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Obstacles faced in school (re)integration by Roma pupils in international migration (Romania)

REPORT

within the project MISTO AVILEAN



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This paper was elaborated within the project “MISTO AVILEAN (in Romani, Welcome) Migration = Integration: Service Transfer Optimisation — MISTO” funded by the European Union’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020) through the Grant Agreement 809784 - MISTO - REC-AG2017/REC-RDIS-DISC-AG-2017.

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December 2019



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Obstacles faced in school integration by Roma children in international migration – Romania

REPORT SUMMARY

The present report is produced within an intervention project as support for the organisation of an advocacy campaign addressed to Romanian and European relevant institutions addressing the structural obstacles faced by Roma children who migrate to various countries accompanying their families in seasonal or temporary work. The report develops mostly a practical approach, and less an academical one. It synthesises information collected in Romania, based on interviews and focus-groups with 35 teachers, school principals and other education specialists, as well as an online questionnaire completed by 116 teachers from schools with at least 50 Roma children at the national level. The report provides a synthesis and an analysis of testimonials collected from experienced specialists, and it provides recommendations and topics for advocacy targeting Romanian and other relevant European institutions.

This report starts with an analysis of the Romanian teachers' and Roma parents' view on the seasonal and temporary Roma migration trends in the EU and the children involved. The paper then discusses the educational impact of these migration cycles on Roma children in foreign countries and in Romania, having returned from migration.

A first set of conclusions indicate that the migration context is marked by unpredictability, precarious living conditions and low integration of Roma families abroad (in terms of language, housing and institutional experience). This context makes school integration of Roma children in foreign countries difficult. When living conditions are too precarious, children are left at home with grandparents. When better conditions are available (housing, labour contracts), smaller children are taken with their parents and supervised by one of them, up to the reach of school age. At school age, only a few children are registered in local schools abroad, while most of them are sent back in Romania. In many cases, they are sent back at higher ages than the one necessary for preparatory class, thus requiring adaptive efforts or risking entering the "Second Chance" Programme (when educational delays exceed three years). Some children come to Romania with previous school education experience abroad, especially those who are born in other EU countries. When a foreign school background exists, Roma children, attempting to register in Romanian schools, grapple with the inability to validate abroad schooling due to lacking documentation. The Romanian school system imposes their insertion in classes immediately. In 30 days, the family together with the school and the county school inspectorate must clarify the child's previous school education abroad based on documents provided by the parents.

Analysing the Romanian legislation, regulations and procedures related to school to school transfers, including those made in international migration contexts, a second set of conclusions was formulated. It was found that there are available and specific mechanisms for proper school integration in most case scenario possible, including instances when no previous school documents are available. The equivalating procedures are not very complicated, involving school and county school inspectorate support. Yet, these procedures are often an obstacle for Roma families involved in circular migration. The procedure requires parents' involvement in interactions with local institutions, which is often an impediment for many Roma families who are rarely available (because of migration) or able to conduct institutional procedures (writing requests, filling files, providing documents upon request, requesting documents from foreign schools). According to Romanian schools' representatives, "the weak link" in the school to school transfer procedures consists in parents' difficulties in following these procedures. In order to fill this gap, the schools in Romania initiate direct communication with schools abroad. Yet, this communication is rare and not regulated at the institutional level, placing those who initiate communication in risky situations. Increased cooperation during a child's school transfer is

required by Romanian schools regarding the information transfer of a child's school history abroad and requisite documents for school registration in Romania. Schools also highlight the need to transfer information related to education contents and of information related to psycho-social environment previously experienced by children. This seamless sharing would facilitate a non-disruptive reintegration for Roma children who returned in Romania from international migration.

The final conclusions and recommendations indicate the need for international and interinstitutional regulations for the direct cooperation between schools in Romania and abroad. These conclusions also highlight the importance of a previous parents' agreement for the interschool cooperation in general, based on which, technical and institutional cooperation should be carried out directly by specialists, especially when parents unable or unavailable to intermediate it.

This report, as the base for an Advocacy campaign, indicates the major recommendation of upgrading the SIIIR (Integrated Informatic System of Education in Romania), in the sense of developing an operational function, next to the current statistical function. The SIIIR already collects consistent data related to the educational background of each pupil in Romania. Were new functions made available in SIIIR, based on previous parents' agreement, each school would be able to verify the educational history of a newcomer. This can be facilitated through various channels: through school access to SIIIR, the county school inspectorates or other existing or newly created contact points at the national level. Thus, the technical and institutional load of the process would be managed by specialists and not by the parents, who often do not have time, resources or do not understand the entire process. Moreover, interconnecting the SIIIR with other countries' similar monitoring systems would enable the transnational cooperation between schools in various countries, directly or mediated by internationally agreed, secured and accredited contact points.

Upgrading SIIIR to acquire an educational profiling option based on parents' previous agreement and interconnecting within a European network of similar systems are the major recommendations for the advocacy campaign to follow. Achieving this point would remove, at least, the administrative obstacles faced by (Roma) children involved in international migration and allowing a more consistent cooperation on other topics indicated by schools' representatives.

I. CONTEXT

The research report was produced as part of the project “MISTO AVILEAN (in Romani, Welcome) Migration = Integration: Service Transfer Optimisation — MISTO” funded by the European Union’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020) through the Grant Agreement 809784 - MISTO - REC-AG-2017/REC-RDIS-DISC-AG-2017.

The project is implemented for 24 months, between 01.11.2018 - 30.10.2020, by Terre des hommes Foundation Romania in partnership with Terre des hommes Foundation Hungary, Fundación Secretariado Gitano in Spain and AFEJI in France.

Project objective: To promote the integration of Roma children in education by:

1. Creating a mechanism for transnational cooperation in providing education to Roma children on the move in three EU Member States,
2. Strengthening the capacity of education professionals to provide non-discriminatory education to Roma children on the move in three EU Member States,
3. Combating negative representations regarding Roma through a child-led campaign.

Project activities:

A transnational cooperation mechanism will be created to support education professionals and institutions in places of **origin** and **destination** of Roma families on the move to ensure non-disruptive education for Roma children.

Education professionals will be provided with concrete tools and methods for ensuring non-discriminatory quality education to these children through a comprehensive **training programme**, stimulating mutual learning and cooperation through a transnational community of practice.

Prejudice-related difficulties in ensuring non-discriminatory education for Roma children on the move will be tackled through a **child-led campaign**.

Project beneficiaries:

- 570 education professionals,
- 200 Roma children.

Project results:

- A transnational cooperation mechanism linking **40 schools**;
- Increased capacity of **570 education professionals** to deliver non-disruptive, non-discriminatory education to migrating Roma children;
- Increased awareness among education professionals on Roma rights and success **stories in education**; and
- Successful integration in non-disruptive education for **200 Roma children**.

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II. STUDY OBJECTIVES

The present study was elaborated to highlight **the obstacles faced in school (re)integration by Roma children, in temporary or permanent migration, travelling with their families from Romania in Western countries.** Given the national, Romanian perspective of this study, the report on the obstacles in school integration more heavily tackles the reintegration of Roma children in schools in Romania after their return from seasonal and temporary migration in other European countries.

The study is part of a series of two others conducted in France and in Spain on the same topic. Considering the project's international coverage, targeting countries like Romania (as origin of migration), France and Spain (as destination countries), the study on obstacles in school (re)integration of Roma children has a multi-country coverage leading to three national studies and a common report summarising comparative findings in Romania, France and Spain. This paper only extends to the Romanian aspect.

The study on obstacles faced by Roma children in school (re)integration was structured on several topics:

ROMA MIGRATION CHARACTERISTICS, CHILDREN INVOLVEMENT AND IMPACT ON EDUCATION

1. Which are the main characteristics of Romanian Roma families' migration?
2. How are children involved in this international migration?
3. How does migration affect Romanian Roma children school education abroad?
4. Where are the gaps fostered in school education by Romanian Roma children while abroad?

ROMA CHILDREN RETURNING IN ROMANIAN SCHOOLS AFTER MIGRATION

5. How do Roma children returning from migration adapt to the Romanian school context?

ROMANIAN INSTITUTIONAL ANSWERS TO PROBLEMS FACED BY RETURNEES

6. What are the main regulations and institutions treating the school reintegration of returnees?
7. What are the main instruments and procedures available for school reintegration?
8. What are the main difficulties faced by children, parents and schools in using these instruments?
9. What are the recommendations for overcoming these difficulties?

DIRECT PROFESSIONAL COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, FILLING "THE WEAK LINK"

10. Why is school to school communication and cooperation needed and who benefits?
11. School to school communication and cooperation, as it occurs currently.
12. School to school communication and cooperation, as expected by Romanian schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR (TRANSNATIONAL) SCHOOL TO SCHOOL DIRECT COOPERATION

13. What are the recommendations for avoiding disruptive education faced by Roma children engaged in international migration with their families?
14. What are the recommendations for overcoming the missing direct communication and cooperation between sending and receiving schools at local level?
15. What are the recommendations for overcoming the missing direct communication and cooperation between sending and receiving schools at system level?
16. What are the recommendations for overcoming the missing direct communication and cooperation between sending and receiving schools at transnational level?

The results of this study are to be used for the **design of an advocacy campaign, both in Romania and other countries, seeking the development of a Transnational cooperation mechanism**, linking at least 20 schools in Romania (as the sending country) and 20 schools in France and Spain (as the destination countries) in order to facilitate school (re)integration of Roma children. Transnational cooperation between schools can overcome a series of obstacles, most likely those related to school documents, study periods recognition, proper evaluation when starting school in a new country, proper understanding of the personal, educational, psycho-social history of a child traveling between schools and countries.

The conclusions and the recommendations of this report will be practically oriented towards supporting the organisation of formal, procedural and operational settings for a Transnational cooperation mechanism linking schools in Romania and in other countries that provide education to Roma children on the move.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study carried out in Romania was designed based on data available about the target group, namely the teachers that work in schools with a high presence of Roma pupils. Roma families were also included in this research. The availability of data structured the study design in much of its content.

On the qualitative side of the study, 10 focus groups and interviews were carried out in the months of June and July 2019, with 35 teachers and other specialists having experience in school education of Roma children and with 10 Roma parents in three counties of Romania. The qualitative data collected was also the base for an assessment of teachers' needs regarding educational methods tailored for disadvantaged schools and communities. Next to the data, legislative and institutional investigations were realised by searching and analysing the most important regulations in Romania tackling the migration between schools/country phenomena. The participants to the qualitative study were school principals and teachers, as well as county school inspectors specialised in ethnic minorities (see Annex 1 - Focus group guide and Interview guide).

On the quantitative side of the study, an extended online survey was carried out in the months of September and October 2019 to identify the general topics to be approached during various stages of a Capacity building program proposed within the project (training with 10 teachers, dissemination seminars in 10 schools with other 100 teachers and webinars with at least 120 participants in Romania). Through the online survey the study reached a large group of schools, each of them having registered at least 50 Roma pupils (see Annex 2 and 3 for the online survey used in the quantitative study).

The database with potential participants of the online survey comprised 272 schools from 16 counties (out of 41 in Romania). The database also contains the contact details of school principals, Romani language teachers and school mediators. The online survey was distributed among 314 persons: 252 principals, 41 school mediators and 21 Romani language teachers.

The online survey was pre-tested among 30 teachers that participated initially in the qualitative research based on focus-groups and interviews to verify the clarity and the consistency of the questions. For one week, the online survey was completed by the invited persons. Overall, 116 answers were collected, representing 37% of the initial target group.

The high rate of answers, more than one third of the population investigated, indicate that the topic in question and the project itself raised interest among teachers working with Roma pupils in Romania.

Completion of the questionnaire was anonymous, as it was administrated on the google forms platform to ensure participants' trust. However, at the end of the survey, each respondent could optionally provide his/her contact details to allow later contact regarding the project updates and for further activity involvement. Out of 116 persons who completed the online survey, 99 respondents offered their contact details, demonstrating **a considerable level of trust and interest in the project.**

Regarding respondents' experience in teaching in classes with Roma pupils, 113 out of 116 respondents declared having previous experience in working with Roma pupils as disadvantaged persons. The answers were received from teachers with practical knowledge on the surveyed topics, thus indicating **the quality of professionals.**

Note: The report is supported by quoting testimonials provided in individual or group interviews during the months of June and July 2019, mostly from schoolteachers and principals in schools attended by Roma children, and less from county school inspectors. Overall, 31 women and 14 men answered to interviews. Given that the report does not intend to divide the analysis by subcategories of age, gender or socio-professional status, this kind of data will not be mentioned for each quote. In order to avoid repetitions, the quotes will not be accompanied by socio-demographic data. Special mentions will be made only for the quotes provided by Roma parents (mostly men) within the same period. This is justified by the fact that they present opinions that are different from those offered by the other interlocutors.

IV. COVERAGE

The study on obstacles faced by Roma children in school education during migration and returning to Romania is only one part of a larger study carried out in France and Spain, the two other partner countries. Even if the main topic is the same (Roma children in international migration and the obstacles faced by children and teachers in school integration), the perspectives vary from one country to another.

As the departure country, **Romania** is the starting point of migration, where migrants often return periodically or permanently. In the case of Romania, the topic is mostly related to problems encountered by teachers in working with Roma pupils and in facilitating their **reintegration in schools after migration**.

France and Spain are approached mostly from the point of view of destination countries of Roma migration. Separate reports are elaborated for each of these countries. The three reports form the basis for an integrated study on obstacles faced by migrant Roma children in school (re)integration.

Countries of Roma children migration approached within the study

Departure country: **ROMANIA**

Destination countries: **FRANCE AND SPAIN**



Figure 1. Country of origin and destination for Roma children in international migration

(Hungary is also represented indicating the involvement in the project of a fourth partner, Terre des hommes Europe in Hungary, having in charge communication issues mainly.)

This report presents only data collected in Romania, as the departure country for migration and as the return country after periods of seasonal or temporary migration.

In the map below, **the coverage of the online survey is represented**. The 116 respondents from 54 schools and 21 counties are **a significant number of specialists** whose opinions should be considered. All respondents are professionals with teaching experience and delivering education to Roma communities. These respondents are sufficiently involved and receptive to the topic, having invested the time to complete the online survey. Moreover, the 116 respondents represent an active group of education specialists, as 85% of them offered their contact details in order to be informed and involved in future interventions targeting the specific topic of disadvantaged migrant Roma children.

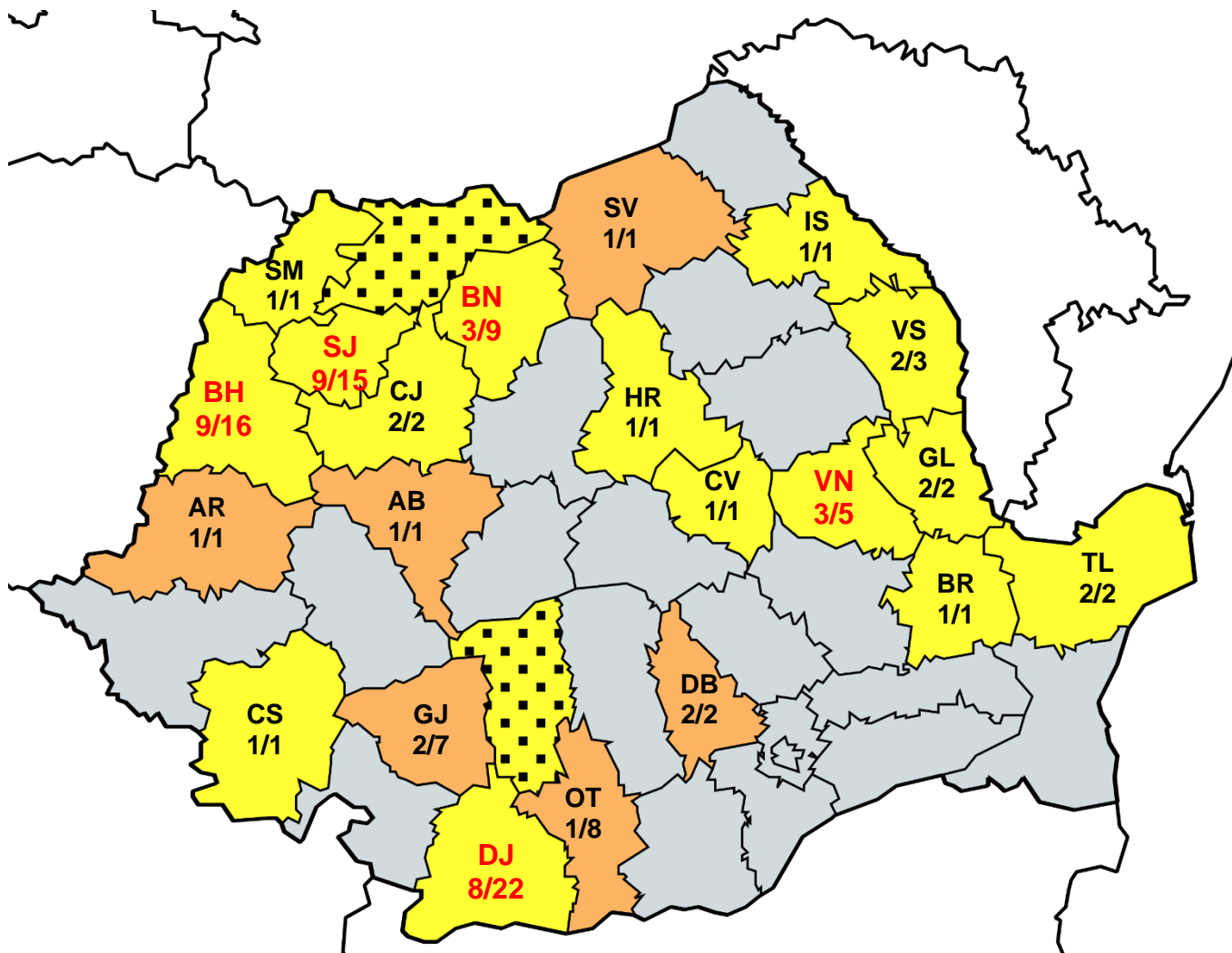


Figure 2. Counties covered by the study (Legend: Counties codes – ex. **DJ**, no. of schools=**8** – and teachers=**22**, providing answers to the online survey and interested in further project involvement)

In the chart above, the 21 counties from Romania covered by the study are represented. The yellow counties are the ones initially targeted, and the ones in orange are the counties that provided answers, even if surveys were not distributed to any schools in those counties. This is explained by the fact that respondents were encouraged to share the survey link in their professional networks.

The numbers on each county represents the number of schools and the number of teachers that provided answers to the online survey. This evidence is very important since the **respondents are possible beneficiaries of the Capacity building programme** organised within the project.

The table below presents data related to counties and schools represented in the study by participating teachers. In white are the counties initially targeted, and in grey are the counties that provided answers based on the spontaneous dissemination of information.

County	Code	Number of targeted schools	Number of Roma pupils in targeted schools	Number of responsive schools	Number of responsive teachers
ALBA	AB	.	.	1	1
ARAD	AR	.	.	1	1
BIHOR	BH	52	8444	9	16
BISTRITA-NASAUD	BN	15	2221	3	9
BRAILA	BR	11	1372	1	1
CARAS SEVERIN	CS	3	166	1	1
CLUJ	CJ	24	2037	2	2
COVASNA	CV	20	4105	1	1
DOLJ	DJ	17	2673	8	22
DAMBOVITA	DB	.	.	2	2
GALATI	GL	16	2939	2	2
GORJ	GJ	.	.	2	7
HARGHITA	HR	20	2769	1	1
IASI	IS	6	990	1	1
MARAMURES	MM	3	.	.	.
OLT	OT	.	.	1	8
SALAJ	SJ	30	166	9	15
SATU MARE	SM	7	2037	1	1
SUCEAVA	SV	.	.	1	1
TULCEA	TL	7	4105	2	2
VALCEA	VL	14	2673	.	.
VASLUI	VS	10	2939	2	3
VRANCEA	VN	17	2769	3	5
Others (unspecified)		.	.	.	14
TOTAL		272	42405	54	116

Table 1. The geographic coverage of the quantitative study

The high level of participation in the online survey (37% response rate), the high level of competence of respondents (97% of respondents with experience in teaching Roma pupils), the high level of interest (85% rate of respondents providing contact details for future involvement) indicate that **the study population is represented by a significant group of professionals whose knowledge and opinions are to be considered.** It is noteworthy that 15 of the respondents initiated spontaneous communication both by e-mail and phone with the project team to obtain more information and to share their interest in the project. **Even if the sample cannot be considered as statistically representative at national level, it can be considered as significant and consistent, comprising experienced specialists involved in Roma children' school education.**

Note related to statistics used: the number of Roma pupils registered in one school or another is not the object of an official evidence. County school inspectorates, through their minorities' county inspector, collect information about Roma pupils registered in schools. This information is mostly approximated by teachers at class level, based on their knowledge of the place of residence of some pupils.

