

# SHADOW REPORT ON ROMA SEGREGATION IN EDUCATION

**Created by ANTIGONE**

**In the framework of DARE-Net project  
Desegregation and Action for Roma in  
Education Network**

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## Abbreviations

<b>Art.</b>	Article
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>ECRI</b>	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
<b>ECHR</b>	European Convention of Human Rights
<b>ECtHR</b>	European Court of Human Rights
<b>ECMI</b>	European Centre for Minority Issues
<b>EEC</b>	European Economic Community
<b>EPSO</b>	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs
<b>ERRC</b>	European Roma Rights Centre
<b>ETS</b>	European Treaty Series
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FRA</b>	European Union Fundamental Rights Agency
<b>GHM</b>	Greek Helsinki Monitor
<b>GNCHR</b>	Greek National Commission for Human Rights
<b>IGOs</b>	<u>Intergovernmental Organizations</u>
<b>IPODE</b>	Greek Diaspora Education and Intercultural Studies
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-governmental Organizations
<b>NSRF</b>	National Strategic Reference Framework
<b>OSCE</b>	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>RAP</b>	Regional Action Plan
<b>SOKADRE</b>	Coordinated Organisations and Communities for Roma Human Rights in Greece
<b>TFEU</b>	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNTS</b>	United Nations Treaty Series

## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

The present Shadow Report on Greece has been prepared within the DARE-Net project. Through this project the partners develop a set of indicators and a methodology for monitoring the plans on education within the National Strategies for Roma Inclusion. The shadow report has been elaborated to pilot the indicators and methodology for monitoring the plans on education within the National Strategies for Roma Inclusion for 2012-2013.

Shadow reports from NGOs are a very appropriate measure to monitor and report on the Governments' work on a certain issue. The methodology is designed in order to assist the Roma communities, who are supposed to benefit from the public policy, in expressing their opinion on how the actions included in the national plan on education (within the National strategies) have been implemented.

The report has been divided into six chapters. Chapter 2 analyses the methodology used in drafting the Shadow Report. This chapter should be read in light of the Guide of Methodology prepared within the same project. Chapter 3 presents the legal and policy framework in Greece. Namely, it describes the law as it is on discrimination and education as well as the enacted policies that have been introduced.

Chapter 4 constitutes the main body of the Shadow Report. It examines specific priorities concerning Roma desegregation contained in the National Strategy Plan on Roma Integration. The priorities under two programmes, 'Education for Roma Children' and 'Roma Children in Macedonia and Thrace' will be further analysed as well as the specific actions under the Programmes. The Chapter will also contain an evaluation of these priorities and identify any gaps which need to be further addressed under the National Strategy.

Chapter 5 presents case-studies, namely based on three cases brought against Greece before the ECtHR since they are indicative of the deficiencies in the Greek National Strategy. They are also important for the analysis carried out in the next chapter which highlights the national specific subject hindering any efforts for desegregation.

Chapter 6 identifies the national specific subject, which in this case is that of racial discrimination and extremism. Many organisations –national and international- have expressed their concern for the rise of extremism and racism. The Roma community is also a target of such behaviour and discrimination against the Roma is deeply rooted in Greek society. Education is a field where such discrimination appears. However, overcoming discrimination in education is the first step in overcoming discrimination in society and promoting the social integration of Roma.

Finally, Chapter 7 draws its conclusions from the study carried out in the Shadow Report and presents a list of basic recommendations for improving Greece's policies when it comes to Roma educational desegregation.

## Chapter 2 – Methodology

This chapter should be read in light of the methodology guide provided within the same DARE-net project.

### 2.1. The data used in the report

The methodology of the present Shadow Report is based on data collected mostly from secondary sources. Secondary sources on Roma segregation include the information compiled by other stakeholders in previous researches, reports, books, articles and scholarly journals and media reports.

This research included the reports drafted and published by Greek Governmental Organisations, Independent Authorities and NGOs such as: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Employment and Social Security, the Greek Ombudsman, the Greek National Commission for Human Rights, the Greek-Helsinki Monitor, the NGO ‘ANTIGONE’ and University-run programmes (specific sources were included herein).

The report also examined information contained in reports on Greece by various UN agencies, EU and CoE agencies such as UNICEF, CRC, World Bank, FRA, ECRI, the European Commission etc. Other international or regional organisations may also produce reports on Roma Segregation or the Greek educational system such as the OSCE, the Open Society Network and the ERRC (specific sources were included herein).

The report also includes a descriptive analysis of the legal and policy framework on Roma educational segregation. Laws and ministerial circulars were presented as well as details of the two programmes on Roma education. For the latter, the relevant websites were very helpful in listing priorities and actions carried out under each programme: ‘Education for Roma Children’ and ‘Roma Children in Macedonia and Thrace’. The chapter on the specific priorities (Chapter 4) even contains an evaluation of the priorities. This evaluation is based on secondary data, namely the reports of monitoring bodies set up under international or regional treaties the State is party to, which usually review the implementation of the State’s obligations and issue recommendations it should follow for the best attainable result.

For the case-studies the Shadow Report, in order to highlight the role played by racism and extremism in school desegregation, presents those instances of segregation that brought Greece before the ECtHR. Apart from difficulties in carrying out a field-like case-study, these cases are the most important cases in reference to the indicators set within the project. They also helped the ECtHR formulate important standards with regards to the ECHR. The report also contains information on the implementation of these ECtHR decisions.

More information on the sources used in the present Shadow Report can be viewed in the document’s ‘Sources’ which contains a list of bibliography, reports, treaties etc. The reader will be able to view the sources while reading the text *via* footnotes that contain references to the sources. The data are all considered to be valid since they are based on the well-informed and impartial opinions of reliable sources.

### 2. 2. The data analysis methodology

The method of data analysis used in the Shadow Report is descriptive with elements of qualitative research. By identifying specific issues, relevant data has been collected and then presented through the form of a description. This is especially true for the main chapter of the

Report, the specific priorities. The priorities of the National Strategy were identified and then placed into categories based on specific actions for their realisation. Then a description on how the actions are to be carried out is presented.

In this section the presentation of information through tables was used in order to provide the reader with a better and easily accessible descriptive analysis. This helped provide a holistic view of the actions in every policy programme.

The same is true for the chapter on the case-studies. The facts of ECtHR cases against Greece were presented in order to show the main deficiencies the Greek Government has to address in order to effectively address Roma educational segregation. This chapter also provided the opportunity to carry out a comparative analysis that is expressed in the national specific subject chapter. The comparison showed that the common denominator in the cases has been racism. This allowed the research to direct itself in addressing the prevailing issue of racism and extremism in Greece.

The final chapter on the conclusion and recommendations is based on the author's critical thinking and qualitative analysis. An examination of the data collected and a reading of the recommendations proposed by other stakeholders was helpful for the formulation of a conclusion to the overall report.

Throughout the document specific data and findings have been highlighted. This is to show the reader what the author deems crucial for the investigation of Roma segregation issues. It is meant to point-out issues and provoke the reader to investigate and question specific matters. Also, the author hopes that highlighting specific issues will assist other researchers that may use this Report as a secondary data source.

Finally, the format of the specific Shadow Report was based on the instructions provided by the DARE-net project terms of reference which were disseminated to all partners within the project. Each chapter was required to include specific information and always keep in mind the set of indicators attached to the terms of reference. The terms of reference were crucial in determining the form each chapter took and the information provided therein.

### Chapter 3 – Legal and policy framework

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the current legal and policy framework in Greece regarding the right to education and the right to equality, the legislative acts that have been taken in order to ensure the safeguarding of these rights for Roma children and the policies introduced for their implementation.

The Greek legislative framework guarantees schooling for all children, citizen or foreign, from the age of 6 to the age of 15 (6-year elementary school and 3-year lower high school). Education is compulsory and is applicable to all children regardless of the residence status (legal or irregular) of their parents.

- Greek Constitution<sup>1</sup>: Art. 14 (Equality) and Art. 16 (Education) -> Specifically: Art. 16(4): *“All Greeks are entitled to free education on 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”*.
- Law 3304/2005<sup>2</sup>: Chapter II of Law 3304/2005 establishes its scope, which extends to both the public and private spheres and covers employment, social protection, education and access to public goods and services, including housing.
- Law 2910/2001<sup>3</sup>: Art. 40 stipulates that all children born to third-country nationals living in Greece have the right to public education.
- Law 3386/2005<sup>4</sup>: Art. 72 re-establishes the framework of the above article which guarantees the right of third national children living in Greece to public education. In effect, school authorities enrol foreign students even if they do not have the necessary documents, such as school certificates or birth certificates that are required for enrolment. The same is true for Roma children who may not have certificates of residence in a given municipality or may be enrolled at different ages than those foreseen by the law (e.g. age 6 for elementary schooling, and as of 2008 age 5 for compulsory pre-school).

Greece guarantees through its legislative framework schooling for all children, native or foreign, from the age of 6 to the age of 15 (6-year elementary school and 3-year lower high school). Post-compulsory secondary education (lyceum), according to the 1997 educational reform, consists of the Unified Upper Secondary General Education Schools (“Eniaia Lykeia”) and of the Technical Vocational Educational Schools (“TEE”); students may transfer from one type of school to the other. As for the former type, studies last 3 years and after graduation a competitive national examination takes place giving access to University or to Technological Educational Institutes. For the latter type, the duration of studies is either of two (A' level) or three years (B' level)<sup>5</sup>. Education is applicable to all children regardless of the residence status (legal or irregular) of their parents.

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<sup>1</sup> <<http://www.hellenicparliament.gr/UserFiles/f3c70a23-7696-49db-9148-f24dce6a27c8/001-156%20aggliko.pdf>>.

<sup>2</sup> “On the Application of the principle of equal treatment regardless of racial or ethnic origin, religious or other beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation”, Government Gazette A' 16/27-01-2005.

<sup>3</sup> “On the Entry and Stay of aliens in the Greek Territory”, Government Gazette A' 91/02-05-2001.

<sup>4</sup> “On the Entry, Stay and Social Inclusion of third-country nationals in the Greek Territory”, Government Gazette A' 212/23-08-2005.

<sup>5</sup> I. Dimitrakopoulos, (2004), *Analytical Report on Education in Greece (2003)*, National Contact Point for Greece – ANTIGONE, Information and Documentation Centre, Athens, accessed AT <<http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/RAXEN/4/edu/R4-EDU-EL.pdf>> and G. Mavrommatis, (2004), Roma in public education, RAXEN and ANTIGONE (National focal point for Greece, available at: <[http://dikadi-rom.gr/assets/studies/studies%20and%20researches\\_iii/Roma%20in%20Public%20Education\\_Raxen\\_National%20Focal%20Point%20for%20Greece.pdf](http://dikadi-rom.gr/assets/studies/studies%20and%20researches_iii/Roma%20in%20Public%20Education_Raxen_National%20Focal%20Point%20for%20Greece.pdf)>.

**Intercultural education** in Greece has developed as a response to a number of factors<sup>6</sup>: the poor school performance of native minority children (the Roma in particular as well as the Muslims of western Thrace); the need to adapt to EU standards as regards intercultural education and the education of minority children in particular; the arrival of nearly half a million of immigrants (largely undocumented) during the first half of the 1990s and the need to enrol and integrate their children in Greek schools.

Greece's intercultural education policy was formally inaugurated with **Law 2413/1996**<sup>7</sup> which created the Institute for the Greek Diaspora Education and Intercultural Studies (IPOSE, Ινστιτούτο Παιδείας Ομογενών και Διαπολιτισμικής Εκπαίδευσης).

The second component of intercultural education in Greece has been the reception and support classes. Reception classes were first set up in gymnasiums and lyceums in the 1980s, particularly in the Thessaloniki area for the children of co-ethnic returnees<sup>8</sup>. **Law 1894/1990**<sup>9</sup> revised the **1404/1983** legislation on reception classes, incorporated these classes in the mainstream public school system and focused on Greek language, culture and history courses for pupils who did not have Greek as their mother-tongue.

