

Roma in Public Education

RAXEN

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Executive summary

Approximately 45,000 Roma live in Sweden, of these are about 20,000 Travellers. The Roma have a history based on centuries of discrimination and social marginalisation. The Romani population in Sweden is very heterogeneous, as they have immigrated to Sweden at different times and from different countries, with a start in the 16th century.

Today there are five major Romani groups in Sweden; the Travellers, the Finnish Roma, the Swedish Roma, the non-Nordic Kelderari and the Arli, the Slavic Roma. The majority of the Roma live in the metropolitan areas which mainly are socio-economically disadvantaged, areas where also many newly immigrated people from Asia and Africa live. Large parts of the Roma population are also fairly recent immigrants, such as the Arli that in the 1990's fled the political instability and war in former Yugoslavia.

The Romani population may thus be seen as a very disadvantaged group in Swedish society. This is among other things illuminated by the lack of access to education, housing and the labour market. In a historical perspective, the Roma have been totally excluded from these areas, many times because of the travelling life they have led. They have also been subject to many appalling measures initiated by the authorities. In the 18th century immigrant Roma were expelled if they did not become domiciled. In the beginning of the 19th century the Roma were subject to measures in line with the theories of eugenics.

Their situation and poor life conditions did not attract attention until the 1950's when the first Swedish Romani author, Katarina Taikon, published her book on the life of gypsy women in Sweden. This book led to the authorities rapidly taking initiatives to improve the situation with regard to housing and education.

The situation for the Roma in Sweden today has to a great extent changed to the better. However, the situation with regard to access to education and employment is still unsatisfactory. Many young Roma do not complete their studies at compulsory school education. In some schools the Romani children have 40 percent absence. Very few of the Romani pupils continue their studies at upper secondary school level or at higher levels. Many of the adult Roma have neither education nor employment. The drug abuse is rapidly increasing among the youth.

Most people of Romani origin are to a great extent subject to ethnic discrimination and harassment, very few report though. The hidden statistics with regard to the extent of the ethnic discrimination against the people of Romani origin is very large. Also in the schools, the Romani pupils witness about being discriminated against by teachers and other pupils. In a study carried out by the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination, 50 per cent of the respondents said that they had not conveyed their Romani origin in order to save themselves from the negative behaviour from the majority society.

In 1999 the Roma was recognised as one of Sweden's official national minorities and their language Romani Chib was acknowledged as a national minority language. This may be an important step in the right direction for the Roma group to be able to live a life characterised by respect and inclusion in society. For education, this in particular has led to the changing of the curriculum to incorporate education on the national minorities. This has however not been implemented yet.

The main focus with regard to education is on the maintenance and development of the mother tongue, because of its central position with regard to culture and identity. The municipalities are obliged to provide the Romani children with mother tongue education even in cases where there is only one child who has been registered, compared to five children for children with immigrant background. The Romani children do not either have to use the mother tongue on a daily basis, which is the case for immigrant children. The Romani children are also entitled to mother tongue education in a second language, which mainly is used by Romani children that have Finnish or former Yugoslavian

background. However, very few Romani children participate in the mother tongue education. More Romani children participate in mother tongue education in a second language. Another problem is the lack of qualified Romani mother tongue teachers. This implies that when there are no qualified teachers in the municipalities, they are not obliged to provide education even in cases where there are children that want to attend.

In the last years, many activities with regard to the Romani pupils' situation in the Swedish schools have been carried out. Some have been successful, others have not. The most successful initiatives may be said to be the projects and activities that have been initiated by the Roma themselves. The majority of all projects aiming to improve the schooling involve Romani employed working as special needs teachers, mother tongue teachers, teacher assistants etc. Activities have also been initiated to organise education of Romani professionals with the aim to work in the schools or in relation to school activities. Education can either be incorporated in the schools time tables or outside, then organised by leisure-time centres. Among the main aims are to have Romani parents and adults serving as role models for the Romani pupils, to improve the contacts between the schools and the families, and also practically to support the Romani children with their school work. In addition, several initiatives have been launched to educate the adult Roma. These educations have also proved to improve the schooling for the children. Measures like these often take place on a municipal level.

There are also many measures initiated on a national central level for instance by the school authorities. The main activities by the school authorities regard mapping out the situation for the Romani pupils in the schools, producing teaching material in Romani for the mother tongue education and establishing a web dictionary in Romani Chib and the various dialectal variations that are spoken in Sweden.

The most important change in regard to the measures taken is the involvement of the Roma group, from the planning to the carrying out. There is a strong emphasis from the majority society today to involve the Roma in the work aiming to improve their situation after centuries of exclusion and marginalisation. This may be a good start, but there is still a great deal to improve. Critics maintain that the Roma is used as alibis, as they are outside the real decision making.

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Introduction

The Roma was in 1999 acknowledged as one of Sweden's five official national minorities together with the Sami, the Swedish Finns, the Tornedalers and the Jews. Their language Romani Chib was thus also recognised as an official national minority language.¹ This status implies that their situation in Sweden should change dramatically from a life in the margins of society to be a more respected and included group in society.

This report brings up the aspect of the Romani children in the Swedish education system, while focusing both on the educational policies as well as on the group and their children's situation in the schools. The Roma is a very much marginalised group in Swedish society and also to a very high extent subject to discrimination both on a structural level and an individual level.² This is also visible with regard to the children and their situation in the schools and to the groups' general living conditions, seen in for example their housing situation and their nearly absent position on the labour market.

The report will begin with a brief background on the Roma in Sweden. It will then discuss the changes mostly with regard to the new national minority policy as well as other governmental measures that have specifically been carried out during the past years to improve the Roma's situation in particular in the schools, but also in related areas. Many of these good practices have been initiated by the Roma themselves through their organisations. The report will also present statistics on the young Roma's school enrolment and their participation in mother tongue tuition and the work of eight municipalities.

In the past years issues regarding discrimination and structural racism because of ethnicity, religion or belief have been of high priority. This aspect may also have positive effects for the Roma, even though the major focus have been mainly on improving the situation for immigrant groups from countries in Africa or the Middle East. The report will bring up the issue of discrimination and how and if the measures taken to combat discrimination have improved the situation as well as the Roma and the children's views on discrimination and the manifestations of it.

The majority of the data used in this report come from the school authorities, as they are the only central institution that have mapped out the situation for Roma pupils in the schools. Other governmental sources are also used, such as for example the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination, and the municipalities. There is not much written material published by the NGO's; here interviews have been made.

The focus of this report is mainly on the Roma population and not the Travellers. Many Travellers also say they belong to the Romani group. The two groups are nearly the same size, but there is almost no data on the latter group. The Travellers have not been mapped out in the same way by the school authorities as the Roma have. The Travellers may thus be seen as more invisible in Swedish society.

The report will end with some final comments and some recommendations based on the material on how to continue to work with issues with regard to improving the situation for Roma pupil in the Swedish education system.

¹ The government bill 1998/99:143 proposed on a new minority policy which was adopted by both government and parliament in 1999.

² Sweden, Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (2004), *Diskriminering av romer i Sverige*

Roma in Sweden

The Roma have been living in Sweden for centuries.³ The first known Roma came to Sweden in the 16th century from Finland. Since then, the Roma have immigrated to Sweden at different periods and from various countries in Europe or Russia.

Roma have often lived a life travelling not the least because of the difficulties for them to get a resident permit or a permanent base somewhere. From the second half of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century a second wave of immigration of Roma took place, this time via Russia from Valakia. In the 1960's and 1970's approximately 10 000 non-Nordic Roma came from Poland and Eastern Europe. Most recently, people of Roma origin have fled from the political instability and war in former Yugoslavia, many of them from Bosnia, Macedonia and Kosovo.

Sweden's policies on the Roma have varied during the centuries. In the 17th and 18th centuries the authorities decided on regulations to either expel the Roma immigrants or assimilate them by force, which implied to force them to be domiciled.⁴ A written communication from 1897 emphasizes that the children should be separated from the parents and placed on institutions or individuals living at places where the parents normally did not visit. This would make the children decent and domiciled as citizens. In the beginning of the 20th century eugenics were also discussed in connection to measures directed towards the Roma. Sweden was the first country in the world to establish a Swedish State Institute for Race Biology.