The only official information is the number of parents' formal requests for their children to follow Romani language courses. The number of these requests is the base for the allocation of funds to schools in order to hire Romani language teachers or school mediators. This information is not reflective of the entire Roma pupils' population.

V. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY ROMA CHILDREN ABROAD

In order to find **the structural obstacles in the school integration faced by Roma children affected by international migration**, information was obtained through interviews and focus-groups made with school principals, teachers and Roma parents in Romania.

V.1. General statistics regarding Romanian Roma migration

The migration of Romanian Roma increased after Romania joined the EU in 2007. In 2012, about a quarter of Roma households were found to have experienced travelling or living abroad, while over 60% of these had recently made a choice to move. Most migration is circular, consisting of short periods of time (3-6 months) abroad (mostly to Spain and France), followed by returns to Romania. Within the migrating population, the 2012 research found that there was a high percentage of minors (17%).¹

Together, these elements point to the disrupted educational process for Roma children engaged in migration between Romania, Spain and France.²

Studies indicate difficulties related to transnational cooperation between schools³, amounting to returning Roma children not being able to register in schools in Romania due to lacking documentation and evidence of their previous educational achievements in migration destinations. Similarly, hosting schools in destination countries may invoke the lack of language skills of Roma children to justify their non-enrolment. Racist attitudes persist against the Roma in the countries targeted by Roma migration. Thus, Roma are perceived in negative terms by 41% of the population in Spain⁴ and 66% in France⁵.

Romanian Roma migration is part of a larger phenomenon of emigration that affects Romania since the 1989 Revolution and especially after the country joined the EU in 2007. A recent study published by OECD on 16 of July 2019, "Talent Abroad: A Review of Romanian Emigrants", indicates that "Emigration has become a major social and economic phenomenon for Romania, the population of which has fallen from 22.4 million in 2000 to 19.5 million in 2018, with outward migration responsible for more than 75% of this decline. [...] In 2015/16, around 3.6 million people born in Romania were living in OECD countries, of which 54% were women. Between 2000/01 and 2015/16, the number of Romanian emigrants rose by 2.3 million, with most of the increase occurring between 2005/06 and 2010/11. The number of Romanian emigrants also appears large in relation to the domestic population of Romania. In 2015/16, 17% of all people born in Romania were living in OECD countries. While Romania ranked fifth in total emigrant population, it had the highest emigration rate among the ten main origin countries of emigrants living in OECD countries."⁶

Besides the notorious migration phenomenon of Romanian, another prominent figure is that of the returning, or intention of returning to the origin country. Most migrants consider their migration as temporary. According to the OECD report, one in four Romanian emigrants intend to return to Romania, and between 160.000 and 200.000 actually return each year in Romania: "Using data on outflows of Romanian emigrants from Italy, Germany and Spain, it can be estimated that, on average between 2015 and 2017, approximately 135.000 Romanian emigrants returned to Romania each year from these countries. On this basis, one can estimate that the total yearly number of Romanian emigrants returning from European OECD countries has ranged between at least 160 000 and 200 000 in recent years⁷."

The present study approached the topic of Roma children in international migration, their specific needs related to formal registration and consistent (re)integration in the education system in Romania, and how the teachers, the schools and the Romanian institutional settings respond to these needs.

¹ Soros Foundation report, *Roma Situation in Romania. Between Inclusion and Migration*, (2012, p.203, p.206, p.207)

² UNDP, *Migration of Roma and non-Roma from Central and Eastern Europe*, 2013, p. 95-96)

³ 2009, OSCE, report on *Recent Migration of Roma in Europe* <https://www.osce.org/hcnm/78034?download=true>

⁴ University of Granada within the EU funded MIGROM project (*The Immigration of Romanian Roma to Western Europe: Causes, Effects and Future Engagement Strategies*)

⁵ CDERE, *L'Ecole impossible?*, 2016

⁶ 2019, OECD, *Talent Abroad: A Review of Romanian Emigrants*, <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/27927b96-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/27927b96-en>

⁷ Ibidem

V.2. Schools' perspective on Roma (children) international migration

Based on data collected, the study provides a series of conclusions related to the characteristics of Romanian Roma international migration, as well as how children are affected.

To summarise the viewpoints of the interviewed teachers and Roma parents regarding **the traits of Romanian Roma international migration**, fair terms to evoke are “massive”, “seasonal”, “circular”, “temporary”, “financial motivated”, “collective/familial” migration, in “harsh living conditions” and with “low perspective for permanent settlement abroad”.

Regarding **the children involvement in migratory processes**, the teachers and Roma parents indicate several situations that often occur in Roma families involved in international migration:

- Children are generally, and preferably, left at home in Romania when the extended family (grandparents and others) can host and supervise children, when parents cannot provide minimal living conditions abroad (housing and food) and supervision (one parent available), or when they risk problems with local authorities because of lack of minimal conditions required for children by local regulations.
- Seasonal migration of children is usually intended to happen during summer vacation, with low impact on their schooling. Yet, the summer migration is often prolonged over the autumn, generating minor problems of accommodation in Romanian schools at children's return. When such delays are longer than a few months, the risk of repeating the school year in Romania grows.
- Children accompany their family in migration when minimal conditions are ensured, when one family member can supervise them at home, when children are of a younger age and when local authorities provide several social benefits related to small children (housing, financial benefits, social and health care).
- When children reach school age, a few are enrolled in local schools abroad, especially when migration tends to become permanent, while most are brought back to Romania for schooling. In many cases, they are older than the age necessary for preparatory classes in Romanian schools.
- There is also the case scenario when Roma children are born abroad and raised by their families in the destination countries. They are seldomly enrolled in local schools abroad, particularly when migration tends to become permanent. More often, they are brought back in Romania to be enrolled in Romanian schools. In many cases, this happens at older ages than the normal age of starting school in Romania.
- In most cases, when children reach the school age, parents must make a choice between temporary migration (bringing children back to Romania for schooling) or permanent migration (enrolling children in local schools with all the efforts required: permanent official settlements, language issues etc.).

Romanian Roma are usually involved in massive migration following family and community lines of mutual support and flows of information regarding opportunities for revenues abroad. They often migrate in large groups (extended families and networks of neighbours). The main incentive for migration is more the immediate economic gain, and less the clear perspective of emigration for permanent settlement in other countries. The migration may become permanent in time, but it rarely starts as a decision for permanent settlement abroad. The international migration experience often makes the difference between richer and poorer Roma families in their communities in Romania.

People are leaving from all communities. I can't say that in one community they are leaving more than in the other. The best example is from the community X, where most of them leave. They're going to Canada, Germany and France. We are talking about a community where going abroad is a kind of sport. Those who leave are known. You can see better living conditions, bigger houses. The community is split into rich Roma people and poor Roma people. If we did a comparative analysis, the community X would be at the top in terms of going abroad, taking into account the frequency and time period of their leave.

Our interlocutors indicated **temporary and seasonal migration scenarios**, guided by the specific periods of agricultural labours. This type of migration rarely spans over one whole year. In this type of work, Roma workers rarely have labour contracts and the migration conditions are precarious.

The vast majority are in agricultural work during the summer. Yes, most of them are seasonal. Regarding the Roma ones, there are very few of them who have a work contract.

Seasonal departures are most common. Not even a year. Only a couple of months during the summer, at the time of reaping strawberries, potatoes, garlic. During September, October, most of them return. Those who leave for good, we know nothing about.

As far as teachers know, **the living conditions are very harsh** for seasonal Roma workers abroad. Low wages determine them to accept, sometimes, inhuman conditions, as long as they are temporary and allow them to send money home to their family and children.

A parent told me that he sleeps in his car. He sells newspapers, begs for money, and at night he sleeps in his car. He earns about 500-600 EUR. Renting a house would be 300 EUR. He wouldn't have anything left to send to his children. So, he prefers to sleep in his car. He moves from city to city.

Roma parents also indicate that migration conditions are acceptable, provided that they are temporary. The long-life perspective remains always the return home in the family and in the communities in Romania.

Those who have been away for more years would really like to come back, they are tired of working abroad, of being away from their relatives, especially in countries such as England and Germany where people are colder, more distant, compared to those in Spain where people are warmer. (Roma parent)

According to teachers and Roma parents interviewed, most of Roma people choose migration for the **pragmatic reasons of financial gains**. The revenues obtained abroad are higher than in Romania.

Over there (in countries of destination) we earn 80 EUR per day. If there are two people, husband and wife, then it's 160 EUR. In Spain for example, life isn't that expensive when it comes to food. It's cheaper than in Romania. Over there you fill an entire basket with 50 EUR, and it's enough for a week. In Romania, with 50 EUR you barely buy a few products. (Roma parent)

Most migrants work abroad and **send money back home** to sustain their families.

These boys (interviewees) had to leave because they had no money for their family. Even if they got employed and earned minimum wage (in Romania), they couldn't have taken care of a big family of six-seven members. Here (in Romania) we earn poorly, but the prices are at EU level. (Roma parent)

In Roma communities, temporary migration is structured by **local family and neighbourhood networks** and it is incited by **financial success models**. As a one Roma parent mentioned,

They go to work for two-three months, then come back, then spend another month or two in Romania, then leave again. We see our friends, our relatives going abroad and making a living, coming back with money and then we go there as well even if we have six or seven children. (Roma parent)

Migration is also seen as a better perspective when it comes to resources needed for **raising many children**, due to the more generous support provided by authorities in destination countries.

Many of the people here leave the country because of the lack of money, of the wages. They have a lot of children: seven-eight per family. They prefer to go to Germany, Italy, Spain where they get social aid, for each child an amount our 80-100 EUR per month. (Roma parent)

For seasonal workers, the best option is to leave their children at home, under the supervision of the extended family, especially when the **parents can't provide minimal housing and food as well as proper supervision abroad**. This is especially the case for small children that need permanent care.

Those who leave, especially for seasonal, agricultural work, do not take the little ones / babies, because they are harder to manage. They prefer to take those who can move independently, who they can sometimes take with them to the workplace. Those who leave seasonally, often leave in groups larger than 20-30 people. This is why it is harder to take the little ones (the children). They live in the field, where they work agricultural work, in quite difficult conditions.

When migration spans only over **a couple of months**, the children are left home with relatives. But when migration perspectives are more stable and for **longer periods of time**, up to one year or more, Roma parents tend to take their small children abroad.

They usually leave seasonally with their children. When they take their children with them, they're staying for a longer period: one-two year. But, most of the time, they only stay for a couple of months. Sometimes both parents leave, and the children are left here, to be taken care of by their grandparents.

The large majority of Roma going abroad are seasonal/temporary workers who do not have labour contracts and proper living conditions abroad. For them, **the most common option is to leave their children in Romania** under the supervision of grandparents, older brothers and sisters. These options are temporary solutions. In many cases, children are supervised by persons that are too old (grandparents) or too young (not adults yet).

We have a case where a grandmother is taking care of her three-month-old grandchild. When it is not possible to take them abroad, they leave them home with their grandparents. It depends on whether they are going with or without a labour contract, whether they have accommodation. They can't leave with a three-month-old without certain amenities.

Usually, those who leave, leave their children with older brothers, cousins to take care of young children. There is another category that goes without children and leave them here in the care of grandparents, relatives. These are the most common cases. Sometimes the children remain in the care of older brothers who, in most cases, are not adults.

The cases of **Roma parents who take their children with them abroad** are rarer. This happens especially when they do not find local support in Romania for children supervision during their migration.

There are far less those who leave with their children. We are a fortunate case because our pupils rarely leave for long periods of time, for years on end. Ours' are seasonal workers. As they are saying, they leave in time to reap garlic, olives for a couple of months and then they return.

Yes, they are always leaving. Sometimes (when both parents are away for work abroad) children are left in the country and taken care of by a relative. There are also cases where families do take their children with them abroad.

Roma people leaving abroad for temporary work are aware that the best for their children is to be taken care by their parents. Grandparents are often too old to be able to take proper care of small children.

Mostly, all of them go abroad and take the children with them because they don't really have anyone to leave them with here. The grandparents are old and can't take care of the children properly. The parents prefer to take them when they leave, even if it's only for two-three months.

V.3. The school education incentives and risks abroad

In certain conditions, Roma parents would like to take their children with them in migration, especially when it is prolonged for longer periods (greater than a few months) and when the children are very small. The children involvement in migration generates **a series of risks**. When the parents are not able to comply with **local regulations regarding childcare and supervision**, they risk having troubles with local authorities. These regulations may vary from country to country but, generally, they are perceived as more demanding than in Romania. Proper conditions for childcare involve **proper housing, food, permanent supervision for minors and school enrolment for children reaching the school age**.

When children are very young, housing, food and supervision can be ensured through migrants' communities/extended families migrating and living together. The kindergarten is not seen as an option, because of language, distances and formal procedural difficulties. Supervision of young children is undertaken by older brothers and sisters or by other relatives who are not involved in daily work.

Reaching the school age for children becomes more problematic, since it requires the family to interact with foreign education systems. Greater efforts and expenses are required, that many Roma families cannot afford, such as a legal address, bureaucratic procedures, document completion, language issues, clothes and shoes, school supply, school education supervision etc. When the effort and the expenses cannot be met and when the migration plans do not entail permanent settlements abroad, **many Roma families send their children back in Romania for schooling** under the care of the extended family.

The policies for childcare abroad are described by project interlocutors as being very strict. When proper supervision and care regulations cannot be respected, parents must "hide their children" in houses under the supervision of older brothers and sisters. Parents are at work, and there are no other relatives available to care for the small children.

I went to Spain with my children for three months to pick olives. The girl is nine, the boy seven, another boy four, and the other girl two. It's a very difficult thing to have your children with you. You must keep them locked inside the house. You can't let them out, because the police will come and, over there, you can't leave your children at home unsupervised. When a couple of families leave together, they rent a house, an apartment, and leave the younger children in the care of the older ones. (Roma parent)

When children are very young and at least one parent works legally, the family brings the children abroad. Social services systems in many countries where parents migrate are more supportive than in Romania. **Social benefits include often housing, food and monthly allowances** that are seen by many migrants as revenues.

We have a family who went to Germany with seven children, the reason being that they received social housing there, allowances for children exceeding the amount they received in Romania. From the father's reports, he said that the money received abroad (social housing, allowances), plus what he earns through work (the wife was not allowed to work, because they had seven children, four of which minors) were enough, because they had no additional expenses and the money he earned was saved.

For five of the children he also requested a transfer from here to enrol them in school over there. This is a happy case, from those who go outside and integrate.

When reaching the school age, keeping the children abroad without schooling creates high risks. In other European countries, the state authorities may even take the children out of their parents' custody. Bringing their children back to Romania for school remains the only remaining option. Enrolling children in schools abroad is seen as a very difficult challenge.

My neighbours, they have returned from Spain. The girls are young, approximately four-five years. They came here (in Romania) especially this summer. They brought them home, because they had reached the right age to attend school. The Spanish state clearly told them: if they don't enrol their children into a school, they will be taken away. Therefore, they brought them to Romania. They didn't want to enrol their children (in Spain), neither to leave them there, so they brought them here. Probably they are dealing with a different system there (in Spain).

Enrolling children in local schools abroad appears to be a mammoth challenge for parents, and they avoid it as much as possible. Since many migrants are temporary workers who do not plan permanent settlements, the local language is rarely learned, and direct and consistent interaction with local institution is also a rarity. Even when enrolled in schools abroad, the children often fail in proper school integration.

Often, they don't adapt to any school, they don't even go to school. If they are in Germany or England, where the law is much stricter, then it's mandatory that they sign up their children for school. In Spain, the law is more permissive. But it is also clear: the children must go to school. But it's a bit more permissive. The social workers come, carry out an investigation, notify the parents that the children must go to school, but they don't force them.

For families involved in longer migration based on legal labour contract, enrolling children in school brings social benefits, especially when there are many children in the same family.

The parents, when they arrive there (abroad) with their children, sign them up for school because, otherwise, they won't receive that aid. Here, at home (in Romania), everything must be cancelled, and they submit a file there and receive social aid there (abroad). There are countries where enrolling children into a form of schooling is mandatory: like England or Germany. Otherwise, they won't get those allowances.

In Germany, they receive allowances, and the same happens even in England or Spain. For instance, my brother is with his family in England. He's working, but the mother isn't (working) and she has social aid. They have left for four years. The house is paid for by the state. They signed their children up for school. It was mandatory.

The best-case scenario for longer periods of migration, attracting most of social benefits, is one where one parent has a legal labour contract, and the other stays at home supervising many children and some of them attend foreign schools.

Abroad, they enrol their children into school because, firstly, they are incentivised financially (they get up to 200 EUR allowance/child) and, secondly, those who have a work contract are somehow obligated. Thus, they benefit from social housing, allowances, they do not pay utilities, the wife is not allowed to work because she must take care of the children.

There, for example in Germany, the state helps those that have children, they sign them up for school, they offer them an allowance from that school, pay their rent, give them food and groceries from the city hall. The only condition is that one of the parents is employed and proves that he has a place to work.

When parents migrate in stable communities abroad that are formed by other migrants able to support the newcomers in local integration, children have more chances of attending school. Yet, another perspective is also evoked by project interlocutors, particularly the perspective of **families and children involved in illegal activities** like "begging" or other forms of lower or higher criminality.

Usually, those who take their children have older children, and they request social aid which can be more easily obtained when you have two or three children. Another reason is that children are sent to beg. Those leaving with an employment contract or who are employed in any way sign their children up to a school there. But those how go to beg, or for other types of "labour" that isn't legal, they don't take their children to school. Those who go abroad in a community already created there, in an area of the city X, they take their children to school because most of them are working.

V.4. The types of school education abroad

Based on interviews conducted with school principals and teachers in Romania, the report sought to garner information regarding the types of school attended by migrant children abroad. Besides the diversity of cases, **Romanian teachers constantly display a low level of understanding regarding the kind of school education and the procedures for school enrolment abroad.** The Romanian schools' representatives rely solely on children' and parents' stories, which are often unclear. The general perspective over the school abroad indicates a "more flexible" (i.e. less bureaucratic) enrolling systems than in Romania, "preparatory classes for migrants", "mixed classes", "day care centres", "language learning centres" etc.

The education systems abroad are perceived by Romanian teachers as being **more permissive** than in Romania, at least regarding the school documents required at registration and upon leaving.

Over there (abroad) the law is more permissive. Even if they go for three months, parents can enrol their children in school and often, after enrolling them in a school abroad, they can request documents regarding the level of education of the child.

If children are born in Romania, **learning the foreign language** is the first, mandatory and difficult challenge when they are enrolled in foreign education system.

It's very difficult for them, firstly because of the language. They spend some time in mixt groups of migrant children. Most of the times, they don't even get to go to school, to be in a class, because they have to return home with their parents.

Regardless of their nationality or ethnicity, migrant children are enrolled in **preparatory classes** for language and institutional accommodation. Depending on the destination country, these classes are dedicated to migrant children or are mixed with natives' classes.

There are mixt classes: two-three months they learn the language. Children learn much easier than the adults. They aren't separated. The classes are mixed: Muslim, Jews, Orthodox children. In terms of ethnicity, there are no differences: English children share a class with other nationalities.

Over there (the schooling system in Spain) nobody is placed in a class straight away. They don't take part in class immediatly. They're over there with a big group of children from migrant families and, for a while, they are trying to accommodate with the local language. Most often than not, children never end up in a class or at an educational level similar to the one they had in Romania. They have to return here. Their parents finish their seasonal work and then, they have to return with them in Romania.

Even when enrolled in schools abroad, children accompanying their parents **do not experience proper school integration.** If their parents are involved in seasonal work, sooner or later they must return to Romania, interrupting the school education they started a few months prior. When the parents' migration plans are for temporary work, enrolling children in foreign school might be used as a temporary solution for children supervision, an alternative to the constant supervision at home.

There is also the possibility that, across borders, there are those kinds of centres where they keep them. Maternal schools. How they are functioning? Who knows?

In my case, the boy claims he went to school across borders. But he did not request his transcript of records from us (when he has left). Thus, we do not know how he enrolled there, how will he return and with what documents. I don't know how they register them (in schools). Or, what's more, how they accept them just like that, with no documents. There is a possibility that it is not a school per se, but more of a day care centre for children.

Romanian teachers' testimonials are marked by lack of understanding and even suspicions concerning the type of school education followed by Roma children accompanying their parents during temporary migration. When **children recall being enrolled in schools abroad**, these schools might, in fact, be day-care centres, language learning centres, preparatory classes with no school relevance for the Romanian education system. The school experience recalled by Roma children might also indicate a proper insertion in education systems abroad, but often affected by the interruptions caused by parents returning to Romania. These interruptions can happen before the children succeed in completing full years or cycles of study. In such cases, the foreign school attended might also become irrelevant in Romania, especially when **no documents** are provided from the education institution abroad and when **no education advancement** was achieved by children in short periods of study abroad.