One of the most important components of intercultural education in Greece are the special programs co-funded by the Greek State and the European Union, which cater for the needs of Muslim children in Western Thrace, Roma children and children from immigrant and co-ethnic returnee families<sup>10</sup>. These Programs have been running since 1997 and have provided for specialized textbooks concerning the teaching of Greek as a foreign language, training of teachers in intercultural education, special initiatives of intercultural education activities.

Until 1984, the Greek State had not shown any particular interest as to the school performance of Roma minority children. In fact, a Ministry working group document dated 27 March 1986 on Roma children blamed Roma families for their children non-attending school or attending with very poor results<sup>11</sup>. In 1987 there was a first attempt to study the issues of Roma children education and to identify the relevant problems in cooperation between the Ministry of Education (General Secretariat of Popular Education), the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior. The relevant study issued by the General Secretariat of Popular Education proposed for the first time a different approach to the analysis of Roma children educational issues with a view to recognize their cultural specificity and addressing the root causes of their school failure.

It was only in 1993 when the Ministry of Education issued a circular (**Circular G1/1126**, 17 September 1993) which invited all Directorates and Regional Offices as well as teachers and school principals to cooperate in a *special effort to integrate Roma children in public schools*. According to Pitsiou and Lagios<sup>12</sup> this slow realization that a special approach was needed for the integration of

<sup>6</sup> A. Triandafyllidou and H. Kouki, Tolerance and Cultural Diversity Discourses and Practices in Greece, 2012, available at: <[http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/22318/ACCEPT\\_PLURALISM\\_2012\\_08\\_Finalcountryreport\\_Greece.pdf?sequence=1](http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/22318/ACCEPT_PLURALISM_2012_08_Finalcountryreport_Greece.pdf?sequence=1)>, p. 40.

<sup>7</sup> "Greek Education Abroad, Intercultural Education and other", Government Gazette A' 124/14-06-1996.

<sup>8</sup> G. Markou, Intercultural education in multicultural Greece, *European Journal of Intercultural Studies* 1993, Vol.4:3, pp. 32-43 and M. Damanakis, European and Intercultural Dimension in Greek Education, in *European Educational Research Journal* 2005, Vol.4:1, pp. 79-88.

<sup>9</sup> "On the Athens Academy and other", Government Gazette A' 110/27-08-1990.

<sup>10</sup> Triandafyllidou and Kouki, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>12</sup> H. Pitsiou and V. Lagios (2007) "Η θέση των τσιγγανοπαίδων στο σχολείο και οι εκπαιδευτικές πρακτικές του ΥΠΕΠΘ για την εκπαίδευσή τους" [the position of Roma children in school and the educational practices of the Ministry of education for their schooling], presented at the 4th Panhellenic Conference of the Greek Institute of Applied Pedagogy and Education (Ινστιτούτο Εφαρμοσμένης Παιδαγωγικής και Εκπαίδευσης, 4ο πανελλήνιο συνέδριο), Athens, 4-6 May 2007, available at: <[http://www.elliepek.gr/documents/4o\\_synedrio\\_eisigiseis/16\\_22.pdf](http://www.elliepek.gr/documents/4o_synedrio_eisigiseis/16_22.pdf)>.

Roma children into the school system was largely due to a **White Paper** issued by the Ministers of Education of EEC member states on 22 May 1989 regarding Roma education and intercultural education at large.

Article 72 of Law **3386/2005** (previously art. 40 of Law 2910/2001) stipulates that all children born to third-country nationals living in Greece have the right to public education. In effect, school authorities enrol foreign students even if they do not have the necessary documents, such as school certificates or birth certificates that are required for enrolment. The same is true for Roma children who may not have certificates of residence in a given municipality or may be enrolled at different ages than those foreseen by the law (e.g. age 6 for elementary schooling, and as of 2008 age 5 for compulsory pre-school).

An important step was taken through the introduction of the aforementioned Law **3304/2005** for the **implementation of the principle of equal treatment** regardless of racial or national origin, of religious or other beliefs, of disability, age or sexual orientation in the field of employment (co-signed by the Minister of Education). The latter appointed **three specialised bodies** responsible for the promotion of equal treatment: the Greek Ombudsman, the Labour Inspectorate and the Equal Treatment Commission. The Greek Ombudsman addresses cases of violations of the equality principle by public actors, therefore it can examine cases of discrimination that take place in the public educational system. In fact, the Office of the Ombudsman has frequently addressed issues related to the education of Roma children<sup>13</sup>.

In October 2008, the Ministry of Education issued a **circular**<sup>14</sup> where it emphasised the inclusion of Roma children in the reception and tutorial/support classes and presented the framework for the establishment and functioning of such classes. Two years later, on 20 August 2010 the Ministry of Education issued another **special circular**<sup>15</sup> that pointed to the obligation of school headmasters to assist and encourage the enrolment and participation of Roma children in schools. The circular reminded headmasters that Roma children have a **special Student Card** that follows them from school to school. Because of the frequent moving of families this Card allows schools to trace back the school history of the child and ensures a continuation in the school career of the child. The ministry thus invited school headmasters to enrol children even without the appropriate documentation (proving their residence), even if they were older than the class they should attend. It emphasized that the equality of all citizens is a Constitutional principle and should not be violated, and that **any reluctance to enrol or effort to segregate Roma from non Roma children is a violation of this principle, introduces discrimination among Greek citizens and is against the obligations of Greece emanating from international conventions** (such as the UN Convention for Children Rights and the European Convention of Human Rights). The Circular encouraged cooperation among all relevant services (health services for instance for the vaccination of children and general family support services) for the successful inclusion of Roma children in the national education system.

Since 2011 and the inauguration of the **National Roma Integration Strategies**, Greece has implemented policy incentives to increase school attendance *via* two programmes – ‘*Education of Roma Children*’<sup>16</sup> and ‘*Roma Children in Macedonia and Thrace*’<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> In fact a special office on Roma was inaugurated. The official website for the Roma Ombudsman: <<http://www.synigoros.gr/?i=maps.el>>. The Annual Reports of the Ombudsman always contain a specific section on the discrimination in education of Roma. See i.e. *Annual Report 2013*, p. 104, *et seq.*

<sup>14</sup> 116184/Γ1/10-9-2008.

<sup>15</sup> Φ.3/960/102679/Γ1.

<sup>16</sup> The official website of the programme: <<http://www.keda.gr/roma/>>.

<sup>17</sup> The official website of the programme: <<http://roma.eled.auth.gr/>>.

After the ECtHR decision in *Sampanis and Others v. Greece* (2008) and on 22 February 2011 the Deputy Prosecutor of the Greek Supreme Court issued a relevant “**Urgent Written Order**”<sup>18</sup> (with Protocol Number 720/22-02-2011) addressed to all local prosecutors of Greece, affollowing a a letter (16 February 2011) on behalf of the “*Coordinated Organisations and Communities for Roma Human Rights in Greece*” (SOKADRE) asking him to investigate thoroughly cases of educational exclusion and marginalisation of Roma children in “school-ghettos”, contrary to Greek law as well as following several circulars and other clear instructions from the Prosecution Office of the Supreme Court itself<sup>19</sup>. According to his above Order, the Deputy Prosecutor of the Greek Supreme Court officially asked all local prosecutors of Greece to “*take care of striking the phenomenon of exclusion of Roma from the public educational system of Greece, in a way that any phobic attitude towards Roma children should be eliminated and that their unhindered equal - without exclusion and discrimination - integration to all structures of the State should be ensured*”. It is noteworthy that although the above document (“Order”) of the Prosecution does not refer strictly to the specific provisions of the Greek anti-discrimination legislation, there is no doubt that at least this concrete judicial authority has fully realised the tremendous importance of the enforcement of the existing legal framework against discrimination.

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<sup>18</sup> *Greek Helsinki Monitor, Catalytic intervention of the Supreme Prosecutor on the educational exclusion of Roma*, 21 March 2011, <<http://cm.greekhelsinki.gr/index.php?sec=192&cid=3741>>.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter 4 – Specific priorities

### 4.1. Introduction to the National Roma Integration Strategy

As we saw in the previous chapter, Greece, as an EU member state, has introduced national strategies for the social inclusion and equal treatment of Roma. These strategies include national policies for the area of education. Therefore, the specific priorities for a national education plan can be derived from **two national strategies on Roma integration of 2001-2008 and 2012-2020**.<sup>20</sup> Since the first strategy has already been concluded and evaluated, focus will be put mainly on the most recent strategy which will end in 2020. First, it is important to note the observations made in relation to the first strategy since it played a major role in formulating the current strategy.

The strategic approach of the 2012-2020 National Strategy for Social Integration of Roma follows the reasoning set out in the earlier Integrated Action Plan for the Social Integration of Greek Gypsies (2001-2008), while adopting specific courses of action which reflect the findings of the evaluation of the results of interventions included in the study, co-financed by the European Social Fund, Inventory of the Current Situation of the Roma in Greece<sup>21</sup>.

The main objective of the **Integrated Action Plan for the Social Integration of Greek Gypsies** (2001-2008) was the implementation of a housing policy for Greek Roma, in conjunction with other measures to support and promote their social integration (training, education, promotion into employment, provision of health services and cultural and sporting amenities).

A basic conclusion from evaluation of the Integrated Action Plan (2001-2008) is that in terms of planning it responded to the urgent necessity of an integrated approach on the basis of the identified needs and problems of Greek Roma, while on the operational level the above basic option was not secured, as a result of the following factors:

1. the organisational weaknesses of a quasi Operational Programme which never actually acquired full operational structure, infrastructure or implementation and monitoring mechanisms, or, above all, a single centre in charge of coordinating the various actions.
2. the decision to adopt a thematic (vertical) instead of a spatial (horizontal) approach for the intervention.
3. the failure to make resources available on a regular, consistent basis.
4. the gradual downgrading of the interventions during implementation – as a result of the absence of strict specifications and shortage of evaluation and monitoring procedures.

Taking into account the shortcomings of the preceding programming period, the **National Strategy for Social Integration of Roma 2012-2020** has set the following objectives<sup>22</sup>:

- the systematic and comprehensive inventory and description of the current situation
- a review of the rationality of the planning priorities, based on the results of the aforesaid inventory
- a redefinition of the priorities on the short-, medium- and long-term levels, based on the existing needs of the target group and the resources (human and financial) available
- the establishment of an administrative mechanism for the integrated management of the national strategy.

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<sup>20</sup> The strategies may be found in English at <[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma-integration/greece/national-strategy/national\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma-integration/greece/national-strategy/national_en.htm)>

<sup>21</sup> See the National Strategic Framework for Roma (hereinafter National Strategy for Roma), December 2011, at <[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma\\_greece\\_strategy\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_greece_strategy_en.pdf)>

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Moreover, it is intended to develop a **long-term Multi-Sector Action Plan** to be given specific shape on the basis of the principles of social operational planning by sector (sectoral operational plans), on the regional level (top-down process), with integrated interventions to be implemented in the country's local municipalities and communes, and with the necessary synergy among different levels and interventions – both sectoral and spatial.

The greatest concentrations of the settled Roma population are to be found in the major conurbations and in rural regions, where there are most opportunities for employment. The major concentrations of Roma (over 1,000 families) are to be found in four (4) regions (Eastern Macedonia-Thrace, Thessaly, Western Greece and Central Macedonia).<sup>23</sup>

The bulk of the Roma population (especially the older age groups) continue to be illiterate, and although school attendance is more common among younger Roma than among their parents and grandparents, their involvement in the educational process must still be characterised as insufficient to strengthen and improve their vocational status and mobility. Most Roma children aged 12 and above leave school in order to find work to supplement the family income. School attendance is often disrupted by a change in location, financial problems requiring the children to work, distance from school, racism in school, lack of suitable, permanent accommodation, and so on.

