup>1</sup> are used to describe members of social groups who share certain common ethnic, linguistic and cultural characteristics that may differ according to their ‘tribe’ or clan.

It is virtually impossible to obtain reliable demographic data on the Roma population, which is spread all over Greece, but has settled for the main part in fifty-six major and ten or more minor settlements. No relevant ethnic or linguistic category for Roma is recorded in Censuses; many people of Roma origin do not declare their ethnicity and some are mobile and cannot be recorded easily. The last Greek Census that contained linguistic data, in 1951, recorded 7,500 individuals as speakers of Romani. However, several studies<sup>2</sup> have indicated that the number of Roma has always been far higher than that. Research on selected samples in certain municipalities indicates that their numbers are between 150,000<sup>3</sup> and 300,000<sup>4</sup>. At the beginning of the 2000s, the Greek government and the network of municipalities which have Roma settlements (established in 1995) calculated the number of Greek Roma as consisting of up to 80,000 persons, of whom some 4,000 families or about 25,000 persons are travellers/ nomads<sup>5</sup>.

Until 1955, the Roma in Greece were stateless. From then on they were all gradually granted Greek citizenship up until 1978, but still many (and the older ones especially) did not register, which means that they do not have an identity card and therefore endure all the problems that this entails e.g. problems with access to public services, inability to receive social benefits etc.<sup>6</sup>

Most Roma in Greece are Christian Orthodox<sup>7</sup> and most have Romani as their mother tongue, but there are also many people considered Roma / Gypsies who have Greek as their mother tongue. However, to a greater or lesser extent all Roma speak Greek (using a characteristic accent that is often ridiculed by other Greeks).

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<sup>1</sup> Additionally the term ‘Turkogifti’ is used to define Muslim Turkish-speaking (with varying degrees of fluency) Roma/ Gypsies, and the term ‘Vulagarogifti’ is used to define Slav-speaking Roma/ Gypsies, while the term ‘Roundari’ is used (mainly as self-definition) to define Romanian-speaking travellers who, along general lines, have the same status as Roma. Apart from that, in one case (in central Macedonia, close to the town of Veria) the term ‘Manusaria’ is used by settled Greek-speaking people of Roma origin in order to define the semi-settled Romani speakers.

<sup>2</sup> Vaxevanoglou, A. (2001), *Greek Gypsies: Marginalised and family men*, Athens: Alexandria, p. 17

<sup>3</sup> Komis, K. (1998): *Gypsies: History, Demography, Culture*, Athens: Ellinika Grammata.

<sup>4</sup> Eliniki Eteria Topikis Anaptixis Aftodiikisis (ETAA), (2001), *Integrated Action Plan for the Greek Roma* (in Greek), Athens: EETAA, p.45. The problem of recording the Roma population accurately presents unique difficulties; the main reason, leaving aside the fact that a number continue to lead a nomadic life – is that most of the settled people of Roma origin refuse to be characterised/ recorded as such due to the stigma attached. In interviews with Roma representatives we were told of several cases of educated and settled Roma people who keep their origin secret for fear of losing their jobs or the respect of their colleagues and non-Roma friends.

<sup>5</sup> Stamos, F, 2002, “Models and practices of social integration and social exclusion”, in *Combatting discrimination, racism and xenophobia* (in Greek), Round table, Athens 2-3/12/2002, Round Table recordings, available at [www.antigone.gr/Proceedings%202002.html](http://www.antigone.gr/Proceedings%202002.html), (20/09/2004). There are certain difficulties in defining the nomadic Roma, as many tend to transform camp-sites to semi-permanent or permanent settlements.

<sup>6</sup> ROM Network, (2000) *Panhellenic Census Study investigating the social, housing conditions and needs of Greek Roma Citizens* (in Greek), unpublished, available on request from the ROM Network <http://www.romanet.gr> (04.11.2001).

<sup>7</sup> Greek Roma consider their (Christian – Orthodox) religious affiliation an important part of their identity and also a means of social integration, since most Greeks are Christian Orthodox and the Christian Orthodox religion seems to be a very important component of the Greek national identity.

All studies agree that most Greek Roma suffer from social exclusion<sup>8</sup>. However, some studies<sup>9</sup> have pointed out that there are significant differences between Roma groups as far as social stratification, life opportunities and social expectations are concerned. In fact, some theorists<sup>10</sup> go as far as to refuse to define the definition of a 'Roma community' with a unified set of social characteristics.

The attitude of the Greek population towards the Roma is mostly negative. Roma are usually employed as unskilled and unregistered workers in agriculture and trade, and experience insecurity and discrimination despite the fact that they are Greek nationals<sup>11</sup>. Only in long-established Roma communities in big cities have some young Roma received some vocational training and work as skilled workmen (electricians, plumbers, engineers etc.). In the private sector, the uneducated and low-skilled Roma have fewer and fewer opportunities to gain employment (mainly due to the mechanisation of labour<sup>12</sup> and competition from cheap migrant workers). In the public sector, the situation is no better. Since the possession of a junior high school graduation certificate (compulsory education) is the precondition for most types of employment (and the legal precondition employment in the public sector, including local authorities), the great majority of adult Roma are not able to apply for a job.

In 2001 the Greek Government proceeded to the ambitious 'Integrated Action Plan' for the Roma, according to which 310 million euros will be spent during the period 2003 – 2009 to improve the social situation of the Greek Roma population<sup>13</sup>.

## Albanian migrant Roma in Greece

At the beginning of the 1990s, a significant number of Balkan Roma, mostly Albanians, migrated to Greece<sup>14</sup>. Their numbers are unknown and not even estimates are available. It seems that all the Albanian Roma who arrived in Greece at the beginning of the 1990s were fluent Albanian speakers and consequently adequately educated, since they had all finished eight years of Albanian elementary school<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Exarchos G. (1998) "The Social Exclusion of Roma", in Kassimati K. (ed) *Social Exclusion: The Greek Experience* (in Greek), Athens Gutenberg. See also Polyzos I., Vlastos Th, Karathanassi E., Terzopoulou M., Tounta F. (1995) *The phenomenon of marginalisation of minorities in the Attica region – the specificity of Roma in the urban space* (in Greek), Athens: National Polytechnic, Department of Urban Planning, General Secretariat for Research and Technology.

<sup>9</sup> Karathanassi E. (2000) *Roma life: The bio- and socio-space of Roma* (in Greek), Athens: Gutenberg,

<sup>10</sup> Georgiou G., Terzopoulou M. (1996) *Gypsies in Greece: History – Culture* (in Greek), Athens: Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs – General Secretariat of Popular Education,

<sup>11</sup> Exarchos, G. (1998), "Social Exclusion of Roma", in Kassimati, K. (ed) *Social Exclusion: The Greek Experience* (in Greek), Athens: Gutenberg.

<sup>12</sup> e.g. in more and more cases machines are used for the collection of cotton and conveyor belts, elevators etc. are used for the carriage of goods.

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Security, "National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2001-2003", available at [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/news/2001/jun/napincl2001el\\_en.pdf](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2001/jun/napincl2001el_en.pdf) (21.06.2002). See also Billa, N., 2002, "Models and practices of social integration and social exclusion", *Combating discrimination, racism and xenophobia, Round table*, Athens 2-3/12/2002, Round Table recordings, available at [www.antigone.gr/Proceedings%202002.html](http://www.antigone.gr/Proceedings%202002.html) (20/09/2004).

<sup>14</sup> Greek National Committee for Human Rights (2001), *I katastasi ton tsiganon stin Ellada (The situation of Gypsies in Greece)*, available at [http://www.nchr.gr/document\\_print.php?category\\_id=61&document\\_id=65](http://www.nchr.gr/document_print.php?category_id=61&document_id=65), (06.09.2004).

<sup>15</sup> The Enver Hoxha's regime followed an assimilation policy which attempted to homogenise Albania's population through banning all religious practices and suppressing all cultural differences. During that period, the Roma in Albania experienced economic and educational integration into society (most of the Roma children attended primary school regularly) as a side-effect of the general policies of the state to introduce full employment and implement obligatory primary education. Centre for Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe - Southeast Europe (CEDIME-SE) (2002), *Roma of Albania*, available at <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/pdf/cedime-se-albania-roma.doc>, (06.09.2004), pp. 6, 13, 30.

When the Albanian Roma first arrived in Greece, they approached the Greek Roma and either settled in or by their settlements, enjoying the safety that these settlements provided since the police never searched Roma settlements for illegal migrants, while, at the same time, by showing off their Roma identity (and hiding their Albanian identity), they escaped the hostility of Greek society against (Albanian) illegal migrants.

In the beginning, according to the 'tribe' to which they belonged, their work skills and their life-style, the Albanian Roma worked as employees of the Greek Roma – usually as construction workers, building the illegal or semi-legal houses of Greek Roma, or as assistants in their trading activities. Progressively, as they became more and more adapted to Greek society and the Greek economy, they worked more and more for non-Roma employers, and finally, were able to get all the necessary documentation and become legalised and they worked to a greater degree for non-Roma employers or they started setting up their own enterprises. In addition, they 'abandoned' their Roma identity, showing off their Albanian identity and they began to settle far from the Roma settlements, close to non-Roma Greek locals. In their new environment they prefer to be defined as Albanian migrants and not as Roma<sup>16</sup>.

Nowadays, the only 'visible' Albanian Roma are those poor families who still live in tents and shanties, usually far from the Greek Roma, earning their living by collecting and reselling recyclable material and second-hand clothes. The children of the Albanian Roma, and any other Balkan Roma migrants, are not 'visible' in the Greek educational system.

In cases where the migrant Roma 'declare' their Roma identity, they usually have the chance to receive the care of the special project regarding Greek Roma children, which aims mainly at facilitating their attendance at school. In cases where the migrant Roma prefer to show off their migrant / national identity, they find themselves with the status of migrants, receiving for their children all that the Greek state offers migrant children<sup>17</sup>.

## The Turkish speaking Muslim Roma

Around 20,000 Muslim Roma<sup>18</sup> with Greek citizenship mostly inhabit Thrace, in north-east Greece. The great majority of them have Turkish as their mother tongue; the remainder, who have Romani as their mother tongue are also fluent in Turkish, while all adults speak Greek, with varying degrees of fluency.

Most of them – especially those with Turkish as their mother tongue – have been settled for more than four generations. Both Greek-speaking Christians and Turkish-speaking Muslims in the area use the name Gypsies (the terms "Katsiveli"/ "Turkogifti" and "Tsingene" respectively) to define the people of this category, despite the fact that most of these people, especially the settled ones, do not accept the term/ definition, mainly in an attempt to avoid the stigma<sup>19</sup>.

Most of the men work as unskilled workers (land workers, carriers etc.) – some are musicians and only a few are skilled workmen – with high rates of unemployment. Some of the women work as daily home helps, though not usually on a regular basis.

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<sup>16</sup> Siotou, A. (2003), *Exceeding the limits: the case of Albanian Gypsies in Aliveri of Nea Ionia* (in Greek), Diploma thesis University of Thessaly, Dept. of History – Archaeology and Social Anthropology.

