

A young man with dark hair is shown in profile, looking down at a notebook on a desk. He is wearing a dark shirt. In the background, other students are visible, some looking at their work. The scene is set in a classroom with desks and papers.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**ROMA STUDENTS IN SECONDARY**  
**EDUCATION IN SPAIN**

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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## FOREWORD TO THE TRANSLATION OF THE EXECUTIVE REPORT

In general terms, the Roma population in Spain has made major social advances over the past 40 years. This progress has gone hand-in-hand with the democratisation of Spanish society, the economic growth of the country, the construction of a social state, widespread access to social welfare systems (especially housing, education, health and social services and benefits) and specific measures and programmes designed to offset disadvantages.

Important progress has been made specifically in some aspects of education such as enrolment in primary education with rates close to 100%. Moreover, over half of Roma children start pre-school at age three and in 90% of the

cases Roma children are in the grade level that corresponds to their age. In short, more and more Roma families are taking the initiative to enrol their children in school. In addition to the growing value that families place on education, headway has also been made in terms of consistent attendance at school and improvement in the social interaction of Roma students with their classmates and teachers.

Therefore, universal and inclusive education, and what has come to be known as the “Spanish model for the inclusion of the Roma population”, can be considered as one of the achievements of the last several decades and a benchmark against which to measure future progress; a model featuring more and better collaboration between public authorities and Roma associations.

However, we cannot rest on our laurels but rather must continue to work in the field of education, both from within and outside the educational

community, to improve and advance in the level of education attained by Roma youth since it is still a far cry from that achieved by the majority population. Here we would draw attention to the dropout rate which is one of the symptoms of the problem: 64% of Roma youth fail to complete their compulsory secondary education studies (ESO) compared to 13% for the population as a whole. Moreover, the illiteracy rate of the Roma community stood at 8.7% in 2011 compared to 2.19% for the whole of Spain. By age 16 the Roma enrolment rate declines to 55%, far below the 93.5% for the rest of the population. In 2007, only 2.6% of the Roma population had gone on to higher education compared to 22% of the population as a whole. We would also note that at age 15-16 the vast majority of Roma who remain in school are enrolled in middle level vocational training or an Initial Professional Qualification Programme (PCPI). The situation is even worse in the case of Roma girls and young women<sup>1</sup>.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, aware of the importance of continuing to work to resolve the issues raised above, and convinced that better training and qualifications over the medium and long term will help to promote equal opportunity for Roma children and contribute to economic growth, actively participates in the implementation of the National Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma in Spain 2012-2020, adopted on 2 March 2012 by resolution of the Council of Ministers.

The Spanish Strategy for the Social Inclusion of the Roma Population was developed in response

to the European Commission Communication “An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020” submitted by the Commission on 5 April 2011, undoubtedly the most important initiative launched by that institution in recent years in this area. This communication was preceded by the European Parliament resolution on the future strategy for the inclusion of the Roma population adopted on 9 March 2011, followed by the conclusions adopted by the Member States at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) on 19 May and the endorsement of the Communication by the European Council at its meeting of 24 June. In that Communication, the Commission calls on Member States to develop national Roma inclusion strategies defining concrete objectives to reach by 2020 in at least four priority areas: education, employment, health and housing, the strategy having to be consistent with national policies in these areas.

Spain’s National Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma was conceived as an opportunity to strengthen and deepen the lines of work and measures that have yielded positive results in recent decades. It forms part of the National Reform Programme and is included in the national plans and policies in different fields (education, employment, housing, health, etc.) that directly affect the living conditions of Roma. Also, given the high degree of decentralisation of the Spanish administrative system, planning and implementation is done in collaboration with the Autonomous Communities and local corporations and in consultation with Roma associations.

<sup>1</sup> FSG (2002): *Evaluación de la Normalización Educativa del Alumnado Gitano en Educación Primaria* (only in Spanish), Madrid. Fundación Secretariado Gitano. FSG (2006): *Incorporación y trayectoria de niñas gitanas en la ESO*. Madrid. CIDE/Instituto de la Mujer. FSG (2010): *Evaluación de la normalización educativa de las alumnas y los alumnos gitanos en Educación Primaria*. Madrid, IFIE/Instituto de la Mujer.



In the field of education, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports is working on four major objectives as part of the National Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma:

1. Increase Roma participation in pre-school education. The participation rate has risen from 59% in 1994 to 74% in 2001 and to 81% in 2009, and the objective for 2015 is 91% and 95% for 2020.
2. Achieve universal enrolment and increase academic success in primary school. The enrolment rate stands at 99.9%. However, academic success has been lagging behind despite some improvement: in 1994 the failure rate was 57% and dropped to 31% in 2001 and 22.5% in 2009. The strategy intends to further reduce this figure to 15% by 2015 and 10% by 2020.
3. Raise the number of students completing ESO. In 2007 the figures were 78.1% for boys and 71.7% for girls. The goal is to reach 85% for boys and 80% for girls and by 2020 to be in the 90% range for boys and girls.
4. Raise the educational level of the adult Roma population.

These objectives are developed and expanded in concrete lines of action in collaboration with Roma associations and other public administrations in six specific areas: early childhood education, primary and secondary education, post-compulsory education, illiteracy eradication adult education, teacher training in intercultural education and the inclusion of diversity in the curriculum.

Training not only gives teachers the skills and abilities to carry out a professional activity, but also enables them to educate young people to be autonomous, critical and to have their own opinions. Thus, education becomes the main instrument of social mobility, which helps to overcome social and economic barriers and generate future expectations.



# MAPA MUNDI









## INTRODUCTION

This executive summary is a synthesis of the main results of the survey entitled “El alumnado gitano en Secundaria. Un estudio comparado” which was conducted in response to the need for updated data on the educational status of Roma students in secondary school which can be compared with the official data for the general population.

The aim of this study is to gain insight into the gap that exists between the Roma population and the society as a whole and to delve deeper into the variables and factors impacting the educational process of Roma youngsters with a view to continue eliminating the barriers standing in the way to the full incorporation of the Roma population in the educational system. Moreover, we are certain that the results of this work will help to guide the social inclusion policies and measures envisaged in Spain’s National Roma Integration Strategies passed by the government in 2012.

The Fundación Secretariado Gitano has undertaken other earlier studies in this area at the primary and secondary level of education, but on this occasion the research targets Roma youngsters, men and women between the ages of 12 and 24. The work carried out included 1604 interviews of Roma in that age bracket from households throughout Spain<sup>2</sup>.