VI. ROMA CHILDREN COMING BACK IN ROMANIA AND IN SCHOOLS

The present study tackles the structural barriers for school education of Roma children when accompanying their parents in seasonal or temporary migration in other EU Member States. This report focuses on the obstacles faced by migrant children when returning to Romania and attempting to register in local schools. What are the administrative and procedural obstacles faced by Roma children trying to register in Romanian schools?

VI.1. Lack of documents for schools abroad / in Romania

As school principals and teachers indicate, **the main hurdle preventing rapid and proper (re)integration in Romanian schools of returning Roma children is the lack of document attesting the school education abroad.**

The documents attesting to previous school education are the main instrument required by the Romanian education system to decide the suitable and legitimate class level for newcomers to be enrolled (the right year of study and the right class), depending on previous achievements. Once a Romanian school is asked to enrol a child from another school and foreign country, the first step is to allocate him/her properly in a class. When the parents demand the insertion in school, the institution must enrol the child immediately, regardless of his/her previous school education. If this is standard procedure for any school transfer, according to our respondents, the specific difficulty is Roma families managing documents and institutional relations because of lack of school education (in many cases) or distrust and, sometimes, negligence related to institutional/formal relations.

There are some who come and ask about what school documents they need in order to enrol their children in schools abroad. The Roma children are rather the ones who do not announce their transfer.

The biggest problem concerning Roma people is that they come back without proving documents or without any documents at all. If they do bring documents proving that they have completed a form of schooling, they can re-enrol. Otherwise there are no solutions other than programmes such as the "Second Chance."

Based on Romanian school principals and teachers, **the lack of school documents and proper transfer procedures is more frequent among Roma families.** Some of our respondents indicate the more demanding Romanian education system (compared to other countries) that require written and precise documents. Others indicate the disregard regarding documents which would be specific to some Roma families, while others recall cases of Roma children born abroad who did not receive any education there.

We've had two cases where children came back from abroad with documents but, sadly, most of them do not return with documents to prove that they have indeed complete a school year. Most come with a warrant stating that they have followed a series of classes there, but it is not enough. They should come with school records, like in the Romanian education system.

Regarding children born abroad, the main issue is their age at their return. Usually, they are sent back in Romania for school very late, when they are old enough to care for themselves but, also, when they are too old to be placed in the preparatory class.

Most of the Roma children are born abroad. There are very few born in Romania, those who attend our school. Usually, their parents bring them at around 9-10 years old. They come without having attended any form of school abroad. Very few bring proving documents that they have attended school there. We are, in a way, pressured to accept them. We feel sorry for the children. Some are very intelligent and want to go to school.

One possible explanation for parents' disinterest regarding documents issued by Romanian schools before leaving is that **many foreign schools do not ask for previous school documents** for children enrolment. As Roma parents confirm it:

We never take any documents from the school in Romania (when preparing the travel). Abroad, they don't ask for them. Only in Germany they asked for documents. I was away with my children in Spain for three months, but there were no documents needed. They didn't force us to enrol them. Only if you move there for good you must sign them up for school. Now, not even Spain allows you to leave your children at home. You must take them to school. (Roma parent)

Another possible explanation is linked to **the unpredictable migration trajectories of Roma families.** As seasonal and temporary migrants, most of Roma families traveling to other EU countries are unsure how long they will stay abroad, in what conditions, the time of return, the school abroad for children

enrolment. Most seasonal workers take their children only for summertime, during the school vacation. The returning moment is not always entirely controlled by the parents. The high costs of travels and the working conditions abroad force parents to bring their children home and in Romanian schools only when a low-cost opportunity is available.

When they leave, they do not ask for papers, because they don't know what they will do. (They don't know) where they will go. If they will enrol the child in school. If the parent requests for documents, I, as a representative of the school, am obliged to release the transcript of records. But he has to say what he will do with it.

These are also the explanations mentioned by Roma parents when interviewed. On one side, **Roma parents evoke the temporary/summer migration**. From this perspective, children are not transferred from one school to another. They merely accompany their parents during the summer vacation and return in autumn to continue their studies in Romania.

We had no problems, once we returned, with school reintegration. We didn't leave for more than a couple of months. We knew what documents we had to take from the school abroad in order to prove that the children followed an educational system. Same as here, we have to request a statement of records that proves the child's level of education completed at that moment. But we never needed them, because no one asks for them. We are never away for too long. It depends on the country we are going to, and not all of them ask for documents. (Roma parent)

On the other side, when school principals and teachers indicate that, sometimes, the absence of documents is also caused by the parents' lacking interest, care and ability to understand and interact with foreign school institutions, **Roma parents reject this explanation of "negligence"**. They state that Roma parents display great care for their children's school education and, when needed, they communicate, ask and provide all documents necessary for school enrolment abroad and, at their return, in Romania.

There were no problems re-enrolling the children in school. When I left, I filed a leave request. For example, in the neighbouring village there are many people leaving and taking their children to school abroad. But when they come back and re-enrol them, they bring documents because they know that without them there can't be no enrolment into any school. (Roma parent)

Both teachers and Roma parents indicate, as explanation for the lack of previous school documents, on one side, the permissiveness of foreign schools regarding documents requested for enrolments and, on the other side, the seasonal character of Roma families' migration abroad that, most often, do not involve children's school (re)enrolment at all.

There were no problems upon return and re-enrolment. Those at the school talk to us, they tell us what needs to be done. We know that we have to inform the school. If we find out there's a document needed when we leave, we tell each other, we're united, we help each other in the community. (Roma parent)

School principals and teachers in Romania sometimes add to these explanations the unpredictability of migration plans along with the parents' "negligence" hypothesis concerning school documents and registration procedures.

VI.2. Migration impact on Roma children education

The impact of international migration on Roma children accompanying their parents abroad varies from case to case. Based on interviews conducted with school principals and teachers in Romania, these case types can be presented:

- Seasonal migrants who provide good care for children's continuous school education in Romania. In such cases, parents pay much attention for their children to comply with all school obligations (exams, paperwork) before taking their children abroad during the summer vacation. Moreover, parents return their children to Romania before the next school year begins.
- Seasonal migrants who take their children for the summer vacation, but do not return children to school in Romania prior to the start of the upcoming school year. When the delay is short, the time lost can be recuperated. When it extends over most of the next year, the child risks repeating the school year with educational and psychological costs.
- Children who are born abroad and have to adapt to Romanian language and education environment.
- Children who miss school for many years and have to be integrated in "Second Chance" Programme.
- Long term migration when children risk becoming victims of parents' exploitation, including their forced involvement in illegal activities like begging, stealing and other situations.

Aware of the **temporary and seasonal nature of migration**, most parents do not ask for documents from the departing school as they anticipate a quick return. In the same time, most of them pay attention to the Romanian school requirements and, more specifically, to the completion of all school duties, ensuring their children's continuity in Romanian education system.

I had two children who left. They came back next fall. Now they have left once again, at the end of June. They were interested in graduating. This is what most interests them, finishing their school year. To close their records. They leave seasonally.

We have approximately 20 constant cases at the school level that leave seasonally for a few months and return requesting re-enrolment in school. Usually, they announce their intention to leave and do not request any documents because they tell us that they will not take them to school once there, and that they will return in a few months.

There is also a category of **temporary Roma workers whose migration is less predictable** and who mismanage the timing of their children's migration. In such cases, educational gaps exist as children are not enrolled in schools abroad long enough for educational recognition in Romania. Due to the marginal time abroad, the children do not have the chance of continuing school in the destination country. Nevertheless, learning gaps must be managed in Romania after their return.

We also have seasonal workers. They are practically the majority. It is a problem for our school, because they leave for a few months and interrupt the educational process here. They don't go to school there. Those who leave seasonally do not enrol their children in school and, after a few months, they return and want to re-enrol here.

The large majority constitutes seasonal migrants who take their children abroad for summer vacation. For those seeking to secure **more stable and even permanent migration**, enrolling their children in foreign schools is prioritized. This process is reflected in their effort to obtain documents from the original school as such documents are needed for the transfer to schools abroad.

We have a percentage of 50 children who constantly leave abroad and return without having done, without having followed a form of education abroad. There is still a category that leave and do not return, and there are some who go to school there. We know this only because school institutions from those countries requested the transfer/documents.

The most difficult cases are those of families (parents and children) that leave Romania for a few months **but extend their migration for one year without being able to enrol children in schools abroad**. When family plans for returning in autumn are not fulfilled and the family remains abroad with their children, they might miss a new school year. After increased time abroad without schooling, returning in Romanian schools requires repeating school years. These, however, are rare cases.

One child had to repeat the school year. Another went to Spain for a year, he came back and then had to repeat the school year. He was in third grade. He left during summer holidays. In September he did not return. He then stayed away for another year and, upon his return, he could not enrol into fourth grade. All his former classmates were already in fourth grade. So, the child felt this as a repeat. New classmates. A different classroom. But he accommodated easily. They are still children.

More often, children are **born or taken abroad at young ages** before starting school education. In such cases, these children do not attend any school in destination countries and then return to Romania at older ages than that of school enrolment. As a result, they risk being enrolled in "Second Chance" Programme (see also Chapter VII.2., pag 32).

For Roma children, I don't think we had very long periods (years of migration). The majority of children who have departures over the years, generally occurs in primary education. Usually, the parents take the children who are too small to be left in the care of someone. The children who are already in gymnasium school are left at home.

Other difficult cases to manage are those of children born abroad **who return and leave repeatedly**, missing the chance of completing full school years in one country or another. These are cases where migration rhythms and constraints prevail over the school calendars, thus generating education problems for the children.

I had a case with a boy who came from Spain, with a birth certificate issued in Spain. Until they got it translated the child attended school unregistered. Then they translated the birth certificate. Then he left again. He missed out an entire year. He finished first grade. Once second grade started, he left. He missed out on a year and then repeated it.

There are also the difficulties faced by children who are born abroad and then brought to Romania when nearing the school age. **The Romanian language barrier** is an obstacle that must be managed. However,

being young and inserted in local networks of family and neighbours, the children often succeed to accommodate and to recuperate.

I had a situation where the child started first grade and did not know any Romanian. For the little ones, this is how it is, they are completely befuddled. He only knew Romani and Spanish. But we understood each other, slowly but surely. He learned to speak Romanian. Probably because he spent time with children who spoke Romanian. He caught on pretty fast. And he didn't know Romanian at all. At the beginning, when I didn't know he doesn't speak Romanian, he was looking at me and I had no idea how to react. I did not know Spanish, nor Romani.

When returning to Romania after extended periods without schooling leads to **a repeated year, children grapple with the psychological and social effects**. Although a child's age does not allow decision autonomy, he may internalise the repeated year as a personal guilt or injustice, even if it is the family that decided. **Guilt, frustration and injustice** are feelings that Romanian teachers recognise in such cases. There is little that teachers can do but, being empathetic, teachers appreciate that such events can be felt by children as personal trauma.

The child will be left with a feeling of injustice, of frustration. He will perceive his having to repeat the school year as a personal failure that is his own, not his family's. The child will think "I had to repeat the school year because I wasn't able to succeed." With the pupils I had, this is what I felt: that the child was sad because he had to repeat the school year, though somewhere inside his soul there is a rift that is created. Because he is aware that he hadn't done anything wrong. He left because he was taken by his mother and father, and the school is punishing him for it. It is something that affects them. Indeed, they are welcomed by their colleagues, other classmates do not tax them. But he, somewhere, he feels the injustice. An adult would understand that sometimes we lose, that this is how life is. But the child will feel a drama that might affect him his whole life.

Even when children accompanying their parents abroad succeed in being enrolled **in foreign schools, their education experience is superficial**. The short periods of migration do not allow them to properly integrate in the education systems abroad. Most often, children are only auditing classes, but they fail in completing full years or education cycles. Also, the language barrier abroad is a considerable obstacle.

The greatest pain Roma children suffer is when they are going abroad and aren't enrolled in any type of schooling. This is what I learn from them once they come back and especially from what they dare to share with their friends, who then come to us and tell us. They are saying that over there they are rather only auditing classes instead of attending them, that they cannot accommodate. Best case scenario, they are auditing the classes.

Often, in school principals' and teachers' stories, there are **sad cases of children who are taken abroad by their families and become involved in illegal activities like begging, stealing etc**. In these cases, teachers lose contact with the parents and children. The only news received are from other children and parents that maintain contact. Children experiencing such situations have no chance of being inserted in schools abroad nor being re-enrolled in schools in Romania after their return. The feeling of such situations causes teachers to express their frustrations about the traumatic experiences of these former pupils.

Those are stories that I hear from children in classrooms, that most of the ones going abroad do not go to school. They are taken at a certain age and kept there until a certain age for illegal activities: begging, and I think even more than that. A child told me that his father took him, promising that he will enrol him in a school in Germany at the end of fifth grade. From Germany they illegally ended up in the US. The child, he could only tell this to his friend on the Internet: "What I am doing here is not alright, and I can't say what it is".

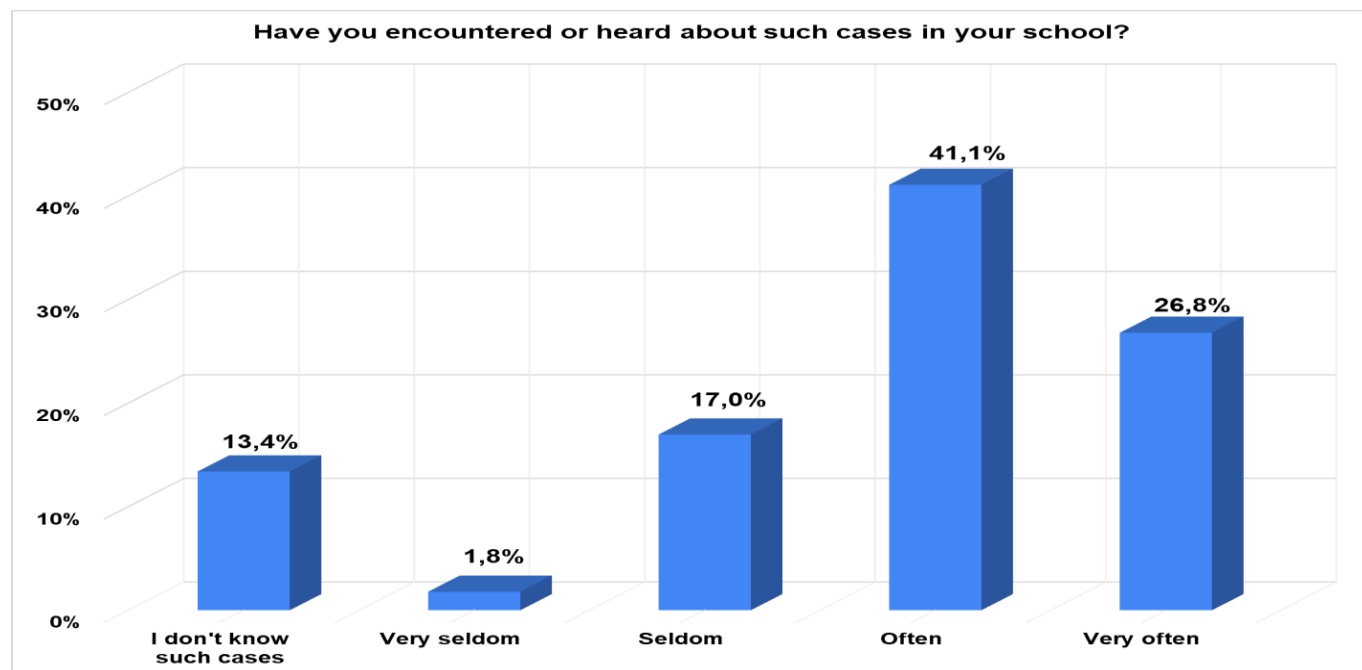
This is one of those situations where you can't keep in contact with the family. They have my phone number and can reach out whenever, for any kind of problem. I was expecting them to do it somehow. I had no possibility with this child, and it hurts when you hear that they are being used. This is a case that I've dealt with often over the past 14 years.

These cases do not represent the majority of Roma children's experience abroad when accompanying their parents. Nonetheless, such accounts are present in teachers' testimonials as sad and tragic histories.

VI.3. General view on challenges faced by children when returning

The quantitative aspect of this study began with searching for information about **the teachers' exposure to this phenomenon**, more specifically to the frequency of international migration cases among Roma children in classes managed by respondents.

The graph below indicates that only 13.4% of the respondents did not meet or hear about cases of Roma children affected by migration. For the rest, **86.6% are aware about the phenomenon of Roma children' migration in other countries, while 67.9% encountered such cases "often" or "very often"**. Thus, it may be concluded that respondents are, in their majority, education experts who worked with Roma children who returned from international migration and whose opinions and judgements are based on direct and consistent experience. The report also holds a view on the relative frequency of such cases in Romanian schools attended by Roma children.

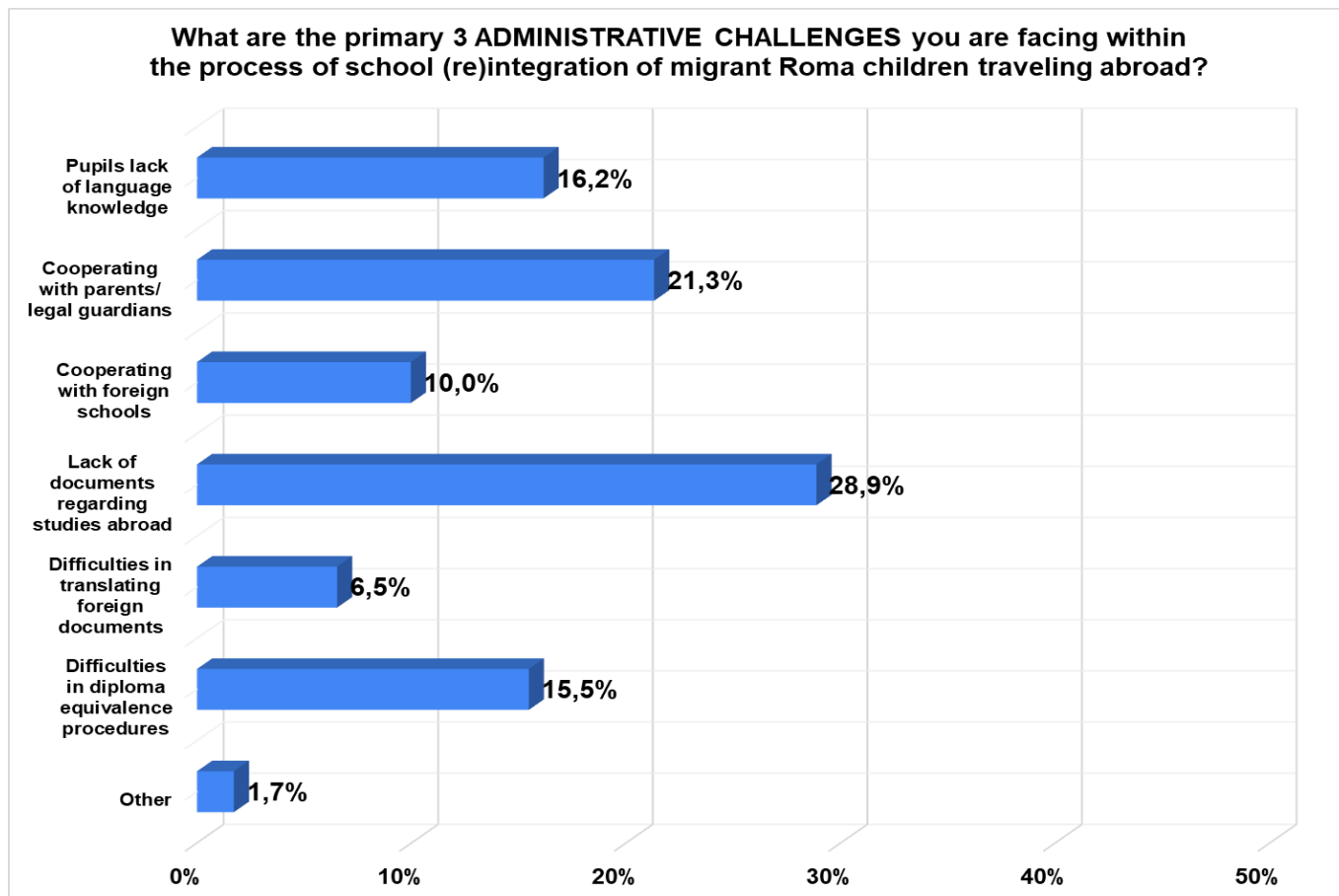


Graph 1. How frequent are Roma children on the move cases in teachers' experience?