The primary objective of the Action Plan is to end the social exclusion of the Roma and to create the necessary conditions for the social integration of Roma individuals, whether Greeks or foreigners residing lawfully in Greece. As for specific priorities for the field of education, see the sub-chapter below.

#### 4.2. Priorities set by the National Strategy for a national education plan

By reading the 2012-2020 National Strategy, a general objective concerning the education of Roma is established:

*“... so that by 2020 there will have been an increase in the number of Roma children enrolled in and attending compulsory education and acquiring the corresponding knowledge and skills..”*

More specifically, education is placed under “*Priority Axis 3*” of the National Strategy.<sup>24</sup> The main objective in respect of Roma education is to ensure that Roma children are part of the school system, reducing drop-out and failure rates, encouraging the children to continue through all levels of the system and thereby increasing levels of social, cultural and functional literacy. In respect of Roma adults, the key objective is to reduce illiteracy, increasing functional literacy – at least in the areas of reading, writing and numeracy.

Before moving on to listing the priorities of the national plan on education, the National Strategy notes that the Roma population suffers from particularly severe forms of social exclusion, seen most clearly in the relevant economic indicators and indicators of employment, and also in their living conditions (particularly in the case of those living in camps), in the Roma population's lifestyle and in their level of education.<sup>25</sup>

The relationship of Roma children to the school system – both cause and effect of their way of life and social exclusion – continues to be characterised by the following features<sup>26</sup>:

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15 *et seq.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15 *et seq.*

- Lack of pre-school education
- Delay in registering for school and entering the school system
- Low rates of school enrolment
- Poor attendance and high drop-out rate
- Poor performance
- Frequent failure to complete mandatory years of school attendance
- Racist attitudes in school environment

It is important to note that the Strategy recognises the link between the education of the Roma and their participation in the economy and employment sector, identifying educational integration as a step towards fulfilling their social integration. On the issue of racism, more will be elaborated in the chapter on national specific-subject since according to recent reports racism has become one of the most outstanding problems Greece currently needs to overcome.

Having identified the issues that need to be addressed, the National Strategy lists the following objectives:

1. Ensuring Roma children attend school and combating the high Roma drop-out rate
2. Ensuring Roma children attend all levels of education, reducing levels of failure at school
3. Combating stereotypes and prejudice in the local community, and among teachers and classmates
4. Increasing levels of social, cultural and functional literacy among Roma and integrating them into society
5. Empowering Roma families in their relationships with the school, and promoting the positive impact of education on their lives

Under the proposed measures to address the aforementioned priorities, the Strategy presents individual indicative actions on the basis of the relevant special objectives. Below is a chart that elaborates on these indicative actions. The left column contains the aim of the strategy and the responding right column offers the manner with which it is to be achieved.

TARGET / AIM	HOW TO ACHIEVE IT
<i>Explore needs and implement improvements to school infrastructures</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Examine the suitability of buildings</li> <li>- Check whether there is adequate school equipment</li> <li>- Ensure access to school for Roma children</li> </ul>
<i>Encourage and support the participation of Roma children in preschool education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Devise programmes to improve social skills of pre-school Roma children, in order to ease their integration into the school system</li> <li>- Organise health education seminars</li> <li>- Devise programmes to strengthen the relationship between Roma families and the school</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide suitable educational material to kindergartens with Roma children</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Regular intervention and monitoring to ensure Roma children are attending school during compulsory years of education</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carry out a study on the development of a mechanism to monitor and record population</li> <li>- Develop a monitoring and recording mechanism</li> <li>- Create instruments for monitoring registration, and evaluation of quality and frequency of school attendance</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Providing educational support for Roma children and social integration actions</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set up reception classes</li> <li>- Set up summer remedial classes</li> <li>- Provide information seminars on children's rights</li> <li>- Provide information on sex education issues and prevention of child/teenage pregnancies, with the emphasis on gender equality</li> <li>- Introduce programmes to tackle violence in schools</li> <li>- Develop extracurricular activities, with the emphasis on special skills (e.g. music, dance, maths)</li> <li>- Provide support for Roma families through mediators, social workers, psychologists, etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Creating actions to support teachers at all levels of compulsory education</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further training and awareness-raising programmes</li> <li>- Provide support and advice for teachers from psychologists and social workers</li> <li>- Explore the possibility of crediting teachers with extra points for pay and promotion if they work in schools with a Roma student population of over 30%</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Increase adult education and training, and special care for children in the 12-17 age group, where the school drop-out rate is high</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide information and encourage young people aged 18-30 to enrol in Second Chance Schools and Adult Further Training Centres</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduce special measures to encourage participation of Roma women in the above programmes</li> <li>- Offer special lifelong training seminars on management of staff and family income (micro financing), as well as arts teaching, to improve women's education</li> <li>- Develop a monitoring and support mechanism for children aged 12-17 entering the education system late or re-entering after absence</li> </ul>
<b><i>Providing incentives to enrol in and successfully complete secondary and tertiary education</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduce graduated cash prizes, rising in amount to reflect the degree of successful completion of each course of study</li> <li>- Disseminate the best practices relating to children from Roma communities who have benefited</li> <li>- Organise cultural actions and school competitions in special skills, with special provision for percentage of Roma children to receive prizes.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Informing local communities and raising local awareness of Roma issues</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Offer learning-through-experience seminars and conferences to raise awareness of Roma rights</li> <li>- Introduce actions to promote Roma culture, with at least 30% Roma population involvement</li> </ul>

As for the funding of the actions in the National Roma Strategy that are related to education, from September 2010 to the year 2013 two programmes were to be implemented with NSRF funding (National Strategic Reference Framework<sup>27</sup>), under the aegis of the Ministry of Education – total budget €11,287,500. These are the ‘Education of Roma Children’ programme, beneficiary the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, budget €8,387,500 and the ‘Education of Roma Children in Macedonia and Thrace’ programme, beneficiary the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, budget €2,900,000. Most of the actions referred to above are already under way as

<sup>27</sup> <<http://www.espa.gr/en/pages/staticwhatisespa.aspx>> The NSRF (National Strategic Reference Framework) 2007–2013 constitutes the reference document for the programming of European Union Funds at national level for the 2007–2013 period.

part of the programmes, and continued until 2013. Additional funds will be committed for the next period, 2014-2020.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4.3. More on the 'Education for Roma Children' Programme and the 'Education of Roma Children in Macedonia and Thrace' Programme

##### 4.3.1. Education for Roma Children<sup>29</sup>

The main purpose of the programme is to ensure the access of Roma children to preschool education and guarantee their enrolment to a primary education school, familiarise them with the school environment and finally keep them enrolled at least until they have completed the period of mandatory education.

In order to achieve this purpose, all relevant stakeholders such as school teachers, specialised scientists, social workers and psychologists have to contribute by undergoing the necessary training.

In essence, the programme seeks to ensure the harmonised integration of Roma students into the educational system, by actively minimising the number of primary school drop-outs and failure and by indirectly lifting any educational and social barriers the Roma face by empowering the members of their community.

Within this framework, the goals of the project are:

- To ensure the acceptance of these children by the teaching staff, the parents and society in general,
- To provide the teaching staff with updated information and educational material,
- To support the families with cultural characteristics, in order for them to be better prepared in supporting their own children,
- To raise public awareness amongst the administrative educational staff and the local community

The programme actions that were deemed necessary for fulfilling the aforementioned purpose are:

- To raise the number of Roma children enrolled in schools (mainly nursery and primary school)
- To extend the expected period of schooling (by minimising the number of drop-outs especially during the first years, i.e. primary school)
- To raise the number of Roma children that transit from primary to secondary education.
- To raise the number of children of Roma descent that complete the period of mandatory education.
- To inform and raise public awareness amongst Roma parents in order to convince them to facilitate and support the enrolment and constant presence of their children in school.
- To improve the acceptance conditions of Roma children set by the education administration, the local administration and local communities.

The aforementioned general goals of the programmed actions are basically maintained throughout the entire duration of the carried out programme.

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<sup>28</sup> *National Strategy for Roma, op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>29</sup> Information and data on this Programme are available at: < <http://www.keda.gr/roma/> >.

Therefore, the achievement of the goals and their expected results are carried out through the development of a concise and systemic plan of interventions and actions.

In relation to the interventions into school units, the programming includes actions that relate to the creation of favourable conditions for the integration and continuous attendance of Roma children in schools, an achievement that is expressed mainly through the encouragement of Roma children and their families especially, to first enrol to a school and second attend it. This supports on the one hand, their educational integration until their graduation in order to avoid phenomena of drop-outs and on the other hand, it ensures the acceptance of these children from the educational community as a whole and the elimination of their educational and social exclusion. Of course, the education of this specific group is highly affected by other ‘explosive’ issues affecting the particular group such as housing, health and sanitation, employment and linguistic differentialities. The contributors to the programme basically agree that for the structure of the Programme Actions up until now, the main target has been and will be the integration of Roma children in the field of education without any attempts of segregation either in separate buildings or classes that are intended solely for Roma children.

The actions included in the Programme are nine. Below is a chart that lists the action and details thereof:

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
<i>Supporting the access and attendance to preschool education</i>	For the encouragement of the access of Roma children that are at a preschool education age, the designing of encouragement actions for Roma parents in order to support the enrolment of their children in preschool education, the enrolment of preschoolers also in other relevant programmes such as immunisation, of young Roma students.
<i>Intra-school interventions for the school integration and support of continuing attendance</i>	<p>These intervention focus on the immediate and easy access to school through programmes of encouragement and raising awareness parallel to the linguistic and educational support of Roma students within and out of the school time curriculum.</p> <p><b>The sub-actions include also:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The function of two important support institutions, the Reception Classes and Tutoring Courses and general of supportive teaching, where personalised educational teaching is offered to cover</li> </ul>

any gaps in knowledge, and also to support these courses with materials, educational guidance and training.

- The organisation of summer courses for a smooth transition of Roma children from primary school to junior high school.
- Enacting the Programme of Cooperative Teaching, targeted at specific school units.
- The function of Workshops on Creative Activities (EDAM).
- Enabling the transport of Roma children to school.

***Supporting the access to Adult Training Centres and Second Opportunity Schools***

This will be done through the assistance of social workers and mediators, who will be called upon to investigate and identify the educational needs of Roma students and members of their families, and to encourage their participation in Literacy Programmes. As for the measures for the programme related to the employment of Roma adults, these include: support for the access and attendance of adults in structures and programmes created for this purpose. The promotion especially, of participation in literacy programmes of the KEE (Adult Training Centres), the enrolment and attendance of SDE (Second Opportunity Schools) as well as facilitating their access to such programmes. Moreover, this action includes the creation of Schools for Parents which aim to raise awareness and familiarise parents with the importance and value of a school environment as well as teach them to write and read.

***Training support for teachers***

Which aims to empower teachers but also offer them systemic training support and which will contribute to the immediate and support of the educational community, by promoting constantly a sense of interculturalism. The relevant sub-actions include:

1. Intra-school teacher's training that were divided into introductory and regular.
2. General training for Education Stakeholders that are involved in the actions of the Programme, for the Partners from the local peripheries, and the cooperating Universities, which were divided into introductory and general.
3. The distance training, which is technically and functionally supported and refers to the electronic availability of materials as wells as the organisation of online courses την εξ αποστάσεως επιμόρφωση.

***Offering Psycho-social Support***

With the aim of cooperating of school psychologists with members of the school community, for offering educational and psycho-social support to students and Roma parents as well as the training support for school teachers in order to facilitate the functionality of communication, understanding and expressing feelings, but also to understand and take advantage of the opportunity presented by diversity and educational evaluation and support.

***Connecting school, family and local community***

In order to create immediate communication and cooperation of school units attended by Roma children, with their families and local community stakeholders. The sub-actions include:

- Creating schools for parents,
- During population census, identifying how many pre-school children exist, since Municipalities do not have the necessary information on every Roma settlement or are not even aware of any settlements in their territory,
- Documentation of Roma population by the Programme partners themselves.