<sup>17</sup> Free school attendance for all grades, reception classes, additional language lessons etc.

<sup>18</sup> Zeginis E. (1994), *The Muslim Gypsies of Thrace* (in Greek), Thessalonici: IMXA, No. 255. Many members of this latter group have, during the past 20 years, moved to the urban centres of Athens and Thessaloniki in search of employment. Their children attend the normal Greek public school and in some cases have the chance to receive some additional care within the framework of multicultural education projects.

<sup>19</sup> Trubeta, S. (1999) *Die Konstitution von Minderheiten und die Etnisierung sozialer und politischer Konflikte - Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel der im griechischen Trakien ansässigen Moslemischen Minderheit*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang. They prefer to be referred to as "Turks" or "Muslims".

Their children attend the semi-private semi-public minority schools<sup>20</sup>, where half of the lessons of the curriculum are taught in Greek and half in Turkish<sup>21</sup>. There are a large number of drop-outs though. No official data are available on this. In a case study examining the school attendance of 286 pupils of 6 cohorts in the mid-1990s, it was found that the drop-out rate from primary school was around 44 per cent<sup>22</sup>, while at the same time the Greek national average was estimated to be around 2 per cent<sup>23</sup>.

## The Slav speaking Roma

An unknown number of people of Roma origin, all Greek citizens, live in a broad strip of land in the north where Greece borders with F.Y.R.O.M. and Bulgaria. They have Bulgarian / Macedonian as their mother tongue (in decline among younger generations) while all are fluent Greek speakers. In some communities, elements of Romani still survive. People of that category are regarded as Gypsies, though most of them refute this categorisation, while in some cases they flaunt their Macedonian ethnic identity. They are all settled farmers and land workers, whilst there is also a significant number of musicians.

Their children attend the normal public school. No data is available on school attendance and drop-outs. Sporadic observation indicates poorer school attendance and a higher number of drop-outs than the national average.

## The Greek national educational system

### A. Brief overview

Traditionally, education has constituted the primary means of upward social mobility for large sections of Greek society<sup>24</sup>. At the same time, however, public education, which has suffered from a chronic shortage of funds, has also generally been characterised by outdated and formalist curricula, bureaucratic and ineffective management and low-quality infrastructure. This pattern largely continues even today, despite major reforms in the past twenty years at all levels of education.

Educational modernisation and democratisation have been arduous tasks in all liberal societies, but more so in Greece, a country with very limited resources, conflicting ideologies, a history of educational conservatism, linked to its nation-building efforts following the annexation of large territories in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as frequent major political changes and upheavals. The nation-building process was particularly difficult and complex given the continuous integration of various ethno-linguistic populations within its expanding borders<sup>25</sup>. The treatment of cultural, religious and ethnic minorities by the Greek educational system, which remains both inadequate and assimilative, can best be understood in terms of what has traditionally been the primary role of the Greek educational system, which is political socialisation and the formation of a strong national and religious identity, rather than simply in terms of its recently formulated migration policies.

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<sup>20</sup> Extensive presentation of the minority education system in Greece in Mavrommatis, G, Tsitselikis, K, (2003) *Turkish in Greece*, Leeuwarden: Mercator – education, , also available at [www.mercator-education.org](http://www.mercator-education.org), (06.09.2004).

<sup>21</sup> Greek language, history, geography and civic education are taught in Greek while Turkish language, religion, mathematics and physics are taught in Turkish.

<sup>22</sup> It is virtually impossible to find children of this category completing obligatory education (6 years elementary school + 3 years high school).

<sup>23</sup> Mavrommatis, G, 2005, *The children of Kalkandja: poverty, education and social exclusion in a Muslim community in Thrace*, (in Greek), Athens: Metehmio, (In press).

<sup>24</sup> For a detailed analysis of the significance of education for Greek society see Tsoukalas, K. (1992), *Dependence and reproduction: The role of educational mechanisms in Greece 1830 – 1922* (in Greek), Athens: Themelio.

<sup>25</sup> Christopoulos D. (2001). “The end of ethnic homogeneity: traditional and new forms of heterogeneity in Greece” in Marvakis, A., Pavlou M., & Parsanoglou D. (eds) *Migrants in Greece* (in Greek), Athens: Ellinika Grammata.

The Greek educational system remains highly centralised. Central government, through the Ministry of Education and its departments, formulates and adopts educational policy<sup>26</sup>. The Greek school curriculum is national and compulsory. There are standard numbers of hours, subject content and textbooks dictated by the National Ministry of Education for all levels of schooling.

The most characteristic feature of the Greek educational system is the high degree of centralisation necessary for the close control of curriculum, teaching methodology and the teachers themselves. The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs and its Pedagogical Institute are responsible for defining:

**The school curriculum** (analytiko programma) at the primary and secondary levels of education – essentially this is a guide prescribing in great detail what is to be taught.

**Daily school timetable** (orologio programma) at the primary and secondary levels of education –this guide prescribes exactly how many hours each subject is to be taught.

**Textbooks** – all school textbooks are developed by the Pedagogical Institute, ratified and printed by the Ministry of Education and distributed gratis to all students of public schools. Private school students are charged a nominal rate.

**Employment of teachers** - public school teachers are tenured civil servants.

**Local Authorities (Municipalities)** are responsible for school buildings.

Formal education is characterised by the fixed length of study and the award of a formal school-leaving certificate at each level, which is a necessary prerequisite for further education.

The National Curriculum is obligatory for all teachers, schools and students in Primary and Secondary Education. This curriculum prescribes both the general and the specific aims and objectives of each subject, the precise content to be taught from the official textbooks, guidelines as to the teaching methodology used and rules for evaluation procedures. In this sense it does not constitute a framework for the guidance of teachers, but a complete and detailed list of what should be covered by any class/year and at what speed.

Schools are internally non-hierarchically structured with the teaching staff deciding on all issues and the school principals having only a co-ordinating role. However, in practice, the centralised nature of the educational system does not allow the teaching staff any real autonomy in deciding on issues concerning school life.

The infrastructure of most schools in both urban and rural areas has improved significantly in the past few years. However, since neither parents nor pupils can choose which school is to be attended, as this depends upon their place of residence, it is obvious that Roma pupils usually attend schools in the poorest districts where the infrastructure is still inadequate.

## B. The Greek Educational System - Description<sup>27</sup>

### School System (Primary and Secondary)

Pre-school education is optional and available for children from the ages of 2 to 6 in public (state and local authority) or private kindergartens, supervised by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, called '*Vrefonipiakoi Paidikoi Stathmi*'. In some *Vrefonipiakoi Stathmoi* there are also nursery classes (*nipiaka Tmimata*). Apart from that, there are public or

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<sup>26</sup> Ifanti, A.A. (1995), "Policy making, politics and administration in education in Greece", *Educational Management and Administration*, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 271-278.

<sup>27</sup> Data sourced from the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, [http://www.ypepth.gr/en\\_ec\\_page1531.htm](http://www.ypepth.gr/en_ec_page1531.htm), (14.10.04). A detailed description of the Greek Education System is offered in EURYBASE, the EURYDICE database of European Education Systems [http://www.eurydice.org/Eurybase/frameset\\_eurybase.html](http://www.eurydice.org/Eurybase/frameset_eurybase.html), (14.10.2004).

private Nursery Schools (*nipiagogia*) supervised by the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs.

Primary Education and Junior Secondary education (6+3 classes) is compulsory for all children, aged six to fifteen. Public schools operate from 8:10 to 13:30 and a number of primary schools operate with an extended timetable and an enriched curriculum as 'all-day schools' (07:00 – 16:30).

Post-compulsory Secondary Education, according to 1997 educational reforms, consists of two types of school:

a. Unified Upper Secondary General Education Schools – '*Eniaia Lykeia*' with a duration of studies of three years. Following graduation, through competitive national examinations, school-leavers may, depending on the grades they have achieved, enter University or Technological Educational Institutes (all courses are competitive through a *numerus clausus* system).

b. Technical Vocational Educational Schools – TEE with a duration of studies of either two years (A' level) or three years (B' level). Students may transfer from the one type of school to another.

A small number of Nurseries and schools of Primary and Secondary Education are designated as schools for students with Special Needs. There are also secondary schools specialising in Music, Ecclesiastical Studies and Physical Education.

Post-compulsory Secondary Education also includes the Vocational Training Institutes (IEK), which provide a formal, but unclassified level of education. These Institutes are not classified as an educational level, because they accept both Gymnasio (lower secondary school) and Lykeio (upper secondary school) graduates depending on the specialisations which they provide.

## Higher Education System

Higher education is divided into Universities and Technological Education Institutes (TEI). Students are admitted according to their performance at national level competitive examinations which take place in the second and third grades of the '*Eniaio Lykeio*'. In addition, students are admitted to the Hellenic Open University upon reaching 22 years of age, by drawing lots. It is worth stressing that since competition between candidates for the Universities and the Technological Education Institutes is very strong, almost all candidates attend intensive courses on a daily basis in private tuition schools. The cost (per year and child), which is covered by families, surpasses 3,000 euros.

Requirements for entrance to TEI are the same as for universities. Studies in higher education last for eight semesters (which in TEI includes compulsory professional placement and the completion of a graduation project) and lead to a degree. Subjects include courses compulsory for all, as well as mandatory electives and optional elective courses. In most cases – apart from the legal, medical and engineering professions, where an additional professional qualification is mandatory – the degree qualifies holders for immediate employment, while also allowing them to continue their studies at postgraduate level. There are also other Higher Education establishments that do not rank as universities, such as the Higher State Academies for the Merchant Navy.

## Teacher Education

Pre-primary and Primary school teachers receive a university education combined with pedagogical training for eight semesters in the faculties of pre-primary or primary education. In-service training is also available, though not mandatory, at Teacher Training Centres (*Didaskaleia*) and Regional Training Centres (*Periferiaka Epimorfotika Kentra*), and through seminars on a variety of areas of specialisation (culture and arts, environment etc.).

General teachers at secondary level are graduates of faculties whose primary subject matter is taught at secondary level (i.e. mathematics, physics, literature etc.). They receive pedagogical training during a one-semester course on Pedagogy that is not always mandatory. No further teacher training or educational training is required to ensure their employment in general secondary education. However, some categories of teachers like economists,

sociologists, jurists or engineers must have a teaching qualification which is obtainable upon completion of a one-year course at the Pedagogical Training School (PA.TE.S.). Secondary technical or vocational teachers are trained in a Vocational and Technical Teacher-Training Academy (A.S.PE.T.E. - SE.LE.TE). Secondary education teachers also receive limited in-service training at Regional Training Centres and through seminars on a variety of areas of specialisation (culture and arts, environment etc.). Generally the pedagogical training of general secondary and technical education teachers is not considered adequate and the Education Ministry has repeatedly implemented a variety of in-service training courses.

In the context of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Community Support Framework Projects a number of primary and secondary school teachers received limited training in intercultural education.

### Adult education

Adult education, which is beyond the traditional 'evening schools' (*esperina scholeia*) available to working adults lacking in formal education, was gradually introduced during the 1980s, largely as a result of the new labour market situation which developed after Greece's full membership of the European Community in 1981. Funding by the European Social Fund (ESF) led to the growth of a number of learning and training activities, which concerned adult vocational training mostly.