Based on their experience, the respondents highlighted the main administrative difficulties in dealing with cases of Roma children returning from schools abroad. The graph below indicates that **the major difficulty (28.9% of answers) is the absence of study documents for the periods of school education abroad**. This problem was also indicated during the interviews (see also Chapter VI.1., pg. 17).

Another specific problem that teachers encountered is **parental cooperation (21.3%)⁸**. Besides the usual problems indicated by teachers related parental cooperation, in the case of Roma children affected by international migration, the cooperation becomes even more difficult since many of these parents are absent and engaged in new migratory cycles. Not only that Roma children on the move have their own difficulties or that general cooperation with Roma parents is difficult due to material conditions mistrust, but **these parents are also almost entirely absent**. Cooperation with other children' supervisors (grandparents) is also a difficult and frustrating experience for teachers.

⁸ The tensed relation between Roma community – school institution and between Roma parents and teachers is presented in the twin Research report published together with the present one: "Teachers' needs assessment for the (re)integration of Roma children in the educational system in Romania"



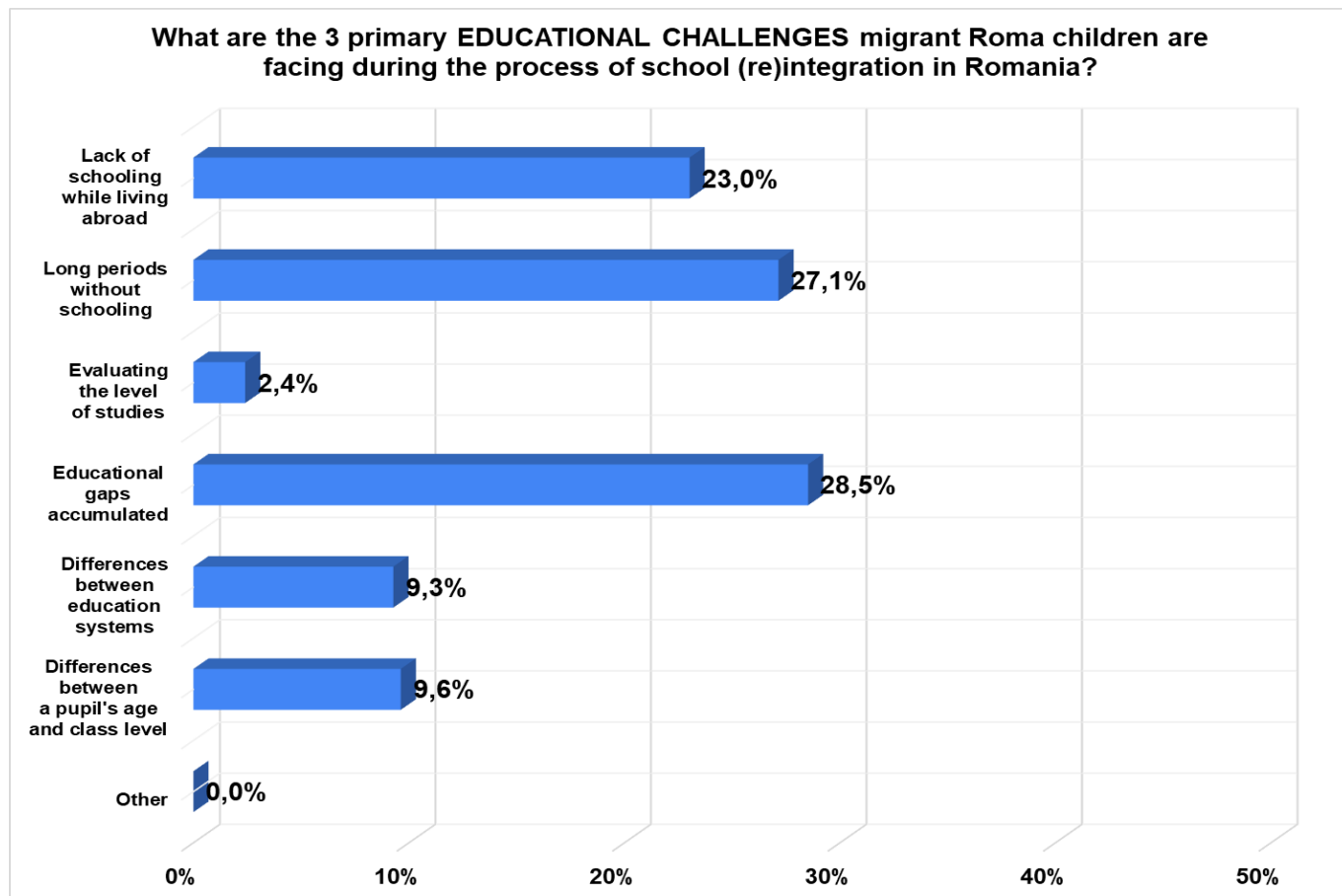
Graph 2. The three main ADMINISTRATIVE CHALLENGES faced by teachers in school (re)integration of Roma children

According to 16,2% of the respondents, a specific problem faced by returning Roma children is the **Romanian language**. As detailed above, in the qualitative analysis (see Chapter VI.2., pg. 20), some Roma children are born abroad and return to Romania when they reach school age or later. In these cases, children return with Romani language as basic language and, sometimes, with some knowledge of the foreign language they learned abroad, but with no command of the Romanian language. Consequently, school education becomes challenging. Yet, having their new entourage speaking Romanian (extended family and friends at home, and colleagues and teachers at school), this problem is resolved in a reasonable period, counted in months, where the newcomer masters the local language that allows him/her to stay apace with school. But, if mastery occurs quickly, it is not without effort and teachers request support to manoeuvre these cases. Untrained to teach Romanian to foreigners, this process of accommodation is often left to a teacher's will, availability or capacity of offering special attention in such cases⁹.

Another key problem school principals and teachers encounter to integrate returned Roma children is that of **equivalating diplomas or study periods** that Roma children achieved abroad. **15,5% of the respondents** to the survey indicated this issue as an obstacle in Roma children's (re)integration in Romanian schools. This obstacle, along with its legislative answers, are extensively addressed in the subsequent chapter of the research report (see Chapter VII, pg. 25). The same, **lack of cooperation between schools** is seen as an obstacle by 10,0% of the teachers participating to the online survey (see Chapter VIII, page 38).

⁹ An extensive analysis on teachers needs related to the school education of Roma children (specificities, tailored methods, obstacles in the relation among the Roma community – school institution and Roma parents – teachers) is presented in the twin Research report published together with the present one: "Teachers' needs assessment for the (re)integration of Roma children in the educational system in Romania"

From the teachers' point of view, **the international migration experience of Roma children creates major negative consequences on their educational path.** As discussed in the qualitative analysis above (see also Chapter VI.2., pg. 18), many teachers (23%) completing the online survey are convinced that Roma children do not attend any school abroad. The migration experience is a “no school experience” (27,1%) leading to big educational gaps (28,5%) accumulated by children that accompany their parents abroad.

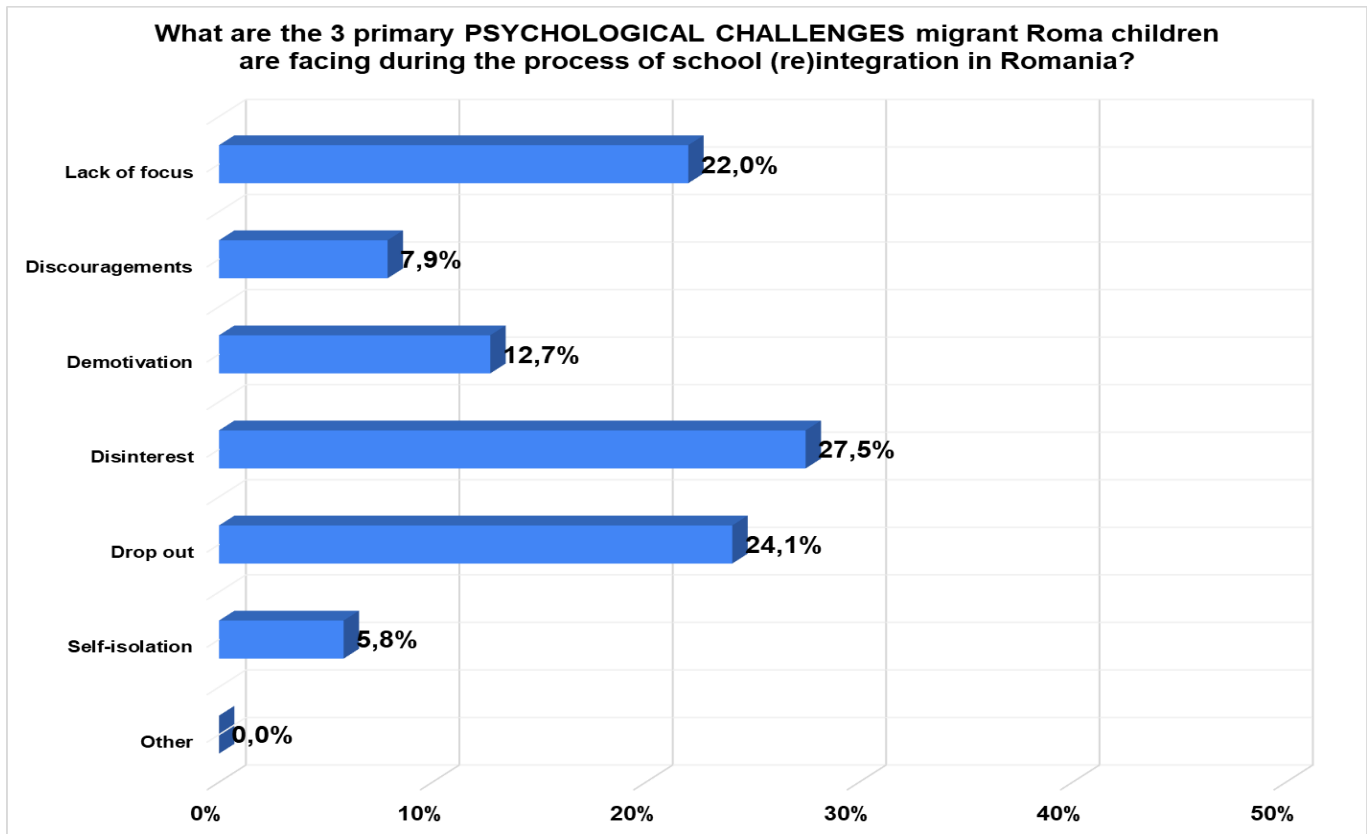


Graph 3. The three primary EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES faced by migrant Roma children

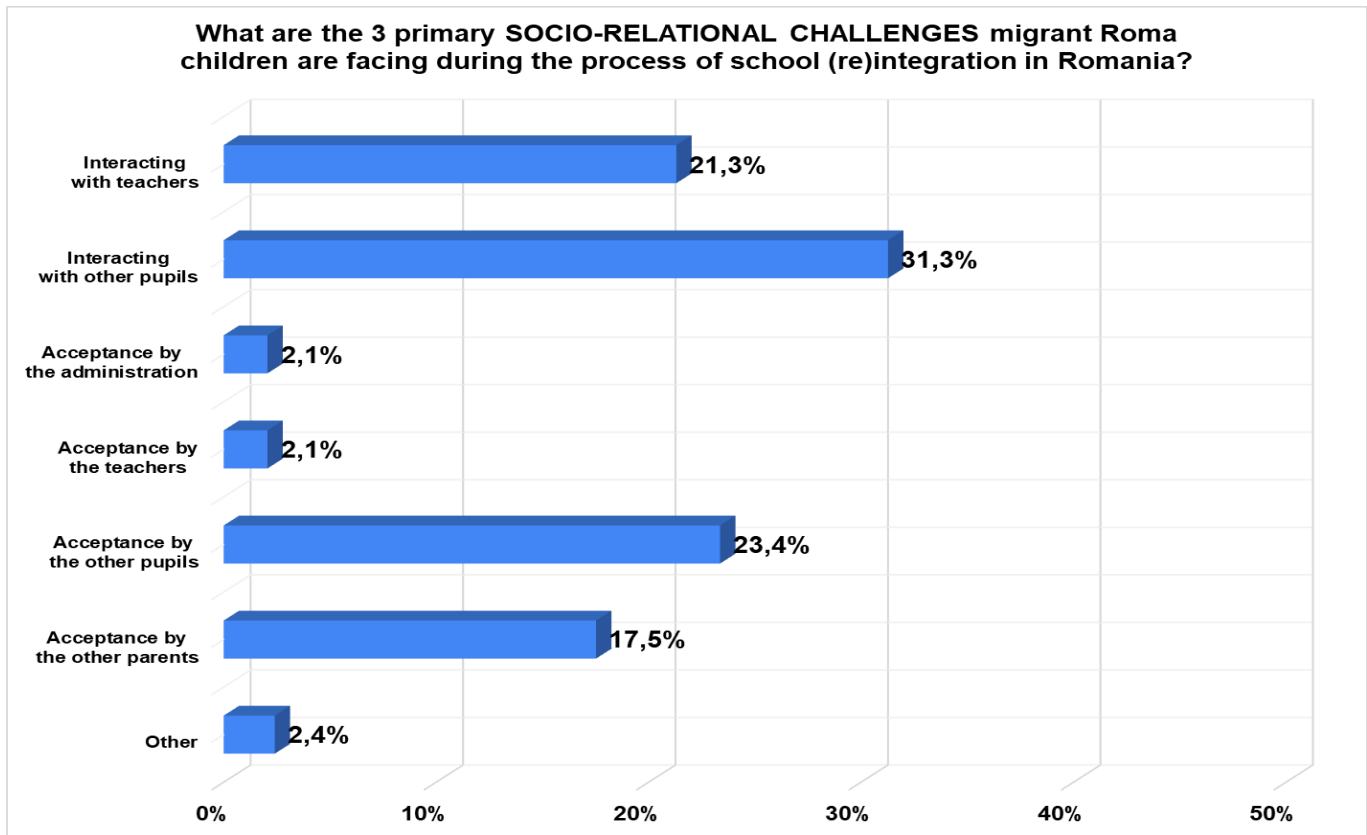
The long periods without schooling abroad creates increased difficulties for children' (re)integration in Romanian schools after migration or when initially coming to Romania at ages beyond that of school enrolment.

Psychological obstacles are another hurdle returning Roma children experience. The most frequently indicated are those related to “disinterest” (27,5%), “drop-out” (24,1%) and “lack of focus” (22%). As detailed below (see Chapter VI.4., pg. 25), besides the difficulties caused by the discontinuous education, children returning from international migration may have adaptive difficulties to the conditions, rules and customs of the Romanian education system. On one side, children must regain education content, and dually accommodate the new disciplinary codes of conduct in class and with teachers.

The socio-relational environment of returning Roma children to be (re)integrated may also act as an obstacle to their inclusion and school performance. Roma children face various challenges in their interaction with “the other pupils” (31,3%) and “with teachers” (21,3%). Acceptance poses challenges also, and results show these rates: accepted by “the other pupils” (23,4%) as well as by their “parents” (17,5%). These problems are a by-product of general discriminatory attitudes regarding Roma people and, these problems also stem from a child's migratory background being perceived as newcomers by their colleagues and the broader social environment.



Graph 4. What are the three primary PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES migrant Roma children face during the process of school (re)integration in Romania?



Graph 5. What are the three primary SOCIO-RELATIONAL CHALLENGES migrant Roma children face during the process of school (re)integration in Romania?

VI.4. Difficulties in school adaptation upon return

For children experiencing international migration next to their families, educational disruptions caused by school registration procedures are the greatest risk. Yet, even for those that comply with various education systems requirements in terms of files and school documents, the integration is not automatic. **Differences between education systems across countries are not seen solely in registration procedures. They are also present in the education process itself.**

Romanian teachers often observe the effect of these differences in the newcomer's behaviour. Even if teachers do not see a major risk of inadaptation, in their opinion they would require **tailored methods and buffer zones of education**, smoothing the passage from one education system to another. This would be necessary, especially when these cases become increasingly common.

For me, it is very important to have this buffer zone for the children coming from another educational system (from abroad). They (the children) must also adapt to our educational system, but also the children in the classroom have to adapt to them.

When we are faced with massive groups of children who miss large periods of time, respectively years, or even come only to the exam, they will surely need a testing period, integration and learning recovery.

For the children that did or did not attend schools abroad, adaptive difficulties to the Romanian school may require special attention. Teachers' testimonials focus on the **specifics of Romanian school education as being more demanding** than in other European countries, especially the emphasis on these areas: theory and practice, learning and playing, discipline and free will, teacher authority and child compliance.

Maybe a system of methods would be useful to make the transfer from the different educational systems, like the ones abroad. In the Romanian education system, there is more theory in learning. Abroad, it is more practical. They return with a positive attitude. But, when faced with the elements that must be learned constantly, they feel somewhat in difficulty. It is difficult to get back into our system.

There are also **differences in the knowledge content** accumulated abroad and the Romanian school system demands. These require supplementary effort from newcomers and teachers. Besides this, the teachers noticed a **difference in attitude** by the newcomers compared to the pupils acclimatized to the Romanian education system and customs.

I didn't notice an extra baggage of knowledge. At most, a slightly more relaxed attitude. This is probably due to the education system they attended, as it was not strict as the one in Romania. Moreover, in other countries, they are not focusing on the massive teaching of one topic. For them, teaching is more focused on games and other activities (practice).

The "more relaxed" attitude manifested by children that experienced another countries school education may result in **misunderstandings and even tensed relations among the newcomers and the Romanian teachers and the other pupils**. The "relaxed" and "free" attitudes of newcomers manifest often by not respecting local rules of classes and schools in Romania. Thus, children risk being perceived by the local teachers and the other children as "troublemakers", "bad examples", "naughty kids" that "put in danger" the consistency of the local rules and customs. If teachers usually appreciate these "relaxed" attitudes are learned abroad, the other children might label them as "bad family education" and might complain about their classmates from abroad.

Regarding that period in which (those who come from abroad) should adapt to the specific of the Romanian school. The pupils in second grade told us that there (abroad), the relationship between teachers and children was much more permissive. Over there, no one was surprised that they could address the teacher by "You". Or, no one was surprised when a child got up during class because he wants to do something, and no one thinks that he is disturbing the entire class. (In Romania) that's how we teach young children, that they have to talk formally to the teachers. Moreover, (those from abroad) must be accepted by the other children. When they come from abroad, they are perceived (in Romania) as being a little cheeky, or as children who "bother" because they laugh during class. And conversely, children who come from abroad, have the impression that they are marginalized because they are criticized for the attitude they have, which there (abroad) is seen as normal. We understand these things. But they are not yet understood by the other children. It's not a bad attitude. We explain these things.

To avoid such misunderstandings, Romanian schools suggest that the children returning from other education systems have **adjustment periods and tailored methods of education** that aid with adapting to the Romanian education system, regulations and customs. Such specific approaches would facilitate a faster integration and avoids labelling and marginalisation.

VII. INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS ANSWERING CHILDREN MIGRATION

To find the structural obstacles faced during school integration of Roma children in local or international migration, further analysis of the institutional settings in Romania was conducted. These settings might support or block the rapid school integration of children that migrate from one school or country to another. At structural (normative) level, the analysis will approach migration issues at large, the phenomenon being treated by Romanian national legislation unitary, and not divided by ethnic groups.

VII.1. Equivalating procedures when documents are available

Given the large international migration figures (see also Chapter V.1., page 11), the Romanian State developed a series of institutional mechanisms to address problems faced by Romanian migrant population and diaspora. In January 2017, the Ministry of Romanian Living Abroad was created and in March 2017, "The National Strategy for Romanians Living Abroad"¹⁰ was published. Before that, a special Direction within the Ministry of External Affairs was in place for the previous 10 years (since 2007) after Romania joined the EU.

Since the largest part of Romanian emigrants are persons of working age, many social problems generated by the international migration were related to children left at home under the supervision of extended family or joining their parent's migration in European countries. The international migration raised challenges related to children's school attendance in Romania when left at home, in other countries when migrating with parents or after returning to Romania.

National legislation does not differentiate various migrating categories of population, ethnic categories included. International migration is recognised and approached as a unitary phenomenon with no ethnic based differences. The Roma children migration is not considered by Romanian institutions otherwise than any other emigration phenomenon affecting the school careers of children, regardless of ethnicity.

As a general principle, the **Law of National Education No.1 / 2011** (own translation) ensures free and open access to public education to any Romanian citizen, and not only, regardless of their situation or context.

Art. 2 (4) The state guarantees to the citizens of Romania equal rights of access to all levels and forms of education primary, secondary and superior education, as well as to the long-life learning, without any discrimination.

(5) The same rights are guaranteed to the citizens of the other members states of the European Union, and of the states belonging to the European Economic Area and of the Swiss Confederation.

