THE THIRD SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE DELIVERY
OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICE FOR ROMA CHILDREN IN ROMANIA
An inside look

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About The Rise of Service Delivery Third Sector in Europe fellowship program

The aim of "The Rise of Service Delivery Third Sector in Europe" fellowship program sponsored by the Education Support Program, Open Society Foundations, is to contribute to a better understanding of the transformation that civil society organisations undergo when engaged to undertake education service delivery with public funding. Special emphasis in the program is given to case-studies of educational civil society organisations, as education is an area where the growing trend of public outsourcing in service delivery is most striking, and is also a sphere where the quality and delivery of services has a direct and consistent impact on service recipients.

This new context arguably provides a positive outlook for civil society sustainability, following the withdrawal of many international donors from the Central and Eastern Europe region. However, the increasing trend towards outsourcing public service delivery to civil society organisations raises important issues, including the new principal-agent relationship, the process of selecting beneficiary civil society organisations, civil society independence vis-a-vis agenda formation and prioritization, the strength of the critical voice of civil society, and the capacity of civil society organisations to engage with the public sector in this new relationship. Four initial areas for consideration are being addressed under the 2010 round of call, including:

- The structural implications of engagement among public sector institutions and third sector organizations from the view of public service delivery. For instance, in the current (2008-2013) programming period, the governments through their funding mechanisms often end-up setting the priorities for third sector organisations, suggesting that the agenda for civil society organisations might be government-driven as well.
- The extent to which access to public funding for direct public service provision strengthens the institutional and programming capacity of third sector organizations. The extent to which third sector organizations service government priorities, or they themselves are able to institutionally develop and get closer to their immediate beneficiary groups.
- The steps taken to ensure the transparency and accountability of the existing public funding mechanisms. For instance, the public sector often finds itself in multiple and possibly incompatible positions, such as that of agenda setter, regulator, and financier, as well as sole controller of the initiatives implemented by third sector organizations.
- The capacities that public sector institutions need to develop in order to provide leadership and management under various market-type mechanisms in order to produce and deliver educational public services more effectively.

CONTENT:

Introduction

In the second part of the twentieth century a shift 'from government to governance' (Rhodes, 1981 quoted by M. Moran, 2003, p. 12) comes into place, the government sharing its numerous responsibilities, especially in the field of policy implementation, with different institutional actors, generically named agencies. A large range of entities, from state agencies, exclusively financed from state budget; state agencies that are mixed financed, from governmental sources and other sources as well; the third sector organisations including non-profit organisations (NPOs), nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) or civil society organisations (CSOs), and private agents stands for what is meant by term of agencies.

In this context, traditional borders between public and private dissipate. The relationships between diverse institutional actors are built on interdependence, provided that each agency becomes an owner of particular resources. Furthermore, the decision-making process becomes shared and, consequently, the governing style is no longer hierarchical.

International and national policymakers appear to be increasingly focused on collaboration between governments and non-state providers of educational services according to the Lisbon strategy' benchmarks and, more recently, the Europe 2020 strategy targets, in response to the chronically underfinanced educational systems. They became aware of the significant role that the third sector organisations can play in extending access to and improving the quality of educational services for all due to the third sector organisations' quality of being embedded between the action logics of three different societal spheres (market, state, and family) and, consequently, being able to accommodate and simultaneously cooperate with these very different economic, political and social environments. (Granovetter, 1985, Zimmer, 2010). For these reasons, the third sector providers are increasingly deemed as being effective in filling a gap by providing for those who were excluded from state education (i.e. students who drop out of school).

Governments often hesitate to apply market mechanisms when providing public services. This is also true in the case of Romania, where unlike technical services (e.g. telecommunications), a social service as education was less open to market mechanisms. Despite this, from the 1990s, the number of non-profit providers of educational services dramatically rose in number. Bringing the third sector and government agencies together has obviously been a significant step forward in implementing private market rules. The state maintained its traditional responsibilities in the moral, social, and legal areas for overall education service delivery, but also performed the role of a facilitator and regulator to NGOs. Developing partnerships with third sector organisations became a necessary and convenient practice of state policy implementation for government agencies.

It is worth mentioning that, according to the *Governmental Sector Condition's 2010 survey*, only 10% out of the total Romanian NGOs declared that public grants were their main funding source. 20% of the NGOs claimed that their main income source came from the 2% income-generating tax that can be redirected from donors' income via the public tax collecting system, while the remaining NGOs rely on private sector donors and sponsorship (18%), other external financing sources (9%), European funds (9%) or other donations.

In this paper, we will focus on the role played by third sector organizations as providers of public services. We believe that the mechanisms that underpin the success of the third sector's activities is highly dependent on the field in which they work. We will analyze the third sector's role in the field of education, and more specifically, on

educational services for Roma children. At the moment, this is a 'hot' topic, and poses many challenges to the European Council and EU Commission, organizations that try to shape national policies; the efforts to improve the lives of the Roma people filters down to the local authorities, who also struggle to substantially increase the rate of social and economic integration of this ethnic group. It is assumed that education can play a pivotal role in improving the livelihood of many Roma people. In this paper, we will analyse a number of cases, where Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have provided educational services, draw conclusions based on our empirical research data, and end by highlighting the lessons for the future. More details about our approach are provided below.

I. Description of the particular case addressed by research

I.1. Demographic data

By the data of the most recent national census (2002), Romania's population is of 21.68 million people, of which 19.39 million declared themselves to be of Romanian ethnic origin, 1.43 million Hungarian, and 0.53 million Roma people (namely 2.5% of entire population). There are several estimations of the 'real' number of Roma in Romania, assessing the size of this ethnic group starting from 1.5 million Roma (in accordance with a 1998 study of National Institute of Quality Life Research) and up to 1.8 million (in accordance with World Bank and European Commission). The needs analysis performed for Romania by Roma Education Fund in August 2004 showed that the Roma NGOs and stakeholders assessed the number of Roma ethnics living in Romania as varying from 1.01 million up to 2.5 million individuals. A national research of 2005 (entitled 'PROROMA', and conducted by the National Agency on Roma – NAR, and financed by the World Bank)[1] estimated that there were approx. 0.73–1 million Roma living in clustered communities (i.e. more than 20 households together). Of course, there are more "generous" assessments coming from more or less informal Roma leaders ("Roma Party" leaders, the Roma "king" or "emperor") which are assessing the number of Roma living in Romania of up to 3-3.5 million people. However, there is no statistical data or survey to underpin these hazarded figures. The main reason leading to this kind of exaggeration is the fact that the size of financial (domestic or external) support for disadvantaged groups is usually tailored according to the size of the target group. The Roma communities are not clustered in one specific area of the country but rather they are disseminated throughout entire national territory of Romania. After Romania joined in EU in 2007, a countless number of Roma fled abroad, more or less legally, towards older EU Members States (especially France, Italy, UK and Spain), They did not all succeed to adapt and integrate in the new "promised land" and caused a hot topic on EU Presidency agenda in 2010 after the Italian and, especially, French governments decided to expel several thousands of them in their country of origin. Currently, a whole EU strategic framework for Roma is conceived at the level of EU institutions fallowing to be tailored by EU members states in national strategies for Roma.

This information is useful in understanding the stake for the future, namely the future EU and national funding for social intervention programmes for Roma designed to alleviate the social and economic condition of this community and the need for active
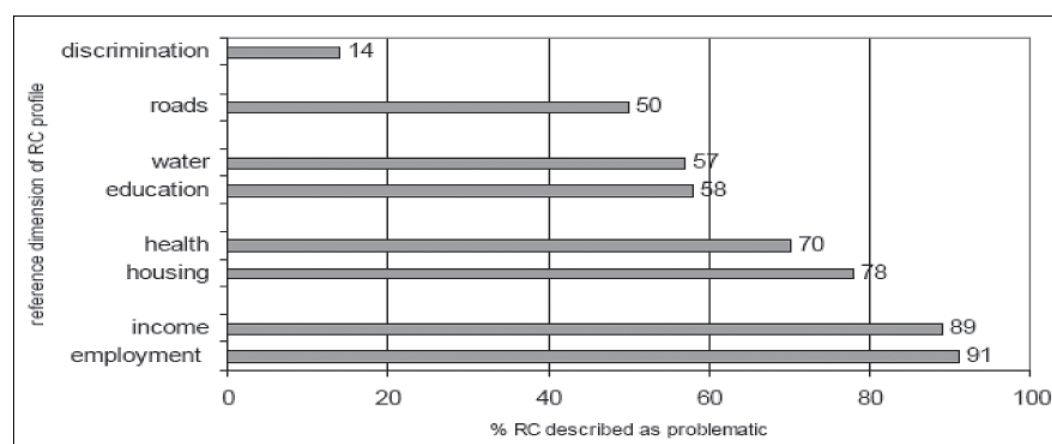
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[1] Roma Social Mapping- Targeting from a poverty survey, Dumitru Sandu (eds.), Bucharest, June 2005, available online at: http://www.anr.gov.ro/site/Biblioteca.html

and experienced stakeholders to implement these programmes. According to unofficial sources, in Romania there are roughly 200 NGOs founded by activists of Roma origin and targeting the Roma community. However only half a dozen of these third sector Roma NGOs are relatively large-scaled capable to design and implement programmes or projects at national level. The remaining ones are satellites of the former or local NGOs.

I.2. Problems faced by Roma in Romania

Many of the members of the Roma community are vulnerable, as they suffer disproportionately of poverty (in 2001, 52.2% lived in extreme poverty conditions and the poverty rate was of 75.1% while only 0.6% were declaring themselves content with their income), illiteracy (18% for men and 27.6% for women), unemployment (28% according to national Census and 40.7% according to another sources[2]), poor housing (in 1998, 21% lived in dwellings without legal property papers) and without healthcare assistance (in 2000, only 34% of them were covered by National Health Insurance System), when compared with the rest of Romania's population. The problems faced by Roma communities – as self-perceived by the Roma themselves – are illustrated in figure 1 bellow.

Figure no 1 – *How many of the Roma communities are considered by PROROMA study as being marked by certain socio-economic problems*[3]

As one can perceive in the chart above, more than 58% of Roma identify education as a problem of their community. Among the main education related problems identified at the level of Roma children one can point out the *lack of participation to education and the early school leaving rates which are very high among Roma people. Thus,* a 1998 study of Institute for Life Quality Research (ICCV) showed that 11.6% Roma children attended school classes **for the first time** at the age when they should be in the 4th grade. As against the rest of the school population, there is a gap of at least 10 years of education due to the late enrolment age at which many of Roma pupils are sent to school by their parents. The Ministry of Education, reported in 2005 that roughly 12–20 % of the total

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[2] Roma in Romania – 1998 – Published in 2002, Cătălin Zamfir and Marian Preda (eds.), Expert Publishing House, Institute for Research on Quality of Life, Romanian Academy

[3] Roma Social Mapping- Targeting from a poverty survey, Dumitru Sandu (eds.), Bucharest, June 2005, available online at: http://www.anr.gov.ro/site/Biblioteca.html p. 33.

Roma pupils drop out in primary and lower-secondary school. According to 2002 Census 26.2% out of the Roma population did not complete any kind of school participation as opposed to the 4.9% of the total population. The same census data showed that 25.6% of Roma people aged above 10 years old are illiterate as against 2.6% of the total population. The share of Roma who did not attend school at all is 34.2% as against 5.5% of the total population. Only 5% of the Romanian Roma graduated upper secondary or high education.