The data obtained refer to the 2011-2012 school year and shed light on the status of Roma students in secondary school at that point in time. The fieldwork underpinning the analysis was conducted



between October and December 2012 so as to be able to cover the entire school year. The national data used for most of the comparison are from the 2010-2011 school year, i.e. the most recent data published by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports. For some indicators, reference is made to an earlier school year; the same holds true for the comparison with data from the Labour Force Survey, from the Sociological Research Centre on the Roma population and from the Survey on the Transition from Education-Training to the Labour Market which are from previous years depending on the availability of information.

This survey was conducted thanks to funding from the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality through the income tax allocated to social institutions, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, Ministry of Employment and Social Security, the European Social Fund within the framework of the Operational Programme Fight Against Discrimination 2007-2013, and UNICEF.

<sup>2</sup> With the exception of the Autonomous Communities of the Balearic Islands, Canary Islands and the Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla.

## THE ROMA POPULATION AND EDUCATION

The incorporation of the Roma population into school, despite being relatively recent, has been a reality for several years now thanks to efforts made by education professionals, schools, NGOs and, of course, Roma families. Today, practically all Roma children enrol in school at the compulsory age and young Roma are reaching higher levels of education than their parents and grandparents.

Moreover, according to survey results, more and more Roma families value school and education as the basic vehicle for social advancement, personal development and the opening of possibilities for the future.

The Roma population's assessment of education in Spain is significantly more positive than the opinion

held by the population in general. 51.3% of Roma respondents believe that education in Spain is good or very good compared to 34.1% of the overall population.

Moreover, 95% of the Roma population considers education to be very or fairly important in achieving success. Most Roma believe that studies are equally important for boys and girls and that decisions about the education of children should be taken jointly by both parents.

However, even though the enrolment situation of the Roma population has been steadily improving in recent years and advances are being made towards the educational mainstreaming of Roma students, in many cases certain difficulties are observed in the full incorporation of Roma children at school; achievements are still limited in terms of consistent attendance, the completion of compulsory studies and access to post-compulsory and higher education.



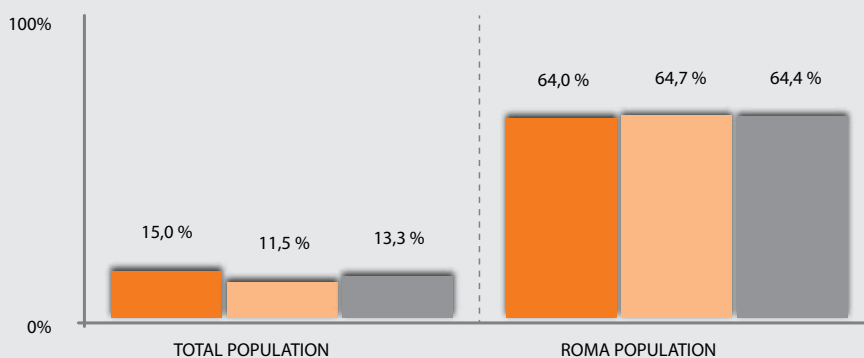
## THE EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF YOUNG ROMA

Generally speaking, young Roma are less educated than youngsters in general. For instance, 64.4% of Roma boys and girls aged 16 to 24 have not earned their compulsory secondary education (Spanish acronym ESO) diploma which means they have not even completed compulsory education, compared to only 13.3% of all young people in that age bracket. That comes to a difference of 51.1 percentage points between their respective **school failure rates**.

Generally speaking, young Roma are less educated than youngsters in the overall population.

### School failure rate by sex

- Men
- Women
- Total



Source: Own data based on statistics from the "Labour Force Survey, Annual average", National Statistics Institute (2013) for the total population, and from the survey conducted as part of the study "El alumnado gitano en Secundaria. Un estudio comparado" for the Roma population.



There is a noteworthy gender difference among the general population with regard to the school failure rate, 11.5% for girls compared with 15% for boys and the figures are virtually the same for Roma youngsters.

As for the **level of education achieved by Roma youth** aged 16 to 19, 62.7% have completed primary school, 24.8% have earned their ESO diploma and only 7.4% completed non-compulsory secondary education (high school or intermediate-level vocational training). At these ages, the difference with the general population is quite significant; for that same age bracket, 47% of the general population earned their ESO diploma and 24.7% finished non-compulsory secondary education.

For the Roma population between the ages of 20 and 24 the gap with the general population is even greater, especially with regard to higher levels of education; only 8.9% of the Roma population finishes high school or intermediate-level vocational training and 2.2% finish higher studies while those same percentages for the general population are 39.9% and 21.5% respectively. 60.4% of Roma youth in that age bracket have not completed any post-primary school studies.

A more detailed analysis of the maximum level of education reached by the Roma population reveals that while among older Roma it is the men who have attained a higher level of training, among the youngsters there is very little difference between genders.

Lastly, mention should be made of **young people who neither study nor work**, popularly known in Spain as “ni-nis”. As regards the youngest age bracket (between 15 and 19), 43.3% of the Roma population neither studies nor works, 30.4 percentage points above the national rate (which stands at 12.8%). In the next age bracket considered (20 to 24) the gap with the national indicator narrows: 48.5% of Roma youth are not engaged in any sort of training or labour activity compared to 27.4% of the general population. For both age groups, the percentage of Roma women who neither study nor work is higher than Roma men with differences ranging from 6.7 percentage points for the youngest bracket to 8.8 for the 20 to 24 year old group.

These results show the impact that early school leaving has on the young Roma population as well as how unemployment hits the young Roma community particularly hard.

“**Ni-nis**”: the percentage of Roma youth who neither study nor work is 30.4 percentage points above the national rate.