Art. 9 (3) The public education is free of charge.

Art. 13 (1) Long-life learning is a right guaranteed by the law.¹¹

Based on the Law of National Education, the access to public and free education is guaranteed, and no school institution can deny, prevent or delay children's access to schools. In practice, all teachers and school principals interviewed during the field research were aware that any children, regardless of background (ethnic or migration), must be enrolled in school immediately, placed within a class and included in daily education, even if no information regarding previous education is available.

When a child comes back afterwards (migration), you must receive him/her even if he/she has no documents. It must be registered, even if it comes in the middle of the semester. It's compulsory under the Education Law, depending on the parents' domicile.

The child must be inserted in school. There is no time to wait. It is not permitted to reject him. We look to their former colleagues and we try to figure out the class he should be placed in.

Several legislative and institutional measures were settled in order to cope with education challenges of children's migration between schools and countries. These institution settings and mechanisms were developed to facilitate school education of children migrating together with their families.

¹⁰ Ministerul pentru Românii de Pretutindeni <http://www.mprp.gov.ro/web/legistatie/>

¹¹ Legea Educației Naționale Nr.1 / 2011

https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/fi%C8%99iere/Minister/2017/legistatie%20MEN/Legea%20nr.%201_2011_actualizata2018.pdf

The main legislative instruments facilitating continuous education of migrating children are those that tackle with **the recognition and equivalence of the diplomas issued by school institutions abroad**, and those that tackle with the **recognition of any period of schooling abroad** for children's temporary migrating between schools and countries.

Regarding the **recognition of diplomas issued by education institutions abroad**, the *National Centre for the Recognition and Equivalence of Diplomas (CNRED)*¹² was created in Romania. This institution is dedicated mostly to the equivalence of diplomas issued abroad, including the high school level and above. The CNRED has been established and functional for 20 years. Since 2015, the diploma equivalence and the recognition procedures are decentralised from CNRED to county school inspectorates¹³.

Today, CNRED focuses on the recognition of diplomas issued by foreign education institutions regarding higher levels of education (high school, vocational schools, universities). In the context of the present research, the population most affected by temporary migration are those at lower educational levels, such as primary and secondary schools, when no diplomas are issued, and study cycles are not completed. Often, migration occurs within the same education cycle or during the same year of study. To manage these situations, other regulations and procedures are set.

Currently, the equivalence procedure is regulated by the *Ministry Order no. 5268/2015 regarding the Methodology for the equivalence by the county school inspectorates and the School Inspectorate of the Municipality of Bucharest of study periods carried out abroad (...)*¹⁴ (own translation). This Ministry Order was recently modified through the *Ministry Order no. 3217/2018 amending and supplementing Annex no. 1 to the Order of the Minister of Education and Scientific Research no. 5.268 / 2015 approving the Guidelines regarding the equivalence by the county school inspectorates and the School Inspectorate of the Municipality of Bucharest of the study periods carried out abroad (...)*¹⁵ (own translation).

Based on interviews with school representatives and county school inspectors, it was found that **the procedure for the recognition of diploma or study periods abroad is not very complex**. It requires that parents have a minimal level of comprehension and handling documents, formal writing skills (writing a request), and the possibility to reach the local county school inspectorate. The procedure is free, and it can last up to 30 days, if all necessary documents are provided. But, when such minimal requirements are absent (official writing abilities, low level of parents' education, low level of understanding institutional procedures etc.), which is often the case of Roma parents, the procedure might be troublesome to follow and it might constitute an obstacle in a proper school reintegration.

When documents are available for previous school periods, a maximum of 30 days after the file submission to the county school inspectorate, the child is fully enrolled in school. All the provisional marks accumulated before as auditor become official. School principals and teachers often provide support and assistance in elaborating the file and in its' submission to the county school inspectorate. At this level, some exigencies are softened in order to facilitate the formal registration of children in schools: accepting files submitted by school principals instead of parents, asking only for the diploma of the last cycle promoted, as one county school inspector shared.

The system is much easier now. A couple of years ago it was difficult: Ministry, waiting periods. Now, until the equating is completed, the children are registered to audit the classes. They aren't officially in any catalogue. There is a special catalogue.

¹² CNRED - Centrul Național de Recunoaștere și Echivalare a Diplomelor <https://www.cnred.edu.ro/>

¹³ Institutions representing the Ministry at county level in all 41 counties of Romania.

¹⁴ Ordinul Ministrului Educației și Cercetării Științifice nr. 5268 / 2015 pentru aprobarea Metodologiei privind echivalarea de către inspectoratele școlare județene și Inspectoratul Școlar al Municipiului București a perioadelor de studii efectuate în străinătate și la organizațiile furnizoare de educație, care organizează și desfășoară pe teritoriul României activități de învățământ corespunzătoare unui sistem educațional din altă țară, înscrise în Registrul special al Agenției Române de Asigurare a Calității în Învățământul Preuniversitar și pentru aprobarea modelului atestatului de echivalare a studiilor efectuate în străinătate și în România <https://www.cnred.edu.ro/ro/echivalare-perioade-studii-preuniversitare-clasele-1-12>

¹⁵ Ordinul Ministrului Educației Naționale nr. 3217/2018 privind modificarea și completarea Anexei nr. 1 la Ordinul Ministrului Educației și Cercetării Științifice nr. 5.268/2015 pentru aprobarea Metodologiei privind echivalarea de către inspectoratele școlare județene și Inspectoratul Școlar al Municipiului București a perioadelor de studii efectuate în străinătate și la organizațiile furnizoare de educație, care organizează și desfășoară pe teritoriul României activități de învățământ corespunzătoare unui sistem educațional din altă țară, înscrise în Registrul special al Agenției Române de Asigurare a Calității în Învățământul Preuniversitar și pentru aprobarea modelului atestatului de echivalare a studiilor efectuate în străinătate și în România, din 1 martie 2018 <https://www.cnred.edu.ro/ro/echivalare-perioade-studii-preuniversitare-clasele-1-12>

A commission is formed in each county inspectorate to analyse this type of files. For commission members, the transfers and equivalence responsibilities are supplementary to their main duties. When cases appear, the commission is formed on spot to analyse the files:

There is no department charged with re-enrolment, transfers etc. Each inspector, besides basic specialization, receives an additional responsibility, such as the one regarding transfers. The person tasked with this in our institution is specialized in the English language, but he also takes care of transfer and reintegration cases. They hope that, because he knows English and teaches it, it is easier for him to get in touch with schools from abroad.

The process should normally be initiated by the pupil's parents and all communication should be exchanged between the commission and the parents. As a facilitation measure, no translation is required for documents issued in languages of international circulation (English, French, Spanish, Italian, German etc.) since such institutions can involve in the process specialists in each of these languages. For documents issued in rarer languages, a certified translation is required from the child's family.

When a child comes here from abroad and brings the necessary documents, a file will be compiled. There is a person at the County School Inspectorate level, an inspector who deals with those situations. The parent will send a request to re-enrol his child in the educational system, mentioning the name of the school to attend, and the county school inspectorate employees will take care of it.

For a more comprehensive view of the procedure in place, introduced are sections of the **Order of the Ministry of the National Education no. 3217/2018 amending and supplementing Annex no. 1 to the Order of the Minister of Education and Scientific Research no. 5.268 / 2015** approving the Guidelines regarding the equivalence by the county school inspectorates and the School Inspectorate of the Municipality of Bucharest of the study periods carried out abroad (own translation):

Art. 1. - (1) The current Guidelines are to be applied by the county school inspectorates and the School Inspectorate of the Municipality of Bucharest for the equivalence of the study periods carried out abroad (...).

(2) The periods of study for which the provisions of the current guidelines are applied are those corresponding to the general compulsory education, the upper cycle of the high school period, the periods of vocational and post-secondary studies not finalized with a diploma.

Art. 2. - The file for the equivalence of the periods of studies mentioned in Art. 1 contains:

a) a request;

b) school records for classes in Romania (if applicable) - original;

c) school documents showing the level, duration and promotion of the class(es) for which the equivalence is requested;

d) valid student identification document – in copy.

e) other documents, if necessary (certificate issued by the competent authority of the country of origin confirming the authenticity of the study documents).

Art. 3. - (1) The file provided in art. 2 is submitted:

a) at the county school inspectorate / the School Inspectorate of the Municipality of Bucharest; or

b) at the school unit where the pupil participates in classes as an auditor (...).

(2) The persons within the County School Inspectorate / School Inspectorate of the Municipality of Bucharest nominated to evaluate the equivalence files shall verify the existence in the file of the documents provided by Art. 2 and, should they find that the file is not complete, they shall notify the applicant in order to send the missing documents.

(3) The evaluation of the school documents for equivalence implies the analysis of the school records from abroad (...).

(4) The equivalence procedure is performed at the level of the graduating class or in the process of graduation.

(6) The deadline for issuing a resolution regarding the equivalence file is 30 working days from the date the complete file has been submitted to the county school inspectorate / School Inspectorate of the Municipality of Bucharest.

Art. 4. – No fee shall be requested for the evaluation of an equivalence file.¹⁶

During the qualitative research conducted through interviews and focus groups with county school inspectors, **they evaluated the process as being open to the degree that prevents problems for parents.** Yet, school principals indicate the barrier of parents conducting the entire process independently and continue the exchange of information and documents with the county school inspectorate. According to school principals, this obligation might be a **challenge for parents with lower education levels and those residing in rural areas** as travels to the main city in the county can be expensive in terms of time

¹⁶ Ordinul Ministrului Educației Naționale nr. 3217/2018 (see full note 14, including internet link)

and money. As teachers and school principals confessed, it is not uncommon cases of files completed at school level by parents, with teachers' assistance, and then the process being continued by schools themselves for groups of children in the same situation. Even if Art.3, para. b) (see above) indicates that the Ministry Order does not prohibit that schools collect such files, the school principals and the county school inspectors consider such practices as exceptional. According to them, parents as legal representatives of children are the only ones entitled to initiate and continue the process of diploma and study equivalence.

As a school unit, we cannot equate it (a diploma). That is why we request the approval of the inspectorate. The documents brought from abroad are translated. There were some cases when we (the school) translated the documents. They (the parents) do not have any money or do not want to go and have the documents translated, so we send them to the inspectorate.

The only condition that cannot be relaxed is the one related to **the previous school documents to be provided by the family** to prove study periods abroad. As one school inspector indicated, the file should contain previous diplomas for all study cycles completed. To facilitate the process, school inspectorates have shortened the list of documents required. Instead of requesting previous diplomas for all previous cycles, the last diploma obtained by the children is sufficient, implying automatic completion of all previous cycles of education.

Yes. They go and have them translated. We create a folder for them. The folder is submitted to the inspectorate where a studies recognition committee is formed. Subsequently, we receive the committee in our school. Those are the happiest cases, but they are very rare. We had two such cases last year, maybe even three. Those are accidental cases.

Romanian schools' representatives are aware of the **differences between registration procedures and regulations in different countries**. All testimonials recorded indicate that no such documents are required abroad, and no previous school records are demanded. It is seen as a facilitation, but also as a "weird" procedure. Romanian school representatives consider **ignoring previous school achievements (diplomas, grades achieved in Romania) a form of discontinuous education**.

They do not ask about the child's previous school situation. It is differently than our education system. In Romania, when a child is transferring (from one school to another), the (new) school requests more information about the previous grades, the marks he achieved. Abroad, it is not required.

But apparently, they are somehow registered abroad to school without needing a notice from the previous school (in Romania). There are other rules.

In my case, the boy claims he went to school across borders. But he did not request his transcript of records from us. Thus, we do not know how he enrolled there, how will he return and with what documents. I don't know how they register them (in schools abroad). Or, what's more, how they accept them just like that, with no documents. There is a possibility that it is not a school per se, but more of a day-care centre for children.

One particular challenge caused by the differences among education systems in various European countries relates to **the impossibility of equivalence between daily grades obtained by children in different countries**. If the equivalence of the graduation of an entire year or an entire cycle is possible based on diplomas and certificates, continuous grades obtained during one school year in one country cannot be used in the calculation of necessary indicator for the cycle promotion in another country. Only the grades obtained in the Romanian system can be included in such calculations, which can be decisive when advancing from one cycle to another. If a child attends school in Romania in the 5th year, he/she continues education in another country for the 6th and 7th year, then he/she returns in Romania for the 8th year, the entire cycle average indicator in Romania will be calculated solely for the 5th and 8th years, since the other grades cannot be factored into calculations. The 6th and 7th years will be considered as promoted, but without individual grades for each discipline being considered.

It is not solicited because the rating system is different. For example, in Italy, the marks are noted from 1 to 5. In Romania, the marks are from 1 to 10. It is very difficult to make that correspondence, and every school is facing difficulties.

From a bureaucratic point of view, something could be done, to make it easier to decide in order to appropriately integrate them. I would suggest having an equivalence grid. Let's say that the child got the grade 1 in Italy. (We should know that) the grade 1 in Italy is equivalent of the grade 4 or 5 in Romania.

If the child has been gone for over a year, we cannot consider his grades, but only a final transcript of records stating if he has or has not passed. As a general average, the grading system being different, you cannot equate them. You cannot equate the grades the pupil obtained abroad over the course of the year.

If a child went to school abroad for a few years and afterwards comes back to Romania to continue his/her studies, we can recognise only the years promoted. However, the overall average of the grades obtained abroad will not be considered, as it cannot be equated with our marks.

VII.2. Equivalating procedures when documents are missing

Another procedure for integrating in the Romanian education system the children studying abroad is the one described in the **Framework Regulations on the structure and functioning of pre-university educational units**, regulating the whole functioning of pre-university studies in Romania, the ROFUIP, Art. 136. (*Annex to the Order of the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, for the approval of the Framework Regulations on the Structure and Functioning of pre-university Educational Units*)¹⁷ (own translation).

These regulations should provide procedural answers for situations that may arise regarding children that studied in foreign schools. In these regulations are very detailed the procedures for **registering and allocating a certain school level to newcomers**, even in the absence of documents issued by foreign school. In this case, an evaluation process is completed by the school to determine the child's appropriate school level and the proper class placement. Presented below is a large sequence of this document.

A child coming from abroad and wanting to study in a Romanian school cannot be refused, prevented or delayed enrolment. The day after a parents' request, the child should be accepted in a class corresponding to his/her age, based on minimal evaluation made on the spot. **The child will attend the school as auditor until the educational situation is clarified.** A parent-initiated procedure follows alongside school assistance and completed by the county school inspectorate.

Art. 136. (own translation)

(1) Pupils who have attended courses in a school in another country can acquire the quality of pupil in Romania only after having completed *the equivalence procedure*, undertaken by the Ministry of Education, for the studies completed abroad and, as the case may be, *after sitting the difference exams established within the equivalence procedure.*

(2) The pupils mentioned in para. (1) shall be registered as **auditors** until the completion of the *equivalence procedure*, regardless of when their parents, guardians or legal supporters request schooling.

(3) The activity of the auditors shall be recorded in the **provisional catalogues**, all the mentions regarding the evaluations and the frequency to be then registered in the class catalogues after the recognition and the equivalence of the studies completed abroad has taken place and after the eventual difference exams have been passed.

(4) The choice of the level of schooling in which the student will be enrolled as an auditor is made by a commission comprised of teachers who teach at the level of study for which the enrolment is requested, established at the level of the school unit, namely the Headmaster / Deputy Headmaster and a psychologist / school counsellor.

(5) The evaluation of the pupil's situation and the decision mentioned in para. (4) shall take into account: the age and level of the *psycho-behavioural development of the pupil*, the recommendation of the parents, the level obtained after a brief oral evaluation, the perspectives of schooling evolution.

(6) If the parents, guardians or legal supporters do not agree with the commission's recommendation, regarding the level of schooling in which the auditing pupil is to be enrolled, *the pupil shall be enrolled in the class chosen by the parents, on their own responsibility accounted for by the signature.*

(7) The equivalence file shall be submitted by the parents, guardians or legal supporters of the pupil to the school unit in which the pupil is to be enrolled as an auditor. *The school unit shall send the file to the school inspectorate, within a maximum of 5 days from the pupil's enrolment as an auditor. The file is relayed, in maximum 5 days, by the school inspectorate, to the specialized compartment of the Ministry of Education.*

(8) If the parents, guardians or legal supporters have not submitted the file within 30 days from the registration of the student as an auditor, the pupil shall be enrolled in the class following the last graduated class in Romania or in the class indicated by the commission provided at para. (4).

(9) Within a maximum of 15 days from the receipt of the favourable opinion from the Ministry of Education regarding the recognition and equivalence of studies, *the auditing student shall be registered in the class catalogue and all references regarding the activity carried out - grades, absences, etc. are to be transferred from the provisional catalogue.*

¹⁷ Anexa la Ordinul M.E.N.C.S. nr. privind aprobarea Regulamentului-cadru de organizare și funcționare a unităților de învățământ preuniversitar https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/fisiere%20articole/3027_2018_2.pdf

(10) If the studies completed abroad were not equated or were partially equated, and between the last class that has been equated and the class in which the pupil is enrolled as an auditor, there are one or more classes that have not been passed / promoted / equated, the commission provided in para. (4) shall send a request to the school inspectorate, in writing, within a maximum of 30 days, to examine the pupil in order to conclude the school situation for the un-equated or uncompleted years.

(11) In the context provided in para. (10) the school inspectorate establishes an evaluation commission comprised of teachers and at least one specialized school inspector who shall evaluate the pupil, within a maximum of 20 days, based on the school programs in force, in all the disciplines / modules in the framework plan for education, for un-equated or non-attended or non-promoted classes. The Commission shall operate in the school in which the pupil is to be enrolled. After passing all the exams, the pupil shall be enrolled in the class following the last promoted class, either by recognition and equivalence, or by passing the exams provided in para. (10). The course and the results of the assessment will be registered in a report that shall be kept by the school in which the pupil is to attend the classes. This procedure also applies to individuals who return to the country without the necessary study documents.

(12) The pupil shall be examined in order to complete the registration sheet with the grades obtained for each discipline, from each year of un-equated studies, in reverse order, starting with the last year of study. If the pupil does not pass the examinations provided in para. (10) in three or more disciplines / modules, the pupil is to be evaluated, as the case may be, for a class in a lower schooling cycle. If the pupil does not pass the difference exam, at a minimum of two disciplines, the pupil is to be examined for classes in lower schooling cycles, and afterwards the evaluation results shall be displayed. If the parent, guardian or legal supporter, respectively the pupil of legal age, requests a review within 24 hours of the results of the first examination being displayed, the review is approved. If he does not pass even after the examination, the student is enrolled in the lower first class for which he had passed the exams in all disciplines.

(13) For individuals who cannot speak the Romanian language, enrolment in Romanian education is to be made according to the regulations approved by order of the Minister of Education.

(14) The legal provisions in force regarding access to compulsory education in Romania are applied to the children of migrant workers.

(15) The foreign students who wish to follow studies in the Romanian education system apply the provisions elaborated by the Ministry of Education, regarding the schooling of foreign students in the pre-university education in Romania.

Art. 137 (own translation)

(1) Students from a state, private or confessional education unit in Romania, who are to continue their studies in other countries for a specified period of time, shall be reserved a place in the sending educational unit, at the written request of to the parent, guardian or legal supporter.

(3) If the return of those pupils who have went abroad during a school year takes place after the beginning of the courses of the new school year, the procedure regarding the recognition and equivalence and, as the case may be, the one provided for in the preceding articles shall apply, if the school year completed abroad cannot be equated.

The most difficult situations are those when **children, parents or their legal representatives cannot provide documents of previous schooling in Romania or abroad**. In these cases, an assessment commission at school level and from the county school inspectorate is set to evaluate the pupil's education level and place him/her in the appropriate class. It is important to note this commission will evaluate the child within the school, excluding the costs of travel or accommodation from the family side.

Given the seasonal migration of many families and of their children, the most frequent situations are those of long periods of absence, though less than a year. Most often, children return to the sending school after the summer vacation but with long delays. Instead of September, they return in October or November. Similarly, some of them leave earlier before passing the semester or annual exams. The education system in Romania allows pupils to participate in supplementary exam sessions. School principals and teachers highlighted the difficult choice of organizing the time of such supplementary exams. According to them, the supplementary exams dates were initially settled by each school administration. However, a recent procedural change dictates **that supplementary exams be organised alongside other second examination during late summer at dates fixed by the county school inspectorates**. This change makes difficult for the children on the move to use this second examination opportunity.

We are obliged to evaluate the child, because the regulation says that an evaluation must be done within 30 days after returning home. But this can happen only during the school year. If the child does not pass the initial evaluation, he can be re-evaluated only in autumn. This year, the inspector in charge of equating studies told us that when the child returns, he must sit the evaluation in autumn, with those sitting second examinations. This is quite difficult for many of them, who usually come later than

September, the period reserved for second examinations. But we will find solutions. Up until this year, the School Board established a period for this type of evaluation at the school level.