In 1983 the Adult Education Department of the Ministry of Education was upgraded to a State Secretariat under the supervision of the Education Ministry. The General Secretariat for Adult Education (GSAE), headed by a general secretary, is a public institution operating on a national basis which plans, co-ordinates and supports non-formal adult education programmes and projects in the field of general, socio-cultural and job-oriented adult education, dealing with adult literacy and basic education, vocational pre-training and training, the combating of social exclusion and activities related to culture. The target groups are primarily young adults, women and members of disadvantaged groups such as Roma, migrants etc. Most of GSAE's programmes have national funding. The projects supported by the ESF are seventy-five per cent co-financed by European structural funds.

However, it should be stressed that the GSAE does not co-ordinate all aspects of adult education at a national level: Greece still lacks a general comprehensive policy on adult education and thus each public body, local authority or private organisation, such as the Ministries of Education, Agriculture, Justice, Labour, Social Welfare, Health, Communication and Transport, Commerce, National Economy, Environment and Planning, Mercantile Marine as well as Municipalities, Prefectures, Banks, the National Organisation for Tourism etc. develop their own adult education programmes without reference to the work carried out by others.

General adult education is also provided by regional and local authorities. Each Prefecture has a section for adult education primarily funded (until recently) through the ESF. Municipalities also organise adult education programmes, but not in a systematic way due to financial constraints and lack of human resources.

Some NGOs, like the Greek Council for Refugees etc., provide adult education courses at a relatively low price.

Since the start of ESF funding many private Centres for Vocational Training (*Kentra Epaggelmatikis Katartisis* - KEK) have been established throughout the country, running a variety of courses. Their impact cannot be evaluated, though, due to the lack of any evaluation of their work.

The largest public body offering vocational training to adults is the Greek Manpower Employment Organization (*Organismos Apasholisis Ergatikou Dynamikou* - O.A.E.D.). A complete programme of Initial and Continuing Vocational Training Programmes is implemented through its network of fifty-two Vocational Training Units - one in each prefecture of Greece.

## Legislation governing the education of Roma children<sup>28</sup> in Greece<sup>29</sup>

- **The Greek Constitution of 1975/76<sup>30</sup>** (reformed on April 6, 2001) guarantees the personal rights, dignity, respect for person and property and freedom of religious beliefs and worship.  
Article 5, par. 2 states that “All persons living within the Greek territory shall enjoy full protection of their life, honour and liberty irrespective of nationality, race or language and of religious or political beliefs.” However, it should be noted that generally the constitution attributes the same social and political rights and privileges to foreign nationals as to Greeks.  
Article 16, par. 2. states that «Education constitutes a basic mission for the State and shall aim at the moral, intellectual, professional and physical training of Greeks, the development of national and religious consciousness and at their formation as free and responsible citizens». Par.3. states that «The number of years of compulsory education shall be no less than nine». Par. 4. states that «All Greeks are entitled to free education at all levels, at State educational institutions. The State shall provide financial assistance to those who distinguish themselves, as well as to students in need of assistance or special protection, in accordance with their abilities». Par. 7. states that «Professional and any other form of special education shall be provided by the State, through schools of a higher level and for a time period not exceeding three years, as specifically provided by law which also defines the professional rights of the graduates of such schools».
- **Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations** (Appendix A, Article 2), Lausanne January 30, 1923 between the Government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and the Greek Government<sup>31</sup>. According to that, Thracian Muslim Roma (like all Muslims in Thrace) were excluded from the compulsory population exchange.
- **Greece, Act 927 of 1979 (Government Gazette 28-A/1979)** is the only anti-racist criminal law: it states that “whoever intentionally and publicly instigates, either orally or in the press or through written texts or illustrations or by any other means, acts or activities capable of provoking discrimination, hatred or violence against persons or a

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<sup>28</sup> Regarding the legislation governing the education of migrant children – in which Roma migrant children are included - we have to note that until 1996 this was concerned mainly with ethnic Greek immigrants who had studied abroad and had to ratify their qualifications upon their return and a very small number of foreign residents who attended foreign schools in Greece. Following the massive migration of both foreigners and ethnic Greeks from the Commonwealth of Independent States (ex Soviet Union countries) and Albania during the 1990s a number of legislative provisions were introduced to support the integration of ethnic Greek and foreign migrant children into the Greek educational system. The legislation distinguishes clearly between ethnic Greeks and foreigners, providing preferential treatment for the former. There are vague references in the statutes to the possibility of teaching the language, history and culture of foreign migrant students, but they have not as yet been implemented, while the existing policies seem to indicate a clear preference for an assimilative approach in their education. The legislation governing Muslim minority education – and thus the education of Thracian Muslim Gypsies/ Roma children – is founded upon the Treaty of Lausanne, bilateral agreements (such as the 1968 Bilateral Cultural Protocol that contains recommendations for the exchange of school books for the use of Muslim students in Greece and Greek-Orthodox Christian students in Turkey) and a large number of Greek laws. Both countries, at least since 1990, have maintained good diplomatic relations, something with positive consequences for the education of minorities. Extensive presentation in Baltiotis, L & Tsitselikis, K. (2001), *Minority education in Thrace: Law collection – Comments* (in Greek ), Athens – Komotini: Sakoulas.

<sup>29</sup> This is a non-exhaustive collection of the most important legislative provisions. Legislation texts in electronic form are available to subscribers only from the National Printing Office at <http://www.et.gr> (06.09.2004).

<sup>30</sup> Available in English at <http://www.hri.org/docs/syntagma/> (06/09/2004).

<sup>31</sup> English text available at <http://www.hri.org/docs/lausanne/> (09/09/2002).

group of persons, due only to their racial<sup>32</sup> or ethnic origin, is punishable by imprisonment of up to two years or a fine or both.” These penalties also apply to “whoever creates or participates in organisations pursuing organised propaganda or engaging in any other activity of any kind aimed at racial discrimination.” The penalties are one year in prison and/or a fine for “whoever publicly expresses ideas offensive to any person or groups of persons due to their racial or national origin.”

- **Greece, Act 1566 of 1985 (Government Gazette 167-A/1985)** on the structure and functioning of primary and secondary education, according to which education aims to “contribute to the multilateral, harmonious and balanced development of pupils’ mental and psycho-physical capacities, to give them the option, independent of their sex or origin, to develop into complete individuals and to live creatively”.
- **Greece, Circular No F4/50/G1/1028/22.08.1995, Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, Athens** “Registration and attendance of Roma children in nursery and elementary schools”, which gives directions to teachers, headmasters and executives to facilitate the registration of Roma children, aiming to minimise the number of Roma children of school age who don’t attend elementary school.
- **Greece, Act 2413 of 1996 (Government Gazette 124-A/1996)** on Intercultural Education (aim, content, teaching staff, designation and administration of schools) and the establishment of the Institute of the Greek Diaspora Education and Intercultural Studies.
- **Greece, Circular No F4/155/G1/1277/11.09.1996, Athens, Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs**, ‘Special <attendance card> for Roma pupils’, which simplifies the process of school registration for travelling Roma children.
- **Greece, Ministerial Degree No 201/01.07.1998, Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs** “Organisation and operation of primary schools”
- **Greece, Circular No F4/127/G1/694/01.09.1999, Athens, Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs** “Attendance of Roma children” which gives directions and details regarding the attendance of Roma children (registration, pupils’ transportation issues, reception classes, supplementary teaching, staff issues etc.)
- **Greece, Circular F10/20/C1/708/28.09.1999, Athens, Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs**, on the establishment of reception and special support classes in the context of intercultural education.
- **Greece, Circular F12/896/C1/693/06.09.2000, Athens, Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs** on intercultural education and the social integration of migrants, refugees and repatriated ethnic Greeks.
- **Greece, Circular F4/115/C1/791/12.05.2001, Athens, Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs**, on the improvement of the role of education in combating social exclusion.
- **Greece, Ministerial Degree No KYA 2/37645/0020/08.07.2002, Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs**, “Aid for low-income families with children of compulsory school age” which provides 300 euros per child every school year.
- **Greece, Circular No 88038/G1/21.08.2003, Athens, Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs**, “Teachers’ seminars on pupils with difficulties in learning and speaking”.
- **Greece, Circular No 100008/G1/17.09.2003, Athens, Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs**, “Implementation of the ‘Accession of Roma children to school’ project which provides information about the project and seeks the co-operation of the teachers.

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<sup>32</sup> The term “racial discrimination” or “racism” is defined according to Article 1. 1. of the International Convention for the Eradication of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966) that was ratified by Law 494/1970. The term “race” is to be considered as a “social construction” based on personal and social characteristics of individuals including their religion, culture, nationality and ethnic origin.

## Education of Roma children until 1997

### Roma pupils in primary and secondary schools

Official data concerning Roma pupils' enrolment and attendance till 1997 are partial or not reliable. Everything shows that Roma educational attainment was at very low levels. According to a 1997 survey<sup>33</sup>, approximately 60-80 per cent of the Roma (18-50 years old) were illiterate<sup>34</sup> since they had never attended school<sup>35</sup>, while around 20 per cent were functionally illiterate (UNESCO standards).

Poor school attendance was connected mainly with ignorance of the Greek language, delayed enrolments and lots of absences due to frequent movement to different places in search of work, a lot of dropping-out<sup>36</sup>, racist behaviour on the behalf of classmates<sup>37</sup> (and especially on behalf of the classmates' parents) and of teachers<sup>38</sup>, and also low expectations.

Almost all Roma children did not (and still do not) receive any pre-school / nursery education, while a significant number of Roma children could not enrol at all in school education due to the lack of necessary documentation and proof of vaccination.

Most young Roma children spoke only Romani when they first arrived at school (and still do), and were (are) thus largely incapable of communicating either with other children or with teachers. Furthermore, their socialisation and family life patterns were (are) not compatible with the dominant norms and values of the primary school, such as regular presence/ attendance, discipline, obedience to authority and individual achievement.

Allegedly, public school teachers had little, if any, training in dealing with the problems of Roma children and found it difficult to understand or empathise with the Roma culture (and still do).

Many Roma children are said to have found themselves in a hostile environment, as they constituted a cultural minority with different mother tongue, customs and norms. At the same time, many non-Roma parents complained that the co-existence of their children with Roma children would have a negative effect on educational attainment due to the cultural differences and the low educational level of Roma children which slows down the progress of the entire class. In some cases, incidents of racial violence had taken place.

Roma children often seemed to encounter hostility from other children and some teachers, while in some cases, schoolmasters, under pressure from local parents, and, on occasion from teachers and local authorities, (albeit illegally) hindered to enrol Roma children. A 1997 study revealed that incidents of racist behaviour against Roma children by other children, parents and teachers had increased as more Roma children enrolled and started to attend school<sup>39</sup>.

A high drop-out rate among Roma girls was noted, allegedly connected mainly to the position of women in Roma society and to the 'traditional' Roma culture tactic which

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<sup>33</sup> Tsiokos G., Vergidis D., Nikolakopoulos I., (1998) *National study on illiteracy* (in Greek), Athens: National Book Centre – Book Observatory.