***School Networking***

Through the utilisation of Informatics

Technology for the documenting of the action demands in school networking, designing and developing a website for the presentation of the applications of the programme, by creating a interactive map for the presentation of Roma settlements where interventions are carried out through the programme, the designing and creation of parameters for tools of social networking (facebook, twitter, youtube channel) in order to support the communication and cooperation for actions and events that are relevant to the programme and the providing of information on:

- The network of partners,
- Information on every school participating in the programme,
- Information on the settlements participating in the programme.

### ***Publicity of the Programme***

Dissemination of the results of all the activities of the project to the broader society with the main purpose to fully inform and raise awareness amongst the broader community and the overall public, at central and regional level, for the purposes, directions, priorities and actions of "Education of Roma children" through a selected range of communication activities and media visibility. Thus creating a single integrated system with planned actions and events, using all appropriate means and methods to create a consensus among the public and citizens in general, a very "delicate" and important issue.

### ***Evaluation***

The expected results of the internal evaluation are to include as much as possible a detailed and illustrative capture of the full picture of training needs (students and teachers) and the recording of intervention methods for Roma families in order to reach the optimum level, attendance of Roma children at school and at all levels of education. The main target is, finally, to identify through the interim and final course of the

assessment, those structural measures to be taken by the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs, where necessary.

#### 4.3.2. Education of Roma Children in Macedonia and Thrace<sup>30</sup>

The Program “Education for Roma children in the regions of Central Macedonia, Western Macedonia, Eastern Macedonia and Thrace” is implemented in two axes, Axis 1 (Education for Roma children in the Regions of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, AP1/AUTH, MIS 303167) and Axis 2 (Education for Roma children in the Regions of Central Macedonia, Western Macedonia, AP2/AUTH, MIS 303169). It aims primarily at supporting and enhancing the access, regular attendance and progress of Roma children, including disabled children, at school in the lines of an inclusive paradigm that promotes equal, qualitative and fair participation of Roma children in school.

According to the inclusive approach, the educational actions of the Program have been designed in order to address mixed populations of students, that is, Roma and non-Roma children, so that all children develop cognitive and social skills through cross-cultural interaction. This can lead to the inclusive orientation of schools rather than the implementation of exclusionary practices. Additionally, Roma children receive, except for academic, socio-cultural support as well, inside and outside of school.

The Social Workers and Psychologists of the Program constitute a group of professionals whose interventions run across every action of the Program. As specified in the project design, the psychologists and social workers were employed to conduct field work, and at the onset of their employment they mapped the population as an immediate way of familiarizing themselves with their work context. It was also stipulated that this group of collaborators would attend monthly sessions for professional advice and support. These monthly support sessions administered by a psychologist, collaborator of the Program, have been kept diligently for the whole duration of the Program. They also meet with the Scientific and Coordinating Team of the Program regularly every month (as well as whenever a need arises) to debrief and discuss difficulties and dilemmas as well as successes and joys, a beneficial process for both parties in gaining valuable feedback, reflecting and redefining practice.

The role of psychologists-social workers is:

- to support children and their families,
- to support teachers at schools and the support structures implemented both at school and the field by the Program,
- to build bridges between school-family-community as well as the wider community and its institutions.

The programme consists of nine priority actions. These are listed in the following table:

<b>PRIORITY ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
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<sup>30</sup> Information and data of the programme can be found at < <http://peroma.web.auth.gr/peroma/> >.

***Enhancement of access and attendance to preschool education***

Roma children are underrepresented in nursery and preschool settings. Given the importance of preschool education for their socialization and the acquisition of the Greek language which is the second language of the children, Action 1 has focused on the improvement of preschool children's school attendance. To do this, Roma preschool children, including disabled children, were mapped and families were sensitized about the significance of their children's systematic attendance at school. This was attempted:

- by the mediation of social workers and psychologists and Roma mediators who act in the field on a daily basis building relationship of trust between the families and the school,
- by the collaborative team teaching support (i.e. providing a second teacher who teaches in collaboration with the main class teacher) to 6 selected kindergartens in order to support the equal participation of Roma children in the educational procedure,
- by implementing differentiated educational approaches to enhance the teaching and learning process through theatre, music, environmental and psychokinetic education. These activities are the product of cooperation between specialized scientists of the Program and class teachers. The result is the creation of an attractive and cooperative learning environment where cross-group interactions are promoted. The activities are addressed to Roma and non-Roma children within the framework of the regular school program. Both makeshift and commercial materials are implemented for these activities; a pool of materials has been created.

***School interventions for school inclusion and the support of regular attendance***

The access, the attendance and progress of children at primary school constitutes the main purpose of this action. The role of mediators is crucial in this action as well. Within the framework of this action the following interventions take place:

- Mapping of the school age population
- Arrangement and provision of the

necessary prerequisites (vaccination, registration in the municipal records and other administrative pendency, busing of children, etc) for the registration and attendance of children at school

- Support and awareness-raising of the families with regard to the role of education in the social mobility of the group
- Support of the children's school attendance through
  - Collaborative team teaching support in the six schools of central intervention. The collaborative team teaching support aims at the enhancement of the cognitive and social support of Roma children in crucial phases of their school life. Another goal is the empowerment of class teachers through the cooperation and exchange of professional experience and the use of good educational practices in multicultural school environments.
  - Differentiated, cross-curricular pedagogical approaches through theatre, music, environmental and psychokinetic education, similar to that described in Action 1,
  - Support teaching (in primary and secondary education), the only educational intervention concerning exclusively Roma children. The lessons are offered at school –within or after the school program– and in Roma settlements. In addition, there are summer lessons to support students in the transition from one level of education to the next,
- Creation of a bank of materials for the development of cognitive skills of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade children, mainly in the subjects of language and mathematics,
- Enrichment of school libraries of cooperating schools with selected books of children's literature and with the parallel training of teachers for the use of literature for literacy development. In addition, there is extra material (on the

Program's site) with suggestions for the use of literature for language and skill development.

***Enhancement of the access to Adult Education Centers and to Second Chance Schools***

The education of adolescents and adults has a character of social and critical literacy.

- Roma women participate in groups of advising regarding family prevention, family programming, financial and professional issues.
- Upon Roma's request, classes of training in sewing, hair-dressing and driving were created that aimed at stressing and enhancing literacy skills through the acquisition of technical skills.
- Adult literacy classes. A number of Roma that participated in these classes took part in examinations and obtained primary school certificates.
- A number of adult Roma with the encouragement of the psychologists-social workers of the Program continue their education at Second Chance Schools to obtain their secondary school certificate.

***Professional development of educators***

The aim of this action is to support teachers, principals, school advisors and education executives through different forms of interventions for professional development (introductory, regular, general and distance learning). The professional development interventions familiarize educators with current pedagogical approaches for the effective teaching in multicultural classrooms, the application of differentiated instruction and the establishment of an inclusive learning environment. A long-term goal is the creation of a network of professionals who will function as multipliers in the educational and local community so that prejudice and discrimination against the Roma are eliminated. Issues raised at the interventions included: antiracist, cross-cultural and inclusive education, social and cultural characteristics of the target group, stereotypes, discrimination and social exclusion, experiential learning, differentiation, cross-curricular approaches to knowledge,

project, action research, teaching Greek as a second language.

Distance training for educators of secondary education.

An interactive training process where teachers collaborate with university faculty members, collaborators of the program, to organize, implement and assess an action research project in their diverse classes.

### ***Psychosocial support***

The work of psychologists-social workers of the Program is the focal point of this action. The psychologists-social workers are responsible for:

- the psychosocial support of children and their families,
- awareness-raising of educators in identifying issues related to the psychosocial health of children,
- offering help to parents and supporting them in managing family crises
- empowering parents in their role of supporting their children's school attendance,
- the creation of a communication network and cooperation between parents, the school, special services,
- supporting educators who face certain problems in their work with Roma children,
- the cooperation with educational authorities (principals, school advisors, education office directors) for managing and solving problems,
- empowering Roma with regard to their communication with services and institutions, in an emancipatory way, as a learning procedure for the sustainable development of social skills.

### ***School- family-local community relationship***

The aim of this action is the functional, two-way relationship between the school, the family and the Roma community. The school-family-community link, a prerequisite in the educational process in general, acquires a greater significance in the case of the educational inclusion of vulnerable groups. The social

workers and psychologists accompanied by mediators:

- visit the settlements in order to sensitize and familiarize parents with the school culture (and within the framework of Actions 1, 2 and 5), in order for parents to be convinced about the value of education, to trust school and familiarize themselves with its structure and function,
- make alliances with informal leaders of the community (eg, Pan-Hellenic Cultural, Educational, Creative Association of Women of Dendropotamos). The mediation of key persons in the community builds relationships of trust between the family and the professionals (collaborators of the Program and school teachers), so that parents feel confident to be actively involved in the education of their children, to visit the school regularly, to participate in parents' associations, to attend school events, etc.

Within the framework of this action,

- two Centers of Self-Organization and Coordination of the Roma Education Program (KASPER) were established, one in Orestiada Prefecture of Evros, and the second one in Karyes, in the Prefecture of Kavala, in order to attract the Roma population to a center that they could consider a point of reference, a hospitable and open place that hosts actions for them (eg, support classes, meetings for informing the parents etc),
- two festivals were held, one in Didimotiho, Prefecture of Evros, and one in Thessaloniki, where Roma and non-Roma people collaborated and participated. The events assumed the role of creative bridges between the local community, the Roma and the school and took place in public places in an attempt to eliminate the isolation and exclusion of Roma in their own particular places.

<p><b><i>School networking</i></b></p>	<p>The aim is the networking of the program's school units through the use of ICT (Information and Communications Technology) in order to provide services to teachers, students and the administrative staff. This is realized through the design, implementation and technical support of a web portal which offers the desired services.</p> <p>The action of networking includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• constant enrichment of the electronic library,</li> <li>• newsletters,</li> <li>• registration of users, posting of material on the website and use of the material by teachers,</li> <li>• posting of educational material [early literacy guide, language training, literacy and literacy practices in mixed classrooms, educational material of OEPEK (Organization for Teachers' In-service Training), material for reception classes, etc],</li> <li>• announcement of the Program activity and events,</li> <li>• registration to the trainers' record,</li> <li>• creation of a website for Action 4.3 (Distance Training),</li> <li>• registration of users and posting of material on the website for Action 4.3,</li> <li>• provision of computers for 68 schools.</li> </ul> <p>Certain reports regarding the website are at the Program's disposal: registered users, statistics of visits, posted material, installed software modules, etc.</p>
<p><b><i>Publicity</i></b></p>	<p>The aim is to disseminate the actions and results of the Program so that both the Roma and the wider community are informed at local and national level, in order to support the intervention and to eliminate prejudice regarding the Roma population.</p>
<p><b><i>Evaluation</i></b></p>	<p>The aim of the evaluation of the Program is to give a full account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• of the needs (attendance, drop-out,</li> </ul>

disability) of Roma children,

- of the educational community that is directly involved,
- of the social status of Roma families,
- of the forms of alternative intervention practices and their results.

Professor Mary Kalantzis, Dean of the School of Education of Illinois University and Bill Cope, professor at the same University, have been selected as evaluators. Within the framework of the Action, the evaluation team has visited settlements and has met collaborators of the Program and Roma residents of the regions. The intermediate report of the evaluators has been positive. The final report will be submitted at the end of the Program.

#### 4.4. Evaluation

The historical record provided by three ECtHR judgments -and the overall picture reflected by recent FRA statistics - revealing 35% segregation in mainstream schools attended by Roma<sup>31</sup> - do not necessarily allow for optimism.

The ‘Education of Roma Children’ Programme supervised by the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the ‘Roma Children in Macedonia and Thrace’ Programme supervised by the Aristotle University of Thessalonika, are two ongoing initiatives which *inter alia* aim at combating school segregation directed against Roma children.