Even if the regulations are comprehensive, detailed explanations for re-enrolment procedures and diploma recognition and study periods abroad are not always very clear at school level. During the qualitative study, it was observed that principals and teachers are not very aware who and how should carry out the process: the parents or the school? the school or county school inspectorate? Should equivalence exams be organised in school by teachers or at county school inspectorate by its specialists? The uncertainties may be explained either by the rarity of cases, either through the social mechanism of relying on the expertise of county school inspectorate when needed.

Normally, they should receive an OK from the Inspectorate. We compiled a file for each of them, brought the school mediator with me and went to submit them to the Inspectorate. In the beginning, they told me that the parents should be the ones to submit the file. Sometimes I even brought the parents with me to the Inspectorate. Other times I just went alone.

The lack of knowledge regarding equivalence procedures may have **stronger negative impacts for poverty-stricken Roma families and parents with low educational levels.** Even if the “no documents” equivalating procedures are available in Romanian legislation, some school principals think that, without documents, nothing can be done, and the child risks repeating the school year.

Even if they complete three classes there (but bring no documents), we can't take the child and enrol him in fourth grade. So here, with us, they have to start again from preparatory class. If they submit documents, their education will be recognized.

Others try to guess the appropriate class for returning children based on their age and former education in the same school prior to the migration.

We do ask them for the documents. There are some parents who brings documents. But it must have been 2-3 years at least in order to bring any document. Usually, we find out by age in what grade they should fit in. We know the class he (the child) was in when he left, how much he's been gone, and where (what level) he should be.

Depending on the places available in each class. We also take into account the class in which the child was originally. Therefore, there will not be any negative impact of changing colleagues. We're trying to integrate them in the same class. The children find it normal.

You can get a sense of the child. You can assess the level he is at. A child that goes to school, even if in another education system, you notice that.

In other schools, the process and the procedures are better known and used to integrate children that returned from temporary migration.

The procedure is as follows: the child is accepted in the class as an auditor (in pencil, at the end of the catalogue) until we submit the supporting documents to the Inspectorate. The inspectorate verifies the documents and arranges the pupil's enrolment. Depending on the country where the pupil comes from, the inspectorate tells us what class the child should be included in. They know the level of educational programs in EU countries. Following the inspectorate's agreement, we also do a school-level assessment to see if he is indeed at the requested level.

VII.3. The “Second Chance” Programme

According to school principals and teachers, most of international migration cases involving Roma children are those of temporary and even seasonal migration. The needs for diploma recognition or study periods abroad usually concern months or semesters and, more rarely, entire years. Sometimes, children are dislocated from Romanian education system for more than one year. **If the child does not follow any school in Romania for more than four years, and if no documents are presented or no equivalence procedure is initiated, he/she can no longer be accepted in regular schooling in Romania.** For any person (child or adult) that interrupted the school education for more than four years, the only way of school reintegration is the “Second Chance” Programme. This Programme is not dedicated to migrant children, but it is one of the last options for a child or adult that missed school, caused by migration, to still complete the compulsory education.

The “Second Chance” Programme is regulated by the **Order No. 5248/2011 of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, regarding the “Second Chance” Programme¹⁸** and the **Order No. 4093/2017 of the Ministry of National Education¹⁹** for the modification of the previous mentioned Order (5248/2011) (own translations).

According to the website of the Ministry of National Education in Romania²⁰:

The *Second chance* Programme is dedicated to teenagers, youth, adults from various social environments and of various ages, who did not follow or complete primary and secondary inferior cycle of education. The Programme offers these categories of persons the possibility to continue and complete the compulsory education, without interrupting possible/current professional or familial activities. The Programme is structured on two levels: *Second chance* – primary education and *Second chance* - secondary inferior education – the second one having a vocational training dimension. There is no upper limit for persons wanting to follow this Programme. The only condition is that **they have at least four years of delay in education compared to the normal class age** and they are in one of the situations below:

For the *Second chance* Programme – primary cycle:

- never attended formal school education (I-IV);
- have been previously enrolled, but abandoned primary cycle – regardless of the moment or the reasons for abandonment;
- did not graduate the primary cycle at the age of 14.

For the *Second chance* Programme – inferior secondary cycle (V-VIII):

- graduated the primary cycle (including through the *Second chance* system) but did not further continued education

or:

- graduated part of the classes for the inferior secondary cycle (V, VI or VII) but abandoned the school during this education cycle – regardless of the moment or the reasons for abandonment.

Schooling is organized in small groups (8-15 pupils per class). The courses may be organized in multiple schedules (during the week in the afternoon or evening, on Saturdays or during school holidays, etc.) function of the availability of the pupils and teachers. There are also sessions for individual counselling for the pupils.

The Programme has a flexible duration. The average duration of schooling (two years for the primary cycle and four years for the inferior secondary cycle) can be reduced for each pupil as a function of proved competencies, both in basic and professional education.

Graduated pupils of the *Second Chance* Programme – primary cycle can continue their studies for the inferior secondary cycle.

Graduated pupils of the *Second chance* Programme – inferior secondary cycle can continue their studies in superior secondary cycle (superior cycle of the high school) or can attend internships, based on which they can obtain a vocational qualification certificate of level three.

The “Second Chance” Programme is the last instrument possible used by those wanting to continue compulsory education after long periods of interruption. Usually, “Second Chance” Programme is considered by school representatives as having disadvantages compared to regular school programme:

- school units authorized to organize “Second Chance” Programme are rare, depending on teacher availability and the number of possible beneficiaries;
- such school units collect their pupils from large geographical areas who must travel long distances to attend courses, incurring time and monetary expenses;
- such school units gather pupils of various ages and school experiences, making a standardized and quality education more difficult;
- being flexible, compressed and unusual with less time for individual study, “Second Chance” Programme has less qualitative results for pupils;
- the Programme offers less educational perspectives than the regular schooling. It cannot be the foundation for university studies, for example.

Even if such cases are rare among the Roma children on the move, teachers and school principals recall the a “Second Chance” Programme more as a last resort and less as a suitable option.

¹⁸ Ordin Nr. 5248/2011 al Ministrului Educației Cercetării Tineretului și Sportului privind aplicarea Programului “A doua șansă” <https://www.edu.ro/a%20doua%20sansa>

¹⁹ Ordin Nr. 4093/2017 al Ministrului Educației Naționale pentru modificarea și completarea Ordinului Ministrului Educației, Cercetării, Tineretului și Sportului Nr. 5.248/2011 privind aplicarea Programului “A doua șansă” <https://www.edu.ro/a%20doua%20sansa>

²⁰ <https://www.edu.ro/a%20doua%20sansa>

We have had children who have completed three school years abroad, took a break, and then came back to Romania to equate their studies and re-enrol in school. The equating could not be done because the child had already surpassed the due age by three years and could only sign up for a "Second Chance" Programme. At the county school inspectorate, we're trying every possible solution to bring the child back to school, to reintegrate him into a (regular) schooling system.

When such differences between the pupil's age and their education level are substantial, schools make efforts to avoid "Second Chance" Programme. Instead, schools integrate the children in mass education, sought as their chance to attend "normal" and proper education with all prospects available (high school, university).

A child went to Spain and his age exceed that of first graders by three years. We received him anyway. He was born there. He did not go to school at all before coming here. He was 10. We succeeded, with approval from the county school inspectorate, we succeeded in enrolling him.

There are Roma children that do not attend school abroad. Then they come to us surpassing the average age of the class they should be in. But the child knows how to write, read, and count perfectly. Why should we send him to the "Second Chance" Programme? In this kind of programme, they will start with the first grade all over again. If the child comes to school here, (the legislation should) allow me the possibility to give him tests, to assess his level of knowledge for a certain class. Some kind of equating.

Sometimes, teachers and schools make efforts to integrate children in regular school, even if it requires enrolment with much younger children. Generally, there are the cases when children are born abroad and do not attend any school there and later return to Romania at older ages to enrol in regular classes. Having no documents or previous school records from abroad, children face the perspective of "Second Chance" Programme. Enrolling them in regular classes is considered by teachers and schools as the best successful solution. In such cases, the children cannot speak Romanian but have the advantage of age.

We didn't want to lose the children. If we refuse to accept a child because of an age criterion, then all of them will leave. We've enrolled 20 children in first grade last year (all 8-9 years old).

A child of 11 came from abroad. He was enrolled in the "Second Chance" Programme according to the recommendations received from the county school inspectorate. But I accepted him in my class (regular). I tried to integrate him and make no difference between him and his classmates. I was surprised to see how fast he learned. He didn't know any word in Romanian. He repeated the words I said for a month in order to be able to pronounce them. He fit right in with the class. He used to ask: "What does pen means?" At home, he spoke the Romani language. But now he speaks Romanian. The child progressed rapidly. If he was helped, this child would have progressed to fourth grade in one year. There's one thing to catch up on the first grade when you are 8, and another at 12. The child learned how to write and read in a month. He passed swiftly through maths. It's very frustrating to see that he is physically more developed than the rest of the children in his class. The difference can be felt. He gets bored. You must ask him to play, to colour, to cut paper. He doesn't like it anymore: "We're playing again?" There's nothing I can do. But the other children love him very much. He's the leader, the big brother. He acts like an older brother. He's an example for the children.

All procedures and regulations mentioned in this chapter are clearly and synthetically presented by one respondent:

- **for seasonal migration**, the equivalence is resolved at school level by the school board and the teachers;
- **for migration of 1 to 3 years**, the equivalence is resolved by the county school inspectorate based on previous school documents or equivalence exams;
- **for interruptions of more than 3 years**, the only option is that of "Second Chance" Programme.

For those who work seasonally, who return after a few months, the internal evaluation procedure is applied following the decision of the School Board, which, until this year, also decided the evaluation period. But from this year, the evaluations for equating studies / reintegration are organized during the second examinations period, more precisely during the first week of September.

Those who come after 1-2 years and bring back documents, can submit the file to the county school inspectorate.

For those who are gone for a longer time and do not come with supporting documents, nothing can be done. If you have exceeded the school age by 3 years, then you can only access "Second Chance" Programme. In our area, or nearby, there are no such school units (that organize Second Chance Programmes). These programs are organized in communities where such situations have a higher rate. You must have a minimum target group to run a "Second Chance" Programme.

VII.4. Conclusions regarding available institutional settings

Analysing the legislative and procedural instruments available in Romania, it was concluded that children that migrate temporarily can be enrolled immediately in Romanian schools with no major disruptions. Legislative and procedural instruments are available.

The institutional setting is comprehensive for all levels of intervention in various situations:

Legislation and regulations:

For short periods of migration (seasonal/temporary) with no documents available, procedures to be carried out in schools are available in:

- *Framework Regulations on the structure and functioning of pre-university educational units*, regulating the whole functioning of pre-university studies in Romania, the ROFUIP, Art. 136. (*Annex to the Order of the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, for the approval of the Framework Regulations on the Structure and Functioning of Pre-university Educational Units*)²¹

For the equivalence of diploma and documents issued abroad, procedures to be carried out with county school inspectorates are available in:

- *Ministry Order no. 5268/2015 regarding the Methodology for the equivalence by the county school inspectorates and the School Inspectorate of the Municipality of Bucharest of study periods carried out abroad (...)*²² modified by
- *Ministry Order no. 3217/2018 amending and supplementing Annex no. 1 to the Order of the Minister of Education and Scientific Research no. 5.268 / 2015 approving the Guidelines regarding the equivalence by the county school inspectorates and the School Inspectorate of the Municipality of Bucharest of the study periods carried out abroad (...)*²³.

For longer periods of migration (more than three years), when no school is attended abroad, the “Second Chance” Programme is available in:

- Ministry Order No. 5248/2011 of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, regarding the “Second Chance Programme”²⁴ modified by
- Ministry Order No. 4093/2017 of the Ministry of National Education²⁵

Institutions and experts:

- **At the national level**, there is the *National Centre for the Recognition and Equivalence of Diplomas (CNRED)*²⁶. It treats only diploma equivalence cases, starting with high school level.

- **At the county level**, there are the 41 county school inspectorates with specially designated inspectors to deal with diploma equivalence procedures below the high school level and other re-enrolment procedures:

- Special designated inspectors to coordinate procedures for the recognition of study periods abroad and diploma equivalence,
- Foreign language specialists to evaluate documents issued by foreign school institutions, minimising documents translation costs from parents' side,
- Flexibility in file and documents demands (the last diploma is considered sufficient for attesting the completion of all previous study cycles).

²¹ Anexa la Ordinul M.E.N.C.S. nr. privind aprobarea Regulamentului-cadru de organizare și funcționare a unităților de învățământ preuniversitar https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/fisiere%20articole/3027_2018_2.pdf

²² Ordinul Ministrului Educației și Cercetării Științifice nr. 5268 / 2015 pentru aprobarea Metodologiei privind echivalarea de către inspectoratele școlare județene și Inspectoratul Școlar al Municipiului București a perioadelor de studii efectuate în străinătate și la organizațiile furnizoare de educație, care organizează și desfășoară pe teritoriul României activități de învățământ corespunzătoare unui sistem educațional din altă țară, înscrise în Registrul special al Agenției Române de Asigurare a Calității în Învățământul Preuniversitar și pentru aprobarea modelului atestatului de echivalare a studiilor efectuate în străinătate și în România. <https://www.cnred.edu.ro/ro/echivalare-perioade-studii-preuniversitare-clasele-1-12>

²³ Ordinul Ministrului Educației Naționale nr. 3217/2018 privind modificarea și completarea Anexei nr. 1 la Ordinul Ministrului Educației și Cercetării Științifice nr. 5.268/2015 pentru aprobarea Metodologiei privind echivalarea de către inspectoratele școlare județene și Inspectoratul Școlar al Municipiului București a perioadelor de studii efectuate în străinătate și la organizațiile furnizoare de educație, care organizează și desfășoară pe teritoriul României activități de învățământ corespunzătoare unui sistem educațional din altă țară, înscrise în Registrul special al Agenției Române de Asigurare a Calității în Învățământul Preuniversitar și pentru aprobarea modelului atestatului de echivalare a studiilor efectuate în străinătate și în România, din 1 martie 2018. <https://www.cnred.edu.ro/ro/echivalare-perioade-studii-preuniversitare-clasele-1-12>

²⁴ Ordin Nr. 5248/2011 al Ministrului Educației Cercetării Tineretului și Sportului privind aplicarea Programului “A doua șansă” <https://www.edu.ro/a%20doua%20sansa>

²⁵ Ordin Nr. 4093/2017 al Ministrului Educației Naționale pentru modificarea și completarea Ordinului Ministrului Educației, Cercetării, Tineretului și Sportului Nr. 5.248/2011 privind aplicarea Programului “A doua șansă” <https://www.edu.ro/a%20doua%20sansa>

²⁶ CNRED - Centrul Național de Recunoaștere și Echivalare a Diplomelor <https://www.cnred.edu.ro/>

- **At the local/school level**, the local school representatives:
 - o ask for guidance from county school inspectorate when needed,
 - o assist the families in compiling necessary documents for equivalence file,
 - o assist the families in completing the procedures required by county school inspectorates,
 - o organise local evaluations when previous school education abroad is unclear in documents,
 - o organise supplementary exams for children missing the regular ones,
 - o make efforts to insert children in regular classes, even when their age would warrant insertion in the “Second Chance” Programme.

Even if legislation, regulations and procedures are clear, some difficulties still appear for school principals, teachers and Roma parents while trying to re-enrol returning children:

At the school level:

- Regarding children leaving Romanian schools, there is a lack of knowledge and understanding among Romanian schools concerning school registration procedures of other countries, especially with school documents and initial evaluation procedures.
- Regarding re-enrolment procedures of children coming from abroad, the schools in Romania are not always aware of the steps to follow and of the actors involved and their role in the process. In such cases, the schools in Romania rely on county school inspectors for counselling and clarification. Returning children with no school documents are still considered “hopeless” by many school representatives, even if the legislation provides procedures for evaluation and equivalence for such cases.
- Regarding study periods and grades obtained by children while abroad, they cannot be considered in Romania when calculating average grades at the end of entire cycles. School years completed abroad are recognised, but detailed grades cannot be equated.
- Recovery exams for children missing the usual exams are organised when children returning from temporary migration abroad are not available (late summertime, during second examination).

At the children’ and parents’ level:

- Institutional and official procedures are hard to follow by Roma parents in contexts of low education, low institutional interaction abilities and in the context of their frequent absence caused by migration.
- Migration contexts make it difficult for parents to follow institutional procedures that require their direct participation, since they are often absent because of migration cycles.
- Migration contexts make it difficult for parents to travel, collect documents from schools abroad, send documents and intermediate the relation between schools in Romania and schools abroad.

Recommendations:

Based on these evidences, the following is recommended:

- increased access (communication and cooperation) of schools in Romania to other schools abroad;
- enhanced training of school representatives regarding other European education systems, especially related to the enrolment procedures of migrant children (cycles, curricula, grades, enrolment etc.);
- strengthened training of schools’ representatives regarding the operations to be followed to implement the existing legislation and procedures for returning children;
- advanced training of school representatives regarding all facilitating tools and procedures existing in the legislation, thus approaching the cases of children with no previous school documents (local evaluations, evaluations at county school inspectorates, communication with foreign schools, etc.);
- elaborating and providing schools with equivalating grids for understanding educational content and grades accumulated by children abroad and their translation into Romanian system, thus helping teachers to have a heightened understanding of school documents issued abroad;
- providing schools in Romania with instruments and resources to explain, council, monitor and assist Roma parents in the processes of equivalating diploma or study periods followed by children abroad;
- facilitating contacts between Romanian schools with schools and other education institutions abroad related to clarification of documents and contexts, especially when parents, though in agreement, cannot navigate the process independently;
- providing Romania’s school representatives with instruments that enable equivalating procedures, exchange of information and documents with foreign schools on behalf of Roma children’s parents, based on previous parental consent.

Such recommendations are listed to make the comprehensive procedure, which is detailed in legislation, more operational in cases of families engaged in temporary migration and those with limited resources, low capacity and low involvement in the re-enrolment process in the Romanian education.

VIII. SCHOOLS' DIRECT (TRANSNATIONAL) COOPERATION FILLING "THE WEAK LINK"

As noted in previous chapters, many obstacles in school re-enrolment and integration of Roma children on the move are related to the **lack of previous schooling documents**, the **lack of teacher information** in other education systems, the **lack of parental understanding** about school requirements. During the process of a child's transfer, the main and necessary link is represented by the child's parents.

Children migrating from one school or country to another is currently mediated by parents and only with school documents. In all the institutional settings discussed in the previous chapter, direct communication and cooperation between schools are not regulated or expected.

For a proper integration into a new school, parents must provide the destination school with institutional documents and information along with following specific procedures. If such procedures pose a challenge for any parent, for Roma parents in international and seasonal migration, it can be even more difficult because:

- many are poor. With the mounting stresses of daily livelihood in difficult migration contexts, Roma parents show little to no interest in their child's school education abroad. When little brothers and sisters need supervision, the school education of older brothers and sisters is postponed as a less urgent problem.
- many have low levels of education. Exposed to fast and apparently large financial gains and success models, the parents show little to no interest in children's school education in general.
- many do not speak local language. As seasonal or temporary workers occupied with physical labour, they often do not have the time or incentives to interact with local institutions (kindergarten, schools).
- many are employed in agricultural works. With isolated accommodations like remote farms, there is a low connection with the local community and institutions. Consequently, they do not have the opportunity for deep integration, including the school education of their children.
- many migrate in clusters. Being supported in their interaction with local employer and authorities by others, Roma parents do not achieve an understanding of the local regulations and procedures, local bureaucratic systems in general or the school systems.
- many of are employed without official labour contracts. As seasonal workers, they do not benefit from the complete package of social aid that would allow spare time and money for their child's education.
- many live in precarious conditions. Remunerated with very low wages, parents accept very precarious living conditions which are not conducive to a child's school education. They can rarely afford the extra expense of clothes, shoes, transport, school supply and extracurricular activities for their children.
- many have short term migration plans. Inserted in seasonal and temporary labour, their migration plans are short term, not justifying time and effort for local long-term insertion.
- many of leave hurriedly or spontaneously. They often depend on unpredictable opportunities offered by employers abroad. The emergency departures and returns prevent them organising the school transfer procedures in advance.
- many cannot plan the exact time of departure and returning. This makes it difficult to correlate their work plans with the schools' calendar. Some leave for summer vacation and extend their migration later than planned.