I.3. Public organizations and policies for Roma in Romania

Between 1998 and 2001, substantial efforts were carried out to produce a "Roma Strategy", with a direct participation of all stakeholders: central and local authorities, Roma activists and NGOs, European experts, politicians, academics, and son on and so forth. The Romanian social-democrat government finally designed it in cooperation with Roma NGOs and by means of financial assistance of EU[4]. Thus, in April 2001, it adopted the *Strategy for the Improvement of the Situation of Roma*[5], conceived to guide the public policies for Roma at the national level for the 2001-2010 decade as a comprehensive approach to deal with the problems of the Roma minority. The strategy, finely tuned in 2005, targeted four main areas of intervention, namely: education, employment, housing and healthcare support. Additionally, any public policy involving Roma issues should have been included gender and anti-discrimination issues. A public network of dedicated institutions was created to implement the strategy, including: the National Agency for Roma (created in 2004), the Working Group on Public Policies for Roma, the Ministerial Commissions for Roma, Roma County Offices, and Local Roma Experts.

National Agency for Roma (NAR) was established through the Emergency Ordinance in November 2004, approved by Law 7 / 2005, as the specialized body of central public administration with the Romanian Government. The main objective of this public institution designed for Roma is to initiate, participate to, and promote sectorial programs and actions designed to improve the situation of Roma in Romania, together with other public institutions and Roma NGOs. NAR plays an important role in our research as it is the main central public institution in charge with the elaboration, the monitoring and – up to some extent – the implementation of public policies for Roma. NAR is currently the beneficiary and it coordinated the implementation of some education and training projects funded from European Social Fund and targeting Romanian Roma.

As regards financial support for the public policies for the Roma in Romania, the Government Strategy for the Improvement of the Condition of Roma has ensured the legal framework for the funding of the Romania's social inclusion programmes during pre- and post-accession to EU, and other strategic documents dealing with Roma inclusion. For example, the Joint Inclusion Memorandum (JIM) was not granted special funding but its implementation was monitored by the European Commission.

Since the adoption of the Roma Strategy, several PHARE programmes on Roma have been implemented in Romania. These programmes financed, mainly by means of grants, the following type of interventions: projects for community development, access to education of disadvantaged groups (with focus on Roma), building and strengthening the institutional capacity of local and central authorities, training courses for Roma

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4 Phare RO9803.01 – 'Improving the situation of Roma'
5 Government Decision 430/2001

NGOs/ informal groups/ leaders in order to design, implement, monitor and evaluate projects, as well as awareness campaigns to combat Roma discrimination and make the mainstream population aware of Roma realities and problems.

Besides the Strategy, there were adopted other subsequent national and international public policies targeting disadvantaged groups in order to improve the Roma's economic and social condition in Romania. Most of these public policies focused on social inclusion issues. After the Government Strategy was adopted, between 2001 and 2004, there was **a shift in the focus of social policies, both in Romania and in the European Union from a unilateral approach to combat poverty towards a wider process of social inclusion and development**. This new orientation led to the set of the Commission for Fighting Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion (Romanian acronym: CASPIS) in 2001. The main tool for co-coordinating social inclusion policies was the National Plan for Fighting Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion (the Anti-Poverty Plan), passed under a governmental decision in 2002.

The Anti-Poverty Plan was conceived according to the model provided by the European Council of 2000 for the Member States' national plans in this field. Besides setting long term strategic objectives (2002-2012), the 2000 European Council defined a set of principles underlying anti-poverty policies. An entire chapter of the Anti-Poverty Plan (Chapter 14) was dedicated to decreasing the Roma poverty and social exclusion. Unfortunately, the plan was abandoned after CASPIS was dismantled in 2006. Another failed public policy which had a section targeting the Roma was represented by Priority Measures Plan for European integration (2005). This plan was initially monitored by the Ministry of European Integration and then the Department of European Affairs took over in 2007. At its turn, it became obsolete when Romania joined EU. **Actually, most of these public policies lost their momentum or became obsolete and their impact on ameliorating the Roma condition was far from reaching their goals.** It is arguably if Romania did her homework as regards ensuring the social inclusion of its Roma population before joining EU as a condition of accession. Most of EC reports prior to accession assessed the progress made in the implementation of public policies in this field, especially the Strategy for Improving the Roma Condition, as rather "limited"[6]. Romania joined EU on 1st of January 2007 and, at the same time with the Roma migrants migrating into EU from this country and from Bulgaria – a Pandora's Box was open.

At this point it is worth mentioning another, this time regional and international sized initiative to support Roma inclusion, called, the *Decade for Roma Inclusion* (2005–2015). This is an international initiative supported by twelve governments mostly from Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe (but also by Spanish government), the World Bank, Open Society Institute, UNDP, and the Council of Europe. The working method of this initiative is to gather representatives of the stakeholders: national governments, Roma representatives and stakeholders and public and private donors at the same table in order to find solutions to the problems faced by Roma communities. Here it is worth mentioning that a Roma Education Fund (REF) was established in 2005 to expand educational opportunities for Roma communities in Central and South-eastern Europe. The goal of REF is to contribute to closing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma, through policies and programs including desegregation of educational systems. REF receives funds from governments, multilateral organizations

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[6] European Commission Delegation in Romania (by Focus Consultancy Ltd.), Assessment of the Roma Strategy Implementation Mechanism. Final Evaluation, Bucharest, July 2005, 59 pages.

and private sources. It finances projects that are designed to meet its goals and which are proposed and implemented by governments, NGOs and private organizations. It administers the largest university scholarship program for Roma and supports research, studies and evaluations that contribute to effective policies for Roma inclusion in national education systems[7].

For the current state of play in Romania, it seems that there is a governmental effort to generate a new strategy for Roma for the next Decade to be in line with the newly *Europe 2020* strategy and with the emerging EU framework for national Roma integration strategies which will be launched in April this year by EC and endorsed by the EU Council.

The education sector is present in all public policies for Roma in Romania as a sectorial field of intervention and it seems that it plays an important role in the next national strategy to be adopted.

1.4. Public policies on education for Roma in Romania

The role of Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports (MERYS) is crucial as regards educational policies conceiving, endorsement and implementation. The role of "third sector" and local authorities in education, although increasing, is still low. In Romania, the right to equal access at all levels and forms of education, regardless of social origin and financial situation (…) race, nationality etc. is guaranteed by Constitution as well as through the Law of Education which states *inter alia* that "organization and content of the education cannot be structured by exclusive and discriminatory criteria, such as ethnicity". On annual basis, MERYS monitors the number of pupils according to their nationality and level of education.

The "Roma School Mediators", programme involving the creation of a body of Roma school mediators, was initiated after 1990 by a Roma NGO (Romani CRISS) and Timisoara Intercultural Institute[8]. The project was subsequently supported and expanded by the Ministry of Education and the "school mediator" job description was introduced a secondary school teaching position in the nomenclature of Classification of Occupations of Romania. They mediator represents a very important human resource in education and ensures an effective liaison between the community and school. In the proposal for the new Law of National Education there is a provision (Art. 249) to include the school mediators as paid auxiliary teaching staff. In 2010, 796 Roma school mediators were trained by the MECTS and their NGO partners (NRA, UNICEF, Amare Rromentza). In addition, 80 Roma teaching methodologists (1-6 individuals / county) in Roma culture, history and traditions were formed by means of MEYRS and its partners NGO (2005 – PER, 2006 – Romani CRISS) financing support.

MERYS's annual programme designed to allot distinct positions for young Roma in high-schools and universities started in 2000 sets a quota of has granted special places for Roma students in high schools and vocational education and training schools; this quota increases every year, reaching up to 2,500 positions in 2010 throughout all high-schools and VET school in Romania. The same policy applies also to universities, where a share of Roma origin candidates is accepted to study in universities, in accordance with a ministerial order. During 2004-2006, there were 398 seats set aside for each year

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[7] http://www.romadecade.org/about

[8] In January 2008, through the financial support of "Acces to education for disadvantaged groups" Phare programme, approx. 150 Roma were qualified school mediators and other 242 underwent training.

while, presently, there are 493 places for Roma students granted at state universities. Moreover scholarships are awarded to young Roma students who study to become Romany language teachers. The funding is complemented by different sources, such as UNICEF Romania (up to 170 Scholarships per year), PHARE, and the University of Bucharest. Priority has been given to preventing the school dropout phenomenon and to decreasing the early school leaving rate of Roma children, as well as to deal with the problem of segregation. In this context, special attention was also paid to children with special needs and to those coming from disadvantaged (mostly Roma) communities with a low level of social and economic development. In order to face these problems MERYS developed, starting with 2002, some national support programmes to fighting against poverty and social exclusion amongst pupils and students coming from disadvantaged areas: *Money for High School*, *School Supplies*, *Euro 200*[9], *Milk and croissant*[10]. As regards the combat against discrimination, the Ministry of Education requested, in July 2007. The County School Inspectorates to present their situation of segregation, accompanied by recommendations for desegregation plans. With the recently issued Notice no 28463/ 3 March 2010 regarding the prevention and elimination of segregation of Roma students in preschool and school system, the ministry established new measures to allow all students to study in minority languages throughout Romanian education system.

During the last years MERYS has started to open and expand the its range of activities in the field of educational policies for Roma by collaborating with other public institutions, (for example Department for Interethnic Relations with the Romanian Government, Project on Ethnic Relations -PER, DIVERS Organization, UNICEF, Save the children, etc.) and it takes into account the support for other projects meant to support the objectives of Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015) and the Roma Education Fund.

II. Relevant literature review

1. An eclectic conceptual framework emerging from theoretical and empirical studies

In order to situate our research proposal we carried out a literature survey, looking both at theoretical and empirical studies, on topics such as: (1) the third sector involvement in providing public services and what makes it different from other providers (be they state providers of for-profit providers); (2) the relationships between Government agencies and non-state providers of educational services in terms of conditioning factors, including market mechanisms.

(1) The third sector involvement in providing public services

In defining the third sector, a plethora of interchangeable terms are used to describe the following: non-governmental organizations, non-state organizations, voluntary sector, non-profit sector, social economy, civil society, independent sector and even informal sector. The search for a clear definition is still in progress undertaken by researchers, theoreticians of civil society, European Commission, and other civil society organizations.

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9 Ensuring 200 Euros for purchasing PCs and granting them to those pupils coming from disadvantaged families with PC.

10 A daily meal for pupils in all schools.

Despite its blurry definitions, the term of third sector is typically associated with traits such as generality, comprehensiveness (encompassing a wide range of organizational forms and many domains of activity), and political neutrality. Furthermore, the following differences between the third sector and government are widely accepted as well: their financial dependence on and accountability to different constituencies; established commitments and ideologies; and their organizational form (White and Robinson 1998; Brown and Ashman 1996).

A valuable account of third sector is given by Salamon and Anheier (1998) who highlight the intermediary role of non-profit organizations as operators between the state and market. When searching for a clear definition of the third sector, one may notice the importance of sociocultural and political specificity of third sector development in a historical context. Illustrating this idea, from the perspective of the Esping Andersen' paradigm of welfare state policies, Salamon and Anheie (1998) distinguish among third sector organizations belonging to different welfare regimes, based on government social welfare spending and the scale of the non-profit sector: i) the liberal regime, where third sector provision acts as an important alternative to low government social spending; ii) the corporatist, where the state is forced or induced to act in common with non-profits, seen as pre-modern mechanisms useful enough to be maintained; iii) the social democratic, with extensive state and limited third sector service provision, keeping more to an advocacy role; iv) the statist where both government and third sector provision remain limited

In finding out what non-profits and NGOs actually are, the perspective provided by the concept of public space is also useful. From this theoretical standpoint, the third sector is conceptualized as a specific dimension of public space in civil societies (Evers, 1992, p.161). As a part of public space, third sector faces tensions emerging from the interrelated and often contradictory influences of state institutions, market economy, family and community. The structural pluralism and diversity that characterized the public space are reflected into the polyvalent and hybrid character of third sector organizations, which could be seen as explanatory factors for their willingness and ability to rely simultaneously on resources coming from different sectors and on combining different rationales.

(2) Relationships between governments and third sector organizations

The NGOs and the state achieve two basic goals when they work together. They provide services and frame the political agenda. Regarding government-third sector relationships, there are a growing number of interactions between non-governmental and governmental organisations throughout the world. The reason for this trend can be found in the comparative advantages NGOs have in regards to their organisation and practice.