On 26.11.2013 the Ministry of Education issued a circular on the School attendance of Roma children for the implementation of the aforementioned programmes. The circular also reproduces specific guidelines for other measures that should be taken in order to avoid segregation.

In Greece, against the fact that exclusion of Roma students from ordinary schools, segregation and marginalization are prohibited by law, in many cases school directors deny their involvement alleging insufficiency of space, lack of teaching personnel, as well as over-numbered classes.

The aforementioned circular does not simply invite school directors to avoid such practices, but also to encourage the attendance of Roma children. Both school directors and directors of the educational departments have to identify Roma children living in their region and take all necessary actions in order to guarantee full enrolment.

As far as their school registration is concerned, the Ministry of Education stresses that Roma children must be accepted in pre-school and primary education, even if they are unregistered or they do not possess a certificate of permanent residence.

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<sup>31</sup> FRA, *Education: The situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States. Roma Survey - Data in Focus* (forthcoming in 2014).

The absence of permanent residence can be a common characteristic for Roma population, which may regularly move between different regions of Greece. This is the reason why the circular provides for the supply of the “Student Card”. Once a Roma student is enrolled in any educational structure, he/she is provided with a card which indicates his/her personal information and certifies their schooling in a specific structure. In case of sudden change of residence, this card allows for the automatic registration of the student in a new school. This procedure may be repeated unlimitedly during the school year.

The “**Student Card**” follows the rather successful pattern of the “Travelling Student Card”, which was first implemented in 1997. Possessing such a card, a Roma student could enrol in different schools around the country without any further documentation. This single document bypassed former enrolment problems consisting of keeping track of medical certificates and vaccinations. Initially, the Ministry of Education reported having issued 1,260 cards during the school year 1997-1998. Sadly, a research conducted by the University of Thessaly in 2007, recorded that out of 7,991 identified Roma students around the country, only 76 had used this card.

It should not be neglected that *segregation is often the result of harsh reactions of non-Roma parents and parents’ associations against the enrolment of Roma children due to fears and prejudices concerning their health status*. In some cases, the enrolment of Roma students cannot be assured due to their non-vaccination. School directors are urged to contact the health services involved in order to schedule the necessary health exams and vaccinations.

Both the basic aspiration and the objective of the two ongoing university programs on Education of Roma children (examined earlier), is the inclusion of Roma children in the “official school” and not in an “antechamber” destined for Roma students exclusively.

Both programs recognise that the education of this social group is determined -or even predetermined- by a rather “explosive” general context connected to serious problems in housing, health services and work, as well as to linguistic heterogeneity.

The basic pillars of these initiatives, which concern segregation issues, are summarized as following:

- Enforcement of the access of Roma children to preschool education. As a general rule, access to preschool education has not only a self-value but also supports the future integration in primary education.
- Linguistic and educational promotion of Roma students, inside or outside the class. The function of two institutions is crucial in this direction: the “Reception Classes” and “Supportive Teaching”, where personalized education is provided in order to respond to cognitive weaknesses. Summer classes are also scheduled in order to facilitate the transition from primary to secondary education.
- Guarantee the access to “Second Chance Schools” or adult education institutes set up by the Ministry of Education under the “Lifelong Learning Program”. Social assistances and mediators are invited to assess the educational needs of Roma students.
- Promotion of multi-cultural and inter-cultural training of teaching staff. There are two kinds of training: one addressed to Education (higher) officers and members of the supportive network in the Prefectures and another, distant-training *via* e-classes.
- Providing with psychosocial support both to Roma community (students and parents) and education professionals in order to improve effective communication, mutual understanding and expression of emotions. Understanding and optimizing differences is another important key-element.

- Interaction between school, family and local society. A very important objective is to keep record of the general Roma as well as the student Roma population of each region. There are municipalities in Greece, which do not recognize that Roma reside in their territory.

The aforementioned programmes along with the other measures included in the recent circular of the Ministry of Education, do not imply that the fight against segregation is a successful one. Besides, the evaluation and the effectiveness of the university programs will be considered in the future.

The presentation of these measures, here, firstly demonstrates that segregation is an existing situation in Greece which demands drastic solution. Secondly, it underlines the fact that, this time, Greece is waiting and has to prove the effectiveness of the new ongoing actions<sup>32</sup>. Such effectiveness has not been the case up till now.

The very recent report on the implementation of the “EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies” observes that the first signs of improvement in the lives of Roma are slowly starting to show. This is an overall assessment. As far as the Roma education issues in Greece are concerned, the report is rather reserved<sup>33</sup>, assuming that Greece will need to put in place stronger measures to end and reverse the situation through a quality, accessible and mainstream inclusive education system. More information on the EU conclusions on Greece will be provided in the sub-section below.

However, it should be stressed that both the ‘Education of Roma Children’ Programme as well as the ‘Roma Children in Macedonia and Thrace’ Programme are noted as “promising practises”, which include many innovative aspects that may improve school attendance rates. It is also reported that a centre in Volos had first-rate results at getting children to attend school, among other things. Besides, thanks to these programmes, the Greek government has been able to have a record of the Roma communities, issue official papers like identity cards and vaccination records for children<sup>34</sup>.

#### 4.5. Key steps and identified gaps in the Strategy

In 2012 the European Commission issued a country factsheet on the progress Greece has made with its National Strategy for Roma Integration. Concerning the area of education, the Commission noted that the positive key elements of the national strategy included:

- Reduction of early drop-outs at all levels of education, reduction of adult illiteracy
- Supporting participation of Roma in pre-school education
- Systemic monitoring of enrolment and attendance of Roma children on all compulsory education
- Providing information on children rights.

On the other hand, the factsheet identified a gap in the strategy. It stated that it needed to focus on desegregation and applying an integrated approach. There is also a need to enforce full compulsory education, strengthen learning support and fight prejudices.

In spring 2014 the Commission adopted its assessment on the progress made in the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies in the four key areas of education, employment, healthcare and housing, as well as in the fight against discrimination and the use of

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<sup>32</sup> See here a list of pending cases concerning educational segregation  
<[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/execution/Reports/pendingCases\\_en.asp?CaseTitleOrNumber=sampani&StateCode=&SectionCode=>](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/execution/Reports/pendingCases_en.asp?CaseTitleOrNumber=sampani&StateCode=&SectionCode=>).

<sup>33</sup> European Commission, *Report on the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies*, COM(2014) 209 final - 2.4.2014, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> European Commission, *The European Union and Roma-Factsheet, Greece*, 4.4.2014.

funding. It issued yet another factsheet analysing the progress and shortcomings of the National Strategy. In the area of education it noted that since 2011:

- Policy incentives were implemented to increase school attendance via two programmes – ‘Education of Roma Children’ and ‘Roma Children in Macedonia and Thrace’.

It identified the gaps that still needed to be overcome in order for the programme to progress further:

- Need to develop systematic measures to reinforce inclusion in compulsory education
- Ensure access to high quality and inclusive early childhood education and childcare, as well as preschool education
- Need to ensure proper monitoring of enrolment and attendance
- Reinforce desegregation measures

By comparing the two factsheets, we can see that the gaps have actually grown since 2011. The EU finds that Greece still falls short from developing a concise strategy that will ensure the full integration of Roma children in the area of education.

However, a number of aspects need to be seriously considered if Roma education policies in Greece are to be effectively implemented and with a view to produce sustainable results for Roma inclusion such as:

- Stronger focus on desegregation and an integrated approach is necessary. There is still need to enforce full compulsory education, strengthen learning support and fight prejudices (2011)<sup>35</sup>.
- There is a need to develop systematic measures to reinforce inclusion in compulsory education. Ensure access to high quality and inclusive early childhood education and childcare, as well as pre-school education; need to ensure proper monitoring of enrolment and attendance; to reinforce desegregation measures (2014)<sup>36</sup>.
- Greek schools are funded through the central budget of the Ministry of Education according to number of children and special needs requirements of schools (eg, building maintenance). This budget is complemented by municipality funds to cover additional activities (eg. sports, minor maintenance issues, etc). The amount of local funds available for schools varies according to the finances of the various municipalities. In 2011, Zones of Educational Priority (that included areas with Roma) were identified and targeted for priority resources (prior to 2011 no special provisions were made for schools in socio-economically deprived areas). Cuts to the education budget however have meant that this policy has not been implemented.
- The Greek educational system does not have any anti-discrimination provisions. No monitoring mechanisms are in place to record instances of racism, xenophobia, intolerance, or discrimination. Greece has not ratified the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education. In 2005, Greece did adopt more general anti-discrimination legislation (Law 3304/2005 extending to education as well), but it has not been actively implemented.
- The right of Roma children to education is prevented not only due to the movement of many families in search of seasonal agricultural work, but also because of the chronic marginalization of Roma communities, which often leads children to illiteracy and labour exploitation.

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<sup>35</sup> EU: *Discrimination*, Greece: Country Fact Sheet, 2012, available at: <[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/country\\_factsheets\\_2012/greece\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/country_factsheets_2012/greece_en.pdf)>.

<sup>36</sup> EU: *Roma Integration by EU country*, Greece, available at: <<http://ec.europa.eu/justice/roma-integration/greece/>>.

## Chapter 5 – Case studies

There are three types of segregation. Namely, segregation between schools where most Romani children attend Roma-majority schools - segregation within schools when in mainstream education Romani children are separated from the others in classes and other facilities - segregation into special schools, including schools for children with mild intellectual disabilities. Greece has only presented segregation of the first two categories therefore the third type of segregation cannot be presented.

In fact, in Greece segregation may take the form of informal spatial separation of the Roma minority children in separate school annexes created near a Roma camp with the excuse that they thus can better cater to the needs of the Roma children, but with the implicit scope of keeping these children physically away from the local ‘normal’ school. A former secretary of state in Intercultural Education and a local councillor note in the area of Aspropyrgos, in the western outskirts of Athens that there had been acute problems of rejection of the local Roma population by the local Pontic Greek and overall Greek population, which have led among other things to the set up of a separate Roma school<sup>37</sup>. Pontic Greeks have arrived in the area in the last 15 years, they are Greek citizens like the Roma of course, and are locally a majority. Roma in this area are generally nomadic, or in any case, move frequently between this place and other parts of Greece depending on where job opportunities arise and many among them come from other Balkan and central eastern European countries. These features create additional challenges for their local integration.

This type of direct segregation is against the Greek Constitution but is supported by local actors with the justification that Roma children are not vaccinated and suffer from various skin or other contagious diseases, thus representing a health hazard for other children<sup>38</sup>. A former secretary of State that had taken a special interest in Roma children integration in schools confirms that such risks truly exist and that he, as a secretary of state, had to face such incidents where primary school teachers had been infected. The Ministry as a response had issued a circular reminding school headmasters of the protocol for registering Roma children including their accompanying them to the local health centre for vaccinations, the need to overlook the lack of residence certificates and the importance not to turn away Roma children from schools. The importance of health related assistance to Roma children is also confirmed by an NGO chairperson working with Roma children.

Apart from this form of acute segregation and complete rejection of Roma minority children, there are more subtle ways of indirect segregation, notably ethnic selection that appears to be practiced informally in some schools which refuse migrant or Roma children with the excuse that there are no more free places in the school. Such practices have been indirectly documented in a recent research<sup>39</sup> and have also been referred to by teachers and parents in the areas concerned. The relevant testimonies however are indirect: informants accuse their neighbouring schools who are seen as ‘elitist’, all native children schools, of practicing such informal ethnic selection with the excuse that the school is full.

*De facto* segregation and resistance of Greek majority (non Roma) parents and local authorities against de-segregation has been registered in several places across Greece. While recent

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<sup>37</sup> Triandafyllidou and Kouki, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>39</sup> E. Markou (2010), Διαδικασίες θεσμικής διάκρισης και σχολικές δομές: η θέση του διευθυντή σε πολυπολιτισμικά και διαπολιτισμικά σχολεία. [Processes of institutional discrimination and school structures: the role of school principals in multicultural and intercultural schools] paper presented at a conference in Athens, October 2010.

governments are paying lip service to the fight against Roma pupil segregation<sup>40</sup>, in practice problems persist<sup>41</sup>.

