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Organización
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Организация
Объединенных Наций по
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Regional Literacy Conference Addressing “*Literacy Challenges
in Europe with a sub-regional focus:*”

Building Partnerships and Promoting Innovative Approaches.

(Baku, Azerbaijan, 14-16 May 2008)

“Access to quality education for Roma children
in Central and South-Eastern Europe”



United Nations Literacy Decade

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Presented at the UNESCO Regional Conference in Support of Global Literacy "Addressing Literacy Challenges in Europe with a sub-regional focus: Building Partnerships and Promoting Innovative Approaches", 14-16 May 2008, Baku, Azerbaijan

Programme name: Access to quality education for Roma children in Central and South-Eastern Europe

Implemented by: Roma Education Fund

Basic facts

Country: Bulgaria

Starting year: 2000

Outreach: 2700 Romani children

Target Population: Roma children in segregated schools

Operating in: 10 towns and over 30 schools

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Brief Description

Across Central and South-Eastern Europe Romani children attend separate schools as a result of residential patterns; sometimes they are placed in schools for children with mental disabilities due to poor command of the majority language, or in specific classes separated from non-Romani children. In all cases, the effect of this practice has been an education of lower quality and social exclusion.

The goal of this programme is to discontinue this trend and to ensure that Roma children have access to quality education in mainstream schools together with peers from the majority population.

School integration in Bulgaria has grown in the past eight years from a single project, started by a Romani NGO, into a process involving several thousand Romani children in 10 towns, over 30 mainstream schools, and a number of Romani organizations acting at local and national levels. The issue has also transcended the domain of NGO work and appeared as a policy goal in a number of government programmes and funding schemes.

The specific goals of the programme are to enroll Romani children in schools outside the Roma-only neighborhoods in order to ensure that the Romani children have access to quality education; to provide academic assistance for Roma children who need to catch up with their peers; and to create a supportive environment for the Roma children in the receptive schools.

The success of the school integration initiatives in Bulgaria has dispelled fears and misconceptions about the integration of Romani children in education. First of all, it demonstrated that Romani children do not need adapted curricula and they can achieve as much as non-Romani children when proper educational support is provided for them. It also demonstrated that Romani parents are not indifferent to the education of their children and they choose integrated schooling when they have information and support.

The core model of the programme includes awareness raising campaigns among Romani parents to enroll their children in mainstream schools outside the Romani neighborhood; planned enrolment of Romani children in mainstream schools with a view to avoid desegregation in the new schools; supervision of the progress of Romani children in the mainstream schools by persons from the Roma community; provision of academic support for Romani children who need to catch up with their peers from the mainstream schools; extra-curricular activities involving Roma and non-Roma students; and transportation for Roma students who live far away from their new schools.