Here is a list of the advantages third sector organisations have over governmental agencies based on the welfare state theory and government-market failure theory:
- A widespread perception that governments are unable to adequately provide public services, particularly in regards to offering equal access to education for all citizens;
- A general assumption about the important role of NGOs in promoting development at the local level;
- NGOs are less hierarchical, more democratic, less rigid governance, innovative, more accountable and efficient in terms of cost and delivery of services;
- NGOs, given that they do not have a profit-seeking motivation, are more committed to helping disadvantaged groups;

- A supposed capacity of challenging government approaches and practices through advocacy and mitigating strategies or tactics.

However, the aforementioned arguments in favour of third sector organisations as effective public services providers are counterbalanced by a wave of criticism pointing to the lack of evidence supporting NGO advantages due to the scarcity of empirical studies.

The prevailing types of relationship between government and the third sector organisations

Various theoretical explanations have emerged from different disciplinary backgrounds regarding issues related to the third sector-state relationship. Of particular importance to our research is the typology proposed by Young (2000) that discuss three models of the non-profit sector's involvement with the government in providing public services. They are **supplementary, complementary,** or **adversarial**. In the first model, third sector organisations play the role of filling the gap for public services which are not appropriately delivered by the government. In the second model, third sector organisations play the role of **partners** providing public services financed by the government. In the third model, third sector organizations challenge the government to make changes in public policy with greater accountability. Even if these models imply different roles for the third sector organizations and government, as young highlighted, they are not mutually exclusive.

The most expanded typology describes different types of relationships between government and the third sector organizations. The following are three prominent models: **competition**, **complementarity** and **partnership-based relationships.** From the perspective of a **competition-based relationship model**, tensions are seen as rising due to the state and NGOs' differing motives, different contexts of action, and mutual benefits derived from providing public services. To exemplify, much literature brings into focus the image of third sector organisations as destabilizing agents interested in undermining state actions and fostering distrust. This image stems from market failure and state failure theories, which assert that the creation and functioning of NGOs is a result of the market and states' failure to efficiently supply public services to all citizens. However, these tensions are manageable. Government agencies and third sector organisations continue to work together and serve citizens. The role of these economic theories remains useful in providing technical explanations for the need of developing collaboration between state and NGOs, namely public-private partnerships (Wamai, 2004).

Furthermore, a firm statement in favour of the **cooperation** between the state and NGO is based on the *interdependence theory*. Rejecting the assumption of the conflict between the state and NGOs, this theory postulates that both the state and NGO have their own particular resources but possess shortcomings as well. For this reason, they are dependent on each other and need to cooperate in order to compensate each other deficiencies. The areas of deficiencies are made explicit by the *resource dependency theory* that asserts that one organisation is dependent on the other in terms of financial, technological or knowledge resources (Stone, 1996, Tappin, 2000).

Complementarity stands for a mutually supporting distribution of roles between government and third sector organisations in delivering services (MacDonald and Chrisp, 2005). For example, contracting out service delivery to the third sector organizations (both private and non-profit) has become a common practice in many countries (World Development Report, 2004). This type of relationship evolving between NGOs – state is consistently explained by *theories of social capital* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Evans 1996), which assert the idea that an individual or a group could acquire a sum of

resources, be they actual or virtual, merely through their participation to a network of formal and informal relationships that work toward a common goal. This form of capital is not encountered as acting in isolation, as Bourdieu and Wacquant observe, but closely linked with other forms of capital, such as economic, cultural, symbolic and linguistic. Evans (1996) states that networking as a two-way street whereby the state and NGOs ensure their synergy of action. Furthermore, Evans describes this synergy as taking two shapes: *complementarity*, which stands for a division of labour between the two actors leading to mutually supportive relations, and *embeddedness*, which refers to the fact that one actor, operates from its own particular context in order to improve the effectiveness of the other actor. Embeddedness is based on a network of trust and collaboration that binds state and civil society together. With regard to the incentives for collaboration, inter-organisational relations theory as part of social capital theory discusses the advantages of government-NGO relationship in terms of their complementarity and embeddedness.

Partnership, another type of relationship between state and NGOs, is deemed a new paradigm (Rao and Smyth, 2005). Partnership building is best viewed as a fluid and subtle process that may need to be constantly reworked in the light of experience (Lewis, 1998, p. 335) and definitely it is a product of the intertwining alliances, as Sood (2000) noted. Surveying the literature on this topic, one could find that the sources suggesting the characteristics of a good partnership and the sources questioning the meaning of the concept of partnership in practice coexist (Brinkerhoff, 2002). Furthermore, some sources make conceptual discriminations in reference to the distinction between contracting and partnership. For example, Bhat et al.'s study on contractual relationships of the Mother NGO scheme in India that compares the features of partnership and contracting and concludes that contracting is a form of partnership, but true partnership is an involved affair with participation of all stakeholders in the process (2007, p. 28).

Besides these typologies, a *set of constituent elements of partnership* has also been identified, which include information sharing, policy dialogue, jointly agreed country programmes, multi-annual financial agreements (Maxwell and Riddell 1998, p. 260). These elements are differentiated as they indicate a weak or strong partnership. Thus, whereas information sharing and policy dialogue are seen as components of a weak partnership, jointly agreed programmes and guaranteed financial flows represent features of a strong partnership. Another approach, taken by a group of researchers (Batley, Moran, Palmer, Rose and Sansom, 2006), places the emphasis on the government's role as an initiator of collaboration. These researchers claim that governments bring regulation and/or facilitation of non-state providers, financing, technical advice, training and community mobilization, commissioning of service delivery by non-state providers through contracts, licences, partnership, joint venture, and co-production.

A conceptual framework of factors shaping the relationships between the government and third sector organisations

While the state-NGO relationship has been explored from a variety of angles, a single comprehensive theory, when attempting to explain describe this relationship, is still missing. However, useful insights from both theoretical and empirical studies were synthesized in order to create a coherent conceptual framework for state-third sector partnerships.

A. Macro-level institutional factors, such as historical influences, legislative frameworks, policies and institutions, globalization forces, donor influences and state-regime type.

It has been fundamentally argued that examining political, social, cultural and economic realities should be part of the attempt to understand the relationship between

non-state providers and the government. (Bratton 1989; Farrington et al. 1993; Stone 1996; Sen 1999; Dorman 2001; Hilhorst 2003; Pettigrew 2003; Lewis et al. 2003; Bebbington et al. 2004; Lewis and Opuku-Mensah 2006).

Types of market mechanisms associated with public services provision

The term 'market mechanism' covers the set of rules and institutions of a market economy as applied to the public sector. On the supply side, they are concretized in arrangements such as tendering, outsourcing and private provision. On the demand side, they imply instruments such as user choice, 'vouchers' and other forms of user and performance-related funding.

The market mechanisms are seen as playing a positive role in supplying public services by improving efficiency, reducing costs while increasing supply, and reducing the budget deficit. Most western authors advocate the advantages of bringing public services to market (Butler, 1985; Savas, 1982; Donahue, 1989), which they feel encourages competition and improve efficiency. Moreover, some have even equated marketization with reducing the size of government (Peters, 1996; Wallin, 1997). On the other hand, those who claim that the market mechanism cannot function properly in public service provision, as it provides public goods only for those who can pay rather than for those who need them.

B. *Different levels of government, their origins and associated values*

In our research, government at the national level is represented as the Ministry of Education, while the local government involves mayoralties, county school inspectorates, and schools.

C. *Pre-conditions of successful relationships between government and NGOs*

A valuable perspective on the incentives for collaboration between government and NGOs is provided by who highlighted that the symbolic incentives for greater dialogue, trust, and transparency are equally important as real incentives like contractual forms. As pre-conditions of successful relationships there have been pointed out the following: the government' trust, willingness and adequate capacity to work with NGOs, to maintain contact, cooperation and dialogue (Batley, Moran, Palmer, Rose and Sansom), prior informal contacts (Hulme and Edwards), shared values and common objectives (Welle), recognition of NGOs' comparative advantage, favourable regulatory frameworks, effective monitoring, transparency, and constant commitment (Ullah et al.).

D. Factors pertaining to the nature of the relationship: *boundaries of the organisations themselves, between civil society and the government, within and between networks, coalitions and alliances of various organizations; dimensions of the relationship; roles of participants; formal and informal interactions; methods, styles and strategies of interaction; accountability; autonomy and room for manoeuvre.*

Accountability is an important issue for all NGO-government relationships. As Krishna highlighted, there are three different directions of accountability: upwards or vertical (to higher levels of administration or funders), downwards (to citizens, beneficiaries) and horizontal (to network organisations or partners).

To conclude, the relationship between government agencies and third sector organizations is a result of how they interact. Among these, the macro-level institutional factors, including market mechanisms are governed by regulation and influence these relationships. In addition, they lead to a government-third sector partnership that could be characterized by complementarity, in the case of outsourcing and vouchering and public-private partnerships. While competition between government and the third sector may arise, this is acknowledged by many scholars as an undesirable and ineffectual form of state-third sector relationship because it can negatively affect the beneficiaries of public services – the citizen.

2. The political neutrality of the third sector in Romania

Civil society is actively involved along with the government in providing basic public services throughout Romania. The success of many of these civil society-government partnerships stem from the *third* sector's political neutrality, which acts as a counterbalance to the potentially negative influence of politics.

One of the most prevalent and challenging problems of public services management is that of political incentives. In Romania, the political factors and related incentives play a significant role in shaping policies and political decisions at central and local level. A great interest in visible and tangible investments from public money is due to the struggle to collect votes in poles. For example, as regards education, policy makers prefer to invest in school infrastructure such as buildings, sport arenas (the so-called tangible investments) rather than to invest in the provision of skills for pupils or professional training for teaching personnel (the non-tangible, long-term investments of a nation). The investment in material infrastructure brings short term electoral benefits (people can perceive and touch these investments), while other investments made of public money are less visible and tangible, thus generating less electoral support and votes. The civil society organisations play a crucial role in overcoming policymaker apathy and reluctance as regards long-term investments in education, by means of lobby and advocacy work. Their efforts have led to attracting funding for soft investments and have ensured complementary support for the education public services provided by public institutions.

In providing basic educational services, there are two major points where the specific public policies have failed:
- Ensuring quality of education – currently the quality of education is rather poor as it has been measured via specific standardized international skills tests, i.e. PISA, TIMMS, etc. where Romania records the lowest scores;
- Ensuring access to educational services for students from disadvantaged groups, particularly for Roma students. This access is not ensured for all as there are certain differences as regards the quality of educational services provided depending on the social and economic background of student population enrolled. For example, in Romania, most of students enrolled in schools located in disadvantaged areas have a low attainment level combined with a large number of school dropout rate.

Following this approach, the third sector's organizations are assisting and supporting the state in providing a quality education for all enrolled students. However, one must take into account that the impact of the activities initiated by this sector are highly dependent upon the particularities of the social and cultural framework within which they activate as Evers (1995) emphasized: "*The impact of organisations with social and service-related purposes as part of the public space varies greatly according to history and political traditions. Some states, such as the US, are marked by the enormous importance of these components, while others, such as the Nordic states – in spite of the impressive number of social and solidaristic organisations found there – usually limit their operations to the dimension of interest formulation and lobbying.*"

How one can explain the characteristics of Romania's third sector? Which elements do have an genuine impact, in the field of education service delivery in our country?

The answer to this question may be found in the corroborated influence of three factors: "*While basically guaranteed in all market democracies, **the characteristics of the***

landscape of organizations in the third sector – all of which make up a core area of civil societies – are simultaneously shaped by the respective influences coming from state institutions, the market economy and the 'informal sector' of family and community, Hence, their public space is constantly exposed to tensions." (Evers, 1995)

The report between the third sector and the three factors mentioned above consists in function governed by means of specific mechanisms, individualized in the case of Romania, in particular, and for the South-East European countries, in general, as follows:

a) State institutions and CSOs

One of the most consecrated models of CSO involvement in supplying social services is the 'outsourcing' or the sub-contracting of certain services by non-governmental entities. The use of European funds in order to support the human resource development by attracting and involving CSOs is one of the manifestations of this relationship. The access to these funds is regulated in accordance with EU financial regulations. At national level, there is yet no national law to regulate the involvement and collaboration between state institutions and CSOs.