Indicative of Roma children exclusion from mainstream schools is the case of five localities where true local conflicts about the inclusion or segregation of Roma children from mainstream schools have been registered when the Ministry sought to enforce the ‘bussing’ of children and their dispersion in several schools of the area (in Aspropyrgos, near Athens, in Sofades near Karditsa, Ntamaria and Athili near the town of Lamia, and in Peraia near Salonica).

Local authorities (mayor, prefect) in these areas in agreement with non Roma parents prevented Roma children from going to school (for instance the municipality refused to hire a school bus that would bring the children from the Roma settlement to school). After a series of protests and the mobilisation of the Greek Helsinki Monitor, the public prosecutor of the Supreme Court (Areios Pagos) intervened (in September 2010 and in February 2011) and asked local public prosecutors to stop the segregation of Roma children from schools within their districts. Left wing parties and the Greens brought the issue also in Parliament in September 2011.

In identifying case-studies it is important to look at those instances that have made it through the judicial system and even reached the ECtHR. ECtHR judgements are helpful for the researcher since they also contain a factual background to the case under examination and the decision is always published online. What is more, the ECtHR moves to the application of specific standards which constitute indicators for the monitoring of educational plans in national Roma strategies. This Chapter will examine three cases of Roma school segregation (the first two are connected). The indicators relevant to the facts of each case have been included in brackets within the main body of the text. The first two refer to the enrolment in a separate school facility and the last concerns the enrolment in a separate school.

#### 5. 1. *Sampanis and Others v. Greece* (2008): Enrolment in separate school facility

The 11 applicants (Greek nationals of Roma origin) were living in Psari, an authorised residential site near Aspropyrgos (Greece). The applicants brought the case out of concern that the authorities’ failure to provide schooling for their children during the 2004-2005 school year and the subsequent placement of their children in special classes, in an annexe to the main Aspropyrgos primary school building, was a measure related to the Roma origin of the children.

On 21 September 2004 the applicants visited, with other Roma parents, the premises of the Aspropyrgos primary schools in order to enrol their children. According to the applicants, the head teachers of two schools had *refused to enrol* their children on the ground that they had not received any instructions on this matter from the competent ministry (indicator: Measure for the enrolment – registration of Roma Children). The head teachers allegedly informed them that as soon as the necessary instructions had been received they would be invited to proceed with the appropriate formalities. However, the parents were apparently never invited to enrol their children.

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<sup>40</sup> Fox and Vidra, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>41</sup> See “ANTIGONE” *Annual Report 2011, 2012 and 2013*; The Greek Ombudsman, Department of Children’s Rights, *Parallel Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*, (April 2012), available at: <<http://www.synigoros.gr/resources/parallel-report-un--3.pdf>>; Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention*, Greece, (August 2012), available at: <[http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/co/CRC\\_C\\_GRC\\_CO\\_2-3.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/co/CRC_C_GRC_CO_2-3.pdf)>. See also from the Greek National Commission of Human Rights (GNCHR): GNCHR, “Comments on the draft Second periodic Report of Greek Republic on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights”, 2013, <[http://www.nchr.gr/images/pdf/apofaseis/ellinikes\\_ektheseis\\_en\\_ell\\_org/OHE/Parathrhseis\\_EEDA\\_prosYP\\_EKS\\_DSAPD.pdf](http://www.nchr.gr/images/pdf/apofaseis/ellinikes_ektheseis_en_ell_org/OHE/Parathrhseis_EEDA_prosYP_EKS_DSAPD.pdf)>; GNCHR, “Report and Proposals on the Roma rights”, *Annual Report 2009*, pp. 100 *et seq.*; GNCHR, “Proposals for the Protection of Roma in Greece”, *Annual Report 2001*, pp. 179 *et seq.*

The Greek Government claimed that the applicants had simply approached the schools to obtain information with a view to the enrolment of their children, and that the head mistress had told them what documents were necessary for that purpose. Subsequently, in November and December 2004, *a delegation of primary school teachers from Aspropyrgos visited the Psari Roma camp to inform and persuade parents of the need to enrol their children* (indicator: Racially/ethnically biased/neutral systems which include procedural guarantees, substantial and for informing the parents/legal representatives of children on enrolment system and the consequences of the decision to enrol). An informal meeting was convened on 23 September 2004 and it was decided, firstly, that pupils at the age of initial school admission could be taught on the existing premises of the Aspropyrgos primary schools, and secondly, that *additional classes* (indicator: Specific measures for the prevention of difficulties in following the school curriculum) would be created for older children, to prepare them for integration into ordinary classes.

On 9 June 2005, **23 children of Roma origin**, including the applicants' children, were enrolled for the school year 2005-2006. According to the Government, the number of children came to **54**. In September and October 2005, from the first day of the school year, *non-Roma parents protested about the admission to primary school of Roma children and blockaded the school, demanding that the Roma children be transferred to another building* (indicator: Promoting a culture of anti-racism and non-discrimination). The police had to intervene several times to maintain order and prevent illegal acts being committed against pupils of Roma origin.

On 25 October 2005 the applicants signed, according to them under pressure, a statement drafted by primary school teachers to the effect that they wanted their children to be *transferred to a building separate from the school* (indicator: Desegregation measures - enrolment measures, selection and distribution of children that do not lead to segregation). Thus, from 31 October 2005, the applicants' children were given classes in another building and the blockade of the school was lifted. Three classes were housed in prefabricated classrooms on land belonging to the municipality of Aspropyrgos. In April 2007, the Roma children were transferred to a new primary school set up in Aspropyrgos in September 2007.

Key findings of the Court were the following: even though the incidents of a racist nature that took place in front of Aspropyrgos primary school in September and October 2005 could not be imputed to the Greek authorities, it could nevertheless be presumed that those incidents influenced the decision to place pupils of Roma origin in an annexe to the primary school. There was a strong *presumption of discrimination* and that *it was for the Government to show that this difference in treatment was the result of objective factors, unrelated to ethnic origin*. Whilst the evidence did not show that the applicants had met with an explicit refusal by the school authorities, *given the Roma community's vulnerability and considering that Article 14 requires in certain circumstances a difference of treatment in order to correct inequality*, the competent authorities should have recognised the particularity of the case and *facilitated the enrolment of the Roma children*, even if some of the requisite administrative documents were not readily available. Due to *Greek law recognising the specific nature of the Roma community's situation and domestic legislation providing for the possibility of enrolling pupils at primary school simply by means of a declaration signed by someone with parental authority*, that this obligation should have been particularly clear to the Aspropyrgos school authorities as they were aware of the problem of providing schooling for the children living in Psari camp and of the need to enrol them at primary school. The competent authorities had not adopted a *single, clear criterion in choosing which children to place in the special preparatory classes*. In addition, whilst the declared objective of the preparatory classes was for the pupils concerned to attain the level of education which would enable them to enter ordinary classes in due course, there was no evidence that the preparatory classes facilitated this process. Moreover, the Court was not satisfied that the applicants had been able to assess all the aspects of

the situation and the consequences of their consent to the transfer of their children to a separate building.

Finally, the Court concluded that the conditions of school enrolment for those children and their placement in *special preparatory classes* resulted in *discrimination* against them and constituted a violation of Article 14 of the Convention taken together with Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 in respect of each of the applicants.

#### 5. 2. *Sampani and Others v. Greece* (2012): Enrolment in separate school facility

On 11 December 2012, in the case *Ioanna Sampani and Others v. Greece*<sup>42</sup>, filed by 140 Roma (**98 children** and 42 parents) through the NGO human rights organisation Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM), the European Court of Human Rights ruled that there was evidence of a practice of discrimination under Article 14 of the European Convention of Human Rights in conjunction with Article 2 of Protocol No. 1, since it was found out that the operation of the school between 2008 and 2010 had resulted in further discrimination against the applicants.

The application concerned the *continuing racist educational segregation* of Roma children to a *Roma-only ghetto school*, namely the 12<sup>th</sup> Elementary School of Aspropyrgos. This segregation took place despite the 5 June 2008 judgment in the Case of *Sampanis and Others v. Greece*<sup>43</sup>, when the ECtHR found Greece in violation of the Convention regarding the initial school exclusion of Roma children living in the Psari settlement of Aspropyrgos and subsequently their segregation to a ghetto school (an annex of the 10<sup>th</sup> Elementary School of Aspropyrgos). Following the ECtHR judgment, the Ministry of Education renamed the 10<sup>th</sup> Elementary School of Aspropyrgos annex as 12<sup>th</sup> Elementary School of Aspropyrgos so that Greece could claim before international *fora* that no school segregation takes place anymore.

On 22 February 2011 the Deputy Prosecutor of the Greek Supreme Court, after having received a letter (16 February 2011) on behalf of the “*Coordinated Organisations and Communities for Roma Human Rights in Greece*” (SOKADRE) asking him to investigate thoroughly cases of educational exclusion and marginalisation of Roma children in “school-ghettos”, which it has repeatedly and substantially denounced, and alleging violation of the law as well as of several previous circulars and other clear instructions from the Prosecution Office of the Supreme Court itself, issued a relevant “**Urgent Written Order**” (with Protocol Number 720/22-02-2011) addressed to all local prosecutors of Greece<sup>44</sup>. According to his above Order, the Deputy Prosecutor of the Greek Supreme Court officially asked from all local prosecutors of Greece to “*take care of striking the phenomenon of exclusion of Roma from the public educational system of Greece, in a way that any phobic attitude towards Roma children should be eliminated and that their unhindered equal - without exclusion and discrimination - integration to all structures of the State should be ensured*” (indicators: Positive measures in favour of Roma children and Promoting a culture of anti-racism and non-discrimination).

Therefore, it is noteworthy that although the above document (“Order”) of the Prosecution does not refer strictly to the specific provisions of the Greek anti-discrimination legislation, there is no doubt that at least this concrete judicial authority has fully realised the tremendous importance of the enforcement of the existing legal framework against discrimination.

In its Chamber judgment in the case of *Sampani and Others v. Greece* (application no. 59608/09), which is not final, the European Court of Human Rights held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the European Convention on Human Rights in conjunction with Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 (right to education).

<sup>42</sup> ECtHR, 2012, App. No. 59608/09.

<sup>43</sup> *Catalytic intervention of the Supreme Prosecutor on the educational exclusion of Roma, op. cit.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

The Court, noting the lack of significant change since the *Sampanis and Others v. Greece* judgment, found that Greece had not taken into account the particular needs of the Roma children of Psari as members of a disadvantaged group and that the operation between 2008 and 2010 of the 12th Primary School in Aspropyrgos, which was attended by Roma pupils only, had amounted to discrimination against the applicants.

Under Article 46 of the ECHR (binding force and execution of judgments), the Court recommended that those of the applicants who were still of school age be enrolled at another State school and that those who had reached the age of majority be enrolled at “**second chance schools**” or **adult education institutes** set up by the Ministry of Education under the Lifelong Learning Programme.