In the 1960's the authorities started to become more interested in the situation of the Romani population.⁵ The person, who may have been the most important representative, was the Swedish Romani woman Katarina Taikon, who in the 1960's and 1970's by her novels spread information on the appalling life conditions of the Roma. Her first book entitled *Gypsy woman (Zigenerska)* was published in 1963 and for the majority of the 900 Roma living in Sweden then this book was a revolution. The public opinion that her book roused led to that the authorities quickly had to make the Roma more participating in society in particular regarding human rights such as the access to housing and education. Katarina Taikon also wrote the very much read and appreciated children books about the Romani girl Katitzi.

In the 1970's the municipalities established the so called family teachers who were to teach newly arrived Romani families to manage in the Swedish society, but they also were to contribute to increase the knowledge about the Roma in the majority society.

In 1985 the Roma were to be included in the general immigration policy. At this time special projects focusing on Roma were abolished.⁶

There are several Romani organisations in Sweden. In 1973 an umbrella organisation for 15 different associations were established.⁷ In 1999 this umbrella organisation changed name and became the National Association for Roma in Sweden. They mainly work with social issues and activities that contribute to strengthen the Roma's situation in Sweden, as well as with activities regarding the language, history and culture of the Roma. Many Roma also work locally with among other thing youth activities to combat the increasing drug abuse among the youth.

³ This section is mainly based on the government bill 1998/99:14 pp. 26-27 and information material provided by the National Association Roma International by Schwartz and Lindberg.

⁴ Rodell Olgac, C. (1998), *Vi är rädda att förlora våra barn*. Stockholm: Save the Children, p. 13

⁵ Rodell Olgac, C. (1998), *Vi är rädda att förlora våra barn*. Stockholm: Save the Children, p. 13

⁶ Rodell Olgac, C. (1998), *Vi är rädda att förlora våra barn*. Stockholm: Save the Children, p. 14

⁷ Sweden, Ministry of Culture, *Government bill 1998/99:14*, pp. 26-27

Today, between 20,000 and 25,000 Roma live in Sweden.⁸ There are also approximately 20,000 Travellers living in Sweden. The Travellers have been in Sweden as long as the Roma and many of the Travellers see themselves related to the Roma as they speak a language close to Romani Chib, which sometimes is called Swedish Romani.

The Roma in Sweden usually categorise themselves in five subgroups based on clan belonging. The category called Finnish Roma belongs to the Kalee clan. Travellers belong to the Sinti clan. The Swedish Roma, also called Lovare, came to Sweden in the 19th century, while Kelderari, the non-Nordic Roma, came in the 1950's. The most recent group of immigrated Roma is the Arli, the Slavic Roma that have immigrated in the 1990's.

The language they speak is called Romani Chib, and has its roots in Sanskrit. In Sweden many dialectal variations of Romani Chib is spoken and is named after the different clan belongings, such as Swedish Romani, spoken by the Travellers, Finnish Romani, Lovari, Kelderash and Arli. In recent years many immigrated Roma families also use a second language on a daily basis, e.g. Finnish, Bosnian and Macedonian.⁹ The Travellers mainly speak Swedish.

The majority of Roma live in the Metropolitan regions of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö, but also in the middle small sized cities in the country. Many families live in the disadvantaged suburbs of the cities. The general standard for the population in these residential areas are often socio-economically very low. The areas have also undergone a process of racialized segregation as the majority of the Swedish residents have moved to other areas and newly arrived immigrants have moved in.¹⁰ The Roma thus during the past decades seem to have been a part of this process.

Swedish Educational Policies with regard to the national minorities

In 1999 the government adopted a new minority policy and thus acknowledged five minority groups that had lived in Sweden for centuries as official national minorities and their languages were recognised as official national minority languages.¹¹ The Roma and their language Romani Chib with dialectal variations was one of the groups receiving the status of being an official national minority group.

In the government bill 1998/99:43 that proposes a new minority policy, three areas were of main priority. The most important area is education, but also media and culture are given special attention. According to this government bill Sweden has fulfilled the obligations of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages with regard to the states responsibility to take measures to support and promote knowledge on the national minorities' culture, history, language and religion in the education system. The bill is also promoting equal possibilities for national minorities to establish and run their own educational institutions.

The bill states that it is of major importance that all children, irrespective of belonging to a national minority or the majority, should be educated in the national minority's history in Sweden and their culture, language and religion as well as their part in the Swedish society. As it was formulated in the government bill this would increase the understanding and also the willingness to support the minority groups in maintaining their culture and languages. Therefore the curriculum has been changed and now it clearly expresses that the schools are obliged to provide education for all pupils about the national minorities and the national minority languages.¹²

⁸ These figures are only an estimation, since there is no registration in Sweden of ethnicity.

⁹ Sweden, National Agency for Education (1999), *Romer och den svenska skolan*, p. 3

¹⁰ See e.g. Molina, I. (1997), *Stadens rasifiering Etnisk boendesegregation i folkhemmet*. Uppsala universitet Kulturgeografiska institutionen. Geografiska regionsstudier nr 32

¹¹ Sweden, Ministry of Culture (1999), *Government bill 1998/99:14*, pp. 57-59

¹² Sweden, Ministry of Justice (2003), Fact sheet Ju 03.10, June 2003

The importance of mother tongue education

The national minority policy regarding educational measures is particularly focused at maintaining and developing skills in the mother tongue. The mother tongue has a central position in the development and maintenance of the culture, which is very important in connection to the development of the identity. Therefore the development and improvement of bilingual education and mother tongue education are the two main measures with regard to children with origin in any of the official national minority groups, as well as for children with immigrant background. This is to be supervised and followed up by the National Agency for School Improvement.

All pupils with another mother tongue than Swedish are entitled to mother tongue education, both in compulsory school and in upper secondary school.¹³ The pupil should speak the mother tongue with at least one parent on a daily basis. Mother tongue education is optional and not compulsory but the municipalities are obliged to organise such education if there are at least five pupils sharing one language that wish to participate. The municipalities are not obliged to organise tuition in cases where there are no teachers available. For pupils with a mother tongue in three of the acknowledged national minority languages Sami, Meänkieli (the Tornedalers) and Romani Chib, the pupils are however entitled to education in their mother tongue, even in cases where they do not use it on a daily basis. In addition, in cases where they have another language that is spoken on a daily basis, this refers to many of the newly arrived Roma from former Yugoslavia, but also the Finnish Roma, they are also entitled to mother tongue education in that language of the country of their origin. For these three national minority groups the municipalities are also obliged to arrange classes in mother tongue education where there are less than five pupils, even in cases where there are only one pupil. These regulations existed before the new minority policy came into effect in 1999.

The tuition in the mother tongue can be organised in several ways; as a language option, as a choice of the pupil, as a choice of the school or finally as an extra subject outside the ordinary time table.¹⁴ There is a syllabus for the subject mother tongue in compulsory school and there are also grading criteria. Many municipals choose to put the lessons in the mother tongue late in the afternoons, after all other subjects. Often the municipals coordinate the education for different schools, which implies that the pupils have to go to another school for the lesson and also may imply that the pupil gets an extra hour in between the ordinary time table and the lesson in the mother tongue. The National Agency for Education states that there are several advantages with this arrangement. Even though it may be cost-effective for the municipals it may also have its advantages from a pedagogical perspective, partly because older pupils may find it stimulating to meet others in their own age, but also because the teachers by this arrangement can choose more interactive methods for their teaching. The arrangement may however have a negative effect on the individual pupils entitled to the mother tongue education, in particular the younger children who do not choose this tuition. In this case it is also unlikely that they will choose it when they get older.

At upper secondary school there are three courses regarding mother tongue education and bilingual education. To be qualified for these courses the pupils have to get the grade approved in the mother tongue course at compulsory school level.

The state's focus of mother tongue education may be of a problem for the Romani pupils, in particular since there are not many educated mother tongue teachers in Romani which is a different situation compared to the situation of teachers in the other minority languages.¹⁵ In Stockholm there were four mother tongue teachers, of which only two were qualified.

¹³ Sweden, National Agency for Education (1999), *Romer och den svenska skolan*, p.7

¹⁴ Sweden, National Agency for Education (1999), *Romer och den svenska skolan*, p.7

¹⁵ Sweden, National Agency for Education (1999), *Romer och den svenska skolan*, p.8

The role of national school authorities and municipalities

There are two central national school authorities in Sweden; the National Agency for Education and the rather newly established governmental body the National Agency for School Improvement. Since the establishment in 2003 the National Agency for School Improvement has taken over the responsibility for the central monitoring of issues with regard to educational measures aimed at both the dissemination of knowledge of the recognised national minority groups as well as measures aimed at maintaining culture and language for the national minorities. However the level of the policy decisions taken by the school authorities are on a national and central level, which implies that very many decisions on how to follow the policies and the organisation of it are left for the municipalities to decide.