Migration, working and living conditions abroad are very stressful for Roma parents and, in such situations, children's school education is considered as a secondary priority in a temporary situation. School education is an investment that is financially demanding even in non-migration and non-discriminatory situations. In migration, Roma parents can barely cope with daily life. In such conditions, the plans for children's education are postponed until the family returns to Romania. Considering this, **the Roma parents' role as agents of communication and cooperation between schools of origin and of destination is hardly filled.**

The school to school transfer regulations in Romania and abroad do not involve school to school communication and cooperation. When it does happen, it is unregulated often mediated by overburdened parents. If and when there are failed mediation, the children suffer the consequences. The parents may perceive the situation as a collective/family effort and sacrifice for "a better future". But, when the "seasonal" and "temporary" becomes recurrent and permanent, the child's education suffers long term.

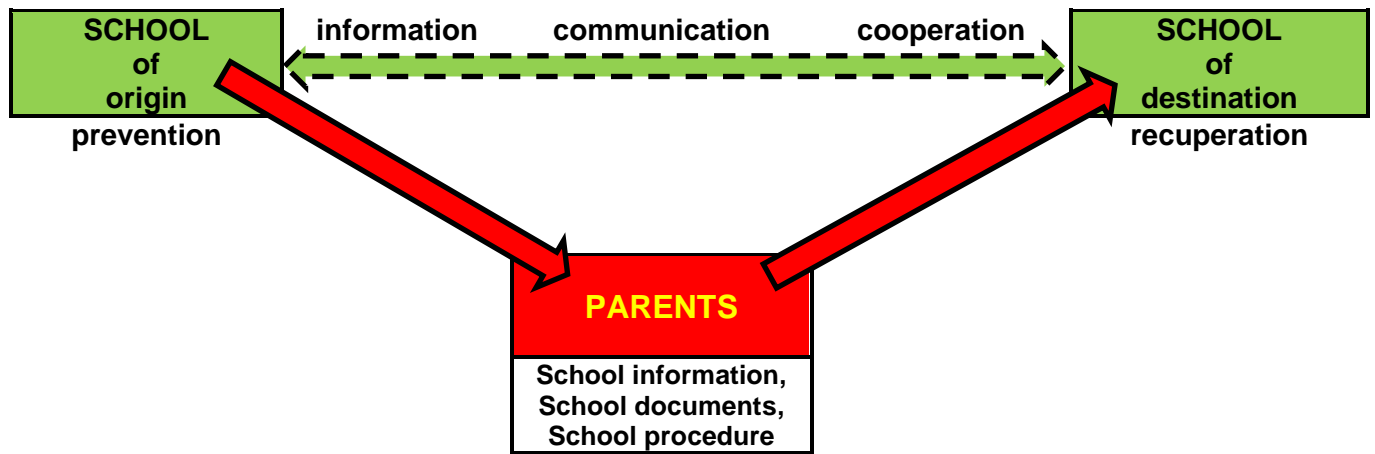


Figure 3. Parents involvement in school to school communication and cooperation

The truth is that 90% of parents, or even more, have themselves completed very few school years. They are very poor and leave this place because of poverty, and somehow believe that a child's education must take second or third place. And this is what leads to everything else. They aren't interested, when they come and go from the country, to request a document for the child. So, they say that "I will arrive first and see how things are going." They don't realize.

The difficulties faced by Roma parents migrating is ensuring the transfer of information and documents between schools is highlighted by teachers interviewed in Romania. Enrolment, transfer and reenrolment procedures may seem easy for those working in the education system but it is challenging for low educated and unknowledgeable parents.

Someone came with me and didn't have a document. I told them "If you know how to and have the means to, get in touch with the school over there. If not, we'll reach out and obtain that document." Most of them come back with any documents, but not because they don't want to get them or because the school won't issue them, but simply because they don't know that they have to and realize when they arrive in Romania that they don't have the papers needed to sign up.

Often, teachers interviewed recall that parents claimed not to know the importance of documents. There is also a probable lack of interest/understanding/priority of these documents.

They didn't realize that they had to take them (previous school documents) from there. I believe that they aren't very interested in their children's education. We are the ones who deliver the information. "If you went to school there, why didn't you take a document? If you completed 3-5 school years there, please bring a document." There is also such a lack of information.

When parents and children are the only link between school of origin and school of destination, the chain of information might be broken when they cannot provide relevant abroad schooling information and documents. Without any information and documents, it is impossible for the receiving school in Romania to find and contact the other school abroad. Previous education abroad is difficult to prove when documents are lost.

They claim that they have attended school ... That is what they are saying.

Because they are leaving in a hurry. Moreover, the financial side (lack of resources) prevents them from going there (in previous school, to request the necessary documents). I proposed that, when they come here (in Romania), they search for objects they still have from the school abroad: a book, an address. Maybe we can find something within the children's supplies. We can try to send an email to the other school (abroad) and officially request the child's documentation. I was very sad for the grandmother (who had made the request for re-enrolment). She found it impossible to enrol her grandchildren.

The interviews with school teachers, principals and inspectors, **a series of conclusions** emerged, indicating the need for transnational cooperation between schools.

- **The Romanian schools need to monitor the child education trajectory.**

As Romanian schools indicate, many of the Roma children that move to other countries often return to Romania. Each child leaving the country remains in school records of the original school as absent but not expelled. Moreover, the school of origin in Romania expects that, sooner or later, and more often than not, the departed will return. From this perspective, the children that left without notifying the original school in Romania about the new education prospect remains in its care. Romanian schools and teachers make efforts to keep contact with parents, and with foreign schools (when this is the case) to keep abreast of

the child's progress abroad. This exchange happens in practice, especially when parents return sooner or later to Romania and the children reenrols in school.

When leaving abroad with their children, many parents do not communicate this intention to the school representative for one reason or another: they believe it is temporary, the pressure of the moment, the emergency of the departure or even because of negligence. This creates an added load for teachers who find themselves doing social work to understand the reasons for school absence.

Yes, we notice when the child appears to be missing school more often. We ask left and right to find out what happened to that child. And then we find out that he's left for a month with his parents.

Most of times, such hasty departures and the lack of communication with the school of origin generates more problems later, particularly when schools of destination request information on previous education history.

Most of the time, the child leaves the country without announcing the school about it. It happens frequently. By the time the child gets there, the parents realize they haven't taken any school documents.

There are some who leave without saying anything. Then it becomes complicated. But the cases have become seldom.

Based on their own experience, schools and teachers try to fill this lack of predictability through **preventive actions of information with children's parents**. In schools and communities where temporary and seasonal migration is very frequent, teachers and schools inform parents about the importance of previous information, departure plans maintaining contact with the school of origin after.

Over the phone, with all of them. We always gave them a piece of paper with the school's data, to take with them. There is also the option where children are not enrolled in school when they arrive abroad.

Such preventive measures are taken because teachers and schools know that most of children leaving abroad will return sooner or later. They find it useful to monitor the child educational trajectory to avoid penalising the child because of absences, and in order to be better prepared at their return.

They also find understanding from our part at school. We discussed with the parents, the pastor and their representatives and explained that it is better to tell us when they are leaving. For example: They announce that he they're leaving starting Monday. We register the child as being abroad for a period of one month, maybe two. When he returns, we try, as much as possible, as much as the law allows, to help him reintegrate in school (closed records, tests, assessments).

In schools and communities where the temporary and seasonal migration are often and where teachers and schools began to impress upon parents the importance of sustained communication, the situation is improving.

That they are leaving? Yes. They do announce. Yes, they come and announce it to us, even a month in advance. They come and keep in touch with the professors, because they are trying to close their school records. "I will be leaving by June 1st. Is that alright? Have I taken my exams?" This is what they are interested in. They want to know that, when they return, in September, October, that they have graduated. And, anyway, they are here for the exams period, in May. So yes, they do this.

Roma parents confirm this tendency towards permanent communication with the school both before and post departure. It became a practice of preparing the school situation of the child, before departure, to ensure child reenrolment upon return.

Us, when we go abroad, we inform the school, fill a leave request stating that we'll be back in 3-4 months or more. When we return, the headmaster said that there should be a request filled in to reintegrate into the schooling system.

Training the parents and preparing the for the child's departure from the educational point of view becomes the first step, a preventive one, for the international migration of Roma children.

- **There are already risky practices of administrative data and document exchange.**

Based on interviews conducted with Romanian school principals and teachers, it was observed that transnational exchange of information and documents does happen between schools and institutions, especially administrative information and documents. These exchanges usually satisfy the need for confirmation of information provided by parents or for understanding unclear documents or data written in documents issued in foreign languages. But, when it happens, the exchange of data and documents puts the providing institution at risk since the exchange is not regulated by institutional agreements and procedures. Such exchanges should also be mediated by parents. Parents, however, are less able and available to be involved in information exchange while in temporary and precarious migration.

We communicated with a few schools over the phone. No, there is no specific procedure. It was accidental. Usually it is parents' responsibility. And then, speaking on the phone, can anybody take you seriously? In that case, they said it was OK. But they didn't send us any documents. (It didn't pass to an official, institutional communication).

Many school principals and teachers recall communication instances with foreign schools and other institutions regarding **specific cases of Roma children in migration**. They also impressed the lack of institutional procedures for these exchanges and the risks of communicating personal data. One school principal recalled a case when a United Kingdom NGO called to the school of origin and requested information for a child inserted in a local programme. The Romanian school principal refused to communicate the requested information because the NGO's representatives failed to provide any convincing information and documents to support the request. Another school principal recalled the case when an embassy representative called the school to request a confirmation for documents that one child's parents presented in an emigration file. The school principal supported the process, but not before verifying that the phone number she had been called was indeed the phone number of the embassy. Such situations are frequent, and **they place the Romanian schools' representatives in a legal and ethical dilemma: not answering the foreign requests and risking child's obstruction to possible benefits (educational or other) or answering to foreign requests and risking personal legal difficulties**. Schools representatives are aware of such risks and some have developed a sort of personal approach and professional philosophy.

I've learned to work in questionably legal circumstances. You should do as much good as possible, without hurting your own self.

In many cases, document exchange occurs. But even such exchanges have limits. Before initiating the evaluation and equivalation procedures, school representatives must make quick and immediate decisions for the suitable class placement. When foreign documents are unclear or written in less common languages, the content cannot always be understood. In these cases, direct communication with the school abroad, by phone or by email, is considerably helpful.

(Regarding foreign school documents) It also depends on which language they are sending us the information on the child's situation. Preferably, it should be a language of movement. It is very hard to translate other languages on Google translate in order to deduce where the child should be placed. A main problem is that the information that comes from the schools abroad are too brief, like a diploma. It is not mentioned what the child did there.

Sometimes, schools in Romania directly investigate and verify schools abroad. When initiated, direct communication between schools can be successful and fill some important gaps of information regarding the child's education history.

There was also a boy that came here (in a school in Romania). He had left a long time ago (abroad). He only went to school there (in Spain). From what he told us, that was the case. We talked to the school in Spain on the phone. And they told us he wasn't enrolled at the school he indicated. He told us he finished four grades there. A colleague of mine spoke with that school. We searched for it on the internet and, sadly, he did not go to school.

- **Even without regulations, schools in Romania are opened to communication and cooperation with schools abroad in order to facilitate the school integration of children.**

This process is smoother when it is initiated by parents. Even if they do not mediate all communication, their initial agreement for this communication legitimises the process between schools.

They (parents) told us that they were going to leave, and they wanted to enrol the children there, but they didn't ask for any transfer documents attesting the level of education of each child. The parents called us and told us they want to enrol children there. I told them to take the children to school, and the school from there to further ask us by email for a transcript of records, and so we communicated with the school in Germany.

Not only schools in Romania monitor the school evolution of their children when going abroad. The concern for transnational communication and cooperation is mutual. Sometimes, schools abroad are interested in the wellbeing of children after their return in Romania.

We have a case: the family left Romania in November 2018, they came back in January 2019, and we have received a letter from the school attended abroad asking us to certify that, after returning in Romania, the child was re-enrolled here. So, there are also schools abroad that are interested in the child's situation upon he's returns to the mother country.

- **The Romanian schools are interested in the exchange of educational content information.**

Beside the administrative need for data, some Romanian school principals and teachers indicate the need for supplementary information concerning the content of education abroad. Even when children and parents bring documents regarding previous education abroad, these documents are insufficient for Romanian teachers and schools to understand the educational content abroad. Such documents offer only information regarding the completion of a school year or cycle but do not provide curriculum information. When enrolling a returning child, the Romanian teachers have no answers to basic questions: “What did the children study abroad? What do they need to recuperate? Which content?” Evaluation is possible but it delays the child’s proper school insertion.

For Romanian school principals and teachers, the direct communication between schools is considered very important, at least during transfer periods, both when going abroad and returning. Knowing the previous education content should be a priority in order to ensure some level of continuity.

They (schools from abroad) should communicate to us, at the beginning at least (when registering), on the subjects that the child will study. It does not have to be constant. Nobody has the time to do it constantly.

The interview participants agree that the parents should initiate or support the communication and cooperation between schools. However, the actual communication is difficult to be sustained or mediated by parents themselves since it is technical and demands the school’s expertise. For one teacher receiving children who previously studied abroad, knowing the education content from abroad is crucial for a better integration in the receiving schools. School documents, however, are insufficient for a proper education profile.

There is no communication with the schools from abroad. One is to communicate with a school institution and the other is to communicate with parents who, most of the time, do not know about the child’s school situation abroad. Every education system is different. A child will bring a certificate stating he has finished second grade, but I don’t know. What subjects he studied there? He does not come back, like in our case, with a transcript of records. At least if we knew what subjects they studied.

Most Roma children engaged in seasonal international migration eventually return to Romania. To properly evaluate the education acquisitions and the gaps, Romanian teachers need access to a deeper understanding of the educational experience abroad.

It would help us to know the level reached by the child: how much he has accumulated and how much he has lost during the migration.

- **The Romanian schools indicate the importance of exchanging personal, educational and psycho-social information related to children development (abroad).**

Besides the need of exchanging administrative data and educational content, some school principals and teachers indicate a more profound need for communication and collaboration. Heavily stressed is the importance of personalized education, especially related to Roma children that belong to vulnerable groups. In their view, the advancements achieved by these children in one school and country can be lost if the new school and the new teachers are unaware of previous efforts and of the stage of the pupil’s personal, educational and psycho-social development. The personal history of each child should be known by new teachers and schools to ensure continuity to avoid destructive breaking points.

- **Romanian teachers stress on the need for education continuity.**

For example, consider the hypothetical example of a child with big gaps in education. After prolonged efforts, the teachers in Romania succeeds in upgrading his school performance **from a “very low level”** to a **“low level”**. Even if in absolute terms, the final level is still low, in relative terms it is a huge advancement, still needing substantial investment from the school, teachers, parents and child to sustain the recuperation process. **After migration** and re-enrolment in another school, the new teachers, unaware of previous efforts, might discourage the child and the parents because the new teachers are unaware that **“the low level” is in fact a “great achievement” for the child**. If new teachers would have the opportunity to communicate and cooperate with previous teachers, they would be able to better appreciate the relative importance of child’s effort and to continue supporting it.

- **Some Romanian teachers also stress the need for psycho-social continuity.**

For new teachers and schools abroad, knowing the special conditions of a child at home is important in adapting teachers' and schools' exigencies to understand the child's learning difficulties. The same holds true for Roma ethnicity. Knowing the history of previous discrimination suffered by a child in one school may be helpful when integrating him in the new school.

Any child moving from one school to another comes with an individual load of personal, educational and psycho-social history that should be known and understood, as much as possible, by the new school and teachers. In the process of initial evaluation, the child, the parents, and the previous school and teachers should be involved. The inter-school communication and cooperation is especially important in difficult migration processes when migrating children and parents are less able to provide relevant information, because of language barriers, stressful situations, distrust in new institutions and the technicality of the information needed.

I'd see it like this: when the parents leave, they should inform me in due time, on their intentions, on the place they are going to. All of this so the people at the destination school will not believe that that child is a gypsy and had gone there to steal. It's about seeing a child correctly, as he is. Maybe he is a very good child. Or maybe he is a problem child: if I know from the start that he has behavioural problems, I can step in. As problems arise on our side regarding a certain child, the same can happen in other EU school units where the child is migrating to. It would simply help us if we knew the child's educational level: how much he has learned or how much he has missed out learn while abroad, to have information on what they are doing there. To somehow manage to keep in touch with them, even when the parents don't want to. We can't find them. We can't contact them.

We need to have new information on what they're doing there. Somehow, we manage to keep in touch with them, even when they, the parents, do not want to. We can't find them. We can't reach them.

The above analysis supports the importance of transnational communication and cooperation between schools of origin and of destination. To prevent disruptive education for Roma children migrating from one school to another and from one country to another, Romanian school principals and teachers indicated **the need for direct transnational communication and cooperation between schools regarding specific children moving from one school to the other.**

As the main recommendation related to transnational cooperation between schools of origin and schools of destination, at least **four levels of communication and cooperation are indicated:**

- Continuous monitoring of children while abroad and preparing their probable return to Romania;
- Exchange of administrative information and documents while registering into new schools;
- Exchange of educational content for a heightened understanding of the level attained abroad;
- Exchange of information related to personal, educational and psycho-social history for continuity.

Some of these needs are answered through the risky search and transfer of information and documents, and solutions are expected to be possible in closer and regulated cooperation between schools. The needs for communication and cooperation indicated by the Romanian schools are often technical and are difficult to understand, even by highly educated parents. Satisfying such needs through the mediation of Roma parents in the difficult migration situations outlined above (see the start of this chapter) becomes very difficult if not impossible. Yet, **based on an initial explicit parental agreement, such cooperation would be possible through direct communication and cooperation between schools and specialists.** Also, only in such conditions, the transnational communication and cooperation between sending and receiving schools on specific cases would be legitimated and the experts be legally and ethically protected.

IX. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report was drafted to identify **structural obstacles for Roma children' integration in schools after migrating with their parents from Romania to other European countries**, within the project "MISTO AVILEAN (in Romani, Welcome) Migration = Integration: Service Transfer Optimisation — MISTO" funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020).

The conclusions and recommendation to follow can also be used in other projects and other programmes targeting the amelioration of the education situation of migrating Roma children. The conclusions and recommendations only account for **the Romanian perspective on the challenges faced by Roma children in international migration**, namely the Romanian schools, teachers and Roma parents' perspective regarding the obstacles that might have negative consequences on returning children.

1. This report includes a detailed analysis of **migration conditions of Roma families and the ways in which children are involved**. The **access of Roma children to school education abroad** was also scrutinized.

To describe **how teachers and Roma parents understand the traits of Romanian Roma international migration** may evoke terms like "massive", "seasonal", "circular", "temporary", "financial motivated", "collective/familial" migration, in "harsh living conditions" and with "low perspective for permanent settlement abroad".

Regarding **the children involvement in migratory processes**, the teachers and Roma parents indicate several situations that often occur in Roma families involved in international migration:

- Children are generally, and preferably, left at home in Romania when the extended family (grandparents and others) can host and supervise children, when parents cannot provide minimal living conditions abroad (housing and food) and supervision (one parent available), or when they risk problems with local authorities because of lack of minimal conditions required for children by local regulations.
- Seasonal migration of children is usually intended to happen during summer vacation, with low impact on their schooling. Yet, the summer migration is often prolonged over the autumn, generating minor problems of accommodation in Romanian schools at children's return. When such delays are longer than a few months, the risk of repeating the school year in Romania grows.
- Children accompany their family in migration when minimal conditions are ensured, when one family member can supervise them at home, when children are of a younger age and when local authorities provide several social benefits related to small children (housing, financial benefits, social and health care).
- When children reach school age, a few are enrolled in local schools abroad, especially when migration tends to become permanent, while most are brought back to Romania for schooling. In many cases, they are older than the age necessary for preparatory classes in Romanian schools.
- There is also the case scenario when Roma children are born abroad and raised by their families in the destination countries. They are seldomly enrolled in local schools abroad, particularly when migration tends to become permanent. More often, they are brought back in Romania to be enrolled in Romanian schools. In many cases, this happens at older ages than the normal age of starting school in Romania.
- In most cases, when children reach the school age, parents must make a choice between temporary migration (bringing children back to Romania for schooling) or permanent migration (enrolling children in local schools with all the efforts required: permanent official settlements, language issues etc.).

When children are very young, housing, food and supervision can be ensured through migrants' communities/extended families migrating and living together. The kindergarten is not seen as an option, because of language, distances and formal procedural difficulties. Supervision of young children is undertaken by older brothers and sisters or by other relatives who are not involved in daily work.

Reaching the school age for children becomes more problematic, since it requires the family to interact with foreign education systems. Greater efforts and expenses are required, that many Roma families cannot afford, such as a legal address, bureaucratic procedures, document completion, language issues, clothes and shoes, school supply, school education supervision etc. When the effort and the expenses cannot be met and when the migration plans do not entail permanent settlements abroad, **many Roma families send their children back in Romania for schooling** under the care of the extended family.