### 5. 3. *Lavida and Others v. Greece* (2013)<sup>45</sup>: Enrolment in separate school

On 21 October 2011, the ECtHR communicated to Greece another application concerning the Roma community in Sofades –Central Greece- where all **550 Roma pupils** attend the Roma-only 4<sup>th</sup> Primary School as opposed to the 289 non-Roma pupils who attend the non-Roma-only 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Primary Schools (*Case of Lavida and Others v. Greece* – application no. 7973/10)<sup>46</sup> with the following questions:

“1. *Les requérants disposaient-ils en droit interne d'un recours au travers duquel ils auraient pu soulever leurs griefs tirés de l'article 14 de la Convention combiné avec l'article 2 du Protocole no 1?*”

2. *Les placement de certains des requérants dans une école réservée aux Roms les a-t-il privés de leur droit à l'instruction et les a-t-il fait subir une discrimination dans la jouissance de leur droit à l'instruction en raison de leur origine rom, en méconnaissance des articles 14 de la Convention et 2 du Protocole no 1?*”

The developments following the communication of the *Lavida and Others* application are indicative of the *resistance of many local communities to the integration of Roma pupils into mainstream schools for all pupils* (indicators: Promoting a culture of anti-racism and non-discrimination and Desegregation measures - enrolment measures, selection and distribution of children that do not lead to segregation)

On 23 December 2011 the Ministry of Education's Office of the Special Secretary ordered the *transfer* (effective from 1 January 2012) of all Roma children of the first grade attending classes at the 4<sup>th</sup> Primary School to five other municipal schools in Sofades and surrounding villages<sup>47</sup>. At the same time, *specialized educational staff* (indicator: Teacher training programmes) would be assigned to these schools in order to ensure the smooth integration and school attendance of the Roma pupils. From the next school year (2012-2013), pupils that were to be registered in the first grade did not do so at the 4<sup>th</sup> Primary School but would be dispersed and enrolled in the five aforementioned primary schools. In that letter, the Special Secretary expressed her “*deep concern*” regarding the concentration of Roma pupils in certain primary schools in the prefecture of Karditsa, particularly in light of “*the application of Lavida against Greece, before the European Court of Human Rights.*”

This decision caused uproar in the non-Roma community of Sofades (some 40% of the total population compared to 60% for the Roma community) and precipitated virulent racist reactions on the part of the local societies in Sofades and Karditsa, leading to the closing of schools to which

<sup>45</sup> ECtHR, 2013, App. No. 7973/10.

<sup>46</sup> Greek Helsinki Monitor, Parallel Report on Greece's compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: An Update (March 2011 – May 2012), p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> See also *2012 Annual Report of the Greek Ombudsman*, <[http://www.synigoros.gr/?i=kdet.el.ehtisies\\_ektheseis\\_documents.93959](http://www.synigoros.gr/?i=kdet.el.ehtisies_ektheseis_documents.93959)>.

Roma pupils were to be transferred (indicator: Promoting a culture of anti-racism and non-discrimination).

As a result, on 26 January 2012 the Minister of Education **overturned the desegregation decision** announcing an effective regression into the *status quo ante* of prevailing segregation with an “icing” of token desegregation that included the creation of a new 5<sup>th</sup> Primary School only for Roma and the selection of just nine first graders to formally register at the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Primary Schools but be assigned to *preparatory classes* housed at the premises of the 5<sup>th</sup> Kindergarten [which is located in the new Roma settlement and is attended exclusively by Roma pupils]. Moreover, from the beginning of the school year 2012-2013, the pupils of the 5<sup>th</sup> Kindergarten were to be registered to various Primary Schools of the town of Sofades under the provision that their **numbers will not surpass 20% of the total student body at any given school** (indicators: Desegregation measures - enrolment measures, selection and distribution of children that do not lead to segregation)

On 13 February 2012, MEP **Nikos Chrysogelos** (Verts/ALE) tabled a parliamentary question<sup>48</sup> in which the EC were effectively called to answer whether the measures taken at the 26 January 2012 meeting, following the reactions of the local society, were in conformity with the Article 153 TFEU and with Directive 2000/43/EC. On 2 April 2012 the vice-president of the EU Commission and Commissioner responsible for justice, fundamental rights and citizenship Viviane Reding gave on behalf of the Commission an official answer: “*The Commission shares the analysis of the honourable Member that measures taken in this case do not go far enough towards effective desegregation although they reflect some will to address the issue*”<sup>49</sup>.

Moreover, the Commissioner highlighted that the Racial Equality Directive **prohibits** direct and indirect discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, *inter alia* in education. Greece has transposed this directive into national legislation (Law 3304/2005). It is therefore for the national courts, in light of all the facts of a case, to determine whether a concrete situation constitutes discrimination. Furthermore, the Commissioner replied that a key objective of the Greek ESF operational programme ‘Education and Lifelong Learning’ is to reinforce access and participation of all in education, that the programme supports a preventive integrated action aiming at combating early school leaving of groups with cultural specificities, including the Roma, and that the action comprises a wide array of needs-based interventions, including reinforced access to early childhood education, additional pedagogical and psycho-social support, and targeted teacher training. This statement constitutes one of the most authoritative arguments in support of the argument that segregation of Roma pupils, as has been practiced for some more than twenty five years at the 4<sup>th</sup> Primary School, is violating the Convention and EU law.

The same was upheld in May 2013 by the ECtHR, which found that the continuing nature of this situation and the *State’s refusal to take anti-segregation measures implied discrimination* and a breach of the right to education.

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<sup>48</sup> Question for written answer to the Commission, Rule 117, Nikos Chrysogelos, available at: <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+WQ+E-2012-001731+0+DOC+XML+V0//EL>>.

<sup>49</sup> Answer given by Ms. Reding on behalf of the Commission, available at: <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2012-001731&language=EN>>.

## Chapter 6 – National specific subject

In the previous chapter concerning the case-studies, the specific cases were chosen instead of different primary case-studies, in order to demonstrate the national specific subject which undermines any efforts to prevent educational segregation: racial discrimination.

### 6.1. Racism and Extremism

In the past few years Greece has witnessed a steep increase in cases of racist discrimination and violence. The increase in this phenomena is attributed to a combination of two interlinked factors: (a) the social and political impact as a result of the economic crisis, particularly the dramatic increase in youth unemployment<sup>50</sup>; and (b) the very large number of third-country nationals, particularly asylum seekers and undocumented immigrants, many of whom live in the centre of Athens under conditions of severe poverty<sup>51</sup>. The existing legal mechanisms do not offer sufficient protection against racism, xenophobia and related intolerance. Recently, however, efforts to introduce new legislation to address issues of migration and racism have intensified. A Draft Law on anti-racism was recently introduced in Parliament<sup>52</sup>. However, more effort is needed for undocumented immigrants, who out of fear of deportation, refrain from reporting racist attacks suffered or witness by them.

The victims of racist violence are mainly immigrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Morocco, Somalia, Soudan, Guinea, Tunisia, Iraq, Iran, Mauritania, Syria, Eritrea, Congo, Senegal, Palestine, Comoros, the Ivory Coast, Albania, Georgia, Gambia and Ghana<sup>53</sup>. In the vast majority of cases, the victims consider the fact that their characteristic as foreigners is the reason for the attack; they believe that they were targeted either because of their skin color or because of any other characteristic revealing the fact they were not natives<sup>54</sup>. According to the victims' testimonies, the perpetrators are believed to belong to extremist groups. This fact also emerges from the qualitative elements recorded concerning the attacks: in these instances, the perpetrators are believed to act in an organized manner and in groups, moving either by motorcycle or on foot, often being accompanied by aggressive dogs<sup>55</sup>.

In 2012, a special police force was put into operation by the Minister of Public Order with the purpose of restoring legitimacy in the capital of Greece. The operation was named "Xenios Zeus" and has been criticised by stakeholders<sup>56</sup>. This is due to the racial profiling that led to the targeted abductions of people in order to verify their identity and make sure they were not undocumented immigrants. A lot of Roma people were targeted during these procedures. In the

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<sup>50</sup> According to Eurostat, in June 2013 Greece's total unemployment rate stood at 27,3 % (15–74 years of age) and youth unemployment at 58,2 % (under 25 years of age); these rates represent unemployed persons as a percentage of the labour force based on the International Labour Office (ILO) definition

<sup>51</sup> Estimates of the number of irregular migrants, based on the interpretation of apprehension data, suggest a maximum of 390,000 migrants in 2011; see: Maroukis, T. (2012), *Update report Greece: The number of irregular migrants in Greece at the end of 2010 and 2011*, Database on irregular migration. In 2012, foreign resident population in Greece, including EU and non-EU citizens, amounted to 975,374 people, representing 8.8 % of the total population. This rate is more than twice the EU average but below the rate in Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg and Spain. The respective figure for 2001 was 762,191 foreign resident persons and for 2004 891,197 foreign resident persons (EUROSTAT).

<sup>52</sup> *Human Rights Watch calls on Greek MPs to strengthen anti-racism bill*, Ekathimerini News, 03/12/2013.

<sup>53</sup> Racist Violence Recording Network Findings (1.1.2012-30.9.2012). According to information provided through an interview with the representative of the Network, Ms. Takou, in 2013, 166 attacks were recorded by the Network. An official report is still pending.

<sup>54</sup> *'They killed him because he was different in colour'*, News Article in Ethnos, 18/01/2013. In the previous article, a man of Pakistani descent was reportedly stabbed and murdered for being dark in colour.

<sup>55</sup> Racist Violence Recording Network Findings (1.1.2012-30.9.2012).

<sup>56</sup> Ombudsman Special Report on Racist Violence (2013); Racist Violence Recording Network Findings (1.1.2012-30.9.2012); "ANTIGONE" Annual Report (2013); GNCHR, *Observations on the Draft of the Second Periodical Report of Greece on the ICCPR*, (2013).

same year, the involvement of law enforcement officials in racist attacks was also reported. In the reports of these incidents officers on duty are accused for resorting to illegal acts and violent practices while carrying out routine checks. There are also cases where victims report that they were brought to police stations, were detained and ill-treated for a few hours, as well as reports of legal documents being destroyed during these operations. The Greek Ombudsman has recorded a rise in the number of complaints that are related to the abusive behaviour of police organs within the framework of their official duties which seem to derive from racial motivation<sup>57</sup>. The complainants, including EU citizens, which had specific racial characteristics in their appearance, were forced to undergo identity confirmation procedures and checks after being escorted to police stations. Furthermore, they were not provided with adequate information as to the reasons of their detainment.

Since there have been cases of violence in schools, it is important to mention the introduction of Ministerial Decree 159704/C7/17-12-2012 by the Ministry of Education, that established an Observatory on the Prevention of Violence and Bullying in Schools<sup>58</sup>. The Observatory started its operation in the beginning of 2013 and one of its duties is to carry out a record system on all violent acts perpetrated on school grounds, including racist violence and to issue directives on their suppression. The Greek Ombudsman is also active in this respect<sup>59</sup>.

The protracted economic uncertainty has been accompanied by a rise in support for the virulently anti-immigration Golden Dawn party - which entered Parliament for the first time in 2012 - and human rights groups have expressed concern at the increased incidence of violence against ethnic minorities<sup>60</sup>. The growing number of incidents of racist violence attributed to members or sympathisers of Golden Dawn was reported on several occasions by international organisations, national statutory human rights bodies and civil society organisations. The party was founded in 1985 and developed its activities during the 1990s focusing mainly on the issue of the name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and migration. Until 2010, it received between 0.07 % and 0.47 % of the vote in national or European elections. Its first electoral success was in 2010 when it managed to secure one seat on the Athens municipal council with 5.29 % of the vote<sup>61</sup>.

In the general elections of 6 May and 17 June 2012, however, Golden Dawn received 6.97 % and 6.92 % of the vote, respectively, securing 18 seats in the Hellenic Parliament. This was a spectacular increase from the 0.29 % the party received in the previous 2009 elections. An analysis of the demographic characteristics of Golden Dawn voters showed that almost 75 % were men, around 40 % were aged 18–34 years, and 27 % had higher education degrees.

In September 2013, after investigations into alleged crimes (32 files) committed by Golden Dawn affiliates, the leadership of the party was charged with crimes ranging from murder and bodily harm to money laundering, bribery and participation in a criminal organisation. The cases are still pending before the Greek Criminal Courts.

## 6. 2. Prejudice and discrimination targeting the Roma

Even though the majority of Roma living in Greece are Greek nationals, stereotypes and discriminatory practices towards the members of this group are deeply rooted in Greek society. Roma have even fallen victims to racist violence crimes as evidenced in the recent 2013 FRA Report on Racism and Xenophobia in Greece.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, Ombudsman Special Report.