Another pattern of CSO involvement in providing public services is the public-private partnership (PPP). So far, in Romania there is no legal framework to regulate the entities created through the partnerships concluded between state and CSO partnerships. The Law on Public-Private Partnership has been recently approved by the Romanian Parliament on 30th of June 2010. However, the law shows several shortcomings as follows:

- It passes the responsibility as regards PPP start-up solely to public institutions;
- It does not provide sufficient incentives in order to involve private partners in PPP implementation. For example, at moment when a PPP expires, its output consisting in products and/or services becomes the full property of the public body and not of the private one. Although the private body is accountable as concerns the financial aspects of the PPP concluded, the public brings only an in-kind contribution;
- There are some limitations such as the impossibility to develop a PPP in case of contract terminations defined according to the Government Emergency Ordinance (GEO) no 34/2006, and GEO no 54/2006;
- The role of central and local public bodies within PPPs and the ways to synchronising their activities are not clearly stipulated. Central public institutions enjoy larger material resources and expertise, while the local public bodies enjoy a better knowledge on regional and local realities and facts.

On the basis of some preliminary conclusions as regards PPP, Romania still lacks a formal institutional framework designed to support CSOs involvement in providing public services. The recent legal developments on PPP legislation are still unclear, and the EU funds represent, so far, the only incentive to persuade the state interact with the third sector in supplying public services. The projects developed with EU funds, in our cases covering the targeted topics (quality of education and access to education for Roma children), represent a genuine opportunity to analyse and identify the best practices operating in the social context specific to Romania and aiming to develop a national legal framework stipulating the role of the third sector in supplying public services by support of national and EU financial support.

b) Market economy and CSOs

Within this framework, one will compare the way the stakeholders (private companies, enterprises, etc.) acting on the private market and which are normally profit oriented involve themselves in the complex process of public services supplying along

with CSOs. Is there a genuine competition between the private companies and CSOs? In this framework, the historical, social, and cultural contexts play an important role. According to the *Governmental Sector Condition* 2010 survey (Civil Society Gala, May 2010), 26% out of the total number of NGOs support idea that the private sector is a partner in projects implementation, 48% describe the relation with private sector as 'good', while a genuine interest existing for the projects developed, 19% state the fact that the relation with private sector is not quite good while 7% of the total number of NGOs sustain the idea that this relation does not actually exist.
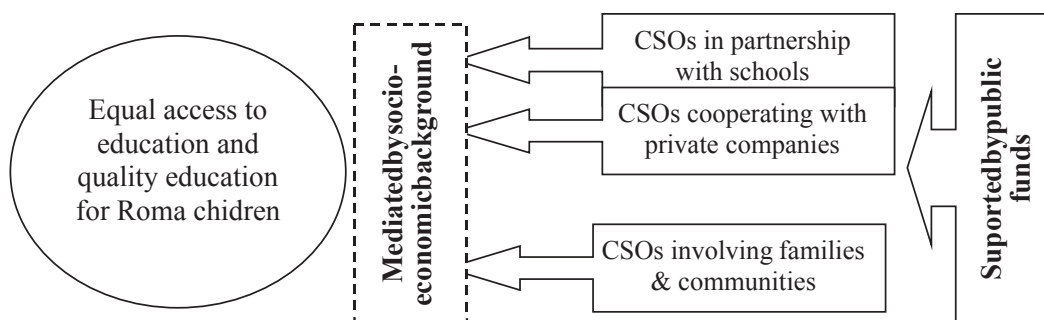
Romania does not have a tradition as regards the marketing of social services as the state remains the dominant actor in providing social services. The collaboration between the private, incomes oriented, market agents and the non-profit area stakeholders, is rather a scarce phenomenon, as the state is not an intermediary and incentive agent in their relation. However, in our research we will address the role played by the income generating agents in the successful implementation of the projects coordinated by CSOs.

c) Family / community and CSOs

In South-East Europe countries, and particularly in Romania, the family plays an important role in all the aspects of social and economic life but especially in the process of guiding young generations towards education services. Although, in ideal circumstances the family should play a minor role as possible – as the school attainment and performance of their children which should be synchronised with his/her natural gifts and capacities and not with his/her family characteristics and social background – the reality is far from this ideal (see Vlasceanu, 2002, Voicu and Vasile, 2010, Ivan, 2010). The family is actually the major factor in pupil's educational attainment rate.

CSOs can play a key role in improving educational services but only in partnership and collaboration with pupil's family. The support and assistance granted to families have a direct impact on pupil's education. On the other hand, the community, at its turn, can be an enhancing or inhibitive factor as regards school attendance of its young members.

A reliable intervention model implying the involvement of the third sector for the improvement of the education quality and access to educational services for Roma children should take into consideration the following elements:

17

III. Methodology and research design

1. Research design

The research was undertaken through a combination of qualitative methods: documentary and relevant sources analysis; in-depth interviews with representatives of stakeholder's categories playing a decisive role in projects implementation.

Synthetically, within research carried out, data collection and processing methods included:

- An initial literature and relevant policy reviews drew on documentary analysis;
- An initial analysis of projects documentation available to the public via organisation websites;
- In-depth, semi-structured interviews with NGOs' representatives, teachers, parents involved in or affected by the project;
- Integrated analysis of field research data, literature, legislation and policy documents by core concepts clustering, as presented in the Results section.

a. *The analysis and review of relevant sources and documents for the description of the assessed projects' implementation mechanisms, stakeholders involved, the outputs and outcomes of the activities developed, other useful data* etc., i.e.: project/ programme promoting website, financing contract, financing application tender, financing agreement, projects' promoting materials, research and/or analysis reports deployed within the project, project assessment reports, progress reports, other materials and documents drafted within the project. In order to access the information sources we used the legal provisions in force of the Law no 544/2001 on the free access to public information.

Among other aims, this endeavour hopes to identify lessons we can learn from to improve educational services for Roma children by means of CSO involvement.

In our preliminary analysis we have identified eight projects targeting the improvement of educational services for Roma children. These have represented research units within our research – **SEE ANNEX 2.**

b. The second step of research consisted in ***carrying out in-depth sociological interviews for each of the selected projects – namely those with better outcomes from their objectives achievement point of view – and approaching them as case studies.***

The following stakeholders were interviewed:

- Project manager or representative of team project – 8 interviews
- A representative (principal or teacher) of the schools targeted by the project (as there was the case) – 1 interview;
- A beneficiary of the project activities – Roma pupils or member of his/her family (parent preferably) – 2 interviews.

A number of 11 interviews were undertaken. Time and resources constraints limited our possibility of extending the interviews to other stakeholders (e.g. an expert member of team's project who was responsible for training or improving educational service delivery for Roma children or a representative of a public institution involved in the project implementation) as initially planned.

c. The third step consisted ***in drawing a normative perspective emerging from the analysis of policies addressing the issue of NGOs involvement in the area of***

providing educational services for Roma children and *the interpretative one* resulting from perceptions of NGOs representatives, teachers/principals and parents on different aspects of educational interventions, the role of each actor involved and the relationship between state and NGOs.

d. Starting from a case study approach, *our research evolved to a wider framework based on a more general experience on the part of NGOs in their relationship with the state*. Thus, the fourth step implied *exploring the case studies* in order to derive general conclusions about the features that shape the NGOs performance in the area of delivering educational services for Roma children, the factors leading to the success of the project intervention, good practices in terms of the partnership between state and NGOs, and identifying aspects that need further attention. We particularly focused on issues such as the role of the organizations involved in project's implementation, projects management quality, the existence or absence of partnerships with schools, the level of local community involvement in the area where the project has been implemented, the role of Roma parents and an ideal perspective of the roles in order that the success of the intervention be ensured.

2. Research questions, working hypotheses, expected research outputs

The objectives of the research were:

1. To acquire empirical knowledge on current practices in terms of CSO involvement with the state in providing educational services for Roma children, taking into account the role played by the relationship mediators such as local authorities, donors, school inspectorates, schools/teachers, Roma children families and community in ensuring the success of the interventions.

2. To identify the areas where improvements in the relationship between NGOs and state are needed in order to develop a real partnership for successfully providing educational services for Roma children.

We achieved the objectives 1 and 2 by means of collecting data, conducting in-depth interviews and documenting work from eight projects carried out by NGOs supporting Roma children education (projects financed from European funds or projects sustained by other types of funds), and analysing their particular features. From the very beginning, it is important to note that we did not propose to evaluate the efficiency or effectiveness of the activities undertaken in these projects[11].

3. To develop a theoretical understanding of the characteristics of the way of NGOs operation in providing educational services for Roma children.

In order to provide conceptual substance to the data we employed an eclectic theoretical framework. Consequently, the approach taken in this study required us to pose broad research questions that would allow us to map out the characteristics of the NGO involvement with the state in providing educational services starting from the assumption that, in daily practice, a variety of factors impact the way NGOs perform their particular roles prescribed by legislation and their relationship with the state.

In this framework, leading research questions were as follows:

Q1. In the case of the CSOs involvement in improving provision of educational services for Roma children, *which is the role of family and community in relation to the*

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[11] Even if this aspect is also appealing, there is not an issue of strong necessity given that this is compulsorily made in the case of the EU financed projects.

success of intervention? Is working in partnership with school sufficient for successful intervention?

Q2. Another aspect worth investigating is the partnership between the relevant public organizations (schools, school inspectorate, etc.) and CSOs. More specifically, we hoped to discover *how much relevant public organizations in the field of education are interested in developing partnerships with CSOs to improve the educational process, and which are the rationales for their interest? How about CSOs, how much are they interested? What are their perceptions of their role in this process?*

Q3. Starting from the evidence that one of the main causes of failure in providing inclusive and high-quality educational services for Roma children is rooted in school segregation, there is a legal framework (orders of Ministry of Education) in Romania playing the role of curbing this phenomenon. With the regard to segregation phenomenon, the research question is: *what is the role of CSOs in the implementation of public policies particularly addressing the issue of ethnic segregation in schools? Is there such a role allotted to CSOs?*

Q4. The role of CSOs is crucial in what is called marketization of social services. There are predominantly three market-type mechanisms that impact on the relationship between state and CSOs: outsourcing, private–public partnership and voucher mechanism. *Which of these are prevalent in characterizing the relationship between CSOs and the state regarding the education of its Roma children? What is the role of private agents, focused on profit in this process? What are the explanatory factors for this situation?*

We expect that in the process of providing public education services to Roma children, their families play vital role along with the social and economic conditions of the Roma community, i.e. symbolic and material resources, proximity to the nearest school, quality of community transport infrastructure, etc. Thus, the effective involvement of CSOs in educational service delivery can only run in partnership with family and community. From this point of view, CSOs have an advantage over the public institutions because schools and school inspectorates do not develop interactions with children families as CSOs do. Our hypothesis is that CSO experience success when they become involved and collaborate with the family and community that they are serving.

It is unlikely that in Romania, the tradition rooted in particular historical conditions be supportive for the collaboration between CSOs and public institutions, although this would lead to improving the quality of educational services for Roma children. In other words, if the collaboration between school and CSOs is cohesive than education services will become more effective.

Furthermore, CSOs may play an important watchdog role in implementing the public policies in educational sector. One of the major problems identified in supplying educational services is represented by the school segregation phenomenon, which persists despite the legal measure against it. If CSOs were allowed a more proactive role in helping to prevent measures against ethnically segregated schools, there would be less segregation.

We expect that partnerships between schools and CSOs which aim to improve the quality of education to Roma children are low in number. Currently, EU funding provides a great opportunity to ensure CSO involvement in the educational services supply for Roma children projects. While a PPP incentive legal framework does not yet exist, a law (not without flaws) has been recently adopted.