# THE EDUCATIONAL SITUATION OF ROMA IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

## Enrolment

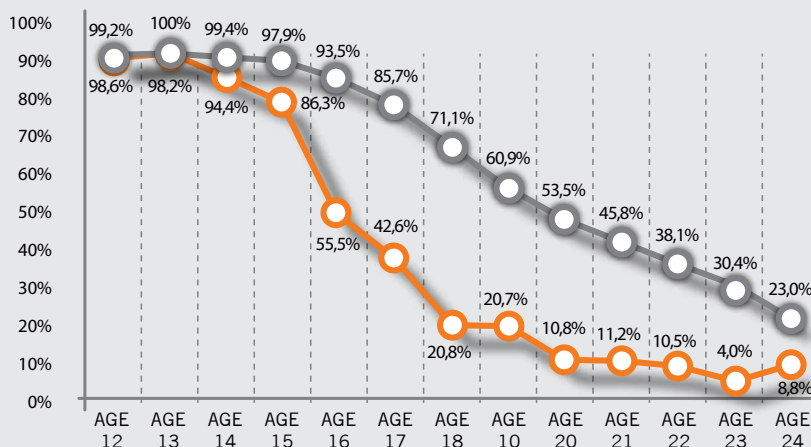
Generally speaking, Roma students enrol in public schools at all levels of education. While this is also the option chosen by the majority of the general population (74.7%), the percentage is higher among the Roma population (81.7%). The majority of Roma students who choose private education opt for semi-private subsidised schools.

Up to age 14, the **enrolment rate** for Roma youngsters is very similar to that of the general population. At age 12, for instance, the general enrolment rate stands at 99.2% compared with 98.6% for the Roma population. However, as of age 15 the number of Roma children enrolled in school gradually declines with a very significant drop of 30.8 percentage points between age 15 and 16, the age at which education is no longer compulsory.

The most substantial differences between the Roma population and the general population are found between the ages of 16 and 20, reaching a maximum enrolment rate gap of 50.4 percentage points at 18, age at which 71.1% of the overall population is in school compared to only 20.8% of Roma youth.

Net enrolment rates by age

- Total Population
- Roma population



Source: Own figures based on data from "Education figures in Spain. 2010-2011 school year (2013 Edition)". Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (2013) for the total population, and from the survey conducted as part of the study "El alumnado gitano en Secundaria. Un estudio comparado" for the Roma population.

Here we should point out that the enrolment rate for Roma women is lower than that of Roma men which is just the opposite of what happens in the general population. This means that the gap between Roma girls and the general population is even wider, reaching 56.6 percentage points at age 18.

## Educational path of Roma students in compulsory secondary education (ESO):

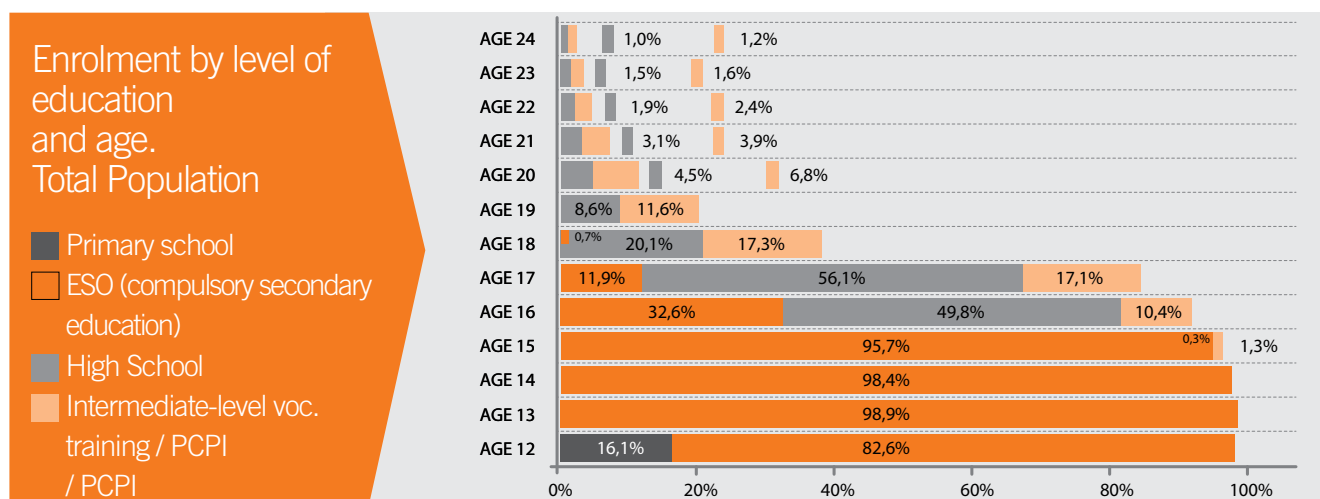
From age 12 to 16, most Roma pupils are enrolled in ESO (commensurate with their age) but a closer look shows that at age 12, when most Roma students should be in year one of ESO, 37.3% are still in primary school (compared to 16.1% of their general population counterparts) which means that even at this early age a significant percentage of Roma boys and girls have had to repeat a grade level.

Age 15 marks another milestone in the educational gap between the general population and Roma. Not

only do we see a drop in the enrolment percentage of Roma students, 11.1% of Roma pupils (6% girls and 16% boys) continue to study through what are known as “initial vocational qualification programmes” (PCPI) compared to 1.3% of the general student population at that age. Hence, the PCPI are an important alternative for Roma youth to continue their training but are also a way out of ESO.

Another significant gap opens up at age 16 when many Roma students drop out of school (the dropout rate being higher for girls than boys) since it is no longer compulsory. Moreover, of the Roma youngsters who remain enrolled in school at that age, 43.8% are still in the ESO (compared with 32.6% for the general population).

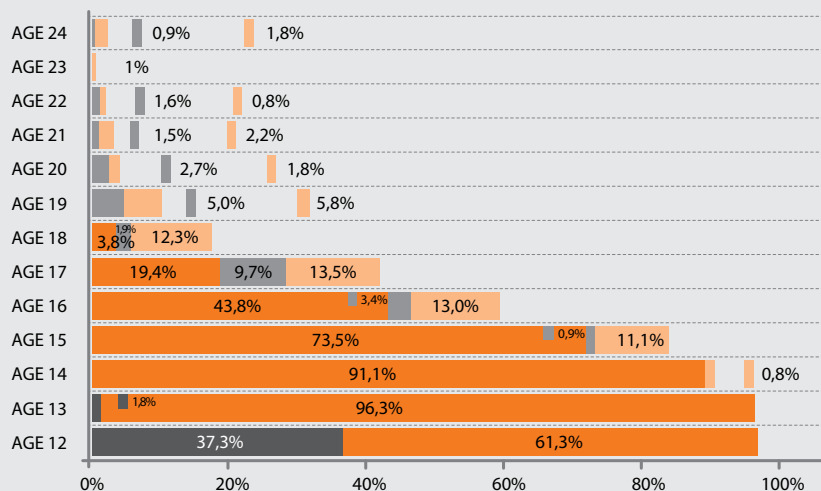
As already alluded to, we would draw attention to the fact that the age-grade correlation rate of Roma students is lower than that of the general population in all of the age brackets studied (12, 14 and 15), the gap being especially wide at age 14 where 68% of the general student body is enrolled in the grade