Romani children in the schools

In 1999 the government commissioned the National Agency of Education to map out the situation for the Romani pupils in the schools.¹⁶ In 2000 the National Agency of Education made a similar survey but for all children who belong to a national minority and the survey on the Romani pupils are also a follow up from the study made two years earlier.¹⁷ The report from 2001 brings up the aspect of discrimination that today is mostly relevant for one of the national minorities, namely the Roma. However in a historical perspective and with regard to the education system all groups have been subject to discrimination. Still today the report states that there is a strong pressure from the majority society on the minorities to assimilate as much as possible, although the policies in effect put pressure on more maintenance of the groups' culture and language.¹⁸ To make it easier for the municipalities to follow and fulfil the policies on the rights of the national minorities, the National Agency for Education has suggested that the children's language skills should be registered when starting pre-school.

Most reports on Romani children and their situation in school bring up the aspect of their over representation among pupils that do not complete compulsory school according to the nationally set goals and their high frequency of absence in the school.¹⁹ Although it has to be stressed that there are Romani pupils that complete the compulsory school and some even that continue their schooling at upper secondary school level. With regard to the school authorities mapping, these pupils are not many. There is however no clear image of the situation with regard to the high rates of absence and the many pupil's that do not complete the compulsory schools as there are major differences within the group in school achievements.

Although it may be seen as a homogenous group from the outside perspective of the majority society, the Romani group is very heterogeneous. Some Romani groups are totally invisible in Swedish society, mainly the Travellers. One reason is that they often have Swedish names. According to the survey of the National Agency for Education there are no records in Sweden on Traveller pupils who participate in mother tongue education, although they are entitled to it according to their rights as a national minority.²⁰ The National Agency for Education states in one of the reports that in order to be able to map out the Traveller children's situation in the schools they have tried to reach representatives of the Traveller group but without succeeding.

¹⁶ Sweden, National Agency for Education (1999), *Romer och den svenska skolan*

¹⁷ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och pa de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*

¹⁸ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och pa de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, p. 9

¹⁹ Sweden, National Agency for Education (1999), *Romer och den svenska skolan*; Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001) *Undervisning i och pa de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*

²⁰ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och pa de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, p. 40

The differences within the group also are related to when and where the Roma have migrated from. Many of the relatively newly arrived Roma from former Yugoslavia have a better educational background as the assimilation policies in this part have been much stronger from the majority society than they have been in Sweden.²¹ The Roma from these countries may also conceal their Romani identity because of this reason.²² In addition, many of the Roma in general conceal their origin in connection to schooling, as they want to protect themselves from discrimination, harassments and prejudice on ethnic grounds.²³

This is naturally a problem when mapping out the situation for this group. There are no complete statistics in Sweden, as there is no registration in the schools on the pupils' ethnic belonging and also the registration on foreign background is not in this perspective relevant, since there is neither any information on the ethnic origin.²⁴ These factors make it very difficult to carry out a true mapping on a national basis regarding school enrolment and drop out rates for the Romani pupils. Studies have been made on a regional basis in a couple of municipalities. However, in the majority of these studies the figures are based on estimations. Since the Roma are a very heterogeneous group there is also a great distribution regarding figures on school achievement and school enrolment.

Most surveys reveal that the majority of the Romani children do not either participate in mother tongue education in Romani, although they are entitled to it. Another aspect was that the municipalities did not seem to do very much about the situation regarding the great number of Romani pupils that are absent from the education.²⁵

In 2001 the National Agency for Education came to similar conclusions but the situation is described as somewhat improved as there are more Romani pupils that complete their education in compulsory school and continue their education at upper secondary school level. Although very few Romani pupils continue their studies at upper secondary school level.²⁶ In the survey made by the National Agency for Education in 2000 in eight municipalities, only a few Romani pupils in every municipality study at this level. Therefore it has been difficult for the authority to map out the situation for the Romani pupils studying at this level. Two municipalities, Stockholm and Norrköping, have Roma pupils concentrated in one particular upper secondary school and one particular class. These pupils have chosen to study the Individual program.²⁷ The schools are Fogelströmska gymnasiet in Stockholm and Marielundsgymnasiet in Norrköping.

²¹ Sweden, National Agency for Education (1999), *Romer och den svenska skolan*, p. 6

²² Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, p. 40

²³ Sweden, Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (2004), *Diskriminering av romer i Sverige*. See also the part on discrimination.

²⁴ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, p. 38

²⁵ Sweden, National Agency for Education (1999), *Romer och den svenska skolan*

²⁶ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, p. 39

²⁷ A pupil who is not qualified for the national programs, may choose the individual programs.

Romani pupils in eight different municipalities

As stated before the majority of the Roma in Sweden live in the main cities. Many also live in middle-sized cities. In 2000 the National Agency for School Improvement carried out a survey in eight cities. Five of the municipalities have been chosen because of their large Romani populations. The three remaining, Lund, Norrköping and Gävle, were chosen because of their long experience in their work with the Romani population. This section is based on the concluding report.²⁸

Pupils in compulsory schools in the eight cities with Romani as mother tongue

Municipality	Entitled	Participants
Stockholm	175	119
Uppsala	4	0
Norrköping	83	12
Malmö	142	20
Lund	10	0
Helsingborg	47	15
Gothenburg	56	15
Gävle	6	0

National Agency for Education, October 2001²⁹

Malmö

The majority of the Roma in Sweden live in Malmö in the southernmost part of the country. According to estimations made in January 2001 the group then amounted to be between 4,000 and 5,000. The two dominating groups of Roma living in Malmö have immigrated to Sweden either in the 1960s and 1970s from Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, or in the 1990's from former Yugoslavia.³⁰

142 children were in 2001 registered as being entitled to mother tongue education in Romani in Malmö. Only 20 pupils attended the education.³¹ The National Agency for Education estimates that this number should at least be doubled to show the correct number of Romani pupils. The majority of Roma lives in a suburb called Rosengård, one of the disadvantaged suburbs with in a socio-economic perspective a generally low standard among the residents. In Rosengård most of the Romani residents live due to both an involuntarily and voluntarily housing segregation in a smaller demarcated area.³² Half of the estimated 100 Roma pupils in the compulsory school in this area, Rosengårdsskolan, that probably has the largest amount of Romani pupils, have registered that they have Romani as a mother tongue. Only six of these participate on a regular basis in the mother tongue education. According to the coordinator of mother tongue tuition many of the Romani pupils register for the tuition but eventually do not appear at the lessons. Many measures have been taken to improve the situation but without positive effects.

At another school in the municipality of Malmö, in the area Southern inner-city with approximately 50 pupils of Romani origin, the main problem is the lacking attendance. There are many pupils that have total absence, in particular for girls in grades 7-9. In 2000 the social services initiated a project where

²⁸ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*

²⁹ These figures are based on estimations, which most probably imply that there are more children that are entitled to mother tongue education in the municipalities.

³⁰ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, pp. 41-42

³¹ See table provided by the National Agency for Education October 2001

³² Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, pp. 41-42

they employed a Romani pupil assistant. The result of the project was good and ten pupils with a high number of absent hours were almost totally attendant at the lessons and the school achievements among these ten pupils were also improved to a great extent.

No complete studies of the Romani pupils' situation regarding their absence in school have been carried out in Malmö. However, among the schools visited by the National Agency for Education, two schools estimated the absence rate to be nearly 50 per cent.³³ At Rosengårdskolan, approximately 20 per cent of the Roma pupils leave without being qualified for the national programs at upper secondary school level.

In 2002 the County Administrative Board in Malmö County together with Romani organisations carried out a conference for young Roma about the future and their thoughts of it. This conference is the only one of this kind that has been organised in Sweden. One of the results was a declaration made by the participants. The declaration was later handed over to the Children's Ombudsman. The declaration was containing the young Roma's thoughts on current issues, such as the increasing drug abuse in the group, the discrimination that the majority of Roma are subject to, the school and the future. Many of the statements about schooling regarded how important the youth thought it was, but also the negative behaviour of the majority society that the Romani pupils meet in the schools.

Here follow some examples of the thoughts from the young people that participated in the conference:³⁴

"The school knows to little about the Roma. There is poor knowledge about the Roma among the staff, but also among pupils, for example thematic weeks and in the teaching material. For example when they talk about Hitler they never mention the genocide of the Roma."