IV. Results

The characteristics of third sector intervention in providing services **(Q3)** may be approached in terms related to educational offer diversity. They link with the identified needs of target group and collaborate with the donor, both in its legal terms and in daily practice.

1. Perceived needs of educational intervention in the case of Roma children

The NGOs representatives raised a series of attitudes and situations which are fuelling the Roma children segregation/discrimination within the educational system and thus they are transformed into needs of educational intervention.

a) *Instruction according to stereotypes.* Too often, teachers guide their interaction with Roma children in conformity with the prescribed stereotypes of Roma. For instance, they involve Roma children in cultural activities such as singing, playing an instrument, or dancing, and they expect the Roma to excel in these fields. The teachers do not have much confidence in the intellectual potential of Roma children. The specific characteristics of Roma communities such as poverty, migration of entire families for labour purposes (i.e. forest fruits harvesting), early marriages, devaluation of academic performance or the low academic expectations, lack of confidence in regards to educational usefulness are the major impediments to Roma children. Learning a craft seems to be the main reason for which the Roma parents send their children to school.

b) *Mutual attitudes of Roma and non-Roma regarding the desegregation of schools.* In the project, the children were mixed depending on criteria i.e. ethnicity, gender, intellectual capacities. There were cases when Roma and non-Roma children and their families tried to avoid mixing.

c) *A lack of awareness of de-facto segregation.* Often, the prestige effect pushes the school inspectors and teachers ignore the fact that the issues related to educational segregation and the discrimination of Roma children in schools still exist. This fact made the school withdraw itself from the project even though it needed the funds of the interventions proposed in the project. (RC) The development of the projects played a role raising the school representatives and parents' awareness of the problems raised by Roma children integration in schools.

d) *Turning a blind eye to the discrimination of their children in school.* In several cases, Roma parents silently accepted the discrimination against their children and thus the violation of their rights. The parental voice is a very weak one in advocating for the rights of their children. They do not trust public authorities in dealing with and solving this issue. The parents often try to apply solutions they believe would make their children life in school easier by enrolling their children in special education because they believe the teachers will behave more gently with the children and the requirements and expectations are lower in this category, and thus do not risk failure (RC). However, in those cases where Roma parents found an NGO to mitigate for and ensure a better educational condition for children, the parents cooperated and supported the education of their children.

2. The nature of NGO interventions

NGOs provide complementary interventions to state actions in providing educational services for Roma in order to prevent and combat the discrimination and school segregation **(Q4)** of Roma children act in diverse forms of intervention and have a diversity of involved stakeholders. In our research, the following two layers of interventions were identified: enhancing the access of Roma children to education via activities that encouraged their inclusion within the educational process (kindergarten preparatory courses, prevention measures against early school leaving and school drop-out) and raising the quality level of school provision for Roma and their chances for a better school achievement. The educational and training activities proposed by NGOs cover a large spectrum and target groups: children, teachers, principals, parents, Roma school mediators, Roma mentors, trainers, members of Roma communities and involved all learning frameworks (formal, non-formal, informal), themes (intercultural, raising Roma self-esteem and self-assuming of their ethnicity by creating knowledge and inter-action bridges between school and families, school and communities, etc.), and various methodologies (interactive methods, role playing, sharing stories, meetings with Roma personalities, support groups, school, and vocational education and training, mediating activities for young Roma, informing, counselling activities, etc.)

In addressing the most immediate needs of the target group – Roma children' equal access and consistent participation in education, the following hybrid of three intervention layers was discovered: a) *Intercultural component*: While learning about others through kindergarten activities coordinated by the teacher and assistant teacher, both the Roma and non-Roma students became aware of the fact that it is okay to be different and that there is nothing bad in being different. Moreover, the children are encouraged to exhibit their ethnic identity and become more comfortable with their feelings and who they are; b) *Bilingual component*: The bilingual classes (groups) in kindergartens, founded within the project, are located in Roma communities where Romany is spoken at home. Because the passage from community to school proves to be very difficult for these children, many of them leave school, especially during the lower primary school years as they do not fully understand Romanian. As a solution, the Roma children could learn Romanian within these bilingual classes and thus the transition from community to school is eased; and c) *Support group component*: the intervention of this component aims to increase school retention in Romany-speaking Roma (traditional) communities where the transition between lower primary education level to upper primary education is sluggish. Most of these pupils, particularly the girls, do not attend upper primary school level. The support for these pupils to continue their studies, by means of their families support, will form a new trend favourable to change trend at the community level.

Another interventional approach included a **cross-generation and community education component.** For example, *Grandfathers Evening* and *Mothers Club* were created and attended by Roma children and their families. Moreover, the interviewees signalled that the Roma parents came often to school to see the works performed by their children. Remedial education activities were also deployed for Romanian language and mathematics, and these were attended not only by Roma children but also by children whose parents migrated temporarily abroad for labour purposes. In terms of methodologies, the activities basically applied interactive teaching methods, role playing, play-based learning, and informal learning methods as opposed to standard ones.

In order to ensure the success of the various interventions, a series of training courses on project management and interaction strategies for working with intercultural

classrooms and Roma parents were provided to teachers and school mediators involved in the projects.

3. Factors shaping the NGOs partnerships into practice (Q2, Q4)

The partnerships in analysed projects fall under two main categories: NGO(s) – ministry / school inspectorate(s) – school(s); NGO(s) – ministry / school inspectorate(s) – schools – other NGOs.

3.1. The actors' roles and the level of performing them
The role played by state institutions
The roles played by the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sports as they were addressed by NGOs' representatives were as follows: *educational policy designer role*, *implementing role*, through its territorial institutions, like the county school inspectorate and schools, and *facilitator role* as regards the relation with schools and inspectorates within the projects initiated and coordinated by NGOs. Assessments with regard to the way the Ministry of Education performs these roles shape the ministry's image. On the one hand, they are seen as an education policymaker whose policies look good on paper more than at ground level, as they do not properly fit to the genuine needs of the system. They can also be poor policy implementations due to the lack of functional monitoring mechanisms for its policies and their outcomes. On the other hand, they can be excellent facilitators for schools and CSOs.

In relation to the project phases, as it has been mainly claimed, the state institutions were less involved in project development and planning, but contributed to project implementation. Their contribution was primarily associated with facilitation and mediation functions. The state representatives (minister, local authorities' representatives) often sustained the NGOs' projects through including information and reference on those projects in their public speeches and/or by their physical presence and interventions within the events organized by NGOs within the projects.

It has also been said that the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sports' actions in combating segregation are not supported by the schools, and this is due to a series of shortcomings of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sports. The ministry often designs the policies without properly consultation all the stakeholders involved, nor does it monitor the implementation of its policies (including anti-discrimination). Because the ministry does not penalise the violation of its norms and regulations, support and follow-through of its policies vary.

Apparently, the burden of educational inclusion of Roma children is largely placed on school teachers. The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sports is preoccupied in a rather superficial manner regarding what happens to Roma children in school, since it has given teachers a curriculum for intercultural education as national proposal of school based curricula without any concrete and sufficient methodological guidelines to support teachers in developing their activities in order to prevent segregation in schools.

Another issue is related to liability. Although public intervention is needed to raise the integration level of Roma children in schools, there are no liable public stakeholders to deploy this intervention. To be more specific, an example addresses the efforts to integrate Roma children in the 1st grade in school and prevent school drop-out. Although this line of intervention is assumed as a priority at the ministry level, at local level, more accurately, at the schools neighbouring Roma communities, there are no local stakeholders liable for the implementation of this process. A strategy identified by NGO to raise the

level of inclusion of Roma children into the educational system and prevent school drop-out consists of attaining early education for Roma children, which will support and encourage Roma families to enrol their children in kindergartens and first grade. However, no public body has explicitly assumed the responsibility to involve and support families in enrolling the children in kindergarten and/or in school. Teachers, educators, local and decentralised public representatives declare that their roles are limited to teaching and training those children who are already integrated in the educational system – early-education (kindergarten or crèche) or primary level. They do not feel they should have to teach families of the importance of sending their children to kindergarten and primary school.

However, this should be a top priority area for educators and ministry officials. Only a few NGOs have realized and played the important role to raise the parents' awareness on the importance of enrolling children in kindergarten and school and encourage Roma adults to perform this action. One way would be to set up *summer kindergartens* where educators introduce Roma children to schooling and help them acclimate to the school environment and teach them school rules, which will bring them up to par with other students before the school year begins. The parents of these children – while superficial and lacking motivation and resources to support their children in school – were visited and persuaded to enrol their children in the school 1st grade: the children school attainment level and track were monitored as a special focus case throughout lower primary cycle of education in school. NGOs could cover areas where the state failed to intervene. We shall describe in detail the role of NGO in the following chapter.

The role of NGOs

How do NGOs perceive their own role in their partnerships with the Ministry of Education, local authorities, school inspectorates, and on the particular role played by these state institutions and bodies?

NGOs representatives addressed both the NGO's role as service delivery and advocacy organization. Most often, NGOs are perceived to operate as an initiatives proposer for the state with regard to Roma children education.

The NGOs contribute to preventing and combating educational segregation by including in the target group not just the Roma children but children coming from poor families, single-parent families, disabled children, through training teaching personnel for integrated, intercultural forms of education and parent education and training. NGOs seem to be more familiar with the needs of the target group and with the reasoning mechanism of the problems related with the exclusion of Roma children from educational point of view. Moreover, NGOs are much more motivated to actively solve local problems than state public bodies.

However, through the NGO projects, only the symptoms to problems are addressed, e.g. individual and particular manifestations of the educational exclusion phenomenon, but not the causes and the grounds per se. Once the project is completed, the new cohorts of children coming from behind face the same conditions and environment which allow educational exclusion.

In order to avoid the quick fix approach, it is imperative that the best practices tested by NGOs through these projects become general practices for the entire population via an institutional framework to consistently prevent social exclusion. Regarding best practices such as summer kindergartens for disadvantaged children, support for families for enrolling their children in school, special monitoring of these

children in the primary education grades, the state should assign distinct responsibilities and allot specific resources for kindergartens, schools, and teachers so that they can assume supportive roles to persuade the children families and parents of children from vulnerable groups to enroll their children in early education.

To illustrate, NGOs use a combination of materials and educational support as incentives for Roma children to participate in school and increase awareness of the importance of education in the development of their children. For instance, in some cases kindergartens were endowed with furniture; children received school supplies and a meal each day. NGOs have also purchased one personal computer and a printer for each kindergarten and given clothes to Roma children. In some cases, parents were encouraged to participate in different activities and observe what happens in the kindergarten. More specifically, one parent per each kindergarten participated in kindergarten activities and assisted the educator. At the end of the day, the parent was granted with a food supply package. NGO representatives interpreted their role as complementary to that of state bodies in supplying educational services for Roma by piloting working methodologies and facilitating project replication with state institutions (i.e. Ministry of Education, school inspectorates, schools). The NGO's role is thus to support the state in offering educational services for the disadvantaged groups. Another side of the coin represented by this kind of involvement with the state is that the NGOs provide specific training for teachers in the field of intercultural education, teaching strategies, translating inclusive education from theory into practice. Moreover, NGOs provide teachers involved in their projects with participation certificates which are useful for teachers who underwent official professional evaluations by MEYRS.

In addition, NGOs help parents to become familiar with their and their children's rights and provide assistance to parents by raising their awareness of the long-term effects of education. To put it briefly, NGOs assume their role as training agents for parents and Roma communities' members. They identify violation of Roma children rights and often act as a watch dog by challenging government approaches and practices through advocacy strategies or tactics.

The partnership between NGO and Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sports / County school inspectorates

NGOs and Ministry of Education are perceived as partners in supplying quality educational services and to all children but especially for children of disadvantaged groups. The involvement of the Ministry of Education and also of county school inspectorates as partners in the NGO projects is seen as essential by the interviewed NGOs representatives to gaining access to schools. Given the fact that the schools are state institutional bodies and teachers are state employees, NGOs need the formal permission of the Ministry of Education to work.