## Enrolment by level of education and age. Roma population

- Primary school
- ESO (compulsory secondary education)
- High School
- Intermediate-level voc. training / PCPI / PCPI



Source: Own figures based on data from "Education figures in Spain. 2010-2011 school year (2013 Edition)". Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (2013) for the total population, and from the survey conducted as part of the study "El alumnado gitano en Secundaria. Un estudio comparado" for the Roma population.

corresponding to their age compared to 26.5% of Roma students. We would also note that that at age 15, only 28.4% of Roma students are enrolled in the grade that corresponds to their age.

If we disaggregate data by sex we find that the age-grade correlation rate is higher for girls both in the case of the general student body and the Roma student body.

**Repetition rates**, i.e. the number of students who have to repeat a grade with respect to the total number of students enrolled in that grade, which are higher for Roma students in ESO, bear witness to the gap between Roma pupils and the general student body. Specifically, more Roma youth have to repeat a grade level during the first two years of ESO (especially year two) where the repetition rate reaches 41.8%, 29 percentage points above

the 12.8% overall rate. In the third and fourth year of ESO repetition rates go down significantly to 19% and 14% respectively, closing the gap with the general population since it is during these two grades that the Roma dropout rate is high and only the students with the best academic performance remain in the school system.

At age 14, only 26.5% of Roma students are enrolled in the grade that corresponds to their age.

Unlike the general population where fewer girls than boys in ESO have to repeat a grade level, just the opposite is true for Roma; in other words, more girls than boys have to repeat an academic year. The biggest difference is in the fourth (last) year of ESO with a gap of 13.6 percentage points.

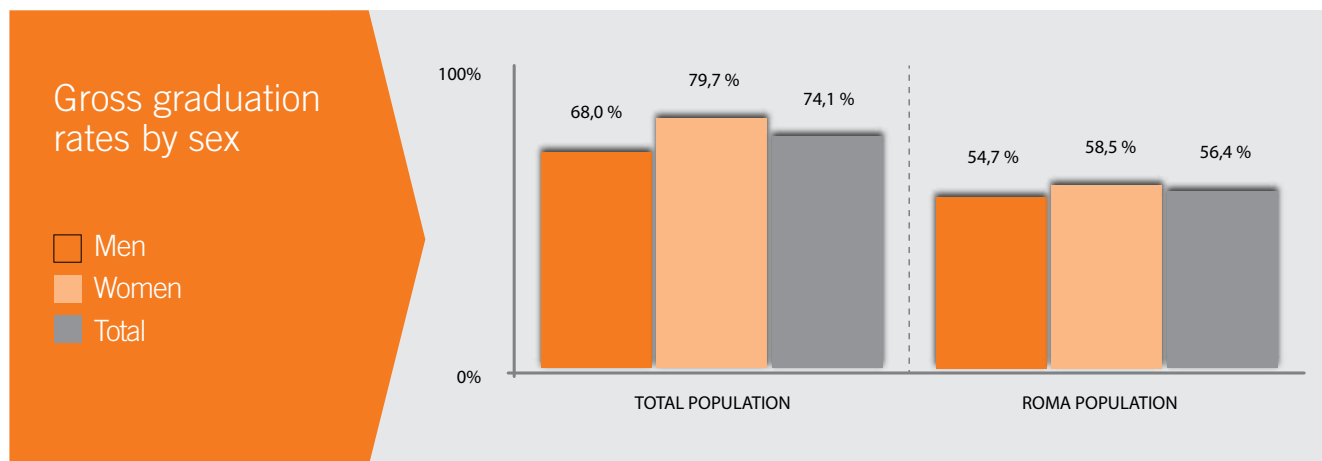
We would also draw attention to the high levels of absenteeism of Roma students in ESO where both absenteeism and unexcused absences are higher than at other levels of education. The absenteeism rate for Roma students stands at 14.3% and is higher for girls (16%) than boys (12.8%). The unexcused absence rate, which also includes the first four absences each month, was 26.4%.

At the end, after successfully passing the different courses of the ESO, 62.4% of the Roma students

enrolled in the fourth (last) year of ESO **obtained their ESO Diploma**. 15% more Roma boys earn their ESO diploma than Roma girls.

The ESO graduation rate for Roma is 56.4% compared to 74.1% for the general population.

Taking the **gross graduation rate in ESO**, a comparable indicator of the general population,



Source: Own figures based on data from "Education figures in Spain. 2010-2011 school year (2013 Edition)". Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (2013) for the total population, and from the survey conducted as part of the study "El alumnado gitano en Secundaria. Un estudio comparado" for the Roma population.

which compares the number of students who have graduated from ESO (regardless of age, i.e. without considering that theoretically students begin the last year of ESO at age 15), clear differences are observed between the Roma population (56.4% graduation rate) and the general population (74.1%). However, if we only consider the Roma pupils who earn their ESO diploma by the aforementioned theoretical age, the percentage falls drastically to 15.4% (17% in the case of Roma girls and 14.1% for boys).

## Post-compulsory secondary education

Today, the presence of Roma students in post-compulsory secondary education is very low, especially in high school where differences with the general population are enormous. At age 16, 49.8% of the general population is in high school compared to only 3.4% of the Roma population. This gap of 46.4 percentage points remains intact at age 17 where 56.1% of the general population is in high school compared to 9.7% of the Roma population. If we include the Roma students who have chosen intermediate-level vocational training or PCPI, the percentages reaches 13% both at age 16 and 17.

Although the percentage of Roma girls enrolled in school at this age is lower than that of boys, they are the ones most likely to continue their studies in high school. Thus, 5% of Roma girls at age 16 decide to go on to high school compared to 1% of their male counterparts. At age 17 this percentage rises to 13% for the girls and 6% for

boys. This same trend is observed when students from year 2 ESO were asked if they intended to continue on to university studies: 11.8% of Roma boys answered in the affirmative compared to 20.5% of Roma girls while 52.2% of the general population expressed the desire to go on to higher studies.

