

OFFICE FOR HUMAN AND MINORITY RIGHTS

Department for Monitoring International and

Regional Human Rights Treaties

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## **The Right of Girls and Women to Education – Preparation of the General Recommendation of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

The Education Development Strategy in Serbia to 2020 was adopted at the end of the year 2012, and one of its main objectives is to create accessibility and equity of the education system and reduce dropout of children from schools. In the last seven or eight years, four more specific state policies had a major influence which relate to the education of children from low socio-economic status families: 1. The pre-school education policy which implies broader approach and prescribes compulsory attendance of preparatory pre-school program in the last year before going to school; 2. The general policy of inclusive education and integration of the Roma; 3. The policy of providing free textbooks; 4. Newly introduced school development policies.

The broad policy of inclusive education and inclusion of the Roma followed the Road Map for the implementation of inclusive education and the Common Action Plan for the improvement of education of the Roma as part of the Decade, unified actions and developed them in specific activities and project documents for “Providing Improved Local Services” and other EU projects, and implies:

- A new school enrolment policy which cancelled earlier methods of categorization prior to enrolment;
- Encouraging enrolment of all children in regular schools using various education, social and health support measures. The newly established local inter-sectoral commissions estimate the need for these support measures, and enrolment in special schools is still possible, if the commission proposes this and parents agree;
- A new curriculum policy which includes a possibility of education according to individual education plans.

During the first semester of the school year 2013/2014, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, within program “School Without Violence”, initiated project “Prevention of Gender-Based Violence” which aims at exploring prevalence of gender-based violence and prevention of this form of violence that is associated with gender roles. The project is being implemented in collaboration with UNICEF and other institutions and organizations that have years of experience in the field of gender-based violence, as well as with the support of the Provincial Secretariat for Education, Administration and National Communities of Vojvodina.

The health and sexual education-related themes are, in primary schools, part of the *Biology* subject and *Health Education* program. Implementation of this program is planned to take place in every educational institution and is part of the Annual Work Plan of a school. Health and reproductive health education in schools is conducted within the classroom meeting program, by inclusion in various projects, most often in collaboration with health care institutions or non-governmental organisations.

The *Life Skills-Based Health Education* project was prepared in collaboration with UNICEF and the Ministry of Health whose purpose is to preserve and improve health of young people and develop active attitude towards one's own health and the health of others. The Ministry supported implementation of similar programs whose holders were health workers and NGOs. Thus, for example, the *Everything You Wanted to Know About ... But Were Afraid to Ask* program held in Belgrade was supported as well as *Promotion of Reproductive Health and Responsibilities of Eight Grade Students in Elementary Schools in Vranje and Vranjska Banja*. With DILS (Delivery of Improved Local Services) Project – “Providing Improved Local Services” in the field of health, education and social protection at the local level, which completed on 31 December 2013 – a significant portion of the funds (a total of EUR 2 million, on average EUR 35,000 per municipality) was allocated to the implementation of projects in 56 municipalities that have a large number of Roma population, a large number of school-age Roma children, and fall into least developed municipalities in Serbia.

The Office for Human and Minority Right participated in the implementation of affirmative action measures for the enrolment of members of the Roma national minority in secondary schools and universities. The Office collects data, processes them and prepares lists of candidates of the Roma nationality who meet conditions, and then forwards them to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technical Development. In accordance with the Guidelines for the implementation of a joint competition for the enrolment of students in the first year of basic and integrated studies in higher education institutions founded by the Republic of Serbia for the school year 2013/2014, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development received from the Office, on 23 July 2013, a list with 205 Roma candidates, 112 female students (54.6%) and 93 male students (45.4%) for admission to universities and colleges founded by the Republic of Serbia. After the second enrolment period, which commenced on 2 September and lasted until 15 September 2013, additional 33 Roma candidates were enrolled.

The Office for Human and Minority Rights implements the following projects: 1. “Technical Support to OHMR in the Implementation of the Strategy for Improving the Status of the Roma in the Republic of Serbia“ in partnership with the OSCE Mission to Serbia, and donations from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) in the amount of EUR 3 million. One of the six objectives of this project is “Improved Access to Public Services”, which ensured support for the training of 178 pedagogical assistants and includes four mandatory training modules and support to the Roma health mediators network (salaries for 15 out of 65 mediators in the Republic of Serbia); 2. “European Support for Roma Inclusion” (IPA 2012) within which so far have been enrolled 503 pre-school children in 20 pilot municipalities, and, also, established Roma Education Fund (REF), which will provide support to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development in the implementation of this project activity.