<sup>34</sup> And in some cases reached 90 per cent. According to data collected from the Greek *Médecins du Monde*, the percentage of tent-dwelling Roma able to read and write in Athens is around 6 per cent, while, at the same time, in Montpellier, France it is around 60 per cent. "Joint Action of Organisations for the rights of tent-dwelling Roma in Greece", 1999, available at <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/greek/reports/osce-roma-sept-99.html>, (29.09.2004).

<sup>35</sup> Dussas D., (1997), *Rom and racial discrimination*, Athens (in Greek): Gutenberg, estimates that, in 1996 some 30.000 Roma children of school age were outside classrooms, although the number is considered excessive and more than double the real one.

<sup>36</sup> A significant part of it could be attributed to the obligation of Roma children to work in order to contribute to their poor family income.

<sup>37</sup> Pavli, M., - Sideri, A., 1990, *The Roma of Hagia Varvara and Kato Ahagia* (in Greek), Athens. General Secretariat on Popular Education - G.G.L.E.

<sup>38</sup> Vergidis, D., 1998, «New-racism, school assessment and education practices – the case of Roma children», in *Virtual School, The sciences of Education Online*, vol. 1, issue 1, available at <http://www.auth.gr/virtualschool/1.1/TheoryResearch/CongressVergidis.html>, (29.09.2004).

<sup>39</sup> Dussas D., (1997), *Rom and racial discrimination*, Athens: Gutenberg.

expects/ accepts that girls get married in their early teens, before the age of 15. By the age of 17, all Roma children have already got married and had children; they have accepted adult roles and they have no time (and usually money) to invest in education in order to prepare for a better future vocational path.

Several literacy projects for adult Roma, organised at a central level by the Ministry of Education since 1984, have been offered by local authorities all over Greece, with high rates of attendance but unknown outcomes.

Only a few people of Roma origin have received vocational training giving them the ability to work as skilled workmen<sup>40</sup> and even fewer have finished a university school and work as scientists.

Regarding the school attendance of Roma children, we have to note the existence of studies suggesting that many Roma have avoided sending their children to school either because they fear them losing their Roma identity or because they see no value in education.

Researchers<sup>41</sup> have attributed poor attendance and academic performance also, partly, to the Roma perception of the value of education and although in surveys all Roma find that educating their children is desirable, it seems that they do not consider that education has anything to offer to the Roma in terms of improved life opportunities, since even well-qualified Roma will not be able to find suitable employment due to the prejudice of employers. Moreover, some Roma seemed to consider that daily school attendance may even be harmful in that it deprives children of spending time with their family and brainwashes them into accepting different values and norms<sup>42</sup>.

Many Roma parents seemed to expect the education provided by school to be complementary to the education they provide their children with, which they believe, is the main one; the education which teaches them social skills and provides the necessary knowledge and skill for their future life. So, since their needs and expectations regarding formal education were limited, and since children learned from their parents how to calculate and have dealings, seemingly what parents expected from school was simply to teach their children to read and possibly write.

Most importantly the Roma had no ‘tangible proof’ that formal educational qualifications could be translated into improved life opportunities, better employment, improvement in their quality of life or their social status. In a ‘cost – benefit analysis’ practically all Roma seemed to find that education comes at a very high cost and provides few and questionable benefits<sup>43</sup>. Besides, for Roma people there is no relation between school attendance and social and economic success.

Poverty, social exclusion and lack of educational qualifications created a vicious circle. Deprived and socially excluded Roma found it very difficult to attend school, while a

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<sup>40</sup> In the early and mid-1990s there were some vocational training projects which were based on a romantic and rather naive conception which trained young Roma in “traditional Roma arts” such as basket-weaving and copper-smithing, activities in which the market showed not the slightest interest. Dimitriou, M – Georgiou, G, 2002, “Roma in Greece: Social exclusion questions” in Combating discrimination, racism and xenophobia, Round table, Athens 2-3/12/2002, Round Table recordings, available at [www.antigone.gr/Proceedings%202002.html](http://www.antigone.gr/Proceedings%202002.html) (20/09/2004).

<sup>41</sup> Chryssakis M., (1989) “Family investment practices by the poor and non-poor and educational inequalities” (in Greek), *Review of Sociological Research*, Vol. 75, p. 89 – 120.

<sup>42</sup> Vasiliadou, M, Pavli – Kore, M, 1996, *KON JANEL BUT, BUT C'RDEL AMA ÉM KON C'RDEL BUT, BUT JANEL* (in Greek), Athens: Ministry of Education/ General Secretariat on Popular Education.

<sup>43</sup> Kogidou D., Tressou – Mylona E., Tsiakalos G., (1993) *Social exclusion and education – the case of linguistic minorities in western Thessaloniki* (in Greek), Thessaloniki: Poverty-3 project – School of Pedagogic, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Also, Tressou, E, (1998), “Exclusion of special groups from education in conditions of school differentiation and school co-existence” in *Social inequalities and social exclusion* (Conference Recordings), Athens: Sakis Karagiorgas Foundation, pp. 639 – 651.

lack of formal educational qualifications hindered them from improving their social status and life opportunities<sup>44</sup>.

## Education of Roma in Greece after 1997

The mid-1990s constituted a turning-point in the education of Roma children<sup>45</sup> in Greece. In a general international and European political environment/ climate favouring special attention to human rights issues, the Greek government (with the PASOK party in power and Giorgos Papandreou as the Minister of Education) proceeded to an overall examination of the educational problems of minorities and migrants in Greece<sup>46</sup> and after ascertaining the extent and the depth of the problems regarding the education of Roma children, proceeded to a major project<sup>47</sup> named “Ekpedefsi Tsiganopedon” (Education of Gypsy children) of four years’ duration (1997 – 2001) and a budget of about 3,228,000 euros, 75 per cent financed by the European structural fund and 25 per cent by Greek national funds.

There is no evidence indicating that Greece was somehow obliged/ forced by international legal commitments or European legal documents (Decisions, Directives etc.) to follow this route<sup>48</sup>. The specific education policy was, rather, the result of the political philosophy and of the priorities set by the Ministry of Education’s initiative during that period<sup>49</sup> and the Ministry’s ability to negotiate and finally find the necessary financing from European Funds.

The project was designed and implemented, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education<sup>50</sup>, by the department of Philosophy, Pedagogy and Psychology of the School of Philosophy of the University of Ioannina<sup>51</sup> under the direction of Prof. A. Gotovos. The main target of the project was to ensure the enrolment and attendance of all Roma children of school age, or, rather, to ensure access to the Greek public education system for all Roma children.

Having as its main target the improvement of Roma children’s fluency in Greek, the project proceeded by a) pointing out and studying all the linguistic, educational, cultural and economic factors determining the social integration of Roma children, b) producing appropriate teaching materials and methods and c) teacher-training<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> Kogidou D., Tressou – Mylona E., Tsiakalos G., (1993) *Social exclusion and education – the case of linguistic minorities in western Thessaloniki* (in Greek), Thessaloniki: Poverty-3 project – School of Pedagogic, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

<sup>45</sup> As well as for the education of children belonging to other linguistic and cultural minorities such as Turkish-speaking Muslim children, migrant children etc.

<sup>46</sup> Greek Roma, Greek citizens who are members of the Muslim minority of Thrace, Greek citizens repatriating to Greece after a long stay away, in order to work in western European countries, Australia etc., migrants and people of Greek origin coming from ex-Soviet Union countries.

<sup>47</sup> The project regarding the education of Roma children was part of a wider Greek government project aiming to improve the life conditions – housing, health, access to public services etc. of the (tent-dwelling) Greek Gypsies and facilitate their acceptance into society.  
<http://www.westerngreece.gr/downloads/tsigganoi.htm>, (06.09.2004).

<sup>48</sup> And despite the fact that activists support that Greece was obliged to proceed to such a project due to pressure exerted on behalf of the E.U. e.g. Divani. L, (2002) “The rejection of Roma of the Greek society”, *Minorities in Greece* (Conference recordings), Athens: General Education and modern Greek civilisation studies – Moraitis School, pp 407. During the relevant investigation done for the needs of this report, such indication was not found.

<sup>49</sup> PASOK party in government and G. Papandreou as Minister of Education. Characteristic of the climate of the period was the passing of the 2413(124 A/17.06.1996) which introduced the concept of multicultural education into the Greek public education system for the first time and Act 2341(208 A/06.10.1995) which - in article 2, paragraph 1 - provides the Thracian Muslim Minority children (with Turkish as their mother tongue) with the ability to enter Greek universities in a relatively easy way, actually taking a positive discriminatory step for the only recognised minority in Greece.

<sup>50</sup> [http://www.ypepth.gr/el\\_ec\\_page2085.htm](http://www.ypepth.gr/el_ec_page2085.htm), (06.09.2004).

<sup>51</sup> [www.uoi.gr/services/epeack/metro11/ergo0664.htm](http://www.uoi.gr/services/epeack/metro11/ergo0664.htm), (04.09.2004).

<sup>52</sup> [www.uoi.gr/services/epeack/metro11/ergo0664.htm](http://www.uoi.gr/services/epeack/metro11/ergo0664.htm), (04.09.2004).

According to the relevant press releases<sup>53</sup>, during the period 1998 – 2001 the project was implemented in 30 areas all over Greece, where Roma people exist, with the following basic activities:

- Training of about 3,000 teachers who serve in schools which Roma children usually attend
- Production of experimental, special new training / educational material
- Creation of reception and supplementary teaching classes
- Seminars, open discussions, events addressed to (mainly non-Roma) parents aiming to inform and sensitise them on the issue

32 experimental books (six of them teachers' books) were created<sup>54</sup> for the teaching of Greek and other lessons, which took into consideration the cultural capital and the environment of Roma children.

125 preparatory classes were established to facilitate Roma pupils of various ages in getting enrolled and attending classes according to their age.

150 new permanent posts for primary school teachers were created.

3,500 pupils, children of travelling Roma, were facilitated in their school attendance<sup>55</sup>, by the implementation of the 'travelling Roma pupil's card' measure<sup>56</sup>.

The project administrators have declared that due to the implementation of the project, over a four-year period (1997 – 2001) the drop-out rate of the Roma pupils in primary school decreased from 75 per cent to 24 per cent, while there was a boost in the flow of primary school Roma children graduating to junior high school (junior secondary education)<sup>57</sup>

Besides the "Education of Roma children project", from 1997 onwards, some vocational training projects for Roma started (e.g. within the framework of the European Union Project "Integra")<sup>58</sup> in which most of the participants took part mainly due to reimbursement. These projects were conducted without any previous market research, and, finally, with no clear results mainly due to limited follow-up information.