We should point out that education outside of official plans becomes quite relevant as from age 16 and this raises the question of whether formal education, as it is conceived today, meets the needs of the Roma population.

Lastly, and to conclude this section, we can report that by and large Roma students do not feel discriminated against during their time in school (83.8%). They typically feel comfortable at their school and have good relationships with the teachers and with the rest of their non-Roma peers.





## SCHOOL DROPOUT WITHIN THE ROMA POPULATION

As we have seen, Roma youth remains less time in education.

The average 12-year-old is expected to study at least nine more years, until age 21, but if that

person is Roma he or she will only remain in school until age 17.6 (17.8 in the case of boys and to 17.5 for girls).

Early school leaving is one of the most serious educational problems facing the Roma population insofar as it affects an important percentage of Roma youth and has indisputable effects on the advancement and participation of the Roma community in the social, economic and cultural life of Spain.

On average, 36.1% of Roma youngsters aged 12 to 17 have dropped out of school at some time in their life, girls at a rate of 38.5% compared to 33.6% for boys. Naturally, early school leaving in this age bracket is most prevalent for 17-year-olds because the older they get the more likely it is they will drop out at some point. By age 17, 72.9% of the Roma population has dropped out of school.

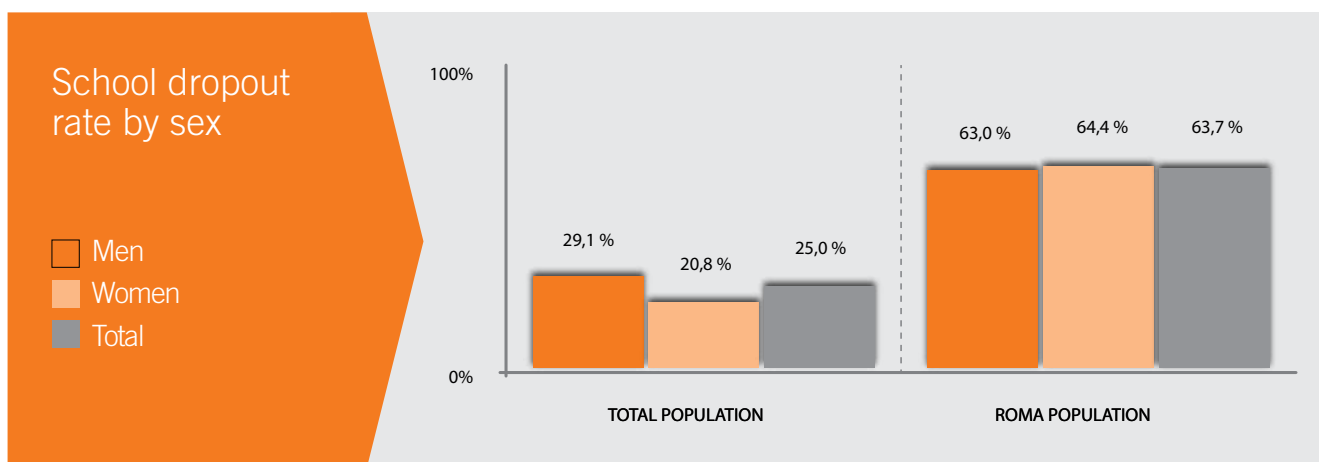
Turning our attention to the 18-24 age bracket, the reference indicator is called the **early dropout rate** which measures the percentage of young people aged 18 to 24 who do not engage in any sort of training or studies and whose maximum level of education is ESO or less. This is a particularly important indicator insofar as it serves as a tool to evaluate the performance of European Union member countries in the area of education. The results reveal that 63.7% of Roma youth aged 18 to 24 (64.4% of girls and 63% of boys) have dropped out of school or vocational training before completing non-compulsory secondary education which implies that at most they have their ESO diploma (compulsory secondary education). The figure



for the general youth population stands at 25%, a difference of 38.7 percentage points. In contrast to the Roma population, in the general population more boys than girls leave school early (20.8% of girls versus 29.1% of boys).

These data demonstrate that early school leaving puts Roma youth at a clear disadvantage vis-à-vis the general population.

The dropout rate for Roma youth is 63% compared to 25% for the general population.



Source: Own figures based on data from "Europe 2020 Strategy indicators". Eurostat (2013) for the total population, and from the survey conducted as part of the study "El alumnado gitano en Secundaria. Un estudio comparado" for the Roma population.

A closer look at the data, **specifically the age at which pupils drop out**, shows that the majority of Roma who leave do so between the ages of 14 and 16, especially at age 16 (32.5% of those between 12 and 17 and 32.1% of those 18 to 24). In this connection, no progress is detected in the 5 years separating these two age brackets.

Also, data show that when Roma youth drop out of school, they do so at an earlier age than the general population. If we consider the age at which pupils drop out of school as an indicator, the majority of Roma aged 15 to 20 who drop out of ESO do so at age 15 (31.2%) and 16 (55.4%). However, among the general population, the dropout age is two years later reaching its

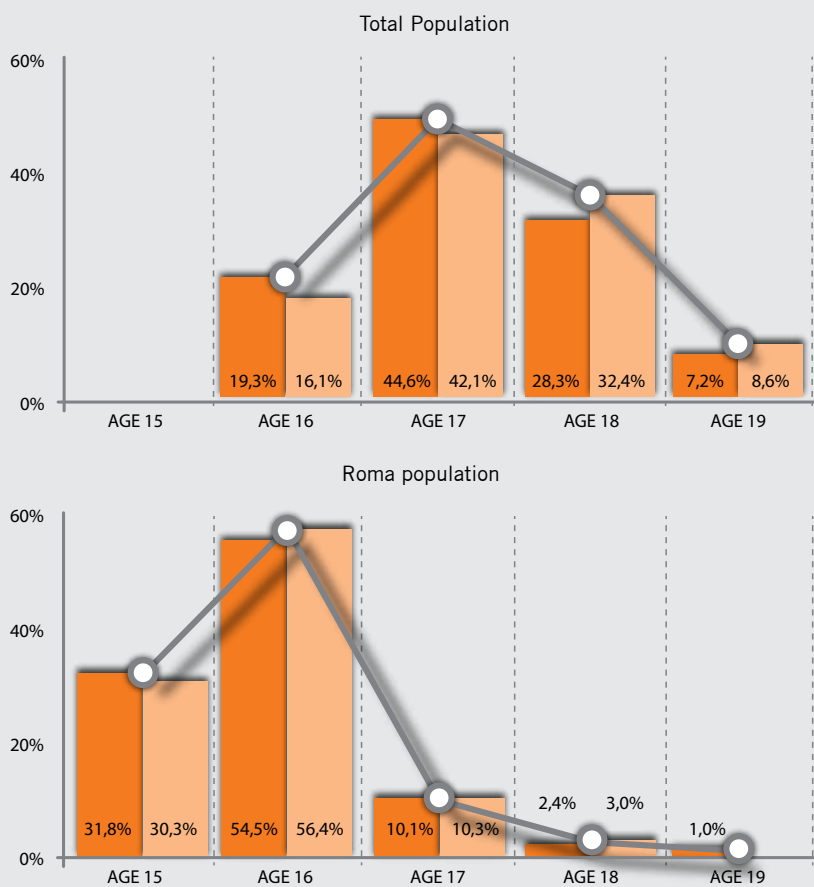
maximum level at age 17 (43.7%) followed by age 18 (29.7%).