<sup>58</sup> The relevant website of the [Observatory](#).

<sup>59</sup> All [programs](#) carried by the Ombudsman for the combating of bullying and school violence are available on the website:

<sup>60</sup> BBC News, Europe, *Greece Profile - Overview*.

<sup>61</sup> Melzer, R. and Serafi, S (2013), *Right-wing extremism in Europe*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, pp. 94–95.

<sup>62</sup> See FRA, Thematic Situation Report, *Racism, discrimination, intolerance and extremism: learning from experiences in Greece and Hungary*, 2013, p. 18-19.

Indicative of the racial stigmatisation of Roma people, is the case of a little girl named Maria who was found during a police raid in a Roma camp in the area of Farsala, Northern Greece. Many NGOs and Human Rights stakeholders were outraged at the manner with which the Media addressed the Roma community. The attention drawn to the case highlighted the extreme prejudice and harsh living conditions endured by the Greek Roma community on a daily basis.

Authorities were conducting a raid in search of drugs and weapons when they caught sight of a small girl with fair skin and green eyes. They became suspicious because the child looked so different from the dark-skinned couple who claimed to be her parents. They took Maria, who was believed to be around five years old, into care and arrested the adults on charges of abduction. When the news hit international headlines, European media suggested she may have been the abducted child of an unknown German or Scandinavian couple that had travelled to Greece years ago — or the offspring of a British boy who disappeared in 1991 while on vacation with his family on the Aegean island of Kos.

Neither was true. It turned out that the press had fed into an **old stereotype of ‘gypsies as child snatchers’**. DNA testing showed that Maria was in fact the child of a Bulgarian Roma couple who gave the little girl away because they could not afford to raise her, and the story vanished from the news. Revelations about the bias did little to change perceptions about Roma in Sofades or elsewhere in Europe, however. Greece’s financial crisis has made matters worse. Many Roma families receive financial assistance for low-income households and having more than three children, an issue that has bred resentment among others.

In the cases above, we saw that even when the authorities tried to enforce the desegregation of educational facilities non-Roma parents were the ones to effectively put an end to any such efforts. By barricading schools or resorting to violence they would prevent the Roma children from attending mainstream schools frequented by their own children. These parents referred to concerns related to the poor health conditions of Roma children and fears of contracting diseases to their own children. However, it is evident that the underlying reason for such behaviour is due to prejudices and racism (the use of derogatory terms such as ‘gypsies’, ‘criminals’, ‘unclean’ etc. verify this).

This means that the effort to combat Roma segregation has to be combined with a general effort to combat discrimination. The FRA<sup>63</sup> identified a number of initiatives combating discrimination and promoting diversity, some of which are included in a report by the National Centre for Social Research<sup>64</sup>, which noted the absence of a comprehensive anti-discrimination and equal opportunities strategy: “The main policy developments have been confined to legislative amendments – mostly on immigration – and EU funded interventions, such as the National Strategy for Equal Opportunities, implemented in the framework of ‘2007: European Year of Equal Opportunities for all’ and the National Strategy Report on Social Inclusion 2008–2010.”

FRA found no evidence of systematic efforts to tackle racism, discrimination and intolerance through a multi-agency approach involving cooperation and coordination of law enforcement, local authorities, schools, health providers and public administration. FRA also found no evidence of local community involvement in the design, development or implementation of relevant policies. Policy makers and representatives of public authorities with whom FRA met identified the effective policing and control of irregular migration as a key priority in their efforts to tackle racism, discrimination and extremism. This is based on the assumption that a key factor for the increase in racist or extremist attitudes and behaviours is the presence of a large number of irregular migrants. Under this –flawed- assumption, reducing their number should lead to a decrease in such phenomena.

In general, during 2013 important steps were taken by the Greek State to tackle racist violence and xenophobia: a draft law on hate speech and hate crime was introduced to Parliament

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> National Centre for Social Research (2012), *Combating discrimination in Greece: State of the art, challenges and policy interventions*, p. 91.

and the Ministry of Public Order established Offices and Departments for the combating of racist violence in all police stations throughout the country.

However, it is evident that the Greek society needs to overcome prejudices and stereotypes that promote discrimination towards specific groups, including the Roma. On this regard, the State has to increase efforts for the education of its own people and the promotion of tolerating practices that in turn will smooth the process of integrating the Roma people. Raising public awareness and starting from the desegregation of schools, Greece can prepare future society to be more open to much needed change.

## **Chapter 7 – Conclusion and recommendations**

### **7. 1. Conclusion**

Reading through the research gathered in order to carry out the drafting of this report, it is easy to conclude where Greece has succeeded and where it has failed when it comes to the integration of Roma children in the field of education.

Firstly, on a legal-framework level, as we can see, Greece has introduced legislative measures for the safeguarding of the right to education without any discrimination. It has also implemented a framework on compulsory education, for all children residing within its territory irrespective of their documented status or not. Measures have been introduced for enabling the enrolment of Roma children, such as the special school card. The Ministry of Education has even issued circulars that urge all schools to identify and enrol Roma children.

Secondly, through the introduction of a National Strategy for Roma Integration, Greece has formulated policies with a certain set of priorities. The field of education is included in the Strategy and programmes such as the ‘Education of Roma Children’ Programme supervised by the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the ‘Roma Children in Macedonia and Thrace’ Programme supervised by the Aristotle University of Thessalonika include many innovative aspects that may improve school attendance rates. A centre in Volos had first-rate results at getting children to attend school, among other things. Thanks to these centres, the Greek government has been able to have a record of the Roma communities, issue official papers like identity cards and vaccination records for children.

Thirdly, notwithstanding all these policies introduced for the integration of Roma children and initiatives to raise the number of Roma children attending school, instances of segregation still persist. Indicative of Roma children exclusion from mainstream schools is the case of five localities where true local conflicts about the inclusion or segregation of Roma children from mainstream schools have been registered when the Ministry sought to enforce the ‘bussing’ of children and their dispersion in several schools of the area (in Aspropyrgos, near Athens, in Sofades near Karditsa, Ntamaria and Athili near the town of Lamia, and in Peraia near Salonica).

Local authorities (mayor, prefect) in these areas in agreement with non Roma parents prevented Roma children from going to school (for instance the municipality refused to hire a school bus that would bring the children from the Roma settlement to school). After a series of protests and the mobilisation of the Greek Helsinki Monitor, the public prosecutor of the Supreme Court (Areios Pagos) intervened (in September 2010 and in February 2011) and asked local public prosecutors to stop the segregation of Roma children from schools within their districts. Left wing parties and the Greens brought the issue also in Parliament in September 2011.

Finally, this leads us to address another issue which has recently become a major problem in Greek society, exacerbated by the recent economic crisis: racism and extremism. As we saw in the national specific subject prejudice and the stereotypical portrayal of the Roma is prevalent and deeply rooted in Greek society. Clear examples of this behaviour are demonstrated through the case of the little girl Maria and the strong opposition of non-Greek parents to the enrolment of Roma students at schools their children attend. More effort should thusly be put in combating extremism and racism, especially against the Roma. By changing how society views the Roma, they will be accepted and fully integrated. Greek politicians and important stakeholders usually fight any efforts of Roma integration or worse ignore it as an issue at all. What they need to understand is that the integration of Roma will bring long-term financial and commercial advantages; through the

education of Roma children a new generation of available workforce will be moulded, which will participate in the future commercial economy and society.

Therefore, the following are important to be taken into consideration by the Greek Government.

## 7. 2. Recommendations

As far as recommendations for avoiding and combating school segregation are concerned<sup>65</sup>, TWO PRELIMINARY REMARKS should be made:

- **Segregation is a structural dysfunction that requires a structural solution.**

We cannot be contented with checklists of good policies. Nor can we be complacent with policies that focus narrowly on desegregation. Segregation is a school-internal dilemma but the fight against it must not be exclusively located within school boarders.

What is needed is a fundamental *culture shift*: Recognition and respect of cultural distinctiveness and recalibration of Roma cultural distinctiveness as a positive value. This assumes and requires a profound confrontation of racism and stereotypes.

Without this mentality shift, actual or future policies will continue to fail<sup>66</sup>.

- Some of the recommendations which will be listed here may sound familiar to knowledgeable -on segregation issues- stakeholders. Besides, we have already seen the measures they imply in varying degrees and combinations in Greece.

Grouping them here has, of course, a value *per se*. On the contrary, their simple inclusion in legislative texts or circulars and their plain declaration by the State has not anymore a value *per se*.

Indeed, the measures and policies recommended must be implemented. They do not simply imply an obligation for action but an obligation for effectiveness. This includes an obligation for an *ex post impact assessment*.

2. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS for avoiding or combating segregation are here addressed:

- Clear and unequivocal commitment by policy-makers and high level officials towards desegregation as part of social inclusion;
- Provide universal access to inclusive pre-school education;
- Eliminate every financial and administrative obstacle to the access of Roma children to education;
- Undertake a critical review of the school entry requirements which might have a discriminatory impact on Roma children;
- Take all appropriate measures to combat absenteeism and drop-outs among Roma children;
- Combat anti-Gypsyism, especially at school:

[General Policy Recommendation No 13 from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance](#) provides useful guidance on this;

- Special care for financing schools' infrastructures in socio-economically deprived areas;
- Intercultural education on a large scale:

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<sup>65</sup> v. *Inter alia* ECRI, *General Policy Recommendation No.13 on Combating Anti-Gypsyism and Discrimination against Roma*, CRI(2011)37 - 24.6.2011, pp. 5-6 and Fox and Vidra, *op. cit.*, pp. 32 *et seq.*

<sup>66</sup> Fox and Vidra, *op. cit.*, pp. 32 *et seq.*

Adopt a curriculum of intercultural education in schools with a sizeable Roma presence. Such a curriculum must be combined with extensive training for majority teachers, hiring of and training for Roma teachers, and the development and dissemination of teaching materials across a range of subjects;

- Include teaching on the Roma genocide (“Parrajimos”) in school curricula;
- Bussing to take Roma children to and from majority schools on a regular basis:

Used effectively, bussing cannot only facilitate integration; it can also reduce absenteeism. If it is to be used to redress segregated imbalances, it must first win the support of the majority community and the Roma;

- Generalisation of the recruitment of cultural mediators:

Young women from the Roma community can be recruited to accompany children from and to school. This allows for the trust of parents who might be reluctant to send kids to school. What is also important is that they help teachers understand the specific Roma cultural and educational needs and they facilitate the integration of Roma children in the classroom;

- Improve information to the Roma parents on the choices that are available and the consequences of placement in remedial education;
- Take immediate and urgent measures once a segregation case arises:

These include legal and political measures, to put an end to the segregation at school which Roma children are subjected to, and integrate them into schools attended by pupils from the majority population;

- Combat, through sanctions, the harassment inflicted on Roma pupils at school;
- Ensure that a large number of Roma join the teaching profession to aid the school integration of Roma children;
- Support comprehensive plans for integration activities at a local level.

As for the issue of extremism and racism, the following recommendations<sup>67</sup> may prove useful:

- The adoption of a comprehensive legislative initiative for the effective combating of racial discrimination and crimes with racial motives,
- The promotion of public-awareness on the dangers of intolerance and racism
- The support of an educational program on human rights to be carried out at schools

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<sup>67</sup> See GNCHR, “Comments on the draft Second periodic Report of Greek Republic on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights”, 2013, <[http://www.nchr.gr/images/pdf/apofaseis/ellinikes\\_ektheseis\\_en\\_ell\\_org/OHE/Parathrhseis\\_EEDA\\_prosYP\\_EKS\\_DSAPD.pdf](http://www.nchr.gr/images/pdf/apofaseis/ellinikes_ektheseis_en_ell_org/OHE/Parathrhseis_EEDA_prosYP_EKS_DSAPD.pdf)>.

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