Within the framework of the "Education of Roma Children project", a lot of research work took place, which resulted in the production of special teaching materials, materials for teachers' further training (studies, conferences<sup>59</sup> etc.) and some interesting research findings. The most important are:

- Stasinou, D, (2004) *Roma children identity and school: Behaviours, attitudes, expectations*, (in Greek), Ioannina: 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools'

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<sup>53</sup> Billa, N, 2002, "Models and practices of social integration and social exclusion", *Combating discrimination, racism and xenophobia, Round Table*, Athens 2-3/12/2002, Round Table recordings, available at [www.antigone.gr/Proceedings%202002.html](http://www.antigone.gr/Proceedings%202002.html) (20/09/2004).

<sup>54</sup> According to the Ministry of Education declarations, [http://www.ypepth.gr/el\\_ec\\_page2085.htm](http://www.ypepth.gr/el_ec_page2085.htm), (06.09.2004).

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.westerngreece.gr/downloads/tsiganoi.htm>, (06.09.2004).

<sup>56</sup> Circular No F4/155/G1/1277, Ministry of Education, Athens 11.09.1996, "Special 'attendance card' for Roma pupils", which simplifies the process of school registration for traveller Roma children.

<sup>57</sup> [http://www.ypepth.gr/el\\_ec\\_page2085.htm](http://www.ypepth.gr/el_ec_page2085.htm), (06.09.2004). These specific figures are checked for their accuracy. There is a significant methodological problem; since there was no giving/ using of a definition for Roma, it is not clear how the Roma pupils were counted. Besides, in every relative announcement and presentation - e.g. Gotovos, A, (2002), "Education of Roma children" in *Combating discrimination, racism and xenophobia, Round table*, Athens 2-3/12/2002, Round Table recordings, available at [www.antigone.gr/Proceedings%202002.html](http://www.antigone.gr/Proceedings%202002.html) (20/09/2004) - the project's administration always used to present a percentage and never an absolute number. Apart from that, it never became clear if this percentage was referring to Roma pupils who were enrolled at the beginning of the school year or to those who completed their attendance.

<sup>58</sup> <http://195.251.20.34/pdf/amea/tsigani.pdf>, (06.09.2004).

<sup>59</sup> Conference and seminar recordings are available at [http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/html\\_epi\\_4.php](http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/html_epi_4.php), (18.10.2004).

Project<sup>60</sup>. Research which took place during the 1998 – 99 school year, in 3 elementary schools in Thessaloniki, 4 schools in Kerkyra (Corfu) and 4 schools in Ioannina, on a sample of 25 teachers and 4 local project collaborators/ co-ordinators; with recorded semi-structured interviews and with no novel findings.

- Gotovos, A, (2004) *Students and cultural differences: students' experiences, perceptions and attitudes towards the different* (in Greek), Ioannina: 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' project<sup>61</sup>. Research which took place in Ioannina, on a sample of 273 students of the School of Philosophy and School of Sciences of the University of Ioannina, with the use of questionnaires
- Gotovos, A, (2004) *Pupils and cultural difference: students' experiences, perceptions and attitudes towards the different* (in Greek). Ioannina: 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' Project<sup>62</sup>. Research on the Panhellenic scales, in the school year 1999/2000, on a sample of 2,752 pupils of junior and senior secondary high school (45.6 per cent boys – 54.4 per cent girls) with the use of a questionnaire.
- Merkens, H, (2004) *Ethnicity, Cultural differences and National Curriculum: Possibilities and Restrictions* (in English), Ioannina: 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' Project<sup>63</sup>.
- Merkens, H, (2004), *Integrationprobleme mit Aussiedlern in Deutschland – Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Bildungspolitik* (in German), Ioannina: 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools Project<sup>64</sup>.
- Athanasiou, A, *Production of teaching material and its implementation* (in Greek), Ioannina: "Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools" Project<sup>65</sup>.
- Alexakis, A, Kapsomenos, E, G, Daltas, P, (2004) *The formation of criteria for the study of Greek in Gypsy children*, (in Greek), Ioannina: 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' Project<sup>66</sup>.
- Baslis, G, (2004) *Teachers' attitudes towards bilingual pupils* (in Greek) Ioannina: 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' Project<sup>67</sup>.

Of special interest are the Gotovos, A, (2004), *Educational and cultural difference: educators' representations for Roma*, (in Greek), Ioannina: 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' Project<sup>68</sup>. Research which took place in the year 2000, on a sample of 808 teachers from elementary and high schools, with an average age of 39.2 years (min 23 – max 62), 47.9

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<sup>60</sup> Available at [http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO\\_YLIKO/EDU\\_ROMA\\_Vol\\_II/Vol\\_II\\_Unit\\_05.pdf](http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO_YLIKO/EDU_ROMA_Vol_II/Vol_II_Unit_05.pdf), (14/10/04).

<sup>61</sup> Available at [http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO\\_YLIKO/EDU\\_ROMA\\_Vol\\_II/Vol\\_II\\_Unit\\_03.pdf](http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO_YLIKO/EDU_ROMA_Vol_II/Vol_II_Unit_03.pdf), (18.10.2004).

<sup>62</sup> Available at [http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO\\_YLIKO/EDU\\_ROMA\\_Vol\\_II/Vol\\_II\\_Unit\\_06.pdf](http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO_YLIKO/EDU_ROMA_Vol_II/Vol_II_Unit_06.pdf), (18.10.2004).

<sup>63</sup> Available at [http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO\\_YLIKO/MERKENS/merkens\\_ethnicity.pdf](http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO_YLIKO/MERKENS/merkens_ethnicity.pdf), (18.10.2004).

<sup>64</sup> Available at [http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO\\_YLIKO/MERKENS/merkens\\_Integrationsprobleme.pdf](http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO_YLIKO/MERKENS/merkens_Integrationsprobleme.pdf), (18.10.2004).

<sup>65</sup> Available at [http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/athanasioy\\_paragogi.html](http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/athanasioy_paragogi.html), (18.10.2004).

<sup>66</sup> Available at <http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/daltas/frame.htm>, (18.10.2004).

<sup>67</sup> Available at [http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO\\_YLIKO/baslis/baslis\\_stasi\\_daskalou.pdf](http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO_YLIKO/baslis/baslis_stasi_daskalou.pdf), (18.10.2004).

<sup>68</sup> Available at [http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO\\_YLIKO/EDU\\_ROMA\\_Vol\\_II/Vol\\_II\\_Unit\\_02.pdf](http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO_YLIKO/EDU_ROMA_Vol_II/Vol_II_Unit_02.pdf), (14.10.2004)

per cent men and 52.1 per cent women, using a questionnaire<sup>69</sup> and the Gotovos, A, (2004) *Parents' representations about difference: stereotypes and prejudices about Gypsies in the Greek family* (in Greek), Ioannina: 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' Project<sup>70</sup>. Research which took place in the year 2000, on a sample of 1,608 parents (63.9 per cent mothers and 36.1 per cent fathers) from all over Greece, using a questionnaire<sup>71</sup>.

Combining the findings of the two research projects, in which the questionnaire was the same, we see that:

- 72.6 per cent of Greek teachers and 67.9 per cent of Greek parents (participating in the research) believe that Roma give the impression that they live in the margins of Greek society
- 52.7 per cent of teachers and 54.7 per cent of parents believe that Roma live in the margins because Greek society is racist
- 42.5 per cent of teachers and 51.5 per cent of parents believe that Roma live in the margins because they see/ realise that even if they try to adapt, they will not be accepted
- 71.3 per cent of teachers and 73.3 per cent of parents believe that Roma remain in the margins because their culture emphasises freedom and spurns order and discipline
- 52.5 per cent of teachers and 54.9 per cent of parents believe that Roma remain in the margins because they do not offer suitable skills in order to qualify for a better position in the job market
- 53.5 per cent of teachers and 60.3 per cent of parents believe that Roma remain in the margins because they do not like the way non-Roma (Greek) people live
- 41.3 per cent of teachers and 57.3 per cent of parents believe that Roma remain in the margins because they believe in the value of solidarity and mutual support and want to live one next to the other
- 47.9 per cent of teachers and 54.8 per cent of parents believe that some of the Roma want to be integrated into society, but they are afraid of being regarded by the other Roma as "traitors"
- 80.5 per cent of teachers and 72.6 per cent of parents believe that Roma remain in the margins because there is not any state welfare to assist them in their social integration
- 60.4 per cent of teachers and 61 per cent of parents believe that, basically, all Roma would like to be successful in their lives, like every modern-day person, but they cannot escape the margins because they do not have adequate sources
- 62.9 per cent of teachers and 59.9 per cent of parents believe that if the State provided money in order to build suitable houses for Roma and organise their residential areas, Roma would change their way of life and would not be in the margins any more
- 65 per cent of teachers and 81.8 per cent of parents believe that ultimately the decision to escape the margins depends on the individual person. The one who really wants to become socially integrated, finally finds the way and succeeds
- 55.7 per cent of teachers and 70.6 per cent of parents believe that Roma are used to a certain way of life. Even if the State provided resources in order to improve their living conditions, they would keep on living according to their traditional values

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<sup>69</sup> The geographic distribution of the sample, its percentage in comparison with the total population, the methods of selection (and finally the representativeness of the sample) are not declared.

<sup>70</sup> Available at [http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO\\_YLIKO/EDU\\_ROMA\\_Vol\\_II/Vol\\_II\\_Unit\\_04.pdf](http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO_YLIKO/EDU_ROMA_Vol_II/Vol_II_Unit_04.pdf), (14.10.2004).

<sup>71</sup> The education and socio-economic situation of the participants, their potential relations with Roma in their everyday life, the geographical distribution of the sample and the way the sample was selected are not declared.

- 72.3 per cent of teachers and 90.2 per cent of parents believe that the best thing Roma children can do is to adopt the values and pace of life of the rest of society in order to achieve social recognition, little by little
- 68.5 per cent of teachers and 88.3 per cent of parents believe that the best solution for Roma children is to become oriented, little by little, towards jobs other than those of their fathers
- 95.3 per cent of teachers and 91.5 per cent of parents believe that without educational skills, Roma children cannot compete with non-Roma young people and succeed
- 84.2 per cent of teachers and 84.2 per cent of parents believe that for Roma children, learning of Greek is an absolute priority
- 59.6 per cent of teachers and 56.8 per cent of parents believe that, for Roma children, the learning of Romani, with help from public school is an absolute priority, compared with any other target, because preservation of the language is connected to the maintenance of their cultural identity
- 74 per cent of teachers and 70.7 per cent of parents believe that the best solution for Roma children would be a bilingual school, where Romani and Greek would be taught and treated equally
- 58.6 per cent of teachers and 77.6 per cent of parents believe that the establishment and operation of special schools for Roma children near Roma settlements would be the best solution to the question of the education of Roma children
- 22.1 per cent of teachers and 35.6 per cent of parents believe that the establishment and operation of mixed pupil populations (Roma children, Albanian migrant children, Greek origin Albanian migrant children, Greek origin migrant children from ex Soviet Union countries etc.) is the best solution to the question of the education of the Roma
- 69.6 per cent of teachers and 64.7 per cent of parents believe that the enrolment of Roma children in normal public schools operating nearby the areas where Roma settle is the best solution to the question of the education of the Roma
- 49.2 per cent of teachers and 57 per cent of parents believe that in many cases the best solution to the question of the education of Roma is the transfer of teachers to the Roma settlements who will teach on the spot using suitable teaching materials
- 69.4 per cent of teachers and 60 per cent of parents believe that Roma, compared with other Greeks, have different values
- 85.8 per cent of teachers and 82.5 per cent of parents believe that Roma have a different way of thinking from other Greeks
- 7.7 per cent of teachers and 17.5 per cent of parents believe that Roma are more hardworking compared with other Greeks
- 56.2 per cent of teachers and 62.5 per cent of parents believe that Roma have a different character from other Greeks
- 62.1 per cent of teachers and 54 per cent of parents believe that Roma enjoy different music from other Greeks
- 36.5 per cent of teachers and 41.6 per cent of parents believe that Roma have a different cuisine from other Greeks
- 64.7 per cent of teachers and 69.7 per cent of parents believe that Roma have a different way of dressing from other Greeks
- 10.7 per cent of teachers and 17.1 per cent of parents believe that Roma are more conscientious than other Greeks
- 15.2 per cent of teachers and 19.7 per cent of parents believe that Roma are more hospitable than other Greeks
- 35 per cent of teachers and 48.4 per cent of parents believe that Roma are more aggressive than other Greeks