"The teachers are negative. Older teachers are not used to the Roma. Some teachers harass the pupils and call them "bloody gypsies", you do not get the right support from the teachers."

"Why should I get an education when I still do not get a job? I have no hope for the future! There are no role models."

"There is a need of Romani teachers in the school as role models, but also as mother tongue teachers! It is important with the mother tongue education in the school to maintain Romani."

Gothenburg

Gothenburg may be the second largest municipality with regard to the number of Romani residents in Sweden. The estimation of the Roma population amounts to more than 3,000 people.³⁵ Also in Gothenburg the majority of the Roma lives in the disadvantaged suburbs that also have a large population of immigrants. Many of the Roma in Gothenburg belong to the refugee groups from former Yugoslavia and have immigrated in the 1990s. In some of the parts of Gothenburg municipality activities have been initiated to improve the situation for Romani children. One of them is a project for the Roma in particular but that is a part of a greater project called the "International School". The project has been financed by grants from both the National Agency for Education and the main state measure to improve the situation for the residents in the disadvantaged areas in the Swedish major cities, the Metropolitan Initiative. In this project a special needs teacher – culture interpreter – is working to create and maintain the relations between the schools and the Romani parents. The special needs teacher is also responsible for the mother tongue education for the 27 Romani pupils enrolled in

³³ Sweden, National Agency for Education (1999), *Romer och den svenska skolan*

³⁴ Sweden, County Administrative Board in the County of Skåne (2002), *Deklaration från framtidsverkstaden för romer, den 11 november 2002, Malmö*

³⁵ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspråken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, pp. 53-54

this school at that time. This project has been very successful. The principal of this school states that the situation for the Romani children is not differing much from other immigrant children's situation in the school, therefore the school is focusing on all groups in the school and not on one group in particular.

Stockholm

In 1997 a number of 1,700 Roma was estimated to live in Stockholm. The estimation of Romani pupils in compulsory school thus was estimated to number 300 children. 67 per cent of these, 203 pupils, had then been registered to be entitled to mother tongue education in Romani. In 2001 the number of Romani pupils registered to the mother tongue education had decreased to 175, 115 of which attended the education.

In Stockholm the majority of the Roma live in two suburbs, where several measures have been initiated with regard to the schooling.³⁶ The most successful initiative has been carried out in Arsta and will be accounted for in the section on good practices. In Rinkeby, one of the disadvantaged residential areas in northern Stockholm, approximately 800 Roma lived in 2000. The work of the schools in this suburb also has been focused on the Romani pupils' high rates of absence from the schools.

In 1997 a questionnaire study called *Roma in school* was carried out to map out the situation with regard to Roma pupils' participation in the education system.³⁷ Since 1997 no similar studies have been carried out. According to Lena Loiske, the department of Integration at the City of Stockholm Municipality, there are no current plans at present to make a follow up as there is no need.³⁸ The department of Integration has decided to focus their activities on concrete measures to improve the situation for the Romani pupils in the schools in the municipality. However, Ms Loiske states in the interview that the situation has not improved in 2004.

315 pupils on different levels, mainly in the compulsory school, were included in the 1997 study (three pupils were in the upper secondary school), and 67 schools in the municipality of Stockholm participated.³⁹ The study was a follow up from 1990. The report shows very high rates of absence, almost 40 per cent among the Romani pupils in the schools in Stockholm, the situation had not either been improved since the 1990 study.⁴⁰

At junior level, grades 1-3, eleven per cent of the Romani pupils had an absence corresponding to the average rate of absence regarding all pupils at junior level, which was five per cent. The median of the Romani pupils' absence was more than 15 per cent. A fifth of the pupils had an absence rate that was more than 40 per cent.

At intermediate level, grades 4-6, 15 per cent of the Romani pupils of the pupils had a rate that was corresponding to the average on six percent for all pupils. The median rate for the Roma pupils was 19 per cent absence, while also for the Romani pupils at intermediate level a fifth had an absence that was more than 40 per cent of the time.

Among the Romani senior compulsory school pupils, grade 7-9, the rates of absence were higher than for the pupils at the lower levels. Approximately 15 per cent of the Romani pupils had an absence

³⁶ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspråken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*

³⁷ Sweden, City of Stockholm municipality, Zigenarkonsulterna (1998), *Romska elever. Hur gar det för dem i skolan?*

³⁸ Interview with Lena Loiske, City of Stockholm Municipality, in October 2004.

³⁹ Since there is no registration on ethnic belonging in schools, this study include only pupils who the teachers know are of Roma origin.

⁴⁰ Sweden, City of Stockholm municipality, Zigenarkonsulterna (1998) *Romska elever. Hur gar det för dem i skolan?*, pp. 14-19

corresponding to the average rate of absence, which was seven per cent. The median was 28 per cent absence from school hours. A third of the Romani pupils at this level had an absence on 40 per cent of the time.

At all levels the girls had a lower absence rate than the boys had. The difference was the greatest at senior level of compulsory school. The rates on absence have a great distribution within the group.

Lund

In the 2001 the survey the National Agency for Education also included five smaller cities. The situation in these cities differs to a great extent from the marginalisation that the Roma are subject to in the larger cities. In the municipality of Lund, approximately 100 Roma live. The majority are from the Czech Republic or Yugoslavia and they mainly live in the same residential area. According to the National Agency for Education the Romani pupils are the most successful in a national perspective.⁴¹ A number of Romani pupils have continued their studies at upper secondary school level. Several girls have completed their compulsory school education with good grades, and continued studying at the upper secondary school level on national programs (compared to the individual programs that many that are not qualified for the national programs choose), they have however not completed their studies, due to marriages or child births. The main factor for the success in Lund municipality is the leisure-time centre Romano Trajo that was established in the beginning of the 1990s. Romano Trajo will be described more detailed in the good practice section in the report. In Lund the Romani pupils have had no mother tongue education. The schools and municipalities have been criticised by the staff at Romano Trajo for not initiating this. The person in charge of the mother tongue education at the municipality said in an interview that the municipality could not do anything as long as there was no Romani staff with the right qualifications and also that there was no Roma staff with the right attitude to the Swedish education system.⁴² In October 2001 however, according to the statistics from National Agency for Education, 83 pupils were entitled to the education and twelve participated in the then existing mother tongue training.

Norrköping

Norrköping is another one of the cities included in the 2001 survey carried out by the National Agency for Education.⁴³ The authority then estimated the number of the Roma in this city to amount to 200 families. Many of these were refugees from former Yugoslavia, mainly from Bosnia and Serbia.

The school authority states in the report, that this municipality has many years of experience of working with the Romani and the Traveller population living there. In 1998 the municipality started a project for the Romani pupils entitled "*With Roma for Roma – in a school for everyone*". The goals of the project were for the schools to improve the situation and make it easier in the daily work for the schools with many Romani pupils. With regard to the pupils, one of the goals was to within the school activities offer them help with the home work. Another goal was to improve the integration of the pupils in the ordinary school activities, and to establish good contacts between the homes and the schools, to eventually help the Romani youth to get a better basis with regard to their future working life. The municipality employed teacher assistants with Romani origin in the schools that needed it. In April 2000 the project was evaluated with a positive result, among others that the pupils' attendance had increased, but also that the contacts between the homes and schools had to a great extent improved.

⁴¹ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, pp. 44-45

⁴² Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, p. 44

⁴³ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, pp. 45-46

Uppsala

In Uppsala, 80 km north of Stockholm, the Roma population is estimated 200 people.⁴⁴ The majority of the Roma belong to the Swedish, Finnish and Polish groups. In Uppsala since 1992 the social services have carried out a project for the Roma. In the beginning the project was time-limited but after being evaluated it was made permanent. The primary aim was initially to improve the Romani children's school situation. The major focus in this project is on the collective, which imply that within this project there is a focus of the particular needs of the group and not at individual's specific problems. The most important part of these activities is for the responsible people to work as a bridge between the Romani families and the authorities, such as the school.

When the project was initiated one out of 30 pupils regularly went to school. According to the National Agency for Education the situation has changed to the opposite. Some pupils have also continued their studies at the secondary school level. The responsible for the project believes that if the work would end the pupils would stop going to the school.

In Uppsala only four pupils are registered to the mother tongue education, but none of them participate.⁴⁵ However, there are activities in Romani run for Romani children outside the school time-table.