From a gender perspective, we would highlight the differences detected between boys and girls

regarding the age at which Roma pupils drop out of school; the dropout rate for girls becomes significant at age 12 (two years earlier than for boys).

School dropout age for pupils leaving ESO between the ages of 15 and 20 by sex

- Men
- Women
- Total



Source: Own figures based on data from the "Survey on education-training transition and labour market integration 2005". National Statistics Institute (INE) (2007) for the total population and from the survey conducted as part of the study "El alumnado gitano en Secundaria. Un estudio comparado" for the Roma population.



If we look at data by **grade level** we find the greatest number of dropouts during ESO year two (this grade level coinciding with the highest percentage of repetitions). Linking this fact with the most prevalent dropout age (16) indicates that poor academic results, age not corresponding to grade level (bear in mind that at age 16 pupils should be in ESO year four) and the number of multiple repetitions, all contribute to early school leaving.

At this point, it would make sense to ascertain **why Roma youth drop out of school**. In this regard we would note that the principle reasons underlying the decision to leave school are being

tired of studying or not liking the subjects (30.9%) and family reasons (29.5%). In the latter case there is a strong gender bias, i.e. family reasons were reported by 42.7% of the girls compared to 14.9% of their male counterparts. For Roma boys, however, the desire to find a job is one of the main reasons for early school leaving (21.7%) compared to 9.3% in the case of girls.

Focusing on family motives, the main reasons reported by Roma youngsters were marriage or engagement (50.7% of boys and 39.1% of girls) and family responsibilities (20.5% of boys and 40.4% of girls). It is also worth noting that 12.6% of Roma girls alluded to family pressure.



# RETURN TO SCHOOL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

While it is true that Roma drop out of school at an early age, the fact is that many of those who leave return to school at some point.

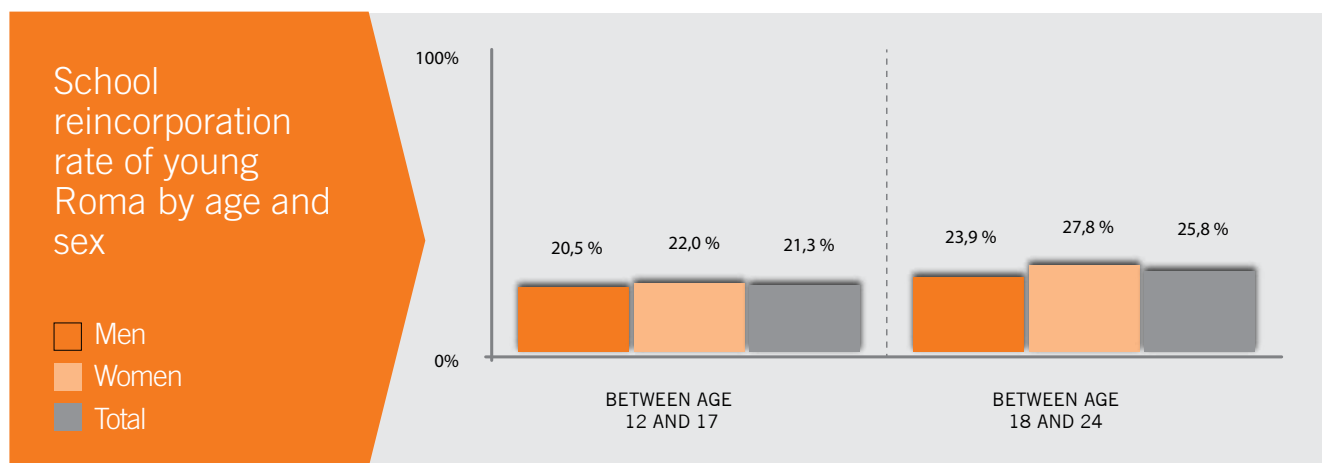
Specifically, 21 out of every 100 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 who leave school eventually resume their studies. For this age bracket the reincorporation rate stands at 21.3%, somewhat higher for girls (22%) than for boys (20.5%).

For the 18 to 24 age bracket, the reincorporation rate reaches the 25.8% mark which would appear

logical given that by that age they have had more time to return. As is the case with teens, young Roma women (27.8%) are more likely to return than young men (23.9%).

The **average reincorporation age** is 22 and it is especially around age 20 that most take the decision to return to school.

During the period of time which they are not studying they devote most of their time to household chores (29.1%), seeking employment (22.8%) and working in the family business (19%). An overwhelmingly greater proportion of girls than boys engage in housework (51.5% compared to 5.1%), while boys outnumber girls especially in family business work (28.8% of boys versus 9.8% of girls).



Source: Own data based on the survey conducted as part of the study "El alumnado gitano en Secundaria. Un estudio comparado" for the Roma population.



Regarding the **type of education to which Roma youth return**, the 12 to 17 age bracket mostly returns to ESO (40%) while the 18 to 24 group engage in adult training schemes (32.4%). For both age brackets, education outside of the formal schemes is the second most frequent choice (23.3% for teens and 24.2% for young people).