- 4.1 per cent of teachers and 12.5 per cent of parents believe that Roma are more law-abiding than other Greeks
- 56.2 per cent of teachers and 64.8 per cent of parents believe that Roma have a different appearance from other Greeks
- 31.8 per cent of teachers and 31.9 per cent of parents believe that Roma are prouder than other Greeks
- 24.9 per cent of teachers and 22.7 per cent of parents believe that Roma are more conservative than other Greeks
- 29 per cent of teachers and 33.1 per cent of parents believe that Roma are happier than other Greeks
- 46.9 per cent of teachers and 56 per cent of parents believe that Roma have more free time than other Greeks
- 50.9 per cent of teachers and 57 per cent of parents believe that Roma have less things to care about than other Greeks
- 55.6 per cent of teachers and 58.6 per cent of parents believe that Roma have less stress than other Greeks
- 32.2 per cent of teachers and 30.9 per cent of parents believe that Roma have less money than other Greeks
- 13.6 per cent of teachers and 15.3 per cent of parents believe that Roma practise religion more than other Greeks
- 76.4 per cent of teachers and 72.3 per cent of parents believe that Roma are more hardened than other Greeks
- 56.5 per cent of teachers and 54.6 per cent of parents believe that Roma are more daring than other Greeks
- 14.4 per cent of teachers and 24.9 per cent of parents believe that Roma, in their transactions with others, are more honest than other Greeks
- 18.3 per cent of teachers and 23.1 per cent of parents believe that Roma are more dependent on state assistance than other Greeks
- 15.5 per cent of teachers and 33.1 per cent of parents believe that Roma are more individualistic than other Greeks
- 80 per cent of teachers and 75.5 per cent of parents believe that Roma show more solidarity than other Greeks
- 58 per cent of teachers and 67.9 per cent of parents believe that in the next twenty years the circumstances of the Roma is not going to change and will remain the same.
- 76.8 per cent of teachers and 74.4 per cent of parents believe that Roma children over ten years old will mostly have the same future/ fate as their parents
- 59.2 per cent of teachers and 62.8 per cent of parents believe that Roma children between five and ten years old will mostly have the same fate as their parents
- 42.3 per cent of teachers and 49.9 per cent of parents believe that Roma children between 1 and 4 years old will integrate smoothly into Greek society and will not live in the margins any more
- 44.5 per cent of teachers and 49.9 per cent of parents believe that Roma children who are born from now on will integrate smoothly into Greek society
- 58.8 per cent of teachers and 49.2 per cent of parents believe that traditional jobs performed by Roma are disappearing day by day and thus the financial situation of the Roma is becoming worse and worse
- 65.9 per cent of teachers and 64.4 per cent of parents believe that since the illegal entry of migrants in Greece, the Roma have faced strong competition in some jobs and their situation has become worse
- 81.2 per cent of teachers and 77.1 per cent of parents believe that it is difficult for a non-Rom to have an affair/ relationship with a Rom
- 84.9 per cent of teachers and 85.7 per cent of parents declare that if they discovered that their son or daughter was having an affair with a Rom they would be very concerned

- 69.1 per cent of teachers and 75.4 per cent of parents declare that if they discovered that their son or daughter was planning to marry a Rom they would do whatever they could to prevent the marriage
- 94.2 per cent of teachers and 92.2 per cent of parents accept that as in all groups, amongst the Roma there are rich, middle-class and poor people
- 60.3 per cent of teachers and 72 per cent of parents accept that as in all groups, amongst the Roma there are both illiterate and educated people
- 29.7 per cent of teachers and 37.8 per cent of parents declare that only poor Roma face integration problems
- 32.7 per cent of teachers and 36.9 per cent of parents declare that only the illiterate Roma face integration problems
- 48.8 per cent of teachers and 53.2 per cent of parents declare that well-off Roma have adopted the values and behaviours of non-Roma people
- 59.8 per cent of teachers and 62.1 per cent of parents declare that educated Roma have adopted the values and behaviours of non-Roma people
- 68.8 per cent of teachers and 72.9 per cent of parents declare that society does not distinguish between well-off and poor Roma. Thus, a Rom child from a rich family faces the same problems in school as a Rom pupil from a poor family
- 61.2 per cent of teachers and 69 per cent of parents declare that society does not distinguish between educated and illiterate Roma. Thus, a Rom child from an educated family faces the same problems in school as a Rom pupil from an illiterate family
- 83.4 per cent of teachers and 64.2 per cent of parents declare that non-Roma parents react to the presence of Roma pupils in schools because they are afraid that, as a result, the performance of their own children will fall
- 90.3 per cent of teachers and 79.9 per cent of parents declare that parents who react to the presence of Roma children in their school are afraid that the presence of Roma children in school will cause a deterioration in health conditions
- 88.9 per cent of teachers and 43.6 per cent of parents declare that parents who react negatively to the presence of Roma children in their school are afraid that some Roma childrens' behaviour might have a negative effect on their children
- 21 per cent of teachers and 39.5 per cent of parents declare that parents who react to the presence of Roma children in their school are afraid that in such schools, teachers with fewer skills might be appointed
- 42.4 per cent of teachers and 40.9 per cent of parents declare that parents who react to the presence of Roma children in their school are just racist
- 81.9 per cent of teachers and 78.6 per cent of parents declare that in such cases it is not easy to blame parents for racist behaviour. There are general problems connected with the co-attendance of Roma pupils
- 81 per cent of teachers and 76.3 per cent of parents declare that those who accuse the specific parents of racist behaviour usually stay far from Roma settlements and do not face such problems
- 94.6 per cent of teachers and 90.7 per cent of parents declare that the principle "accept the other as he is" might sound good, but is difficult to implement
- 82.9 per cent of teachers and 87 per cent of parents declare that if Roma children adapted to basic standards (e.g. health conditions, clothing, behaviour), non-Roma parents would not have reason to react to co-attendance and would accept this solution.

After the formal completion of the ‘Education of Roma Children’ project in 31.12.1999<sup>72</sup>, a new project named ‘Éntaxi tsiganopédon sto scholio’ (Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools) started in 21.11.2002, which is planned to continue till 2006.

The project was assigned to the Department of Philosophy, Pedagogy and Psychology at the University of Ioannina and is co-ordinated by Prof. P. Papaconstantinou. It has a budget of about 5.8 million euros<sup>73</sup> and it could be characterised as a continuation of the ‘Education of Roma Children’ project, since perceptions of the situation and of most of the staff remain the same<sup>74</sup>.

The project is supervised by the Ministry of Education (Institute for Greek Diaspora education and intercultural studies – IPODE), it comes within the framework of intercultural education<sup>75</sup> and aims mainly to secure equality of educational opportunities for Roma children and to “confirm and forge the social cohesion of pupils”<sup>76</sup> while, at the same time, accepting and recognising their differences.

The ‘Integration of Gypsy Children in School’ project accepts that neither Roma have some special needs, nor should some special rights (educational etc.) be awarded to them<sup>77</sup>. Both the project and Roma seem to agree<sup>78</sup> that the aim is for Roma children to be integrated into Greek society and the economy, mainly by attending Greek public schools<sup>79</sup>, learning the Greek language and obtaining professional skills by attending public schools and thereby actually approaching the national average.

According to the co-ordinator of the project ‘Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools’, Prof. Papaconstantinou<sup>80</sup>, Roma perceive their exclusion as denial of the rights all citizens have, and they want their children to attend school<sup>81</sup>. They perceive school attendance and the benefits gained from it in the way that the average Greek does, and they expect to

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<sup>72</sup> After a six plus six months’ expansion and some months with a break in activities. Prof. P. Papaconstantinou, co-ordinator of the ‘Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools’ project, personal communication, Ioannina, 07.09.2004.

<sup>73</sup> Connected also with a wider national project also regarding Roma housing, employment, health etc. <http://www.westerngreece.gr/downloads/tsigganoi.htm>, (06.09.2004).

<sup>74</sup> Prof. P. Papaconstantinou, co-ordinator of the ‘Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools’ project, personal communication, Ioannina, 07.09.2004.

<sup>75</sup> According to the declarations of the project administrators in Papaconstantinou, P – Emvalotis, A, 2003, ‘Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools’ project: Progress Report, Ioannina: University of Ioannina – Ministry of Education.

<sup>76</sup> These are the precise words used in the text.

<sup>77</sup> Prof. Papaconstantinou, P, co-ordinator of the project ‘Access of Gypsy children to school’, personal communication, Ioannina, 07.09.2004.

<sup>78</sup> According to Prof. P. Papaconstantinou, co-ordinator of the ‘Integration of Gypsy Children in School’ project, personal communication, Ioannina, 07.09.2004. Extensive presentation of assimilative perceptions regarding Roma in Gotovos, A (2002), *Education and differences; questions on intercultural pedagogy*, Athens: Metehmio.

<sup>79</sup> There are not separate schools for Roma children in Greece. Since they are children of Greek citizens, they attend Greek public schools. As mentioned before, according to Greek legislation, all children who intend to attend public schools are obliged to register and attend the school in their neighbourhood / district / village. When Roma children face problems following the pace/ flow of the lesson, they have the chance to receive some supplementary teaching (support teaching) just as all pupils facing similar problems can do (see also table B below) in order to facilitate their progress in school. There is no data or anything to indicate that Roma children are put into special classes. Certainly, there are no reports of cases of Roma children receiving such services.

<sup>80</sup> Ioannina, 07.09.2004. personal communication. He stated that his estimates are based on unpublished studies worked out within the framework of the ‘Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools’ project.

<sup>81</sup> There is no extensive research on the expectations Roma have from education. According to Prof. Papaconstantinou, there are indications that some of the elderly Roma have reservations regarding their grandsons’ (and, especially, granddaughters’) full 9 years’ attendance at school, but these perceptions are less reserved amongst younger generations.

gain knowledge that will facilitate them in their everyday life e.g. in obtaining a driving licence, establishing shops, running a business etc. They expect to gain knowledge that will help them cope with future needs and changes in the market e.g. their children learning foreign languages, in expectance of expanding their trading activities/ dealings with tourists. Besides, by becoming more educated they hope that they will be more capable of handling problems connected with prejudice and racist behaviour on the part of non-Roma etc.