Romanian teachers constantly display a low level of understanding regarding the kind of school education and the procedures for school enrolment abroad. The Romanian schools' representatives rely solely on children' and parents' stories, which are often unclear. The general perspective over the school abroad indicates a "more flexible" (i.e. less bureaucratic) enrolling systems than in Romania, "preparatory classes for migrants", "mixed classes", "day care centres", "language learning centres" etc.

2. This report continues with an analysis of the **impact of international migration on Roma children who return to Romania** to start or continue their studies.

As school principals and teachers indicate, **the main hurdle preventing rapid and proper (re)integration in Romanian schools of returning Roma children is the lack of document attesting the school education abroad.** Based on Romanian school principals and teachers, **the lack of school documents and proper transfer procedures is more frequent among Roma families.** Some of our respondents indicate the more demanding Romanian education system (compared to other countries) that require written and precise documents. Others indicate the disregard regarding documents which would be specific to some Roma families, while others recall cases of Roma children born abroad who did not receive any education there.

The impact of international migration on Roma children accompanying their parents abroad varies from case to case. Based on interviews conducted with school principals and teachers in Romania, these case types can be presented:

- Seasonal migrants who provide good care for children's continuous school education in Romania. In such cases, parents pay much attention for their children to comply with all school obligations (exams, paperwork) before taking their children abroad during the summer vacation. Moreover, parents return their children to Romania before the next school year begins.
- Seasonal migrants who take their children for the summer vacation, but do not return children to school in Romania prior to the start of the upcoming school year. When the delay is short, the time lost can be recuperated. When it extends over most of the next year, the child risks repeating the school year with educational and psychological costs.
- Children who are born abroad and have to adapt to Romanian language and education environment.
- Children who miss school for many years and have to be integrated in "Second Chance" Programme.
- Long term migration when children risk becoming victims of parents' exploitation, including their forced involvement in illegal activities like begging, stealing and other situations.

86,6% of teachers answering to an online survey²⁷ are familiar with cases of Roma children affected by international migration, while 67,9% of the respondents encountered such cases "often" and very "often".

The respondents indicated these main obstacles faced by Roma children during (re)integration in Romanian schools:

- Lack of previous school documents (28,9%),
- Difficulties with parental cooperation (21,3%),
- Romanian language barrier (16,2%),
- Difficulties in diploma and study periods equivalence (15,5%).

From an educational perspective, many teachers (23%) participating in the online survey are convinced that Roma children do not attend any school abroad. The migration experience is a *no school* experience (27,1%) leading to massive educational gaps (28,5%) accumulated by children that accompany their parents

International migration also causes psychological difficulties for the returnees: "disinterest" (27,5%), "drop-out" (24,1%) and "lack of focus" (22%). They also have to face socio-relational obstacles. Roma children face challenges in their interaction with "the other pupils" (31,3%) and with "teachers" (21,3%). They also experience difficulties with acceptance by "the other pupils" (23,4%), as well as by their "parents" (17,5%). On one side, these problems are generated by discriminatory attitudes towards Roma people in general and, on the other side, they are the result of the children's migratory background and being perceived as newcomers by their colleagues and their social environment.

²⁷ The survey was conducted among teachers in schools attended in large proportion by Roma pupils.

For children experiencing international migration next to their families, educational disruptions caused by school registration procedures are the greatest risk. Yet, even for those that comply with various education systems requirements in terms of files and school documents, the integration is not automatic. **They must adapt to differences between education systems across countries.** Romanian teachers often observe the effect of these differences in the newcomer's behaviour. Even if teachers do not see a major risk of inadaptation, in their opinion they would require **tailored methods and buffer zones of education**, smoothing the passage from one education system to another.

3. To identify the possible obstacles on Roma children (re)integration in schools in Romania, the report continues with a detailed **analysis of the legislation, regulations and institutions answering to migration challenges in general.**

Analysing the legislative and procedural instruments available in Romania, the report concludes that children who migrate temporarily can be enrolled immediately in schools in Romania with no major disruptions as legislative and procedural instruments are available. The institutional setting is comprehensive for all levels of intervention in various situations: seasonal migration (a few months) and returning in the same school and class, temporary migration (one-two years), requiring equivalating procedures of study periods or diplomas, or longer migration (more than three years) managed through the "Second Chance" Programme (when no school was attended abroad). All procedures can be synthesized as it follows:

- **for seasonal migration**, the equivalence is resolved at school level by the school board and the teachers;
- **for migration of 1 to 3 years**, the equivalence is resolved by the county school inspectorate based on previous school documents or equivalence exams;
- **for interruptions of more than 3 years**, the only option is that of "Second Chance" Programme.

The analysis of the legislation, regulations and procedures indicates that all possible situations are approached, including those where no school documents are available from previous school.

Even if legislation, regulations and procedures are clear, some difficulties still appear for schools' principals, teachers and Roma parents while trying to re-enrol children coming from abroad:

At the school level:

- Regarding children leaving Romanian schools, there is a lack of knowledge and understanding among Romanian schools concerning school registration procedures of other countries, especially with school documents and initial evaluation procedures.
- Regarding re-enrolment procedures of children coming from abroad, the schools in Romania are not always aware of the steps to follow and of the actors involved and their role in the process. In such cases, the schools in Romania rely on county school inspectors for counselling and clarification. Returning children with no school documents are still considered "hopeless" by many school representatives, even if the legislation provides procedures for evaluation and equivalence for such cases.
- Regarding study periods and grades obtained by children while abroad, they cannot be considered in Romania when calculating average grades at the end of entire cycles. School years completed abroad are recognised, but detailed grades cannot be equated.
- Recovery exams for children missing the usual exams are organised when children returning from temporary migration abroad are not available (late summertime, during second examination).

At the children' and parents' level:

- Institutional and official procedures are hard to follow by Roma parents in contexts of low education, low institutional interaction abilities and in the context of their frequent absence caused by migration.
- Migration contexts make it difficult for parents to follow institutional procedures that require their direct participation, since they are often absent because of migration cycles.
- Migration contexts make it difficult for parents to travel, collect documents from schools abroad, send documents and intermediate the relation between schools in Romania and schools abroad.

Recommendations:

Based on these evidences, the following is recommended:

- increased access (communication and cooperation) of schools in Romania to other schools abroad;

- enhanced training of school representatives regarding other European education systems, especially related to the enrolment procedures of migrant children (cycles, curricula, grades, enrolment etc.);
- strengthened training of schools' representatives regarding the operations to be followed to implement the existing legislation and procedures for returning children;
- advanced training of school representatives regarding all facilitating tools and procedures existing in the legislation, thus approaching the cases of children with no previous school documents (local evaluations, evaluations at county school inspectorates, communication with foreign schools, etc.);
- elaborating and providing schools with equivalating grids for understanding educational content and grades accumulated by children abroad and their translation into Romanian system, thus helping teachers to have a heightened understanding of school documents issued abroad;
- providing schools in Romania with instruments and resources to explain, council, monitor and assist Roma parents in the processes of equivalating diploma or study periods followed by children abroad;
- facilitating contacts between Romanian schools with schools and other education institutions abroad related to clarification of documents and contexts, especially when parents, though in agreement, cannot navigate the process independently;
- providing Romania's school representatives with instruments that enable equivalating procedures, exchange of information and documents with foreign schools on behalf of Roma children's parents, based on previous parental consent.

Such recommendations are listed to make the comprehensive procedure, which is detailed in legislation, more operational in cases of families engaged in temporary migration and those with limited resources, low capacity and low involvement in the re-enrolment process in the Romanian education.

4. The final section of the report investigates **the need for transnational cooperation between schools** from Romania and from other European countries when dealing with cases of Roma children migration.

The current legislation, regulations and transfer procedures involve two “weak links”: Roma parents and school documents. Children migration from one school and country to another is currently mediated by parents and only through school documents. In all the institutional settings analysed, direct inter-school communication and cooperation is not regulated or expected. For proper integration of a migrating child in a new school, parents must provide to the destination school with institutional documents and information and to follow specific procedures. If such procedures can be a challenge for any parent, it is even more difficult for Roma parents in international and seasonal migration.

Migration, working and living conditions abroad are very stressful for Roma parents and, in such situations, children's school education is considered as a secondary priority in a temporary situation. School education is an investment that is financially demanding even in non-migration and non-discriminatory situations. In migration, Roma parents can barely cope with daily life. In such conditions, the plans for children's education are postponed until the family returns to Romania. Considering this, **the Roma parents' role as agents of communication and cooperation between schools of origin and of destination is hardly filled.**

The school to school transfer regulations in Romania and abroad do not involve school to school communication and cooperation. When it does happen, it is unregulated often mediated by overburdened parents. If and when there are failed mediation, the children suffer the consequences. The parents may perceive the situation as a collective/family effort and sacrifice for “a better future”. But, when the “seasonal” and “temporary” becomes recurrent and permanent, the child's education suffers long term.

- **The Romanian schools need to monitor the child education trajectory.** As Romanian schools indicate, many of the Roma children that move to other countries often return to Romania. Each child leaving the country remains in school records of the original school as absent but not expelled. Moreover, the school of origin in Romania expects that, sooner or later, and more often than not, the departed will return. From this perspective, the children that left without notifying the original school in Romania about the new education prospect remains in its care. Romanian schools and teachers make efforts to keep contact with parents, and with foreign schools (when this is the case) to keep abreast of the child's progress abroad. This exchange happens in practice, especially when parents return sooner or later to Romania and the children reenrols in school.

- **There are already risky practices of administrative data and document exchange.** Based on interviews conducted with Romanian school principals and teachers, it was observed that transnational exchange of information and documents does happen between schools and institutions, especially administrative information and documents. These exchanges usually satisfy the need for confirmation of information provided by parents or for understanding unclear documents or data written in documents issued in foreign languages. But, when it happens, the exchange of data and documents puts the providing institution at risk since the exchange is not regulated by institutional agreements and procedures. Such exchanges should also be mediated by parents. Parents, however, are less able and available to be involved in information exchange while in temporary and precarious migration. Such situations are frequent, and **they place the Romanian schools' representatives in a legal and ethical dilemma: not answering the foreign requests and risking child's obstruction to possible benefits (educational or other) or answering to foreign requests and risking personal legal difficulties.**

- **The Romanian schools are interested in the exchange of educational content information.** Beside the administrative need for data, some Romanian school principals and teachers indicate the need for supplementary information concerning the content of education abroad. Even when children and parents bring documents regarding previous education abroad, these documents are insufficient for Romanian teachers and schools to understand the educational content abroad. Such documents offer only information regarding the completion of a school year or cycle but do not provide curriculum information. When enrolling a returning child, the Romanian teachers have no answers to basic questions: "What did the children study abroad? What do they need to recuperate? Which content?" Evaluation is possible but it delays the child's proper school insertion.

- **The Romanian schools indicate the importance of exchanging personal, educational and psycho-social information related to children development (abroad).** Besides the need of exchanging administrative data and educational content, some school principals and teachers indicate a more profound need for communication and collaboration. Heavily stressed is the importance of personalized education, especially related to Roma children that belong to vulnerable groups. In their view, the advancements achieved by these children in one school and country can be lost if the new school and the new teachers are unaware of previous efforts and of the stage of the pupil's personal, educational and psycho-social development. The personal history of each child should be known by new teachers and schools to ensure continuity to avoid destructive breaking points.

The above analysis supports the importance of transnational communication and cooperation between schools of origin and of destination. To prevent disruptive education for Roma children migrating from one school to another and from one country to another, Romanian school principals and teachers indicated **the need for direct transnational communication and cooperation between schools regarding specific children moving from one school to the other.**

As the main recommendation related to transnational cooperation between schools of origin and schools of destination, at least **four levels of communication and cooperation are indicated:**

- Continuous monitoring of children while abroad and preparing their probable return to Romania;
- Exchange of administrative information and documents while registering into new schools;
- Exchange of educational content for a heightened understanding of the level attained abroad;
- Exchange of information related to personal, educational and psycho-social history for continuity.

Some of these needs are answered through the risky search and transfer of information and documents, and solutions are expected to be possible in closer and regulated cooperation between schools. The needs for communication and cooperation indicated by the Romanian schools are often technical and are difficult to understand, even by highly educated parents. Satisfying such needs through the mediation of Roma parents in the difficult migration situations outlined above (see the start of this chapter) becomes very difficult if not impossible. Yet, **based on an initial explicit parental agreement, such cooperation would be possible through direct communication and cooperation between schools and specialists.** Also, only in such conditions, the transnational communication and cooperation between sending and receiving schools on specific cases would be legitimated and the experts be legally and ethically protected.

The last chapter recalls an existing mechanism functioning within the Romanian education system, **the SIIIR (Integrated Informatic System of Romanian Education)**, that could answer, after its upgrade, the need for transfer of information between schools. Interconnecting this system with other similar systems in European countries could meet the needs for transnational communication and cooperation between schools, facilitating the school integration of (Roma) children on the move.

X. MAJOUR TOPIC FOR ADVOCACY:

UPGRADING AND INTERCONNECTING THE “SIIIR”

(Integrated Informatic System of Romanian Education)

During the field research carried out with teachers and school principals, one specific instrument managed by the Ministry of National Education emerged as a possible local and transnational solution for problems of school integration of migrating children. Further discussions with specialists from the Ministry of National Education supported this solution as a possible advocacy topic.

The SIIIR (The Integrated Informatic System of Romanian Education – own translation) is active since 2014 and it is implemented by the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport in Romania, with Structural Funds from the European Commission, under the Program PODCA²⁸ (Programme for the Development of Administrative Capacity – our translation). In preparing phase (2014), the SIIIR project website (<https://www.siiir.edu.ro/>) mentioned that:

The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport (the present Ministry of Education and Scientific Research MECS), as a central authority that coordinates the national system of education, is responsible with its evaluation based on criteria and standards, based on which it defines the actions, the strategies and the programmes for the entire system. Currently, MECS uses a set of information, databases and primary instruments for analysis and control that are not integrated, thus demanding a system of the SIIIR type. SIIIR seeks to support the increase of MECS capacity for planning and monitoring the Romanian educational system, which is seen as the main factor to ensure the capacity of Romania to compete on long term on the global market of goods and services.

The Integrated Informatic System of Education in Romania will provide services for complete management of activities in the pre-university system of education on operational, technical, administrative and strategic levels.

SIIIR will answer the needs of users at the central level (regarding the decision making based on the analysis of performance indicators and regarding the transparency of the founding processes, human resources management, their composition and mobilisation), as well as the needs identified at the local level (the management of activities, of processes and flows at the level of educational unit).

SIIIR will be a complex system that answers, on one side, to the needs identified in the educational area and to the improvement recommendations and that also, seeks to be the bearer of an extended vision on the ways the needs of the education system can be answered.

SIIIR will consist of a platform oriented towards the services provision, allowing the communication with the current applications as well as the provision of specific extensions that answer to shortages identified at the existent systems level.

Being aligned with the MECS strategy, the project will lead to the creation of a standard of interoperability with/between the administrative and management informatic systems within the educational system.²⁹

Based on discussions with teachers, school principals and with experts managing the SIIIR at the Ministry of National Education, it was observed that the SIIIR is an informatic system that has **mostly a statistic function**, providing the central institutions with information at the national level about the school system. Each school in Romania has the obligation of registering in the system local information regarding each pupil enrolled (education related information such as exams, grades, graduations), pupils related indicators, human resources, expenses. When needed, at the national level, information can be extracted in statistical figures as basis for decision. Currently, **the information in SIIIR flows in one direction which is from the local to central level**. A school may insert and view data about registered pupils but cannot access data from another school. This, of course, is justified by the need to protect personal data. Thus, the schools are used only as a collecting point and not as an operational and processing point.

Regarding the Roma children, their ethnicity is mentioned in the SIIIR only if their Roma parents demanded special places in classes organised for Romani language learning.

There is a program called SIIIR, where all children are registered, including those not born in Romania and without a birth certificate.

²⁸ PODCA – Program Operațional Dezvoltarea Capacității Administrative

²⁹ Sistemul Informatic Integrat al Educației din România <https://www.siiir.edu.ro/>

There are extremely rigorous records kept at national level. There is also a list of all pupils with personal identification number. Some children have a birth certificate issued by another state. We then generate a personal identification number in order to make it possible to sign up for school.

The topic of SIIIR is introduced within this study because it may provide a solution to a part of the challenges faced by children moving between schools and countries. The major problems related to documents, diplomas, school records and communication between schools would be solved if: the SIIIR would record the educational history of each pupil with all their school records in Romania (and from abroad), local school representatives would have access, not to their data input, but to the data concerning a specific child in migration.

The SIIIR currently stores data for each pupil's education history. At this point, the system is not allowed to provide **individual educational profiles** that integrates data from different schools. If such an operation would be available, at the central, county or local level, each school could ascertain the education background of each child and thus determine the appropriate class placement. This would allow schools suitable decisions, even in the absence of previous school documents or information provided by parents. Such option would be very helpful especially when such information cannot be immediately provided and when equivalating procedures are challenging to follow. As noticed during this research, these are situations very frequent during Roma family's migration abroad.

RECOMENDATIONS:

Most obstacles related to Roma children integration and continuity in school education systems in Romania and abroad are generated by the weakness of two main links between sending and receiving schools: school documents and parents. To manage with these obstacles, below are a set of **recommendations**.

AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL, it is recommended that the SIIIR be upgraded to provide schools (directly or indirectly) with information of previous education history of each new child. This upgrade would improve the school insertion of migrating children through **the following advantages:**

For children in (international) migration:

- Less time spent by schools, teachers and children in initial evaluation of each new pupil registering the school due to readily available information in the SIIIR;
- Better and tailored school reinsertion of migrant children when destination schools are previously aware of the educational history accumulated in time;
- Rapid insertion of children in the new school environment based on extensive knowledge available to school and teachers when registering new children;

For parents in (international) migration:

- Parents are involved with providing general agreement to the data transfer between schools, but they are not involved in all the technical process of documents and information transfer, except when they wish to be involved;
- The pupil's transfer from one school to another can happen independently with no obstacles related to family, social, financial or medical situation that might affect the transfer of information when vulnerable groups are involved;
- Less effort from the family's side in terms of mental effort (accommodation with the overall procedure), collecting and providing necessary documents (request, diplomas, records transcripts, etc.), time and financial costs (documents translation, successive travels to schools and county school inspectorates);

For schools and teachers (with positive outcomes for children):

- Enhanced and rapid response time from schools when dealing with migrant children;
- Schools make proper decisions for appropriate class placement based on reliable data provided by the SIIIR and without needing the parents' availability and cooperation, except their general agreement;
- Schools and teachers can have access to complete and extensive information and documents regarding education history of one child coming from another school;

For the national system of education:

- Less time and effort spent by schools in direct communication and cooperation with each other for transfer procedures by accessing the SIIIR which would be able to provide all necessary information for enrolment.
- Better system analysis options for the understanding of migration paths within the education system;

Such a perspective would require that the SIIIR to be upgraded by the Ministry of National Education in order to achieve the following characteristics:

- **RELIABILITY:** the SIIIR must fill all possible gaps of information regarding education history of all school population. In order to be reliable, the system must be able to collect and provide, on demand, all previous school education of each child currently in school. A second stage of development would be to enlist in SIIIR future possible beneficiaries (newborn children) or past beneficiaries (graduates) of the education system.
- **TRACKING:** the SIIIR must acquire the function of tracking the educational history of each pupil passing through the Romanian education system (previous schools attended, school records and other information);
- **CONTROL:** the SIIIR must be operated by specialized persons at the local, county or central level, able to ensure the compliance with the data protection policies and regulations. This implies that tracking and searching educational history of particular children should become an operation rigorously controlled and used only for the children' benefit.
- **LEGALITY:** the SIIIR must be checked on its reliability and must be accredited. It has to reach a high level of reliability in order to be recognized as a system that allow decision taking in individual cases.

AT EUROPEAN LEVEL, it is recommended to interconnect SIIIR with other national systems of monitoring school population to facilitate the direct or indirect transfer of information when children are involved in international migration and school to school transfer.

Interconnecting education informatic monitoring systems across the EU would resolve administrative obstacles faced by children migrating from one school to another and from one country to another with direct benefits for Roma population that face these problems more frequently:

- Problems related to documents: diplomas, school records and other proofs of previous education;
- Problems related to evaluation procedures while enrolling children in new schools;
- Problems related to the duration of the re-enrolment procedures for children after their return at home;
- Problems related to the exchange of information containing personal data;
- Problems related to the compatibility between grades obtained in various schools (the system could include automatic grids of equation between grades obtained by the same pupil in various educational systems);
- Problems related to families and parents who are absent, remote or neglecting their children.

Upgrading the SIIIR in Romania and interconnecting it with other education monitoring systems in other EU countries presents itself as a promising and feasible topic of advocacy within this project; it is also the major recommendation based on the research on the obstacles in school integration faced by migrating children and of Roma children in particular.

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