Helsingborg

In Helsingborg, in southern Sweden approximately 500 Roma live.⁴⁶ In the school the number of Romani pupils is estimated to be 80. Many Roma families have moved to Helsingborg in the last years, mainly because of a Pentecostal church in which many Roma are active.

In Helsingborg the municipality earlier has employed a Roma consultant of Romani origin, working as a link between the municipality, the school and the Roma. This post was eventually abolished with the motivation that the post of a general Roma consultant was not in line with what the municipality should focus on, despite the municipality's declaration on an awareness of the consequences of the decision of the national minority language policy. Another post was established and the consultant is still working for the Roma.

The majority of the Romani pupils, approximately 90 children, go to one school. A contributing factor to this is the presence of a special needs teacher, who for six years has been successfully working there. Therefore many parents choose to send their children to this specific school. The special needs teacher is not of Romani origin, although he has Romani family connections. He has a university education and a permanent post. He thus serves as a role model for the children as well as having very good connections with all the Roma living in Helsingborg. The concrete result of the work of the special needs teacher is that the attendance among the children has increased and also that some pupils continue their studies after completed compulsory school education.

In 1999 the municipality started an adult education for the Roma living there. Since the start the number of participants has increased from ten to thirty. The education has proven to be successful and in 2001 three of the pupils continued to study at the upper secondary school level.

⁴⁴ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, pp. 52-53

⁴⁵ Statistics provided by the National Agency for Education October 2001

⁴⁶ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, pp. 49-50

Gävle

In Gävle only approximately 25 Romani families live. The majority is from Finland and has lived in Sweden for twenty years.⁴⁷ The general level of education among the adults is very low. On the other hand the majority of the Romani pupils have very low absence in compulsory school. The municipality has carried out several specific projects aimed at the Roma.

There is an adult education project carried out in the municipality. This project is described further in the good practice section.

Discrimination

Centuries of discrimination has made the Romani group one of the most vulnerable groups in the Swedish society. In its second report on Sweden the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, ECRI, brings up the vulnerability of the group and the fact that the Romani population in Sweden still to a high extent are marginalised. The report in particular brings up how the young Roma encounter discrimination in the schools.⁴⁸ Although, according to the report, there has been an improvement, the situation for this group of pupils is still poor, with high drop out rates, high absence and very few Romani pupils continuing their studies at higher levels, such as at upper secondary school level or higher levels in the education system.

In the past years the school authorities have become aware of the discrimination that many Roma have been and still are subject to in the schools. This discrimination is manifested in prejudice and negative attitudes from the school staff and also other pupils. The school authorities have also started to realize that this discrimination is one of the underlying factors for the high absence and the high drop out rates among Roma pupils and their parents' suspicion towards the school as an institution.⁴⁹

The invisibility of the Romani children

The discrimination of the Roma can be seen from several perspectives. According to Ulla Lindström, at the Antidiscrimination Centre for the Roma in Stockholm, one of the major discriminatory aspects in the Swedish schools is the Romani pupils feeling of being invisible. This partly has to do with the fact that the schools do not offer anything where the Romani pupils can find themselves in. Still, despite the new national minority policy, there is not much on the Roma in the general teaching material or in other parts of the education for all pupils. Although, it must be stressed that recently teaching material with regard to the mother tongue education in Romani have been of major priority.

Another discriminatory factor is the problematizing of Romani pupils.⁵⁰ Many of the teachers often see the Romani children as a cultural problem and many assume that Romani pupils are guilty of all the "trouble" in the schools. This is often manifested in the pointing out of the Romani children as scapegoats if something happens at the school and a Romani child is involved. Swedish children often get their prejudices from their homes on how the Roma are and this also affects their behaviour towards the Romani pupils. All these aspects imply that many Romani children do not feel that they are seen and do not feel at home in the schools. Also the residential segregation is an indirect discriminating factor, where the Roma always are on the lowest level in society.

⁴⁷ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, pp. 51-52

⁴⁸ ECRI (2003), *Andra rapporten om Sverige, Antagen den 28 juni 2002*, p. 20

⁴⁹ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*

⁵⁰ This part is based on an interview with Ulla Lindström, Roma International and Roma Anti-discrimination bureau. The interview took place in Stockholm October 2004.

According to an annual report regarding 2002 from the Antidiscrimination Centre Roma, many schools pay no attention to the responsibilities that they are obliged to carry out in regard to the Romani pupils.⁵¹ The schools claim a lack of resources that they need to be able to deal with the Romani problems or that they have no knowledge about the Romani issues. Many parents express in their contact with the Antidiscrimination centre Roma their worries and dissatisfaction over the school's lack of interest to treat the Romani pupils as they treat the other pupils. An example of this is when a Romani is subject to ethnic discrimination or harassments, then the schools' responsibilities seem to be lacking. The report from the antidiscrimination centre also brings up other examples of the schools discriminating behaviour towards the Romani pupils, when for instance some schools choose to put healthy/sound pupils in special needs classes with mentally disabled and other disabled children. The parents experience this as discriminating and a violation, and the schools refer to their lack of knowledge and resources and in their view that the Romani pupils have not the qualifications that are needed to participate in the class and are thus obstructing the teaching.

A report from Save the Children in 1998 concludes that the meeting between the Romani pupil and the school is taking place on conditions formulated by the majority society and also the tendency of trying to assimilate the Romani pupils.⁵² The meeting can also create frustration and anger when the Romani children are met with discriminatory behaviour and attitudes towards its own group. This may lead to an identity crisis for the Romani child, especially when the majority society's behaviour is so different from the pride over the origin that the Romani children are brought up with, the pride which is such a central component in the socialisation process in the Romani families. According to the report by Save the Children this frustration may lead among other things to disturbing the classes. These difficulties for the Romani children may also imply that their parents develop different kinds of defence mechanisms. One of them may be that the parents minimize the importance of the children's schooling, which eventually leads to the high absence and drop out rates.

Mapping of ethnic discrimination against the Roma

In 2004 the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination, DO, concluded its two year long governmental assignment to map out the situation for the Roma in Sweden with regard to ethnic discrimination.⁵³ The report describes a brutal reality and maps out the majority society's discriminatory behaviour towards the Roma. This behaviour is deeply rooted in the structures of society and is working exclusory on all levels and all areas of society.

Many methods have been used in the work with the assignment. It has been of major importance to create a confidential relationship between the Roma and the authorities. To create this mutual relationship the DO has worked together with several Romani organisations, but also with the Integration Board and the National Agency for School Improvement, the school authority that now is responsible for issues with regard to education and national minorities.

The DO has also mapped out the incoming reports on ethnic discrimination made by people of Romani origin. The hidden number of ethnic discrimination against Roma is very large. Between 1986 and 2002 the authority only had received about 50 complaints from people of Romani origin. The majority of the incoming complaints from people of Romani origin regard the housing market, admission to public institutions and received treatment in contact with the authorities. Just a few of the incoming complaints regard ethnic discrimination in connection to education or to the labour market. This does not imply that it does not exist, on the contrary, but these areas are the two where the Roma living in Sweden have the least access to.

⁵¹ The information has been provided by the chairman, Allan Schwartz, of the Antidiscrimination Centre Roma.

⁵² Rodell Olgac, C. (1998), *Vi är rädda att förlora vara barn*. Stockholm: Save the Children, p. 23

⁵³ Sweden, Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (2004), *Diskriminering av romer i Sverige*

Regarding the Swedish education system the DO report brings up the issue of the lack of education in compulsory school about the Roma, their history and culture, which according to the policy from 1999 on the official national minorities was introduced as one of the goals.⁵⁴ According to the report many Roma often experience that the schools do not contribute to strengthen the children's ethnic identity and also that there is a very weak protection in the schools against discrimination.

With regard to the school authorities' and municipalities' difficulty to map out how many pupils that have Romani origin, a questionnaire based survey in connection to the DO study show that 50 percent of the participants in the survey had chosen not to convey their origin in school. The report describes how the Romani pupils' high absence rates in the schools have been explained by the authorities with a starting point in the Roma's cultural behaviour. However, this is slowly changing and from the authorities there is a stronger focus on the Romani people's rights to education as well as the obstructing ethnic discrimination that many Roma are subject to in connection to their schooling.

The DO states that the office has received very few complaints with regard to the education system, only four since the establishment of the body. In 2003 the office received a complaint that criticised the education provider of courses particularly designed for Romani participants.⁵⁵ These courses that some approve of and others disapprove of were reported because of its lack of quality. In this case it was characterised as a "short cut", which means that the course lies outside the ordinary education system and the qualifications normally needed are not required here.⁵⁶ In addition, three complaints have been filed regarding compulsory school. These complaints regard discriminatory statements from teacher's, pupils and parents on the Romani pupils' origin.