The collaboration between NGOs and Ministry of Education on one hand, and between NGOs and county school inspectorates' representatives on the other hand, was assessed as being a good one by the NGOs' representatives. As regards facilitating NGOs' action in the project, the Ministry fulfilled well its tasks.

The role of county school inspectorates is to facilitate the relation between school and early education units involved in the project, to participate at school and kindergarten selection process and to monitor their activity along with partner NGOs. These representatives usually participate at the events organized for the project and even at the activities developed in schools. Good collaboration between teachers and school inspector for minorities was reported when organising some events and exhibitions.

It has been appreciated that in most partnerships between NGOs and public institutions, the NGO was the most active regardless of the partnership stage (project implementation, evaluation or reporting). State institutions were the ones which, in some cases, gave credit and recognition to NGO action and projects. NGO and state representatives recognized the importance of collaboration by noting how each partner had a solid background in his/her field of competency and used them well in project implementation. (The interdependence theory is in practice here).

However, at times, an imbalance of contributions in providing public services was noticed. NGOs perceived themselves in the situation to do more than the state does even though the task was a state responsibility. As a general opinion expressed by the project managers of the projects targeted by us, NGOs *cannot* take over the state's role as regards actions and policies implementation because the NGOs' role is to develop projects meant to support the implementation of state policies. It has been considered that Roma NGOs should become an active monitor of the state in implementing the Ministry of Education's orders to stop school segregation. To conclude, the NGO's roles are interpreted as complementary or supplementary but not as an alternative to state mandatory actions.

Ensuring project sustainability seems to be a sensitive area due to the belief that the state does not provide in-kind contributions to maintain programs. Once the organization leaves, the activities simply cease. The county school inspectorates and schools do not contribute to ensuring project follow-up, not even in the case of those activities which did not require material support or supplementary payment for teaching personnel. Therefore, "*Too often, NGOs have the feeling that their work is in vain.*" This feeling occurs because the county school inspectorates and schools are not motivated by the Ministry of Education to continue projects. Actually, the Ministry of Education does not perceive the NGOs' efforts, their good outcomes and it does not "take over" the working methodology and projects developed by NGOs and which proved to be good practices. Moreover, through teachers training and assessment methodology, the Ministry does not encourage the involvement of teachers in those activities initiated and developed by NGOs by means of awarding credits meant to support teachers in advancing in their career. In any circumstances, we believe that the point where new support mechanisms and practices related to fostering the inclusion of children form disadvantaged groups is located at the level of Ministry of Education.

The partnership between NGO and local authorities
The contribution of local authorities was assessed as very helpful not just for ensuring the immediate success of the project but for preserving its effects and the improvements brought at the level of Roma communities. The communication between NGO representatives and local authorities was overall characterised as being good. However, in some cases, the local authorities apparently lacked interest in project activities and focused on managing the financial resources of the project.

Typically, the mayoralties did not involve themselves much in terms of material contributions. As a problem it has been stressed the relative small number of cases where the local councils/mayoralties were available to sustain NGOs' intervention with in-kind or financial support. However, there were cases in which, although there was no direct role assigned to local authority as partner in the project, the mayoralty representatives involved themselves through granting in-kind support for children, i.e. clothing, gifts, and school supplies.

Nevertheless, most often the representatives of public authorities brought their contribution to facilitating, supporting, and raising the awareness in media on the

activities through involving in organising events together with kindergartens and schools included in the projects, participating at school ceremonies at the end of the projects, and contacting local media to publish articles on the projects related events. The openness of the local public administration representatives to the project idea and publishing information on the project in the local newspaper was stressed by the interviewed teachers. In some cases, the special proximity between school and city hall facilitated collaboration because it allowed local representatives to easily meet with teachers, parents and other members of the Roma children' families.

The partnership between NGO and school

How many public organizations in the field of education are interested in developing partnerships with CSOs to improve the educational process, and what are the rationales for their interest?

As opposed to local authorities, the schools are more open to becoming involved in these projects and contributing resources. However, there were cases where teachers refused to work in certain projects even they were paid for their activities. Generally, it seems that schools prefer to work with NGOs because they bring teams of specialists and contribute to ameliorating the educational process, while private stakeholders (companies) only provide grant funds.

One of the interviewed educators assessed the relationship with NGOs as being a very good one as she always obtained from it the support she had asked for. (SC) Although the partners fulfilled their tasks in the project: participating to the schools and beneficiaries selection process, monitoring the activities, facilitating the relationship between the main applicant and the schools included in the projects (county school inspectorates), the efforts made by NGOs were larger in many cases.

The partnerships between NGOs

In general, the partnerships with NGOs are less extended than partnerships between organizations coming from different sectors, e.g. public sector organizations in partnership with private sector/third sector organizations. In practice, the role of partner NGOs sorts out project beneficiaries, offers training, monitors schools and kindergartens activities, and works with county school inspectorates.

The family involvement issue (Q1)

Regarding the role of family and community in relation to the success of intervention carried out by NGO, in the opinion of the interviewed teachers, family involvement plays a decisive role in keeping Roma children in school. It is clear that the family is solely responsible for either encouraging or discouraging their children to attend school. The parents with a lower educational background and less financial resources can be indecisive or less certain about the importance of education due to the lack to their lack of preparation and resources to support their children.

When the government and third sector intervened to help these vulnerable children, Roma parents became involved due to the daily meals provided to their children during summer kindergarten and the food package given to parents. According to the project's requirements, mothers were required attend kindergarten classes with their child and assist the educator by observing and becoming familiar with class activities. From these visits, the mothers gained confidence and were able to motivate their children to attend kindergarten. Moreover, the kindergarten was visited by not only mothers but also by sisters, aunts, and grandmothers. Consequently, the project

acted as a liaison between the school and community. This best practice model could be extended at large scale throughout the public education system.

No difficulties were perceived in attracting parents to the project since school mediators were familiar with each community and facilitated communication with the parents involved. The role of the school mediator in the project is assessed as being of great importance. S/he talks to the parents, checks the child's attendance, and follows up on the child if he/she does not attend class by learning why he/she was absent from class.

In Romania, there are not enough school mediators for all the schools with vulnerable Roma student populations. In such circumstances, the school mediator role was taken over by a female educator who knew the community well. In the current social and economic framework, planned job cuts of the school mediators position will have a negative impact on the development of communication between the school teaching staff and Roma community members. The summer kindergarten was placed in an interesting position because it provided a safe environment for not only the children to socialize but their mothers and other community members as well. The project manager stressed the vital element to ensuring the involvement of Roma families was good communication among parents, educators, and school mediators.

The project manager and the teachers involved in the project stressed the importance of family involvement. The manager pointed out how some Roma parents do not understand the harmful effects of educational segregation on their children. Involving community members and parents in their child's education and learning about relevant issues is the key to educating Roma children. This can be achieved through activities such as monthly meetings with fathers, regular meetings with mothers, support group meetings, and *Grandfathers Evening* and Mothers Club events.

In the opinion of the interviewed teachers, the obstacles to keeping Roma children in school are largely due to a lack of resources but other factors contribute as well. For example, parents did not attend school and do not perceive school attendance to be vital. Some parents feel their children are more comfortable at home and thus do not need to attend school, or feel school is too difficult for their children.

The main problem faced by Roma children is that they academically lag behind their Romanian peers. The Roma children also do not receive homework assistance from their parents. In the opinion of those interviewed, the involvement of Roma families plays a significant contribution to the success of their children. When parents came to school and school representatives went into the community, parents became aware of the positive long-term effects of education for their children.

The transformation of the children was noticeable. In the beginning of the project, they complained and did not want to leave home but gradually they started to enjoy kindergarten. After the first year of implementation, roughly 80% of those children, who attended the summer kindergarten, reportedly continued attending kindergarten the following school year. The parents proved to be opened and were cooperative. They sent their children to kindergarten with homemade meals. Their attitudes toward education changed due to the positive results they saw in their children. The parents noticed that the children's behaviour were more positive. As a result, they began to trust and respond to the teacher's advice more.

The significant effects on a behavioural plan at the target group level following the participation in the project: the interviewed educator mentioned among the changes she perceived at children the following: quality improvement in collaboration with teaching personnel, courage in expressing their own opinions, less shameful of being Roma, confident in their own evolution as successful individual, rise in social skills, and a more

active participation in classes. In addition, meeting Roma celebrities, who visited the school, had a significant impact on increasing the self-confidence and self-esteem of the Roma children, who were more motivated to study as a result. Non-Roma children learned as well and became more understanding of Roma children.

3.2. The formalization of the partnerships

In all cases, the NGOs' partnerships with state institutions involved in the analysed projects are based on a detailed contract. In some cases, institutions initially not empowered as partners in the projects (i.e. local authorities), were eventually recognized during the implementation stage via the partner statute. However, all NGO' representatives agreed that cultivating a good relationship with all the parties involved was essential to the success of their project.

3.3. Incentives for NGOs' actions

In the opinion of those interviewed, NGOs should perform their specific role in society regardless of the funding available and challenges they must surmount. For NGOs, following their own specific goals and mission are factors that count more than quantity of funds. Essentially, the grounds beyond NGOs' actions are humanitarian, civic. Helping children in need and mitigation for children's rights, irrespective the later ethnicity, gender, religion, etc., is assumed as a primary mission by NGOs and, therefore, the symbolic incentives, such as the beneficiaries' satisfaction with services delivered, NGO's reputation and social recognition, are equally important as the financial or regulatory ones.

Since beneficiaries' satisfaction is perceived as an incentive, there is a common practice among NGOs to self-assess their project's success against parents' satisfaction with NGO's activities. For example, in the case of the project *Roma children prepare themselves for kindergarten*, carried out in 43 Roma communities, one per each county and two for Bucharest, for each year of implementation, at the end of summer kindergartens class, a meeting with all parents was organized in order to assess the projects.

Likewise, a common feature of the examined NGOs is their desire of expanding their local projects onto a national scale. To this purpose, financing from structural funds were accessed.

European funds are seen as an incentive for a broader and larger NGO involvement in providing educational services for Roma, through the following: more generous financing, larger target groups, more activities funded, extended time span for project, determining long-term effects for target groups, schools, communities, training teaching personnel, remunerating teachers and school mediators for their extracurricular activities proposed by projects (remedial education activities, activities with Roma communities members, etc.) in order to ensure a genuine integration of Roma children.

3.4. Challenges NGOs face with their donors

Generally, the implementation difficulties were attributed to the relationship system with state institutions, the mechanisms, and procedures for reporting and reimbursement of the money. The most significant disadvantage for NGOs is the **frequent changes** in the format of documents (i.e. partnership agreement, documents to justify the target group in project, and choice of activities) by the Intermediary Body (IB). New

requirements arising in the process, sometimes requiring retroactive settlement and excessive bureaucracy, are seen as factors that hinder implementation. Confusion about the correct way to fill in some documents is compounded by the fact that those who work at IB do not communicate with NGOs very well. Furthermore, some applications are difficult or even impossible to be completed according to the instructions provided by the IB due to missing or incomplete instructions. Given the congestion and reporting procedures and changing reimbursement, another issue that raises questions is the reimbursement of all money spent, even if true absorption will be the same as the originally declared.

Not surprisingly, the confusion, bureaucracy, and lack of communication have deterred NGOs from applying. Although reporting procedures are very rigorous, they also have flaws. For example, evidence on the target group cannot be enough for showing recipient participation in activities throughout the project. The target group is asked to sign a consent sheet only at the beginning of the project. NGO dissatisfaction regarding the poor management skills of the donor affects projects.