The problem Roma children face in school has to do mainly a) with the (structural) reservation the Greek school has towards “aliens” – here the Roma, b) with the mentality and (pedagogical) practices of the educators and c) with society which does not “recognise” Roma.

Based on this analysis, the ‘Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools’ project targets<sup>82</sup>:

- The harmonic acceptance of Roma children living in settlements (tent –dwellers etc.) into the educational system
- The facilitation of the acceptance of Roma children into the educational system and the multidimensional support of their attendance at school
- The provision of educational knowledge and suitable teaching materials to educators as well as their sensitisation to cross-cultural educational issues.
- The support of families with cultural particularities in order to be in a position to assist their children efficiently
- The sensitisation of the administrative educational mechanism, of governing bodies and executives of local authorities (municipalities, prefectures etc.)

The project activities have developed in the following main sectors:

#### A) Support and follow-up of the children

This has as its first priority that all the people working on the project, and particularly the collaborators working in the field, should focus on: pupil enrolment, school attendance, the formation and support of reception classes and supplementary teaching classes, the registration of drop-outs and all forms of Roma pupils’ «disengagement» from school, mediation between school and families in order to stress the value of education and relations with the school, support of the whole process of educational intervention through the creation of “Pedagogic Support Centres” which will be organised in many schools and supported by the university, creation of materials using the pre-existing cultural material of Roma and using this material in facilitating the teaching of the language.

#### B) Sensitisation and further training

Seminars and additional teaching on cross-cultural education issues for elementary school teachers, school headmasters, educational administrative bodies and local authorities.

Encouragement in the planning / formation of an “internal educational policy” based on cross-cultural educational principles, for each school which Roma children attend.

#### C) Creation of teaching materials

Completion, improvement, production of teaching materials for the reception classes and additional support classes, aiming to cover – apart from educational needs – needs connected with combating racism, stereotypes, preconceptions and Roma-phobia.

Development of a ‘Geographical Information System’ capable of following up all data (registration, absences, drop-out, attendance, special knowledge e.g. music) of all Roma elementary school pupils according to grade, school, municipality, prefecture and region<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> As declared precisely in: Papaconstantinou, P – Emvalotis, A, (2003) ‘Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools’ project: progress report, Ioannina: University of Ioannina – Ministry of Education, p.8.

<sup>83</sup> [http://isocrates.gr/content\\_by\\_cat.asp?contentid=463&catid=151&how=&keywords=](http://isocrates.gr/content_by_cat.asp?contentid=463&catid=151&how=&keywords=), (06.09.04).

D) Expansion of results; production/printing of teaching and educational materials; evaluation of the project.

The project operates based on a network of 94 collaborators, acting in the forty prefectures from all over Greece, where Roma people live<sup>84</sup>.

The project has proceeded to the elaboration of research and studies<sup>85</sup>, most of which are not yet completed or published, and to the creation of teaching materials which according to the project's co-ordinator - take into consideration elements of the civilisation of Roma (now available only in electronic form<sup>86</sup>) the use/ implementation of which seems to encounter significant problems.

The specific materials are not intended to replace the existing ones, centrally produced and distributed (by the Ministry of education) and used in all elementary Greek schools<sup>87</sup>, in schools which Roma children attend. Rather, this material is supposed to be used by teachers in order to create their own teaching material, suitable for the specific needs of each class and each one of their pupils. However, the majority of teachers do not work to produce their own material since: a) they do not know how to make it since they are not trained in that; b) it is far from their mindset since "normal" Greek public schoolwork is based on the one and only textbook published and distributed by the state; and c) they are not obliged and not willing to proceed with such work which requires a lot of effort and unpaid overtime work. Thus, the material is not used or it is misused and finally turns useless.

It is worth mentioning that variances in the interpretation of the technical bulletin between the project's administration and the Ministry of Education (regarding the nature of the project and the time within which the final printed material should be ready) resulted in a certain part of the project being cancelled. This means that if the situation remains the same, by the end of the project in 2006 there will still be no printed material available<sup>88</sup>.

According to Prof. Papaconstantinou<sup>89</sup> the project, mainly through seminars and public events regarding the educational needs of Roma children, has succeeded in changing attitudes among the teachers, parents and local authorities involved etc. and made them more tolerant. The attitudes of non-Roma pupils' parents towards Roma pupils seems to have changed in a way which could perhaps best be characterised as "a lessening of resistance"<sup>90</sup>.

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<sup>84</sup> There are no Roma in the prefectures and areas of Pella, Kozani, Kastoria, Evritania, Grevena, Lefkada, Zakynthos, Lasithi, Cyclades and Samos.

<sup>85</sup> E.g. Kanavakis, M (2004) *Education policy models for dealing with socio-educational problems in modern societies*, Ioannina: 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' project. Available at [http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO\\_YLIKO/EDU\\_ROMA\\_Vol\\_II/Vol\\_II\\_Unit\\_01.pdf](http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/EPIMORFOTIKO_YLIKO/EDU_ROMA_Vol_II/Vol_II_Unit_01.pdf) (20.10.2004).

<sup>86</sup> Regarding the teaching of the Greek language, physics, mathematics, history and geography; also including activities for the nursery school with additional games and songs.

<sup>87</sup> And could be characterised as very ethnocentric. In the last 20 years there have been attempts to make the teaching materials in Greek public schools less ethnocentric. But there are significant indications that despite the existence of textbooks which are relatively free of stereotypes, stereotypic approaches do exist in Greek schools and are mainly introduced by parents and teachers. See Frangoudaki, A, Dragona, Th, (eds), (1997) *Ethnocentrism in education*, Athens: Alexandria.

<sup>88</sup> Prof. Papakonstantinou, P, co-ordinator of the 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' project, personal communication, Ioannina, 07.09.2004.

<sup>89</sup> Co-ordinator of the 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' project, personal communication, Ioannina, 07.09.2004.

<sup>90</sup> For the time being there is not any published research assessing attitudes before and after the implementation of the project. But we have to note that acts of racial violence regarding the education of Roma children have become more and more rare, and have almost disappeared, with the last incident occurring in the elementary school of the village Sagéika in Ahaia, where (non-Roma) parents occupied the school, after the mayor's incitement to block the enrolment of Roma children ('Ta Nea' newspaper, Athens, 03.06.2004). What we have to note here is that this outcome, which occurred spontaneously, was strongly influenced by the extensive presence and the final admittance of migrant

## School attendance and performance of Roma children

Project administrators estimate, using a Geographical Information System developed within the framework of the 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' project, following all Roma children actually in Greece, that more than 90 per cent of Roma children of school age are now (September 2004) attending primary schools in Greece<sup>91</sup>.

Regarding the dropout rate, Prof. Papaconstantinou noted that in the period October 2002 - March 2003 the dropout rate was around 8 per cent, while from March to June 2003 it was around 24 per cent. For the same period March – June in the year 2004, the dropout rate is estimated at around 18 per cent.

Regarding enrolment and attendance it has to be taken into consideration that the Greek state, in a further attempt to provide families with a declared income of less than 3,000 Euro annually (mainly Roma families) with incentives, established an annual benefit of 300 Euro for every child enrolled in primary education (Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, Ministerial Decree No. KYA 2/37645/0020/08.07.2002). There are strong indications that many Roma families, without any expectations concerning the education of their children, enrol them in order to collect the 300 Euro benefit and, after a while, children do not attend classes. The implementation of the particular Decree also meant that Roma children who had abandoned school up till 2002, and were younger than 15 years old<sup>92</sup>, ended up getting enrolled again. This could, along general lines, be characterised as reintegration of drop-outs, despite the fact that, according to strong indications, these children have very poor attendance and performance and their families enrol them in order to collect the 300 Euro benefit.

There is no specific data on the school performance of Roma children<sup>93</sup>. There is no indication that the school performance of Roma children is around the average; rather, indications seem to show that it is far below this level. Limited and sporadic information collected for the needs of project research shows that Roma children have an extremely poor school performance. Finally, in most cases, even Roma pupils who do learn how to read and write seem to have significant gaps in their understanding<sup>94</sup>.

According to the teachers working with Roma children<sup>95</sup>, Roma parents maintain an indifferent stance regarding their children's attendance. What is typical of their mentality is that in many cases, despite the fact that teachers visit them often, explaining the education process and stressing the need for regular attendance to them, and despite the fact that parents seemingly understand and accept what teachers say and assure teachers that from now on their children will attend regularly, the situation remains the same. Teachers involved in

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pupils, who were mainly Albanians, to the Greek public school, which resulted the strictly monocultural Greek public school to be injected with elements from other cultures.

<sup>91</sup> While only a few Roma children attend nursery school.

<sup>92</sup> In Greece children are accepted in elementary school till their 15<sup>th</sup> year of age.

<sup>93</sup> As expected, Roma children's attendance (at elementary school) is strongly connected to the socio-economic circumstances of their family and to the extent of its social integration/ social exclusion. As Prof. Papaconstantinou, (co-ordinator of the 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' project, personal communication, Ioannina, 07.09.2004.) declares, "children from families which have Romani as their first tongue, who live in (good quality) houses, have permanent jobs and a high income, belong to extensive social networks, including both Roma and non-Roma people, have a very good school performance and can even be found enrolled in and attending private schools. At the same time, children with Romani as their first tongue, who come from families living under tents, in miserable conditions and with an income far below the poverty limit, usually have bad school attendance and performance. In Hagia Varara, a district in Athens where a lot of Romani-speaking people live, the drop-out rates in elementary school are close to zero".

<sup>94</sup> See also Dimitriou, M. (1999) " 'Tsiganology' without Gypsies", Eleftherotypia newspaper, Athens 03.04.2004, available at <http://www.iospress.gr/mikro1999/mikro19990403.htm>, (06.09.2004).

<sup>95</sup> Mylonas, H. (2001) <http://11dim-evosm.thess.sch.gr/hmer1.htm>, (29.09.2004).

teaching supplementary classes and reception classes, which Roma children attend, report poor school attendance. As the main reasons for this, they point to inadequate support and control on behalf of parents, the children's bad health conditions which leads to frequent absences, the lack of a special and adequate infrastructure and the fact that many children perceive school as something unnecessary

Poor attendance is also related to the lack of adequate classes and trained personnel. In some cases, and despite the presence and activation of the 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' project, children still do not get enrolled since there are no school buildings and classrooms available<sup>96</sup>.

## Secondary and tertiary education

There is no data available on Roma children's attendance within secondary and tertiary education. The Ministry of Education does not collect such data and Roma pupils try very hard to hide or mask their Roma identity. Everything indicates that only a very small percentage (probably less than 10 per cent) of the children who finish elementary school continue to attend high school<sup>97</sup>. There are no estimates regarding tertiary education.