There are differences between these two age brackets when it comes to the **reasons that Roma youth return to the classroom**. Although the main reason for both groups is to find a better job, this

is more of a motivating factor for the 18 and older group (62.2%) than for the 12 to 17-year-olds (45.8%). Moreover, while teens reported that the second most important factor in returning to school was that they preferred studying over the alternative (16.9%), the over 18 group reported that when they were younger they were unable to study but now they are (11.7%). In other words, dropping out of school was not a decision taken freely. It is important to note that this latter response was much more prevalent among girls (15.5%) than boys (7.1%).



## FACTORS AFFECTING THE EDUCATIONAL SITUATION OF ROMA STUDENTS

The most significant factors influencing the educational process of students are those related with family and the role of parents. The educational level of parents, the priority they place on education and their socioeconomic and cultural level directly influence the education of their children.

Regarding the impact of the parents' **level of education**<sup>3</sup> on their children it is worth noting that, in general, the higher the educational level of the parents, the higher that of their children.

Hence, while the overwhelming majority of the children with parents who have no formal studies complete their primary school studies and part of ESO, a higher percentage of the children of parents who have completed primary, ESO or post-compulsory studies achieve higher levels of ESO and post-compulsory secondary education.

In any case, as a general rule the children have a higher level of studies than their parents: 10.3% of the parents interviewed have no education while only 2% of the children are in that same situation. As for secondary education, 7% of the parents earned their ESO diploma compared with 17% of the children.

The parents' level of studies also has an impact on other variables such as dropping out of school at some point or early school leaving. Analysing the first, there is a high correlation between the

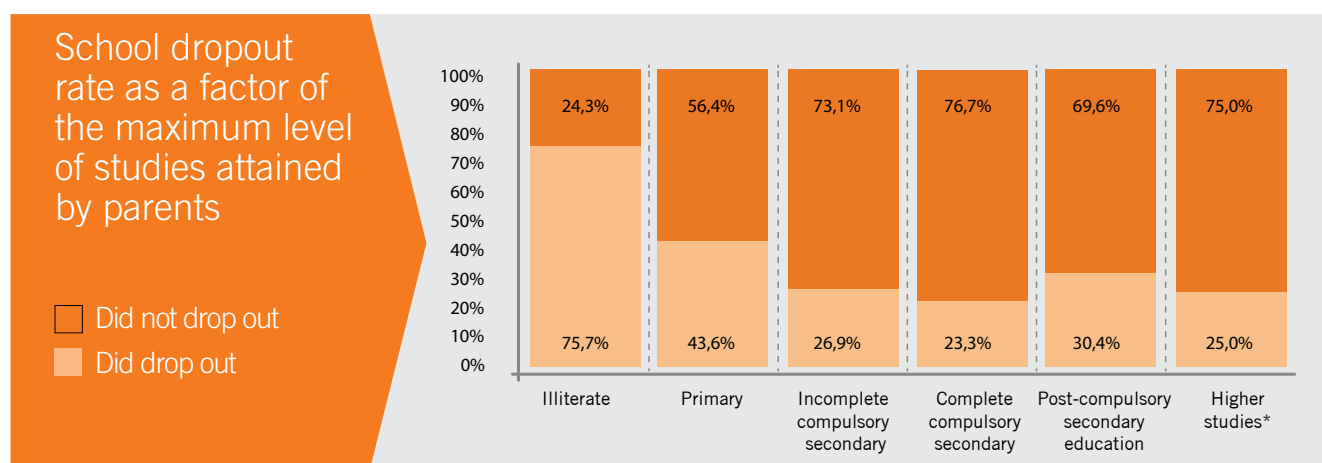


<sup>3</sup> The study considers the level achieved by the parent who has taken his/her education the furthest



maximum level of education of the parents and whether the child has dropped out of school. In the case of parents with no studies, 75.7% of the children have dropped out of school at some point during their academic career, this percentage

falling to 43.6% in the case of children of parents who have completed primary school studies. This percentage drops to between 23% and 30% in the case of boys and girls whose parents completed ESO, post-compulsory education or higher.



Source: Own data based on the survey: "El alumnado gitano en Secundaria. Un estudio comparado".

These data should be interpreted with caution because the sample sizes are very small and may be affected by high sampling errors.

A similar pattern is observed with early school leaving, although in this case there is less of a difference between the percentages of school leavers as a function of the maximum level of education of their parents. While 75% of the children whose parents have no education leave school early, that percentage drops to 54% when the parents have primary school studies.

Cross referencing of the maximum level of studies of the parents with the expectations of

the children in terms of the level of studies they aspire to clearly indicates the impact that this has on the education of their children and their opinion on education in general. Half of the children whose parents have no studies aspire to earn their ESO diploma at most and only 28% would like to continue on to higher studies. In the case of children whose parents have ESO level studies, 18% aspire to earn their ESO diploma in the future and 51% would like to go on to higher studies. In the case of children whose parents

have higher studies, 8% plan to earn their high school diploma (not content with intermediate-level vocational training) and 91% set their sights on higher studies and of these, 83% want to go on to college. These data demonstrate the positive value that children put on their parents' academic achievements and the idea that they should achieve at least as much or more education than their parents.

Another factor determining the educational status of the children is the availability of resources and families' access to services. The educational status and development of children from families **deprived** of said resources is negatively affected. However, in contrast to the effect of parents' studies, the availability of such resources does not result in a higher assessment of education on the part of children.

If we look at the maximum level of studies achieved and whether or not certain resources are available we find that the children who have access to these resources go further in their studies. The children of families that are not severely deprived achieve ESO at a rate of 18%, 6% do high school and 1% go on to higher education. However, 88% of the children from deprived households go no further than primary school and only 4% engage in ESO studies.

Children who are not from severely deprived families are 10% more likely to be enrolled in school. Moreover, deprivation has an impact on whether Roma students complete the grade level in which they are enrolled. Where deprivation is not a factor, 89% of Roma pupils completed

their current grade level compared to 72% in households facing deprivation.

Lastly, we would point out that the **socio-economic and cultural environment** is another factor that significantly affects the educational projection of Roma children.

In this connection, socio-economic and cultural level<sup>4</sup> is directly proportional to the level of education attained and as that level rises, students are more likely to be at the grade level corresponding to their age and dropout rates decline.

Clearly, a better social, economic and cultural status allows children to stay in school longer.

The socioeconomic and cultural situation of parents is directly proportional to the level of studies achieved by their children.



# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERVENTION

## Conclusions

The educational level of the Roma population has steadily improved over the last several decades. The widespread enrolment of Roma children in school and a more positive opinion of education on the part of the Roma community has prompted Roma youth to attain higher levels of education than their parents.