Parts of the projects have focused on strengthening the Roma's own possibilities with regard to the work with issues such as discrimination and human rights. Also the participants in the project have worked on highlighting the need on knowledge that is lacking both in the majority society and among the Roma themselves about Roma's life conditions. Priorities in the project have been made on information activities on the antidiscrimination legislation, as well as the role and the work of the DO.

The result of the questionnaire study showed that the Roma to a great extent are subject to discriminatory behaviour, in spite of the low number of incoming complaints. 90 per cent of the participants believe that Sweden to some extent or to a major extent is a racist country. The same percentage of respondents state that they believe that Sweden to some or to a high extent is hostile towards Roma. Many express that they do not feel that they participate or are accepted in society. The survey also reveals that many are subject to harassment and have been insulted because of their Roma origin.

The declaration made by Roma youth in 2002 from Malmö also reveals the high extent of discrimination.⁵⁷ The ethnic discrimination against the Roma made by people from the majority society increase the Romani people's feelings of being unsafe in the Swedish society and their feelings of not being respected and for instance by being supervised when they are in public premises. One of the statements by the youth regarded the disbelief on the DO's possibilities to prosecute in cases of discrimination.

*"Who is the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination DO?? It is no use reporting on ethnic discrimination (in the end one gets immune). No one listens"*⁵⁸.

⁵⁴ Sweden, Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (2004), *Diskriminering av romer i Sverige*, p. 27

⁵⁵ A similar course is described more in detail in the part on good practices.

⁵⁶ Sweden, Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (2004), *Diskriminering av romer i Sverige*, p. 27

⁵⁷ Sweden, County Administrative Board in the County of Skane (2002), *Deklaration fran framtidsverkstaden för romer, den 11 november 2002, Malmö*

⁵⁸ Sweden, County Administrative Board in the County of Skane (2002), *Deklaration fran framtidsverkstaden för romer, den 11 november 2002, Malmö*

The liability of schools for violations of the integrity of students

As stated above there has not been specific protection in the Swedish education system, in the compulsory school and the upper secondary school, against discrimination or harassment because of ethnicity or religious faith or belief. In recent years there has been a discussion on the importance of introducing the same protection against discrimination and harassment that corresponds with the antidiscrimination legislation Sweden has with regard to nearly all other parts of society, e.g. the labour market and higher education. In the beginning of 2004, a government investigation presented a proposal on a new law protecting pupils in compulsory school, upper secondary school and adult education against discrimination and harassments because of ethnicity, religion or belief. The report of this government investigation, entitled *The liability of schools for violations of the integrity of students*⁵⁹, proposes that the municipalities or other institutions that run schooling activities will become liable for damages related to discrimination in schools due to gender, ethnicity, religion or other belief, sexual orientation or disability. The new law is proposed to come into force at January 1st 2005.

Good practices

There are a number of good practices with regards to the Romani situation. They have been carried out at several levels in society. Some can exemplify the work at a central level, e.g. the Council on Romani issues, with the aim to bring issues of the Roma's situation in society to a governmental level. Other activities are more focused on education and improving the situation for the Romani children in the schools. These measures are usually carried out at a municipal level and mainly regard employing people of Romani origin as resources in the schools with many Roma pupils, or having particular Romani classes where children mainly of Romani origin go.

The majority of people of both Romani and non-Romani origin working with educational and integration activities stress the importance of having Romani adults as both being a role model for them, but also as a support person in the schools.⁶⁰

There is a focus on providing education for adults, which also has shown to have effects for the younger Roma's achievements in school. Many activities to produce teaching material in the dialectal variations have also been carried out.

Central in many activities is to include the Roma themselves, which may be seen as a rather new and very important step to involve a people that for such a long time historically have been excluded from nearly all areas of society. In this context it is also important to mention that many of the most successful initiatives have been developed and put into practice by people in the Romani group.

The initiatives have been criticised for only taking place on a superficial level. The initiatives only look good at a distance, but they do not actually achieve anything on the structural level of society.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Sweden Ministry of Education and Science (2004), *SOU 2004:50. Skolans ansvar för kränkningar av elever*

⁶⁰ See e.g. Sweden, City of Stockholm municipality, Integrationsavdelningen (2004), *PM ang särskild vuxenutbildning för romer i Stockholms stad 1998-2003*

⁶¹ Interview with Ulla Lindström in October 2004

The Council for Romani Issues

In October 2002 the Swedish Government established the Council for Romani issues with the aim to work as an advisory body for the government. The council is consisting of representatives from the major Romani organisations and the chairman has until recently been the Minister of Integration and democracy Ms Mona Sahlin. The council for Romani issues is also cooperating with the National Agency for School Improvement on issues regarding education.⁶² The government has also initiated a work group consisting of Romani women and representatives from the Government offices. The aim of the work group is to strengthen the situation of the Romani women and increase their participation in society.⁶³ In 2005 the government is planning to initiate particular activities aiming at Romani youth.⁶⁴

The work of the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination

In 2001 the Swedish Government decided to commission the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination to specifically work with the issue on discrimination against the Roma living in Sweden. A two year long project was completed in the beginning of 2004 and resulted in a report.⁶⁵ The aim of the governmental assignment was to illuminate and to map out the extent of the ethnic discrimination or other kinds of violating behaviour towards the Roma. DO should also develop methods and strategies to counteract and prevent ethnic discrimination against the Roma and also increase knowledge on the antidiscrimination legislation among the Roma. The project also involved a Romani reference group consisting of 18 people and a Romani work group with seven participants.⁶⁶

Nytorpsskolan

One of the most internationally known and acknowledged Swedish activities aiming at improving the schooling of Romani pupils is the project that for ten years have been carried out in Nytorpsskolan outside Stockholm.⁶⁷ In this school the Romani pupils since 1994 have had a specific teaching group entitled the Roma class. This project was initiated by the Roma, which is an exception, as most similar projects aimed at organising particular classes or schools for the Romani pupils have been initiated by others, for instance by the municipalities.⁶⁸ Two mother tongue teachers have been mainly responsible for the class. In 2001 the class consisted of 19 pupils, which is about half of the number of all Romani pupils in Nytorpsskolan. The majority of the pupils in this class are in grades 7-9, although the class consists of pupils in all age groups.

Initially the class was meant to function as a resource for certain hours. The hours were increased though because of problems with the attendance.⁶⁹ Another problem was that the pupils in the Roma class had either fallen behind to the extent that they could not participate in their original classes or did of other reasons not attend the ordinary school activities.

⁶² Sweden, National Agency for School Improvement (2004), *Romer i Sverige – Tillsammans i förändring*, p.8

⁶³ Sweden, Ministry of Justice (2003), *Fact sheet Ju 03.10*, June 2003

⁶⁴ Sweden, Ministry of Justice (2004), *Fact sheet. Budgetpropositionen 2005. Minoritetspolitik*

⁶⁵ Parts of the report is presented in the section on discrimination.

⁶⁶ Sweden, Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (2004), *Diskriminering av romer i Sverige*, p. 6

⁶⁷ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, p. 47

⁶⁸ Sweden, National Agency for Education (1999), *Romer och den svenska skolan*, p. 11

⁶⁹ Sweden, National Agency for Education (1999), *Romer och den svenska skolan*, p. 11

The education in this class was particularly focused on the core subjects (Swedish, English and Maths), although it followed a reduced course of studies. The education has also been adjusted to the Romani culture, which is of major importance for the cultural identity and the development of the mother tongue. The result has been good, the pupils' attendance at the lessons has improved and the teaching has been working well according to the decided goals.⁷⁰ However, according to the National Agency of Education, none of the older pupils will leave compulsory school qualified for the national programs at the upper secondary school level.

This project has participated in many EU projects and have through these made contact with others involved in education for Roma and Travellers in Europe. This is the most successful project with regard to establishing particular classes for Romani pupils. Similar but not as successful projects have been carried out in other areas of Stockholm and in Malmö. These kinds of projects also are controversial as they to a certain extent are segregating and not integrating the pupils into the ordinary school activities.