The system that manages structural funds is considered defective and the Romanian state procedures are valued as very slow and highly bureaucratic. The fact that all the rules are not established at the outset leads to deadlock situations. Thus, a monitoring and evaluation system based on state representatives own interpretations result in haphazard decisions and no standard for procedures. Moreover, a flawed reimbursement system regarding the Management Authorities (MAs) and IBs blocks the absorption of projects and money. Under these circumstances, structural funds are not attractive to the smaller organizations either. In addition, some NGOs representatives feel their work is merely and insufficiently judged by their capacity to meet the donor's accounting and reporting requirements. They feel donors do not recognize the satisfaction of the beneficiaries for whom the services were offered, or the qualitative changes in the lives of children and community members affected by their projects. Donor's requirements do not correspond to NGOs values in terms of quality assessment.

For NGOs, the lasting effects of the project, such as changing attitudes, improving the integration of Roma children in schools and increasing their school performance are important. However, the results of a quantitative approach to the target group, expressed in numbers of participants in the project, the activities, times and money spent on evaluative findings seem to monopolize the efficiency and effectiveness of the intervention made by the project. Qualitative changes in the life of Roma children, their school, and their community (in terms of changing negative attitudes and gaining knowledge about other cultures, the interaction with non-Roma people, and the desegregation process conducted in school) seem to be ignored to the NGO's dismay. NGOs do not require additional financial rewards but want recognition and acknowledgement for their years of effort in successfully supporting Roma communities. The recognition would boost their public image, which they value.

Another negative outcome of complying to confusing, excessively bureaucratic rules is the change in the nature of NGOs. The projects financed from structural funds led NGOs to learn and apply new rules, like those related to procurement, which led to the alarming situation of turning NGOs into rigid organizations like public ones. Analysed from the perspective of Institutional Theory, this situation of NGOs' adopting of non-specific rules of accountability of public sector organizations as response to donor' demands, is referred to as "isomorphistic change".

3.5. The perceived benefits – a way of enforcing the partnership

The perceived benefits of the involvement in the Roma summer kindergarten project are as follows: the granted assistance to improve the educational process, supplemental pay for educators and mediators involved in the project, (professional development) individual certificates of participation to prove participation in continuing education and certificates of participation for kindergarten. Benefits of school participation in the project perceived by the teacher are the following: the possibility to conduct essential, additional activities (intercultural education, remedial education), extra compensation for teachers involved in the project, prizes and school supplies for Roma students, which for them "it matters very much", a better collaboration among teachers, between school and parents, between school and local authority representatives, a closer relationship between the teacher and Roma children, and a better understanding of the Roma community as a whole.

4. Aspects of a successful state-NGOs partnership

The role of the Ministry of Education should involve supporting campaigns on children's rights, regardless of ethnicity, religion, nationality, and grade levels, in addition to supporting the efforts of NGOs to improve the quality of the educational process, to prevent and combat discrimination in schools. The state should replicate successful projects undertaken by non-governmental organisations or to find ways of generalizing them to the entire educational system. The projects often address symptoms rather than the structural causes of the situation. Projects should suggest effective ways of addressing the failure to acknowledge the existing problems sometimes.

The interviewed teachers emphasized that it would be desirable for local authorities to financially support the development of kindergarten in recreational activities which could determine the child to make associations between kindergarten and enjoyable activities. Children will be able to associate school as a positive, fun environment. For example, the mayoralty could fund field trips for the children. A trip can be a learning experience and further incentive to regularly attend school given that some Roma children never leave their hometown. Such recreational activities proved to be an effective means of developing community-level social capital, increasing trust between families and to enhance their relational capital.

Illustrative case study:
The project title: 'A good start of 1ˢᵗ grade'
Implementing body: The Education and Social Development Centre
Description of the project: Support of the integration in 1ˢᵗ grade of 100 children from 3 rural localities belonging to vulnerable groups.

The discussion with the project manager of the aforementioned project has enabled us to extract relevant conclusions on the role played by the third sector – in this case the NGO mentioned. We summarize the problem which the project met, the intervention and its relevance as follows:

1. The education of children from the vulnerable Roma families' faces had acute needs which were not covered by the rigid education system in Romania. This project focused on a major deficiency of the Romanian educational system, namely the poor integration of children from vulnerable groups of Roma children in first grade.

2. The failure of the education system in this regard shapes two forms: a) there is a significant rate of children from vulnerable groups (poor families, Roma families) who do not enrol in the first grade at the appropriate age, and b) the children coming from the mentioned groups enrolled in the first grade suffer largely from a lack of early education in comparison with the rest of the children, a "failed start" deficit that place them in a disadvantaged position within the school leading to a higher dropout rate;

3. The educational system and schools in Romania are targeting only care and education for children enrolled in formal education classes. The school does not assume an active role to help integrate Roma children in education, classes.

4. In practice, kindergartens should play a vital role in preparing all young students for primary school; however, these educators limit their role to only educate children in their classes and do not assume the role of encouraging parents of poor families to send their children to kindergarten, a fact of fundamental importance for a child's school career. These educators could stimulate registration of children in kindergarten by involving the stakeholders in this process (social workers, school administrators, parents' volunteers in the community, and non-profit organizations). In small rural communities educators know very good all the parents and children and they could engage easily discussions with family of vulnerable children stimulating them to send their children at kindergarten. Studies have shown that deficiencies as a result of lack or little early education are difficult to overcome.

5. Briefly, the following lists the lack of a cohesive approach to compensate for the weaknesses of children from vulnerable families: a) lack of synchronization/ collaboration between the primary/primary level schools/ kindergartens, b) schools lack of responsibility concerning this task and the lack of a formal mechanism of involvement in the process, and c) low motivation for educators to take part in the process.

6. Vulnerable families simply have no resources (material, intellectual, etc.) to provide the necessary education for children. Although the research conducted in the project undertaken by ECSR pointed out that some parents of vulnerable groups value the education – they would like their child to learn and thus avoiding being poor as they are, for a better life – they still cannot act as they would like due to objective reasons. We briefly describe a case presented at the interview by the project manager: a mother would like to send her child to kindergarten but she cannot do this because she affords to cook just one meal a day thus the children are hungry at their arrival at school – this situation is unacceptable. The government offered the **Roll and Milk Program**, a free meal for children from the state, but did not resolve the situation because in the countryside (rural areas) where the project was conducted, these meals reached schools at noon not in the morning.

7. Undoubtedly, the Romanian formal education system fails to provide equal opportunities for all children regardless of home resources and type of family. Children from vulnerable families with parents with low levels of education or belonging to Roma families have from the start an educational disadvantage in competition with other children who are simply lucky to be born to a family of better fortune[12]. In this context

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[12] We do not address in here the fact the luck of being birth in a family enjoying a better condition consists in the genetic inheritance. The specialised literature debated for long time the role of genetic inheritance in the education process, the conclusion at which most of the specialists reached was that the genetic luggage has a certain influence on status reproduction, but the social reproduction mechanisms play, at their turn, a significant role and the effort to diminish the educational gaps through public education is welcomed.

the role of the third sector is the last chance to intervene actively in this regard. ECSR project consisted of organizing summer kindergarten for 100 children who did not attend preschool at all, including a free meal every day in the morning to avoid the situation described earlier. In this project, parents were counselled and guided directly in the child's enrolment in the first grade. Some parents actually did not know that they needed to start a specific process for inclusion in the first grade, the filling of a dossier, documents etc. ECSR has enabled kindergartens and educators to provide training in these summer kindergartens. These educators' wages were supplemented in this respect. In addition, ECSR stimulated and raised the issue of school non-involvement with local school board, advocating for an active role in the process of registration of vulnerable children in the first grade. At the same time, a partnership with local authorities who supported the process was developed; however, the representative was more interested to take over financial management of the project.[13]

8. The case of ECSR project is an example of good practice, a case of inefficiency in the public system to ensure all children equal educational services was offset by the intervention of the third sector. Another important aspect in the interview carried out with the project manager was linked to another major shortcoming of the educational system from primary school level. There are cases of children who, although enrolled in the 4th grade of primary school education, do not have the basic literacy and numerical skills for this level of education. Some teachers rather prefer carry on with these children in their classes despite the later poor educational attainment for the simple reason that the teachers can report better outcomes for their educational work to their superiors.

In short, the quality of primary education in the Romanian education system needs to improve and deserves extensive intervention.

V. General conclusions and recommendations

The general conclusions based on our study of the views of NGOs representatives, parents, and school principals are summarized below.

It is obvious that the Romanian government is failing to provide adequate educational services, particularly for Roma children. In this context, the NGOs play a vital role in supporting the state delivery of educational services for disadvantaged groups. NGO intervention only addresses some symptomatic manifestations of the educational exclusion of Roma children, but not its root causes. With the completion of the projects, future cohorts of children from vulnerable groups face the same social conditions where they are excluded. Although NGO intervention is often successful, there is a low degree of sustainability for such projects. Furthermore, these projects helped a small percentage of Roma children. Our recommendation is to translate the best practices of these NGOs into a comprehensive public policy initiated by policymakers at the national level, which is adapted and implemented through public institutions. If these best practices can be implemented nationally, we may succeed in the long-term fight against educational exclusion of Roma children.

NGOs often provide a combination of material and educational support to encourage the participation of Roma children in their education and to raise parental awareness of the crucial role that education plays in their child's development. NGOs

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[13] The project was funded by Soros Foundation Romania

contribute in preventing and combating educational segregation by including not only Roma children but also the children of poor and/or single-parent families and children with disabilities in addition to training educators, school principals, and parent an intercultural, integrated education.

The government and NGOs perform complementary roles in improving access to education and the quality of educational services, and for this reason the collaboration between them is regarded as mandatory for successfully delivering educational services to underserved communities.

The interviewees emphasized that even if the state designs may look good on paper, the policies for assuring quality education for all, systematically failed in addressing the real needs of the direct beneficiaries of educational services, namely children and their parents. This is due to at least three reasons. First, in drafting the policies the stakeholders' views are not attentively taken into consideration. Second, the Ministry of Education's mechanisms and capacity of monitoring the implementation of its policies are weak. Third, the Ministry of Education's unwillingness to learn from the NGOs' best practices in dealing with the educational needs of Roma children and adopting their working methodologies is unfortunate because the country would benefit in the long run if it thoughtfully and effectively educated its youngest, vulnerable citizens.

Regardless of bureaucratic obstacles and lack of recognition, NGOs work energetically to solve problems. They perform their specific role within society, irrespective of the funds allotted and implementation difficulties. Apparently, at least for now, their mission and their beneficiaries' satisfaction are what matter most to NGOs. The state does not always create a supportive environment in which the state institutions and NGOs partnership can succeed. It has been highlighted that, in the context of structural funds-based projects, the state has no satisfactory method of consistently measuring the impact of educational intervention for Roma implemented by NGOs and many social benefits resulting from NGOs interventions are omitted from evaluations and assessment processes. Thus, a large share of NGO contribution is not known by the state.

The relations between NGOs and Roma children and their parents are both direct and mediated by specific individuals (for example, teachers and school mediators). A series of state institutions by their policies and practices have an impact too on the way in which this relation runs (the Ministry of Education, county school inspectorates, local authorities, schools, and donors in the case of structural funds based projects). The quality of NGO work is primarily conceived in terms of the quality of its relationships with its beneficiaries. The intervention of NGOs in bringing Roma children to school and making their life better and meaningful is appreciated by teachers interviewed as extremely useful and basically guided by humanitarian goals.

Often NGOs perceive their own contribution to improving the access of Roma children to education and enhancing the quality of educational process as being even more long-lasting and profound than the state interventions in this respect. Unlike the state, which is focused rather on a quantitative approach of the intervention results, NGOs focus more on the quality of their work, starting from a genuine and dynamic understanding of beneficiaries' realities, be they children, their families or community as a whole. For NGOs the evaluation made by beneficiaries is decisive in assessing the success of their own interventions.

NGOs work to ensure sustainability of their projects, and for that they prepare working methodologies with target groups and pilot them. They elaborate best practices and put these resources at the disposal of state institutions hoping to facilitate the replication and multiplication of successful projects.