However, despite this progress, the **educational level** of Roma youth is below that of the general population and the gap begins to widen even before the completion of compulsory secondary instruction with just over 60% of young Roma who do not even earn their ESO diploma, the gap widening ever further when it comes to post-compulsory secondary education. While among older Roma it is the young men who attain a higher level of training, among the youngsters there is very little difference between genders when it comes to the level of education earned.

Up to age 14 the **enrolment** level of the Roma population is very similar to that of the general population. When they turn 15 however, even before they reach the age at which they should be completing their compulsory studies, the number of Roma youngsters (especially girls)

enrolled in school gradually declines with an especially sharp dip between age 15 and 16. The biggest gap between the enrolment levels of the Roma population and the general population is reached at age 18 where there is a 50.4% difference. Here we should point out that the enrolment rate for Roma women is lower than that of Roma men which is just the opposite of what happens in the general population.

At **ESO** level, there is a gap of 41.5 percentage points between the age-grade correlation rate for Roma students at age 14 as compared to the general population. The high **repetition** rate of Roma pupils, with a maximum gap with the general population of 29% occurring in the second year of ESO, confirms the fact that the academic results of the Roma population are significantly inferior to those of the general population. Directly related to this situation is the high **absenteeism** rate for Roma pupils which is especially serious in ESO.

More than half of the students who manage to reach year four of ESO (62.4%) obtain their **ESO diploma** but only 15.4% manage to do that without having to repeat a grade level. There are clear differences between the Roma population and the general population; the gross graduation rate for Roma pupils stands at 56.4% compared with 74.1% for the general population.

Roma are grossly under-represented at the **post-compulsory level of education**, especially in high school. School enrolment for the overall population at age 16 is 49.8% compared with a mere 3.4% of the Roma population who opt to



continue their studies. However, at that age 13% of Roma engage in intermediate-level vocational training or PCPI, and non-formal education is also growing in importance. In any case, although

the percentage of Roma girls enrolled in school at this age is lower than that of boys, they are the ones most likely to continue their studies in high school.





Regarding **early school leaving**, one of the most serious educational problems facing the Roma population, it is worth noting that 72.9% of Roma young people, by age 17, have dropped out of school at some time in their academic career. The early school leaving rate reveals that 63.7% of Roma youth aged 18 to 24 have interrupted their studies or vocational training before completing non-compulsory secondary education, 38.7 percentage points higher than the figures for the general population. Most of the Roma community's early school leavers abandon their studies at age 16, although dropout figures begin to become significant at age 14 for boys and age 12 for

girls. If we look at data by grade level we find the greatest number of dropouts during year two in ESO (this grade level coinciding with the highest percentage of repeaters). Linking this fact with the most prevalent dropout age (16) indicates that poor academic results, age not corresponding to grade level (bear in mind that at age 16 pupils should be in ESO year four) and the number of multiple repeaters, all contribute to early school leaving.

The main reasons given by Roma youngsters for leaving school is that they are tired of studying or they do not enjoy their class subjects. The reasons for girls dropping out have more to do with family (becoming engaged, getting married



or family responsibilities) while for boys it is their desire to seek work.

Despite high dropout rates, close to a quarter of the young people who abandon their studies go back to school at some point, Roma girls more so than boys. The average age of **reincorporation** is 22. Boys and girls aged 12 to 17 mostly return to ESO while the 18 and older group engage in adult education. Education outside of official programmes is the second option in both cases. For both age groups, the main reason for going back to school is to find a better job. Also, many of the older girls decide to return because they never left voluntarily in the first place.

Regarding **family factors influencing the educational status of Roma students**, the higher the educational and/or socioeconomic and cultural level of the parents, the higher the educational level achieved by the children, better age-grade correlation rate, greater educational expectations on the part of the young people themselves and less likelihood of dropout. On the other hand, the children of deprived families have a lower level of education and are more likely not to be enrolled in school or to drop out of the grade they are enrolled in. Therefore, a better social, economic and cultural position allows children to stay in school longer.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

The data obtained through this survey leads us to a number of recommendations to improve the educational status of the Roma community at it stands today.

The involvement of each and every one of the participants in the educational process of Roma students is required, as are measures that get the entire educational community involved. In this connection, we have organised our recommendations into four groups of agents: educational administration, schools and teachers, Roma families themselves and other educational and social agents.

## Educational administration

- Encourage school enrolment at an early age, especially in the case of families or groups who are at risk of exclusion or that face situations of inequality.
- Implement systems for the early detection of problems that take into account the social environment of students and that enable the swift application of high-quality measures to alleviate these situations.

- Develop counselling, tutoring and educational support programmes targeting students and their families within the framework of attention to diversity.
- Eliminate ghetto schools.
- Ensure access to necessary teaching material, at least at the compulsory levels of education, with a view to ensuring equality in education with the same rights and opportunities for all.
- Implement programmes to prevent early school leaving and encourage lifelong learning for those young people who have dropped out and wish to resume their studies.

## Schools

- Incorporate elements promoting a deeper understanding of the Roma community in schools from an intercultural perspective.
- Train teachers in all aspects related to handling diversity in the student body.
- Devise and implement actions to promote the involvement and participation of families in school life.
- Eliminate all forms of segregation at schools and implement measures to compensate inequalities suffered by students as a whole.



## Roma community and families

- Develop quality measures to promote the active involvement of families in the educational process of their children.
- Emphasize adherence to the principle of equal opportunity for Roma girls.
- Involve the Roma community in the educational process of Roma adolescents and young adults.
- Assess the development of programmes designed to implement measures to improve the achievement of objectives.
- Publicise academic achievement and offer that possibility to the Roma community in order to raise the awareness of the community itself and society as a whole.
- Raise the government's awareness of the educational situation of the Roma Community and involve the former in the implementation of measures needed to alleviate that situation.

## Other agents

- Avoid paternalistic attitudes that could justify situations where basic rights are left unprotected.
- Enforce the right to education of children first and foremost.
- Implement educational mainstreaming programmes targeting Roma students that envisage educational counselling for families and children in coordination with schools.
- Conduct periodical surveys, in collaboration with education officials, to gain insight into the educational status of Roma students and the changes taking place. Disseminate best practices aimed at the educational mainstreaming and academic success of the Roma community.