Romano Trajo

Lund is probably the municipality that has been most successful in improving the schooling for Romani pupils in Sweden, as the Romani pupils there show the best school achievements. According to the National Agency for Education this to a great extent is because of the leisure-time centre Romano Trajo.⁷¹ This leisure-time centre was established in the early 1990's in an area where many Roma live. In the beginning the leisure time centre was thought to support only the Romani pupils and a place where the pupils could participate in recreational activities and also get support with the school work. Later on Romano Trajo was opened also for other children with non-Romani background. The staff which consisted of one Romani person and one youth recreation leader, also helped the schools with the contacts with the families. Another positive aspect is that the staff can work flexibly as Romano Trajo is an independent body, and not directly dependant on the school and the social services.

Roma in School / Teacher assistant training

The results of the project Roma in School carried out in 1997 showed very high rates of absence among the Romani pupils in the City of Stockholm municipality.⁷² The investigators of this survey saw the strong connection between the Romani pupils' poor schooling and the integration of the Roma in general. In addition the survey showed that very few of the Romani pupils participated in the mother tongue tuition, which has been proved by research to be of major importance in relation to good school achievements. Therefore the investigators proposed that the schools should educate and employ Romani staff. This was realized in 2000, when two Romani project leaders were employed to offer support to the local work with the schooling of the Romani pupils in the City of Stockholm municipality. A Romani reference group was also established in connection to the project.⁷³

In 2001 a plan on how to carry out this project had been developed, based on a discussion with 17 compulsory schools in the municipality. These schools were to employ Romani teacher assistants, who for two years were to be educated twice a week at a folk high school. The schools' employment of the teacher assistants was partly to be financed by state grants while the education would be paid by grants

⁷⁰ Sweden, National Agency for Education (1999), *Romer och den svenska skolan*, p. 11

⁷¹ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och pa de nationella minoritetsspraken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, p. 44

⁷² See the chapter on the Roma in school.

⁷³ Sweden, City of Stockholm municipality, Integrationsförvaltningen (2004), *Projektet Romer i skolan*

from the municipality. 57 applied to the course, of these 27 finally passed the test. In the same year it appeared that only one of these 17 schools that had participated in the initiating discussions thought that they would be able to afford to employ the teacher assistants. Another problem was that the course contained too much practice to entitle study grants. The course then was shortened with one year in order to make the participants entitled to the study allowances. This still led the quitting of twelve of the 27 participants. Many were also disappointed over the behaviour of the schools.

In January 2002 the remaining fifteen participants started the course. The five with the best basic education were placed in a specific group where they studied psychology, pedagogy and methodology. The ten other participants were in the school for three weeks and one week per month on teacher assisting practice. The participants were satisfied with the course and had high hopes for the future. Among the difficulties were that many of the pupils had a background of an incomplete schooling. This implied that many of the pupils needed repetition in the core subjects. The participants were also worried about not being supportive enough for the pupils at their work places. The participants felt that they had difficulties to grasp the psychology, pedagogy and the methodology, mainly due to the limited practice. The majority of the schools were satisfied with the participants' work in the schools, but also noted their lack of theory.

In December 2002 the participants who initially had best basic education graduated. Five of these were employed in the schools. In December 2003 the eight remaining participants graduated, two of these have been employed, five are unemployed, and one is planning to apply to the Teacher's College.

Among the positive results is the fact that the project has led to a stronger focus on the issue of the Romani pupils' schooling. The schools also report on the positive effects of having Romani teacher assistants, among other things since it affects the Romani pupils' participation. The project has also attracted much attention by Romani media.⁷⁴

The evaluation of the project states that it is of major importance for the outcome of such a project that there are Romani people involved in the project in all steps, from the beginning when the project is planned, during the carrying out phase as project leaders and in reference groups and work groups.⁷⁵

Critics of this type of education particularly designed for the Roma argue that it is a "short cut", as it does not require as much qualifications as ordinary educations do. Others want to have ordinary jobs and not be discriminated against by being sent to particular designed courses for Romani people.⁷⁶ The critics filed in 2003 a complaint on ethnic discrimination to the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination. Allan Schwartz, chairman for Roma International and the Anti-discrimination Centre Roma, criticised it in particular since the participants were promised employments, which was eventually not fulfilled by the municipalities.

"Complaint directed towards the Romani education provider"

The anti-discrimination centre in Skelleftea is strongly criticizing the so called educational activities that are offered and aimed at our young Roma. We are very worried about the development of how easily the authorities in responsible try to solve the Romani educational issue. We believe that these so called short cut alternatives are only distorting and misleading the young Roma, who thirst for knowledge, in their views on studies and education. Thus, our, the Roma's, view of the ordinary educational model is distorted and deprived, the view and the procedure on how to correctly get knowledge. By misleadingly offering and overrating this so called emergency alternative or short cut education and qualification improving

⁷⁴ E.g. Swedish Radio International has a Romani editorial staff that broadcasts twice a week on Romani Chib.

⁷⁵ Sweden, City of Stockholm municipality, Integrationsförvaltningen (2004), *Projektet Romer i skolan*

⁷⁶ Sweden, County Administration Board in Skane County (2002), *Deklaration från framtidsverkstaden för romer, den 11 november 2002, Malmö*

*measures, that are directly aimed at the Roma and the Romani youth, our learning ability is depreciated and we are excluded from the public colleges. Consciously or unconsciously the responsible providers are discriminating us Roma, as if we were not enough qualified or capable of studying as the other citizens of society are, i.e. to study in ordinary schools where you start at the elementary level and finish with an approved vocational training.*⁷⁷

However others believe that these types of specially designed educations with incorporated practice are the only way to decrease the knowledge and marginalising gaps between the majority society and the Roma. Therefore these measures are the only way to break the major factors of marginalisation, such as unemployment.⁷⁸

In the autumn 2004 the integration department of the City of Stockholm municipality is planning to start a new teacher assistant education for fifteen people. The education will be prolonged with one year. The first year will be focused on theoretical studies and the second year will be focused mainly on teacher assisting practice, as the time for practice in the former project was evaluated to be too short.

The municipality of Stockholm is also planning to start a similar two year long education for Romani youth recreational leaders and child minders. The aim of the education of Romani youth recreational leaders is to educate the Roma that are today working in Romani associations with the aim of rescuing their youth from the increasing drug abuse, which has become a major problem in the Romani group.

Adult education

Adult education of the parents has also proved to be a good measure to improve the younger Roma's schooling, as it is not only implying that the whole families have the same routines but also that the attitudes towards education in general are changing within the family.⁷⁹

In 1998 educational activities aimed at adult Roma were initiated in Gävle, a city north of Stockholm. The project was initiated by the Roma themselves and was organised by Komvux (municipal adult education). During its existence the project had approximately twenty participants.⁸⁰ The ages of the participants vary between 16 and 55 years of age. The majority of the participants have very low educational qualifications. The primary goal with the project is to motivate the participants for further education, primarily on educations at compulsory school level provided by Komvux, secondly to eventually get the opportunity to study at upper secondary school level. Another perhaps secondary goal is that by being educated the adults as parents can become role models for their children with regard to their school achievements. The education is to a great extent carried out in Finnish. The participants also are educated in Romani, and the responsible teacher is trying to make the parents value the maintenance of the mother tongue.

One of the main problems has been how the participants would be financed during the course. The participants were entitled to study allowance as the education had been organised by Komvux, but neither participants nor the staff thought it was a good idea to have to be indebted for an education at this level.

⁷⁷ Complaint filed at the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination 2003-05-29

⁷⁸ Interview with Ulla Lindström Anti Discrimination Centre Roma, Stockholm branch.

⁷⁹ Interview with Ulla Lindström Anti Discrimination Centre, Stockholm branch.

⁸⁰ Sweden, National Agency for Education (2001), *Undervisning i och på de nationella minoritetsspråken – kartläggning av situationen 2001*, p. 52

Romani Cultural Centre in Stockholm

In 2002 a Romani Cultural Centre was established in Stockholm. The activities are run by an association with the same name consisting of representatives from the five main Roma groups and in cooperation with different departments of the City of Stockholm municipality. The aim of the cultural centre is to create a place for the Romani culture, language and history.⁸¹

The activities of the centre are both aimed at Roma and non-Roma people and will offer cultural and information activities, access to an archive, library and study activities. In the beginning of the planning, some desired that the centre could provide educations on compulsory and upper secondary school level, as most Roma are very aware of the fact that very few in their own group have a completed education. This was also illuminated when the people responsible for the centre were searching for qualified Romani people that they could employ for the activities on for instance establishing and maintaining an archive and lead pedagogic activities.