In terms of incentives for taking action in delivering educational services for Roma children and their parents, the structural funds are considered appealing by NGO representatives. The reasons are as follows: they allow for the implementation of some extended actions with a stronger impact for a longer time span (in case of strategic projects – 3 years and 2 years in case of grants); they ensure the continuity of their actions and the consolidation or the prolongation of their project; and the funding is substantially larger. However, the excessive bureaucracy, sluggish administration, inflexibility on the part of intermediate bodies and management authorities, and the heavy administrative burdens tend to overshadow the obvious and incontestable advantages of such funding and make the NGOs reluctant to apply for this kind of funds in the future.

Furthermore, the possibility of an EU-funded project is regarded as less attractive for small NGOs than for the large ones. Two reasons were mentioned by interviewees for this fact: on one hand, small NGOs might not afford to assume the initial contribution of certain level which is compulsory to enter the project, and, on other hand, if during the project implementation appear funding blockages the small NGOs might not have enough internal resources to continue the implementation.

The quality of partnerships between state institutions and NGOs seem to be decisively biased by two factors, as follows:

a) The hiring of civil servants and staff should be based on competence and skills but unfortunately, many are hired based on political criteria in Romania.

b) The common perception among public servants that working on public-private partnership projects is out of their obligations and, if they however get involved in this, then their small salaries should be supplemented with an additional income due to the extra work.

Of course, the fact the respondents were in most cases NGO representatives contributed to biasing our research data through the 'prestige effect'. However, we started from the premise that subjective perceptions enclose a guiding and explanatory effect regarding the way stakeholders activate. Becoming familiar with the NGOs' perspective on their activities and the state's actions contributes to improving the quality of public-private partnership between state and NGOs.

In this framework, a recommendation would be to establish measures to facilitate the partnership between public institutions and NGOs and transfer the lessons learned by the NGOs throughout the country. Their lessons are particularly poignant because they are located much closer to the concrete needs and causes of the problems. The initiative transfer from the third sector to state institutions does not mean the end of NGO missions, rather their role should continue in terms of monitoring how state institutions succeed in implementing the suggested best practices and evaluating its long term effects.

Annex 1 – EU funded programs on Roma education and training in Romania

1. Pre-accession funds – PHARE programs

By *the PHARE* projects dedicated to Roma education there were targeted the issues of consolidation of a framework of service provision designed to enable the Roma to participate fully in the social, economic and cultural life of Romania. Thus, the 2006 PHARE project makes a national evaluation, covering all counties, regarding the impact of the measures and good practices piloted and designed in previous PHARE projects (2001, 2003, 2004 and 2005). The access to lifelong learning is also ensured by the training programmes that are delivered under these projects for the professionals working in the educational field: school principals, inspectors, trainers, teachers, school mediators, teachers, students coming from targeted communities.

Best practices and success stories related to PHARE projects 'Access to education for disadvantaged groups' has shown, since 2001 (starting point), that:

- approximately 850 teacher trainers from all 42 counties were trained on themes like inclusive education, active teaching methods, school based curricula development and implementation, second chance and remedial education programmes;
- the local training programmes have been developed in all counties and the Teacher Training Houses support it;
- approximately 4000 Roma pupils, youngsters and adults have been enrolled in the Second chance programme (for primary level and for lower secondary level);
- after school/remedial teaching programmes and intensive kindergarten programmes have been developed in 25 counties with a good participation and are currently developed in 11 new counties;
- approximately 381 school mediators have participated or are participating currently in the mediator training programme;
- 36 Resource Centres for Inclusive Education have been established in participating counties;
- approximately 300 participating schools and another 150 schools, currently selected, have developed and develop activities for parents participation in education;
- Counties participating in the project have financed works and procurement activities and approximately 300 schools from disadvantaged communities already ensure a friendly educational environment.

Synopsis PHARE Programs addressed Roma population in Romania
Regarding the PHARE Programs as pre-accession financial instruments it could be said that between 1998 and 2004, the National Agency for Roma (NAR) has been the beneficiary of 4 PHARE programs as follows: in 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004–2006, a total of approximately 35,953,000 million Euros. Other institutions, especially the Ministry of Education, received specific funds (about 35.3 million Euros), according to their specific field of activity, within the Roma were considered the target group.

No.	Programmes	EURO	Year/ Implementation	Institutions responsible for the implementation	NAR function
1	Non-reimbursable funds Pre-accession projects PHARE	85,473,000	1998 (end of the year) – 2009	NAR (and after General Secretariat of the Govern)	Implementer and beneficiary since 2005
2	Reimbursable funds Social Inclusion Program (SIP)	1,000,000	2006 (end of the year) – 2011	Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection, Ministry of Education, FRDS	Beneficiary
3	Non-reimbursable funds Pre-accession projects Strategic projects	2,000,000	2008 (end of the year) – 2012	NAR	Main applicant
	TOTAL	111,473,000 EURO	1996 / 2012		

2. Post – accession funds (structural funds)

2.1. Framework

Human Resources Development OP (funded by European Social Fund) mentions Roma explicitly in 4 Priority Axes:

- *Priority Axis 1* ('Education and Training in support for growth and development of knowledge based society'): includes institutional development for Roma re/integration into education (€1,002,046,290 – ESF contribution: €797,803,989).
- *Priority Axis 2* ('Linking lifelong learning and the labour market'): Roma main target group under second area of intervention (preventing and correcting school leaving) (€1,053,460,619 – ESF contribution: €911,775,778).
- *Priority Axis 3* ('Increasing adaptability of workers and enterprises'): provides support to Roma (among other vulnerable groups) regarding health conditions and improvement of health and safety at work (€578,885,022 – ESF contribution: €450,189,271).
- *Priority Axis 6* ('Promoting social inclusion'): increasing Roma access to the labour market, through re/training, social services, personalised support, awareness raising activities, developing partnerships and new methods to combat discrimination. Target consists in 150,000 trained people, out of which 65,000 Roma. (€661,122,255 – ESF contribution: €540,608,927).

Roma are also eligible for interventions under other priorities (e.g. active employment measures), but not with preferential treatment.

*2.2. **So far** the current EU co-funded projects in the field of education and training are being implemented by means of structural programs:*

The Social Inclusion Program seeks to improve the living conditions and to increase the social inclusion of Roma in four prioritized areas, inclusively education. The component regarding *Inclusive Early Childhood Education Program* is financed with 6 million Euros and it will be implemented through a partnership between National Agency for Roma and

the Ministry of Education. The program targets 120 of Roma communities that were selected in which kindergartens would be built or rehabilitated in order to ensure a good quality early education for Roma children.

Based on the *European Social Fund*, National Agency for Roma in partnership with Roma Education Fund, Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, Resources Centre for Roma Communities and Pakiv Association from Romania, will implement, during 2008-2011, some trans-national projects.

Thus, the *'Education of Roma children – the way to a guaranteed employment'* has as its main objective of this project is to increase the level of education of Romani children in the rural and urban area for developing human resources, which later will participate on the flexible and modern labour market as the result of the improved quality of education and reduction of the school drop-out. Specifically, the expected results of the project are the following:

- Equal access to education of 1200 Roma pupils from VII and VIII grade which are most exposed to the early abandon of school. The result will be achieved by offering additional education preparation for passing the national tests;
- 600 Roma students from grade VII will continue their studies in the secondary stage as the result of the mentorship, personnel development, orientation and guidance activities;
- Retention of 750 Roma students in the 9th grade in the secondary school by facilitating their adaptation to the new educational environment;
- Preparation of 450 students of Arts and Crafts School to gain access to labour market throughout scholarships programs for excellence in studies;
- Preparation of 2400 Roma adults who early abandoned school to benefit of programs such as 'Second Chance' which have as aim to support Roma adults to gain access to labour market by ensuring them basic education.

The transnational project '*School a chance for everyone*' will be implemented during the same 2008-2011 period, by the National Agency for Roma in partnership with International Association Step by Step, Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, the Centre for Education and Personal Development – Step by Step and Agency for Community Development 'Together', The project proposes several measures to prevent the early abandon of school of vulnerable groups in 20 counties of Romania. The activities implemented during 2008-2011 would contribute:

- To improve participation of Roma children, poor and disabled children at primary and secondary level;
- To diminish school dropout rate;
- To realise a collaboration and networking mechanisms among the actors implicated in educational issues.

The transnational pilot project, *'Together on the labour market'*, is managed by the National Roma Agency is being implemented in 8 localities in partnership with the *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* from Spain as transnational partner during the period 2008-2010. In the following period 2010-2013 the project aims to be expanded nationwide. At a cost of 4,908,749 € for a period of two years, the project has the following aims:

- To benefit 6,670 Roma women and men through personalised support for labour insertion;
- Vocational training adapted to the demand of the Romanian labour market.

No preliminary results on this project have been provided yet.

The project *'All in kindergarten, all in the first grade'* is managed by the central government with a budget of 5,000,000 Euros. Although no data is yet available on its results, it sets ambitious and specific targets:

- To prevent and correct early school leaving for children aged 5 to 8 within 420 disadvantaged communities (a high proportion of them being Roma children);
- To increase access to pre-school and school education for 8,000 children within disadvantaged communities, mainly Roma, trough participation in "Summer kindergarten" and 'School after school' educational programmes.

Its potential outputs are ambitious: A 75% decrease in school drop out rate for pupils in the first grade belonging to the 420 disadvantaged communities; 6,000 Roma children benefiting from the school-after-school programme and 10,000 Roma parents receiving counselling regarding child education.

Three other projects target pre-school education. Two are managed respectively by the 'Amare Rromentza' Roma Centre and the National Agency for the Roma, with more than 4,000 combined beneficiaries. The third, titled 'Strategic steps for improving access to education for Roma children' is managed by Romani CRISS and will have as a general objective the reduction of early school leaving risk among Roma pupils. With a budget of 4,872,060 Euros, it will develop desegregation plans within 90 schools from 4 regions of the country – North-West, Centre, South-East and Bucharest-Ilfov over three years, including intercultural training for 150 teaching staff and awareness-raising initiatives regarding the benefits of education to 20,000 planned Roma beneficiaries. Finally, an integrated project, 'Education of Roma children- the way to a guaranteed employment' is being managed by the National Roma Agency and implemented for three years (no exact dates provided). It aims to increase of the educational level of the Roma children from rural and urban areas nationwide and the development of human resources. With a budget of 4,943,831 Euro and targeting 4,800 beneficiaries (50% women), it could help to find ways to articulate education and employment policies through effective local implementation of equal opportunity and desegregation measures, and if it demonstrates long-term sustainability.

Annex 2 – Projects NGOs selected for analysis

Nr. ctr.	Project's name	Name of beneficiary	Total value of project IN EURO	Other remarks
1	„Strategic steps in order to improve access to education for Roma children'	ROMANI CRISS- ROMA CENTER FOR SOCIAL INTERVENTIONS AND STUDIES	4.300.000	Financial donor: Government of Romania through ESF
2	Quality education – a step forward towards equality	'AMARE RROMENTZA' ROMA CENTER	750.000	Financial donor: Government of Romania through ESF
3	Roma children prepares themselves for kindergarten	SAVE THE CHILDREN ROMANIA	390.000	Financial donor: Government of Romania through ESF
4	'CHAVE ZURALE' educational supporting clubs	ROMANI CRISS- ROMA CENTRE FOR SOCIAL INTERVENTIONS AND STUDIES	4.860.000	Financial donor: Government of Romania through ESF
5	'A good start in 1st grade'	Centre for Education and Social Development – CEDS		Financial donor: Soros Foundation Romania
6	School – a change for everyone	Applicant: National Agency for Roma Partner: 'Impreuna' Community Development Agency	2.200.000	Financial donor: Soros Foundation Romania
7	Roma children education – a way for a stable job	Applicant: National Agency for Roma Partner: Roma communities resources centres Centres Pakiv Association Romania	4.350.000	Financial donor: Soros Foundation Romania
8	Everybody to kindergarten, everybody to first class	RUHAMA Foundation		Financial donor: Government of Romania through ESF

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