In a step towards trying to assist Roma children studying at secondary and tertiary education level school, the Federation of Tutorial Instructors of Greece has announced that all its members offer free tutorial instruction to all Roma children<sup>98</sup>.

## Vocational training and adult education.

There are no data available. The Ministry of Education has offered a number of literacy projects for adult Roma since 1984. In 2002, connected to the 'Education of Gypsy Children' and 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' projects, there were literacy projects for 600 adult Roma, an additional Greek language teaching programme for 150 semi-literate adult Roma and additional teaching for 150 adult Roma on matters of an advisory nature (health, bringing up children etc.)<sup>99</sup>. Request lodged – in the frame of this research – to the Ministry of Education, General Secretariat of Adults' Education asking for data on initiatives regarding the education of Roma adults in the years 2003, 2004 and 2005 was not granted.

## Initiatives concerned with the education of Roma taken by authorities other than the Ministry of Education

During the last ten years<sup>100</sup>, the Greek Ministry of Education – through the 'Education of Gypsy Children' and 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' projects – has been the only authority actively involved in the education of Roma. In addition to this, during the same period, the Drom network<sup>101</sup> has had a sporadic presence in Roma settlements providing

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<sup>96</sup> E.g. in Vlichos in Megara Athens, where 180 Roma children declared the intention of attending school, they could not get enrolled. Prof. Papaconstantinou, co-ordinator of the 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' project, personal communication, Ioannina, 07.09.2004.

<sup>97</sup> According to unofficial statistical data, during the school year 1999–2000, 8,500 Roma pupils were registered in primary schools, 1,500 in junior secondary (gymnasium) and 250 in senior secondary (lyceum) schools. No information is available on the percentage of them who finished the school year.

<sup>98</sup> [http://www.oefe.gr/oefe/profile/main\\_tay.htm](http://www.oefe.gr/oefe/profile/main_tay.htm), (05.09.2004).

<sup>99</sup> Billa, N, 2002, "Models and practices of social integration and social exclusion", Combatting discrimination, racism and xenophobia, Round table, Athens 2-3.12.2002, Round Table recordings, available at [www.antigone.gr/Proceedings%202002.html](http://www.antigone.gr/Proceedings%202002.html) (20/09/2004).

<sup>100</sup> In the past, there have been sporadic attempts by various groups such as University departments, independent teachers, the church etc.

<sup>101</sup> The «Drom» network for social rights, based in Thessaloniki and founded in 1995, is an NGO, with members working exclusively on a voluntary basis, monitoring, supporting and promoting Roma.

support services, while such services are provided to inhabitants by some municipalities e.g. in Hagia Varvara in Athens.

## **Participation of Roma in the planning and implementation of the project**

According to Prof. Papaconstantinou<sup>102</sup>, many Roma were involved during the planning of the project and some Roma work as mediators and as teachers in the seminars. However, no data is available.

There are no people with declared Roma identity or origin, serving as teachers in Greek public schools.

## **Estimations or opinions of the Roma regarding the quality of education provided for them**

There has been no relevant research and thus no data is available. According to Prof. Papaconstantinou<sup>103</sup> there are messages coming in from various areas all around Greece where the project has been in operation for a long or a short time or is still in operation – such as Antirio, Igoumenitsa, Ioannina, Alikarnasos – that the Roma are satisfied.

## **Use of Romani language**

Despite the fact that the project declares that it takes on board the concept of multicultural education, there is no use of the Romani language. The approach of the project is assimilative in general<sup>104</sup>. The project, based also on unpublished research on the opinions of Roma childrens' mothers<sup>105</sup> regarding the teaching of Romani in school, believes that the use/ teaching of Romani in school actually produces marginalisation of the Roma.

The educators are encouraged to learn and use elements of Roma civilisation, the language included, to encourage the attendance of Roma children and for this reason, in seminars, Roma teachers and speakers present elements of Roma culture to the teachers and suggest ways that these elements could be used in teaching<sup>106</sup>.

## **Administration – structural problems**

The 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' project is the one and only project implemented by the Greek state for the education of Roma children. Despite the fact that the

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issues. <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/greek/reports/osce-roma-sept-99.html>, (29.09.2004). Volunteers took care to ensure that children were at school on time, properly dressed and fed, with all the necessary equipment (books, exercise books and pencils etc.) in their bags.

<sup>102</sup> Co-ordinator of the 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' project, personal communication, Ioannina, 07.09.2004.

<sup>103</sup> Co-ordinator of the 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' project, personal communication, Ioannina, 07.09.2004.

<sup>104</sup> Despite the fact that the project recognises in the Roma culture the existence of elements which vary from those of the "average" or "normal" contemporary Greek, when finally Roma are perceived as (ethnic) Greeks, the Roma themselves claim/ promote a Greek identity, so no steps are taken in order to promote non-Greek cultural, linguistic elements etc., since it is believed that such a step might delay or block the integration of Roma. An extensive presentation of the assimilative perception in the education of the Roma in Greece can be studied in Gotovos, A (2002), *Education and differentiation; questions of intercultural pedagogy*, Athens: Metehmio.

<sup>105</sup> Research of an unknown sample of Roma mothers of unknown sample size and unknown status, found that they wanted their children in school to be taught only in Greek and not in Romani, and showed disquiet that the use of Romani in school might bring obstacles in the path of their children's acceptance.

<sup>106</sup> Prof. Papakonstantinou, Co-ordinator of the 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' project, personal communication, Ioannina, 07.09.2004.

Greek State is the authority which designed, implemented, supervised and (partly) financed the project, it seems that there is no exact equivalence between the state's educational policy regarding the Roma and the project. According to Prof. Papaconstantinou<sup>107</sup>, there are differences in perception and priorities among the various levels of bureaucracy in the Ministry of Education. This includes the other authorities involved, the project administrators, local authorities (prefectures and municipalities), local education officers and, finally, the teachers.

Not all middle-level education officers and bureaucrats perceive an improvement in the education of the Roma as one of their first priorities, while the whole question of decentralisation of education is also involved. It is quite common, for a concept or a direction from the top hierarchy of the administration e.g. from the Prime Minister's or the Minister of Education's office, to become distorted on its way through the lower ranks and ultimately to be cancelled altogether.

Prof. Papaconstantinou also stresses that at the top of the hierarchy there are "powers" which strongly oppose the project. Some try to get rid of it as soon as possible, since the implementation of the project highlights the problems with infrastructure and the gaps (and the existing infrastructural racism) in the Greek educational system, and some others perceive the project as an – unacceptable to them – - positive discrimination measure (which it is not since it does not offer any special provisions), and thus as a step which violates the principle of equality.

The project has become an object of criticism from people and bodies<sup>108</sup> with a resulting more interesting viewpoint such as that of Prof. M.Noutsos, who in his article 'The education of Gypsy children: Lack of judgement and Ideology' in Avgi newspaper (Athens, 19.01.2003)<sup>109</sup> exercises strong criticism focusing on the quality of the teaching material (mistakes) and on evaluation issues – with allusions to the way the project was assigned to the particular team, the targets of the project, the way the particular team perceives the concept of cross-cultural education, the way the project was implemented and its results.

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<sup>107</sup> Co-ordinator of the 'Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools' project, personal communication, Ioannina, 07.09.2004.

<sup>108</sup> Comments on the deficiencies and weaknesses of the project and suggestions concerning better implementation of the project in Minutes of a School Parents-Teachers' Committee Meeting, 13.11.2000 from a school in Thessaloniki which a lot of Roma children attend. Available at <http://11dim-evosm.thess.sch.gr/special/praktiko.htm>, (29.09.2004).

<sup>109</sup> Also available at [http://193.218.80.70/cgi-bin/hwebpressrem.exe?-A=310649&-w=&-V=hpress\\_int&-P](http://193.218.80.70/cgi-bin/hwebpressrem.exe?-A=310649&-w=&-V=hpress_int&-P), (06.09.2004).

## Concluding observations

In the last decade there has been significant progress in the way the Greek state confronts Roma<sup>110</sup> and thus also the education of Roma children in Greece. Nowadays it seems that the great majority of Roma children are enrolled in a Greek public school – albeit with relatively poor attendance and certainly poor performance.

Despite the great efforts made and the fact that the education of the Roma population is considered to move in an intercultural education concept, the average Greek pupil in public Greek schools learns nothing about the Roma and their civilisation.

Not all Roma families have the same expectations from education and in most cases children are expected to learn just elementary reading and writing.

The average Greek does not consider Roma as ethnic Greeks. The Roma do not accept being defined as a minority, as they are most probably afraid that by presenting/promoting identity elements different from the “typical” Greek and claiming related rights, they will face stronger opposition and exclusion. Thus, there is an open “identity question” which seems to be connected to the problems Roma children face in attending (quite ethnocentric) Greek schools.

The project administrators’ attitude towards the education of Roma children in Greece could be characterised as partly contradictory since different partners in the ‘Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools’ project – local authorities, the Ministry of Education bureaucrats with different ideologies (and often serving different interests) - are involved.

The ‘Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools’ project reveals a significant methodological problem in its research and approach in general since it deals with (and counts) a population without defining it.

Till now, in the research, Roma have been absent or mute. For the time being the attitudes and expectations of the Roma on the education of their children and on the project are not clear – since either they were not researched or the relevant research findings are not yet published. Thus, it is not clear if – and to what extent - the project is trying to cover the Roma’s needs and solve the problems Roma face regarding the education of their children, or trying to solve the problems non-Roma people have with Roma and cover the Roma’s educational needs as those are understood/ interpreted by non- Roma academics, activists and people on the administration.

The project’s main target is to facilitate the integration of Roma children of school age in public schools. Undoubtedly the number of Roma pupils in primary schools – which means in the first six years of nine years’ obligatory education – has increased significantly. However, it is not possible to estimate to what degree this percentage could be attributed to the particular educational policy the Greek state has implemented since 1996 regarding Roma children (project action, aid given to poor Roma families etc.) and to what degree it could be attributed to a change of Roma attitudes towards their children’s education, and how the one can – and finally does – influence the other.

Since there is no data, we have no knowledge of Roma children’s performance; on how they do, on what they learn, on the knowledge and the skills they acquire and finally, by finishing elementary school, how equal and competitive they will be compared with the Greek national average.

It does seem that in the last ten years (1995 – 2004) a great effort has been made by the Greek state and that there has been a significant improvement in the position of Roma in Greece and, more specifically, in the education of Roma children. However, some of the findings of quantitative data analysis portray the situation are disputable, while there is a lack of qualitative analysis. Thus, further independent research has to take place on completion of

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<sup>110</sup> While significant changes seem to be taking place also within ‘Roma society’. Research founding – available at <http://195.251.20.34/pdf/amea/tsigani.pdf>, (06.09.2004) – shows that the young generations of settled Roma declare that they prefer to have less children than their parents did in order to have “a better life” through a better education, by which they mean they want to receive vocational training and find a suitable job.

the project (2006) in order to ascertain the results of the educational policy Greece has implemented regarding the education of the Roma population – the precise situation regarding the education of Roma in Greece and the impact of the “Education for Gypsy Children” and ‘Integration of Gypsy Children in Schools’ projects.