The centre has together with a folk high school developed a model for compulsory and upper secondary school education focused on the core subjects and specific Romani issues.⁸² The centre applied at the municipality for grants to such an education for a first time, but the application was rejected, as the municipality believed there was no need for an education like this. However, the centre is planning on applying for a second time, since they see the need of a specific adult education for the Roma as a complement to the ordinary adult education (Komvux). The centre is also the responsible body for the planning of establishing a Romani Language committee in Sweden.⁸³

The web dictionary Lexin and teaching material in Romani Chib

In recent years the lack of teaching material on Romani has been highlighted. Therefore many projects focus on producing material, mainly because there is also a strong focus by the authorities to maintain and develop the minority languages. Another reason is the lack of written material on Romani, since the written tradition is very weak but also as the oral tradition still is very strong. Neither are there any dictionaries on Romani in Sweden.⁸⁴ Therefore the National Agency for School Improvement has initiated the work with developing a web based Romani dictionary in connection with Lexin.

Lexin is financed by state grants. It is a project for developing bilingual dictionaries mainly for immigrants learning Swedish. However, it is also aiming at developing and maintaining skills in different mother tongues. The word base is on Swedish and is at present containing approximately 30 000 headwords. The work with a Romani based part in Lexin is at present focused on the dialectal variations of Romani, as Arli, Kelderash and Lovara, but the plan is to develop these bilingual web dictionaries on all dialects.

The translation is carried out together with experts from both Sweden and outside of Sweden. The work with Lexin has attained international attention and has been presented at national and international conferences.

⁸¹ Sweden, City of Stockholm municipality, Integrationsförvaltningen (2004), *PM ang särskild vuxenutbildning för romer i Stockholms stad 1998-2003*, p.5

⁸² Sweden, City of Stockholm municipality, Integrationsförvaltningen (2004), *PM ang särskild vuxenutbildning för romer i Stockholms stad 1998-2003*, p.5

⁸³ Sweden, National Agency for School Improvement (2004), *Romer i Sverige – Tillsammans i förändring*, pp. 2-3

⁸⁴ Sweden, National Agency for School Improvement (2004), *Romer i Sverige – Tillsammans i förändring*

The Roma have themselves initiated the majority of the production of teaching material in the different dialectal variations of Romani.⁸⁵ The ambition according to the National Agency for School Improvement is that everyone with practical ideas about teaching material will get guidance on how to develop the ideas. The school authorities find this work method successful, both as the production has a starting point in the interest of the group, but also as it may be a good method in gaining experience in how to analyse the needs of education, plan the work of development, work with the text production and how to organise the work.

Between 1996 and 2004 fourteen publications of teaching material in several dialects of Romani has been produced. Among the publications are traditional textbooks and books with a more culturally specific content, for instance on Romani history, fairy tails, songs and poems. In 2003 a TV series about Romani youth was produced. It is called *Kamlimos – Love* and was broadcasted in Malmö in 2003. Three children's books have also been published and are distributed for free for Romani children. In 2004 and 2005 three other publications of teaching material are under development. One of them is the book entitled *A first reading book in Swedish Romani*, in the dialectal variation of Romani spoken by the Travellers.

The majority of the produced teaching materials are in the dialects, Arli, Kelderash and Lovara. The production of the material is mainly financed by grants from the National Agency for School Improvement, but literature may also be financed by grants from the National Council for Cultural Affairs.⁸⁶

Since 2001 there is a web meeting place, *Tema Modersmal*, for mother tongue tuition.⁸⁷ The target group is mainly teachers responsible for education in different languages but also the pupils and their parents. This website carries information on the regulations on mother tongue education, links to syllabus, current information on courses and teaching material, and also material on the mother tongue in other countries. At present a web site in Romani is under development.

Teachers college for Romani students

The National Agency together with Malmö College University is planning to initiate a two year long higher education designed for Romani students wanting to become teachers.⁸⁸ The aim is to start the education when there are Romani students who have the basic qualifications to be entitled to study at the level of higher studies. The education will lead to a Diploma.

The Antidiscrimination Centre Roma

Several local antidiscrimination offices have been established in the major cities in Sweden.⁸⁹ Antidiscrimination Centre Roma is the only one aimed at the Roma group in particular. The centre was established by Roma and is run by Roma. The centre's board consists of a mixed group of Roma. The centre was established because there was a demand and a need in the group. The major aims of their work are to inform and lecture on the Roma and on the prejudices directed towards them, inform on the new antidiscrimination regulations, and how to increase the tolerance between people. Activities are aimed at both Roma and non-Roma people, but their priority is on cases on ethnic discrimination against the Roma and also to inform Roma about their rights. Many reports they receive at the centre regard ethnic discrimination or harassment in the schools. They also lecture in the schools.

⁸⁵ Sweden, National Agency for School Improvement (2004), *Romer i Sverige – Tillsammans i förändring*

⁸⁶ Sweden, National Agency for School Improvement (2004), *Romer i Sverige – Tillsammans i förändring*, p.3

⁸⁷ Sweden, National Agency for School Improvement (2004), *Romer i Sverige – Tillsammans i förändring*, p.8

⁸⁸ Sweden, National Agency for School Improvement (2004), *Romer i Sverige – Tillsammans i förändring*, p.7

⁸⁹ Based on information material provided by the Antidiscrimination Centre Roma.

Concluding comments

It is very difficult to briefly comment on the situation for the Romani pupils in the Swedish schools. The image presented in this report is much diversified. The situation has improved to a great extent mainly because of the attention by governmental bodies on this group, but also since the focus has changed dramatically only in a couple of years. The measures that are now initiated are more characterised by having a starting point in the specific needs expressed, the needs that the Romani people themselves have formulated. Previously the needs were formulated by the majority society, in particular the authorities that were in contact with the Roma, e.g. school authorities. These initiatives have proven to fail. Therefore new methods had to be developed.

Still, the true picture of the situation in the schools for the Romani pupils is miserable and most sources show that not much have happened. Still many Romani pupils leave school without completed compulsory school education. The proposals on how improving the situation for Roma pupils have been formulated the same way for more than thirty years, but yet the situation for the pupils in that respect is similar today compared to in the 1970's.

There are many positive aspects though. The cooperation between the majority society and the Roma is to a great extent improved, at least on a central and national level. Most parents want their children to go to school and most children want education. The Romani group is however a much stigmatised group and their status in the Swedish society very low.

The involvement among the Roma have also increased, they have realised that there are many aspects of the marginalisation that they have to deal with themselves. In summary one may say that the most successful initiatives have been initiated by the Roma themselves.

The discriminatory mechanisms in the structure of the Swedish society are striking hard against the Roma. Most Roma have been subject to some form of ethnic discrimination. However, the hidden statistics are very large, many do not file a complaint as they mistrust the legal capacity to proceed with the case, as they are used to that no one cares about their situation.

The situation may also have improved due to the increased ethnic diversity in society. This has also led to an increased residential segregation which is most visible in the major cities. The residential segregation has a strong ethnic dimension, as many of the newly immigrated people move to these areas. The Roma are affected by this, as they are one of the groups that live in these areas, very often characterised by socio-economic poverty, something to a high extent also regard the Romani people in Sweden. The access to education and employment has also proved to be limited in these areas. The situation for the Roma living in the major cities does not seem as good as for the Roma living in smaller cities.

Another aspect that has to be emphasized is that the Roma included in the report mainly belong to the visible groups, they are thus more subject to marginalisation and stigmatisation, which excludes them from society.

However, the diversity has positive effects. It may be one of the reasons for the increased attention of the Roma as one of Sweden's national minorities. Also with regard to the immigration and integration policies it may be said that this also have improved the situation for the Roma. Regarding education, the maintaining and development of the mother tongue skills is something that has become very central in both the integration and the minority policy, as the mother tongue is seen as the most central component and also it is proved by research that a good knowledge in the mother tongue is a good base in regard of the learning ability with regard to Swedish.

The situation for the Romani pupils wishing to attend to mother tongue education is ambiguous. First, there is a strong focus from majority society that this education has to be provided, although the

promised education cannot be provided as there are not enough qualified teachers in the Romani language. This may however be seen as yet another discriminatory aspect from the majority society.

This report is mainly based on material provided by authorities, although interviews and contacts have been made with representatives from the major Roma organisations in Sweden. This aspect is however important to emphasize when trying to give as good picture as possible of the situation. There is not much material by representatives of the Roma, such as NGO's. The material provided from the authorities is however rather good and gives a background which is supported by the interviewed representatives.

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